

Persianism in Antiquity

Edited by
Rolf Strootman and Miguel John Versluys

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Studien zu antiken Kulturkontakten und ihrem Nachleben

Herausgegeben von Josef Wiesehöfer

in Zusammenarbeit mit Pierre Briant, Geoffrey Greatrex,

Amélie Kuhrt und Robert Rollinger

Band 25

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Cover illustration:

Nemrud Dağı (Kommagene), around 50 BC. West Terrace, South Socle 2, depiction of the Persian king Xerxes I (ruled 486–456 BC), detail of the upper part of the stele. Preserved *in situ*. Photo: R. Strootman.

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To Henk Versnel at the occasion of his 80th birthday

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The Istanbul colloquium was dedicated to the cultural and political memory of the Achaemenid Empire during Antiquity, and aimed specifically at discussing how the concept of “Persianism” can help us to better understand the intracultural entanglements by which such memory is created, and so move beyond the traditional separation between West and East that still pervades the grand narratives of ancient history and cultural studies. The ideal place to question this dichotomy of course was Istanbul, the city allegedly constituting the bridge between “East” and “West”.

The conference would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and commitment of the director of the NIT, Fokke Gerritsen. We wish to express our sincere gratitude to him and to the other NIT staff members for their hospitality and their help with the organization; Güher Gürmen in particular. For her much appreciated help during the colloquium we would like to thank Milinda Hoo. Back home, Marinde Hiemstra and Merel Kusters (Utrecht) as well as Marike van Aerde (Leiden) assisted us with the editing of the papers and the bibliography.

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We dedicate this book to our mentor Professor Henk Versnel, at the occasion of his 80th birthday. Through his teaching and research, Henk has made us uniquely aware of the complexities and ambiguities of cultural dynamics in Antiquity. *Ad multos annos.*

Rolf Strootman (University of Utrecht)
Miguel John Versluys (University of Leiden),
February 2016

FROM CULTURE TO CONCEPT: THE RECEPTION AND APPROPRIATION OF PERSIA IN ANTIQUITY

Rolf Strootman & Miguel John Versluys

*The conquest of Persia meant not the conversion of Persia to Islam,
but the conversion of Islam to Persianism (Muhammed Iqbal)*

INTRODUCTION

In the late 5th-century BCE, the (in)famous Athenian Alkibiades won the first prize at the Olympic games with his four-horse chariot. It was the crown on a remarkable career; his triumphant presence in Olympia “was enhanced by a luxurious tent, a gift from the Ephesians, described as ‘Persian’”.¹ Almost a millennium later, in the second half of the 5th century CE, and in a different part of Eurasia, we hear about a certain Gobazes, king of Lazica, a mountainous country on the south-eastern Black Sea coast. When this local monarch is allowed to visit the Byzantine emperor, Leo I, he shows up, as the *Life of S. Daniel the Stylite* recalls, “dressed in *Persian* attire”.²

These two examples indicate that the Achaemenid (imperial) model apparently had a strong and long-lasting allure throughout Antiquity. This was not just an idea, an “imaginary Persia” that mattered to poets, philosophers and travel-writers, – from Herodotos to the 19th-century European Orientalists – and that is still with us today.³ As the examples above show, ideas and associations revolving around concepts of Persia were already strong and indispensable symbolic currency for both the Ephesians *and* Alkibiades; for Gobazes *and* the Byzantine emperor – or that is, at least, what the king of Lazica hoped for and expected. Large parts of post-Achaemenid Antiquity thus perhaps indeed should be characterized as “living in the shadow of Cyrus”, as beautifully formulated by Garth Fowden.⁴

This shadow, or, in other words, the *ideas and associations revolving around Persia and appropriated in specific contexts for specific (socio-cultural or political) reasons* we propose to call *Persianism*. This is not to suggest that the strategy of the Ephesians in the 5th century BCE or that of Gobazes in the 5th century CE were identical cultural practices, or that in both cases “Persian” had a similar meaning. On the contrary, Persianism is not to be understood as a monolithic concept. As this book will show, there are many different and differing *Persianisms*. In that

1 Shapiro (2009); Miller and Hölscher (2013), p. 402 for the quotation.

2 Fowden (1993), p. 3–4 with references.

3 The canonisation and development of such ideas, and their relation to one another, is at the core of the field of Imagology, for which see Beller and Leerssen (2007), esp. p. 3–75.

4 Fowden (1993), p. 7.

respect *context* – chronological, topographical and cultural – is key. On the other hand, it seems that it is exactly *through* its appropriation and reworking in these many different and differing contexts over time, that *Persianism* acquired, as it were, its remarkable strength. The epigraph to this essay is a quote from the famous 19th/20th-century scholar, poet and politician Muhammed Iqbal. In his analysis of the spread of Islam, Iqbal refers to the popular view that the conquest of Persia did not have the conversion of Persia to Islam as a result, but on the contrary, the conversion of Islam to (what he calls) *Persianism*.⁵ This narrative of how a cultural and spiritual force can ultimately overcome the military might of a conquering power – an allusion to Horace’s *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit*⁶ – says a lot about the strength and efficacy of what apparently had become a powerful *socio-cultural imaginary*, an idea so formidable that according to some it was able to transform Islam.⁷ To understand this strength and efficacy, it is therefore necessary to study the many different *Persianisms* over a longer period of time and from a wider array of cultural contexts in relation to one another. That is what this volume sets out to do, focusing on the origins of the idea of Persia, in the period of Antiquity.

With regard to the history and archaeology of the Ancient World specifically, the concept of *Persianism* was first used by Miguel John Versluys in the framework of his research on Nemrud Dağı and what was commonly defined as the “Greco-Persian” style and propaganda of its first century BCE ruler Antiochos I of Kommagene.⁸ The term promised to be a convenient shorthand to understand various forms of reception of, and references to, the Achaemenid Empire in the Ancient World that are distinct from direct Achaemenid cultural influence. This latter form of interaction in the context of Persian imperialism during the empire’s existence (c. 550–330 BCE) is commonly known as *Persianization*.⁹ A third term that is of relevance here, is *Iranism*, and the related “Idea of Iran”, *i.e.*, the idea of the political and cultural unity of Greater Iran which was introduced in Late Antiquity by the Sasanian Dynasty as a concept of empire known as Ērānšahr or Ērān (Iran). Broadly speaking, “Iran” is in origin a concept of the eastern Iranian world that later travelled to the west, while “Persia” originally is a Mediterranean and West-Iranian

5 Iqbal (1908), p. 154–155; quoted in Iqbal (1964), p. 82; Sherwani (1977), p. 155.

6 *Epistles* 2.1.156: *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes intulit agresti Latio*, “Captive Greece conquered her savage victor (*sc.* Rome), and brought the arts into rustic Latium”. Iqbal in fact *disapproved* of the alleged Persianization of the Muslim world, as he believed that Persian “mysticism” had destroyed the original virility of Islam. But his indirect allusion to the concept of “Hellenism” hints at an important point to which we will return: the centuries-long, dialectic interaction between *Iranian* constructions of “Persia” (as “self”) and *non-Iranian* constructions of “Persia” (as “other” – in both negative and positive colorings, as we will see).

7 For the concept of social imaginary – *sc.* “the creative and symbolic dimension of the social world” (Johnson 1984, p. 6), *i.e.* the basic, collective conception by a large group of people of the world they live in, and carried by shared images, stories, and legends (rather than in a theoretical sense) – see Castoriadis (1975/1987); Taylor (2004); James and Steger (2013).

8 See now extensively Versluys (2016a), elaborating earlier presentations of the concept in Versluys (2012; 2014a; and 2014b). The word has earlier been used in as a shorthand for the adoption of Achaemenid royal style at the Argead court by Paspalas (2005); beyond the field of ancient studies, “Persianism” is sometimes used as a linguistic term.

9 See below, note 39.

concept that travelled to the east, as we will see below. The concept of Persianism thus allows us to study the genesis of the “Idea of Persia/Iran” in both Iranian and non-Iranian historical contexts.

In what follows, we will elaborate on the differences between, and overlaps of, Persianism, Persianization, and Iranism, and outline the position of the present volume towards earlier scholarship to further explain (and problematize) our definition of the concept.

THE LEGACY OF PERSIA IN WORLD HISTORY

Achaemenid Persia was one of the most successful empires of the Ancient World. Like all great empires, the Persian Empire has known an enduring legacy, and remains to this day in the popular imagination of the “West”, together with the Roman Empire, the best known and most studied empire of Antiquity – and like the Roman Empire *also* in an ambiguous sense, as e. g. the recent success of the film *300* (Zack Snyder, 2006) demonstrated. In modern Iran, the Achaemenid Empire has been conceived as a cultural predecessor and (moral) point of reference for present-day Iranians. The evocation of Achaemenid grandeur by the last shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, at the 2,500 year anniversary of Iranian monarchy at Pasargadae and Persepolis in 1971 is a well-known example of a modern use of the “heritage” of Persia to legitimize power and enhance secular state formation.¹⁰ The Revolution of 1979 removed the Achaemenid past from the heart of official national identity, but the association of modern Iranians with the Ancient Persians survived for the sake of tourism at such sites as Naqš-e Rostam and Persepolis, and among Iranian exile communities in the UK and USA.¹¹ But there is also a rich positive tradition in the West. Until the eighteenth century, the Achaemenids were mainly associated with the pro-Persian tendencies in the Biblical tradition.¹² Islamic-age “Persia”, and the Iranian cultural heritage in general, became in the nineteenth century a considerable focus for scholarship, and a genuine fascination developed in art and literature for what the West came to think of as the highpoint of “Oriental” civilization – a form of appropriation epitomized by Edward FitzGerald’s extraordinary popular and influential adaptation of Omar Khayyām’s poetry (1859).¹³ And like so many other

10 A good overview of Pahlavi secular politics and the ideological uses of a pre-Islamic, *viz.*, Achaemenid heritage is provided by Garthwaite (2007), p. 221–252, with further literature on the modernization of Iran at p. 293–294.

11 More recently there has been a revival of interest in the Achaemenid past in Iran itself, too. Significantly, the ruins of Persepolis and the rock-cut tombs at Naqš-e Rostam in the wake of this development became a popular backdrop for photographs of Iranian women removing their headscarves in the context of “My Stealthy Freedom”, a movement initiated in 2014 by the London-based journalist Masih Alinejad, who asked Iranian women to post pictures of themselves on Facebook without the obligatory hijab; the movement attracted considerable attention from the Western media.

12 For the image of the Achaemenids in Ancient Judaism see Gruen (2005), and the contributions by Eckhardt and Fowler to this volume.

13 A process that for now culminates in the *Prince of Persia* franchise (1989–), consisting of a

non-Western cultural imports that were “translated” in the West, the transcultural exchange continuously went forth *and* back.¹⁴

Of course, this concerns images of Iranian culture during the “medieval”, Islamic period: the idea of a “Golden Age of Persia”, as it was beautifully evoked, and consistently advocated, above all by the late Richard Frye.¹⁵ However, although the words originally had quite different meanings, “Persia” and “Iran” did become interchangeable terms, in which as a cultural term “Persian” normally is preferred to “Iranian”, even though said Golden Age of “*Persia*” (a *western* Iranian region) is associated first of all with eastern Khorāsān, and Central Asia in general, and moreover involves the cultural agency of Arabic- and Turkic-speaking peoples.

This volume is aimed at better understanding the origins of “Persia” as a social imaginary. The idea that the Iranian world under the name of “Persia” is one of the principal civilizational cores in human history, comparable to “Classical Greece” or “China”, originated, we argue, in Antiquity in specific Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid contexts. How did Persia develop from the first world empire in history into an even more extensive “empire of the mind”, to quote the title of a recent book on the cultural history of Iran?¹⁶ As the title of that book once more shows, the primarily *cultural* idea of “Persia” somehow joined hands with the mostly *geographical* idea of “Iran”, a name and a concept that likewise originated in Ancient times. The dialectic cross-fertilization, and ultimately coalescence of “Persia” and “Iran” is another major focus of the present volume.

series of video games, two graphic novels and a Disney movie: though vaguely set in the time of the Sasanian Empire, costume and set design are entirely based on the “Golden Age” of Central Asia, *viz.*, Khorāsān (c. 900–1100 CE), drawing also on the culture of Timurid and Mughal India, to create an imaginary, timeless, and conspicuously non-Muslim “Persia” that is at once Late Medieval and pre-Islamic. On the influence of Khayyām in the West see Biegstrate (2008), with further references.

14 Muhammed Iqbal’s rejection of the “Persianization” of Islam (above, n. 5) is a revealing case in point, for the “Persian” mysticism that Iqbal – a native of British India and one of the founding-fathers of the anti-colonial movement in what is now Pakistan – took issue with, was precisely the form of Persianite “Islamic culture” that European, *viz.*, British, scholars and savants appreciated above all. By juxtaposing the feminine spirituality of “Persia” and the alleged strong, “masculine” nature of *original* Islam, Iqbal moreover used western orientalist stereotype to construct a static “other” in contrast to the modern, regenerated Islamic world that he himself advocated in opposition to British imperialism. For Iqbal’s views on tradition and modernity see Mir (2006), p. 123–124, and for the socio-intellectual context Mishra (2012); see Buruma and Margalit (2004) for the subversion of “Western” ideas in anti-colonial discourse, lightly based on Homi Bhabha’s notion that (colonial) mimicry, *i.e.* the selective adoption of imperial culture by subalterns, “is at once resemblance and menace” (Bhabha 1994, p. 86). The concept of “decadence”, leading to cultural stagnation and moral decline, had already been employed by European historians to construct the degeneration of “despotic” so-called Oriental Monarchies such as the Ottoman Empire or the Achaemenid Empire – as indeed the theme of Persian decadence originates with Herodotos’ view that after the establishment of their empire the once-strong Persians became soft and lethargic under influence of the Medes (Redfield 1985). On the theme of Persian decadence see Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1987); Briant (1989a; 2002); Colburn (2011); Lenfant (2001); Llewellyn-Jones (2013); Tuplin (2014).

15 Frye (1988); also see Frye (1962; 1996); Bausani (1962); Axworthy (2008); Starr (2013).

16 Axworthy (2008).

As we already saw, “Persia” as a concept beyond Iran itself has also been used to do something very different, namely to constitute the quintessential (Oriental) Other. The antipathetic views of Persian ‘despotism’ sometimes expressed by some Greek writers of the Classical period have often been appropriated by European states from the early modern period. Thus Aischylos’ play *Persians* was recited – probably in Latin, or perhaps Venetian translation – to the people of Zante (Zakynthos) in 1571 to celebrate the victory against the Ottomans in the Battle of Lepanto (Zante and other Ionian islands had contributed ships to the Christian fleet).¹⁷ During the Greek War of Independence (1821–1832), the Greek-Persian Wars of the early fifth-century BCE were evoked for the sake of “liberating Hellenism from the Ottoman Empire”. The Romantic conceptualization of the Christian inhabitants of Ottoman Greece as the racial and spiritual descendants of the Classical Hellenes, was mirrored in the presentation of the Ottomans as the New Persians, in a popular narrative that juxtaposed “Western” freedom and “Oriental” despotism,¹⁸ best known from Byron’s famous lines,

The mountains look on Marathon—
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dream’d that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians’ grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.¹⁹

Over the last decades, it has become clear how Orientalistic stereotypes have distorted scholarly views of the Achaemenid Empire itself. Especially in the 1980s, leading scholars of the so-called New Achaemenid History like Pierre Briant, Amélie Kuhrt and the late Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg questioned the reliability of narrative sources for the Achaemenids written in Greek, such as Herodotus or Xenophon.²⁰ We will not further discuss the important topic of Hellenocentric bias and Orientalistic “othering” here.²¹ We do want to emphasize however that the simultaneous construction of “Persia” as the summit of civilization *and* as the antithesis to the rival civilizational ideal of “Europe”/“the West”, has in our time again placed the Ancient Achaemenids central stage in scholarly debates on the dialectics of East-West imagology; specifically in the wake of 9-11 and the War on Terror, the European interpretation of the Greek-Persian wars as a confrontation

17 Rosenbloom (2006), p. 157; Hall (2007).

18 Van Steen (2010); for the use of Classical Antiquity in the construction of national identity in modern Greece see the illuminating studies in Hamilakis (2007).

19 From ‘The Isles of Greece’, in *Don Juan*, Canto III (1821). It belongs to the tragedy of his last years that according to his own letters and journals, Byron (who was in fact well-acquainted with the *real* Greece), knew better than that. For Byron’s attitude towards Greece in his later life Beaton (2013) is now fundamental; still valuable is the down-to-earth, though at times condescending, account by Nicolson (1924).

20 See e. g. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1987) and the essays collected in Kuhrt and Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1987). On the New Achaemenid History see McCaskie (2012), and Harrison (2011a).

21 For Orientalistic tendencies in modern scholarship concerned with the Achaemenid Empire see Harrison (2011a), p. 91–108; Colburn (2011).

between oppositional “Eastern” and “Western” civilizations obtained a second life in the popular imagination.²²

Paradoxically, in the course of many centuries Persia also came to be identified with such things as beauty, artistic refinement, sensuality, spirituality, and mysticism. The roots of this civilizational ideal are commonly located in the great empires of Iran’s pre-Islamic past. The evolution of this idea of Persia has been well-studied for post-antique periods.²³ Often it is crystal-clear that we are not dealing with a simple form of cultural continuity, or “authentic tradition”, but rather with reception and appropriation – and therefore partly a form of “invention of tradition”.²⁴ In his opening speech for the 2,500th anniversary celebrations at Pasargadae, 13 October 1971, Muhammad Reza Shah invoked Cyrus the Great as the founder of the modern nation-state of Iran:

O Cyrus, Great King, King of kings, Achaemenian King, King of the Land of Iran! I, the Shahanshah of Iran, offer these salutations from myself and from my nation. At this glorious moment in the history of Iran, I and all Iranians, the offspring of the Empire, which thou founded 2,500 years ago, bow our heads before thy tomb. We cherish thy undying memory, at this moment when the new Iran renews its bonds with its proud past [...].²⁵

Of course there is a connection between the celebration of empire and dynasty at Persepolis by Darius I and again by Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, about 2,500 years later. But that relationship is different from the one between Darius and, say, his successor Xerxes I. The Pahlavi shahs’ allocation of Iranian origins in pre-Islamic Antiquity is different from the more common forms of retrospective nationalism, with its emphasis on citizenship and territory. The difference, we argue, lies in the development of an universal *idea* of Persia, that later became associated with the Sasanian imperial concept of “Ērānšahr” (see below), and later with the modern Iranian nation-state as it developed under the Qajars (1795–1925),²⁶ and especially the Pahlavis (1925–1979).²⁷ In other words, Persia already had an extensive cultural

22 A surge in popularizing accounts of the Greek-Persian Wars framed the battles fought during these wars as defining moments in history that *Saved Western Civilization* (Strauss 2004, on Salamis), *Changed Western Civilization* (Billows 2010, on Marathon), or *Changed the World* (Cartledge 2006, on Thermopylai); consider also Holland 2005, promoting the Greek-Persian wars in his bestselling book *Persian Fire* as essentially a *Battle For the West*. We already mentioned how Zack Snyder employed Orientalistic clichés for narrative and artistic purposes in his 2006 fantasy film *300*; the sequel, *300: Rise of an Empire*, directed by Noam Murro (2014), introduces contemporary political issues more blatantly by equipping the Achaemenid fleet at Salamis with oil tankers and by having suicide terrorists wearing explosive belts attack the Greeks.

23 See e. g. the *Idea of Iran* series published by I. B. Tauris, London, now consisting of 6 volumes.

24 The recent volume edited by Boschung, Busch, Versluys (2015) now takes stock of current theoretical understandings, explores the application of “inventing traditions” for Antiquity, and underlines the importance of the concept for the study of cultural dynamics in the ancient world.

25 Cited from Garthwaite (2007), p. 253. The identification of the so-called Tomb of the Mother of Solomon (where the ceremony took place) with the tomb of Cyrus is uncertain; see Jacobs (2010), p. 91–92.

26 On Qajar uses of the Achaemenid past see Lerner, this volume.

27 The Pahlavi shahs in particular encouraged the creation of a cohesive national identity that

biography prior to the introduction of nationalism in 19th-century Iran. Current debates about the development of Iranian identity have mostly taken a historicizing approach, focusing on the Iranian past and debating in particular whether modern Iranian identity is based on authentic or invented traditions. This is usually referred to as “the Idea of Iran”, or as “Iranism”. Our concept of “Persianism” takes a broader, more complex view, drawing into the discussion the transmission and adaptation of historical knowledge about “Persia” beyond (Greater) Iran.

To simplify, for Darius and Xerxes, Persia had been a socio-cultural reality: a region (Pārsa) and a locus for dynastic identity. But for the Pahlavi shahs it constituted an “empire of the mind”: a *concept* that also many beyond Iran had been familiar with for more than a century.²⁸

In addition to the enduring legacy of the historical Achaemenid Empire as the cultural concept of “Persia” – that is, as mnemohistory – the historical social sciences provide us with another reason why the study of Ancient Persia has a relevance that extends far beyond the traditional concerns of Near Eastern philology and archaeology.²⁹ For the hegemonial system created by the first Persian kings, Cyrus and Kambyeses, and maintained by the rulers of the Achaemenid Dynasty who succeeded them, was the first in a sequence of universalistic world empires that dominated the history of Afro-Eurasia until the modern age.³⁰ The Achaemenid dynasty can be said to have established the organizational and ideological foundations on which various succeeding empires in the same region were built. Moreover, by loosely uniting the crucial central land mass of what Ian Morris aptly called Afro-Eurasia’s “lucky latitudes”,³¹ the Achaemenid dynasty also laid the basis for the

glorified Iran’s pre-Islamic past and saw the Achaemenid Empire retrospectively as the direct predecessor of modern Iran, see Vaziri (1993); Fragner (1999); Marashi (2008). There is some irony here, as Gene Garthwaite (2007, p. 229) pointed out: in 1935 Reza Shah decreed that the modern state should no longer be known as “Persia” but as “Iran”, while at the same time claiming the ancient civilization commonly known as “Persia” as Iran’s cultural foundation.

- 28 The enormous international prestige of “Persia” is perhaps best demonstrated by the widespread idea that the Cyrus Cylinder, a 6th-century building inscription from Babylon containing rather generic Babylonian monarchical ideology, as the world’s first declaration of human rights. A replica of the original Cylinder (which is now in the British Museum, London, with a small piece in the collection of Yale University, New Haven) has long been displayed in the central hall of the United Nations building in New York. On the Cyrus Cylinder and its modern uses see most recently Van der Spek (2014). On the myth of Achaemenid “tolerance” see Harrison (2011a), p. 73–90, and for a crass example of believe in this myth Chua (2009) p. 3–28, cf. Axworthy (2008), p. 15, heaping myth upon myth by explaining the alleged Achaemenid policy of tolerance from “the spirit of moral earnestness and justice” of Zoroastrianism.
- 29 For the extend of Achaemenid networks and cultural influence beyond the supposed borders of the empire see i. a. Allen (2005); Francfort, Ligabu, and Samashev (2006), p. 125–126; and Pshenichniuk (2006).
- 30 For empire as the predominant form of political organization in premodern and early modern Afro-Eurasian history see e. g. Darwin (2007); Bang & Bayly (2011). The most extensive recent history of the Achaemenid empire and its institutions is Briant (1996/2002); for recent approaches see the papers collected in *i. a.* Curtis & Tallis 2005; Tuplin (2007); Jacobs & Rollinger (2010); Jacobs & Rollinger (forthcoming).
- 31 That is, the latitudinal band with the highest agrarian productivity, roughly between 20–35 degrees; see Morris (2011), 81–89.

direct connectivity between the eastern and western extremities of Afro-Eurasia, *sc.* China and the Mediterranean, that would be strengthened during the Hellenistic Period (c. 300 BCE–100 CE), and remain the principal artery for global cultural and economic exchanges until the early modern period.

Following on the pioneering work of Josef Wiesehöfer, the recent surge in academic output concerned with Sasanian history by scholars such as Rahim Shayegan, Touraj Daryaee, Richard Payne, and Matthew Canepa, among others, has given the Sasanian Empire a central place in the study of Late Antiquity,³² and few would still deny the importance for global history of “the other empire” as compared to the Late Antique Mediterranean under Rome and Constantinople.³³ It probably is only a matter of time before Achaemenid studies, too, will free themselves of the curbs imposed by the traditional, Eurocentric concept of the “Near East”.³⁴

The study of the Achaemenid empire and its legacy therefore is highly relevant from the perspective of global history as well. The recent emphasis in historical and archaeological studies on long-term, global developments – climate change, globalization, migration, economic world systems, and so forth – has shifted scholarly attention away from a Eurocentric view of world history (with its traditional focus on the nation-state and the postcolonial experience) towards non-European forms of imperialism and premodern, Afro-Eurasian processes of globalization and cultural encounters.³⁵ This book aims to play a role in that important development as well.

FROM PERSIANIZATION TO PERSIANISM

Central to the investigation undertaken in this book and many of the articles, is the question how we should conceptualize the difference between Persianization and Persianism. Studies of the post-antique reception of the Persian Empire are logically more concerned with the *idea* of Persia (concept) than with the first Persian Empire as a historical reality (culture). Studies of the cultural impact of the Achaemenids in Antiquity itself, on the other hand, most often think in terms of straightforward historical continuity alone. We argue, however, that already in Antiquity the idea of Persia plays an important role with all kinds of cultural and political developments. Various post- (or even *circum-*) Achaemenid contexts seem to have been able to construct their own “Persia”, resulting in many different, sometimes even conflicting or incoherent, “Persias”. What we put forward as a hypothesis, on the basis of

32 See e.g. Canepa (2009); Daryaee (2009); Shayegan (2011); Payne (2015).

33 Rome and Persia are now often discussed in tandem, particularly in the context of “the end of Antiquity”, *sc.* the rise of Islam; see e.g. Greatrex (1998); Howard-Johnston (2006); Dignas and Winter (2007); Fisher (2011).

34 The present trend in emphasizing “Near Eastern” influences on the “West” of course does not help to deconstruct the essentialistic view of a bounded, amorphous “Near East”, as opposed to the alleged “Classical” cultures (a term that has been all but abandoned by historians and archaeologists concerned with the Ancient Mediterranean; cf. Strootman (MS).

35 For current trends in history see Armitage and Guldi (2014). For Ancient History also see the papers collected in Pitts and Versluys (2015).

the overview that the papers in this book provide, is that it was particularly in the Hellenistic and early Roman Eastern Mediterranean and Near East that the idea of Persia fully developed as a more or less coherent concept.

From the second century BCE, a varied cultural habitus developed that can be described as Persianistic as it revolves around the appropriation of an idealized past through the re-use or invention of imagery and ideas associated with the Achaemenid past. At the heart of Persianism therefore is the concept of cultural memory – that is, the deliberate construction of meaningful common knowledge of an historical period, often for political, or other socio-cultural, purposes³⁶ – and Jan Assmann’s dictum that the past is constantly “modeled, invented, reinvented, and reconstructed by the present.”³⁷

The Achaemenid “revival” of the late Hellenistic period took place especially among former Seleukid vassal dynasties in western Iranian lands such as Pontos, Kappadokia, Armenia, and Kommagene. Here kings like Mithradates VI of Pontos or Antiochos I of Kommagene claimed descent from Achaemenid ancestors. How was in these kingdoms knowledge of the Achaemenid Empire transmitted, translated, excerpted, interpreted, rewritten, re-imagined and represented? It is remarkable that the Arsakids of Parthia, even though they controlled the Iranian Plateau after c. 150 BCE, and had access to Persepolis and the rock reliefs at Bisotūn (to which they added several more reliefs themselves), seemed not very knowledgeable of the Achaemenids or interested in an Achaemenid revival. Could the difference be that the western rulers, who often were (or at least claimed to be) of mixed Macedonian-Iranian descent, had better access to Classical Greek writings on Persia than the post-Seleukid rulers in Iran itself?

It is through the continuous appropriation, reception studies have taught us, that there (slowly) develops some core understanding of what the idea of “Persia” would be in a long-term process of canonization. It is important to realize that this process started already in Antiquity itself from the moment that the Persian Empire emerged to play its remarkable historical role on the Mediterranean and Near Eastern stage. Culture and concept may overlap, as we will continue to stress below. Margaret C. Miller has shown throughout her important work, and in her contribution to the present volume, that “Persia” was already in part a deliberate construct from the heartland, Pārsa, *sc.* the hybrid dynastic identity of the Achaemenid family; in part it was dependent upon local patterns of reception. The “Persian” fashion in Athens after the Persian Wars, called “Perserie” by Miller (a variant of the *Turquerie* and *Chinoiserie* of eighteenth-century Europe) has been well studied by her and others.³⁸

There exists, however, no long-term study of the idea of Persia, what we perhaps should call the *cultural memory* of Persia, and its contextual appropriations in Antiquity. Most scholars understand the relations between the Achaemenid Empire, its neighbors and its successors in the Ancient World in terms of acculturation and cultural tradition: what can be characterized as *Persianization*. The concept of *Per-*

36 For the concept of ‘cultural memory’ see Assmann (1992).

37 Assmann (1997), p. 9.

38 See e.g. Miller (1997; 2010).

sianization has been defined as the cultural influence of Achaemenid Persia on other peoples and cultures resulting in the selective adoption of Persian cultural traits.³⁹ *Persianization*, thus, is a (specific) form of acculturation. *Persianism* is something different and implies that there is a certain distance, in time and/or space, between the Persian Empire as a historical reality and Persia as a concept or idea. *Persianism* thus differs from *Persianization* in that it is less a response to the Achaemenid Empire as a political reality but rather the post- (or *circum-*)Achaemenid construction of cultural memory in the context of new and varied political and cultural contexts (e.g. the collapse of the Seleukid Empire in the later second century BCE or new cultural encounters in the Roman Mediterranean and Near East). Of course, as already underlined above, Persianism will have been in part informed by, and itself will have influenced, ongoing processes of Persianization. There may well have been functioning Persianisms within the Persian Empire itself – “Persianisms from the heart”, to speak with Margaret Cool Root.⁴⁰ At the same time, the diffusion of Persian cultural traits may stretch over time when they have taken the form of a genuine “Persian tradition”: “going Persian” is in itself a form of cultural formation, and thus there is indeed overlap between Persianization and Persianism. However, it may still be useful to try and distinguish between what most often are very different cultural processes. Studying Persianism therefore is not only important to better understand Persianization in Antiquity but also to understand the “birth” and the first and formative phase of that remarkable long and still enduring fascination with the idea of “Persia”.

Focusing on *Persianism* therefore implies that we should reserve, in our interpretations, much more room for the fact that *continuity is a historical product* and that antiquity mattered greatly in Antiquity.⁴¹ We thus propose to use the term “Persianism” to show how the boundaries between culture and concept, between tradition and invented tradition, or between continuity and appropriation often are far less clear-cut than we are inclined to think. This is a pivotal point. As we already pointed out, the appropriation of concepts is in itself a form of cultural formation. What matters about traditions is not the question whether they are real or invented, from our (-etic) perspective, but rather whether they are *perceived* as real and genuine by the community in question (-emic). In that respect there indeed is only a thin

39 Brosius (2010). Cf. the critical remarks by Tuplin (2010). For imperial-local interactions in the Achaemenid Empire Dusinberre (2003) is fundamental, cf. Katchadourian (2012); Colburn and Hughes (2010). It is particularly for the Anatolian province that archaeologists have been trying to make sense of the interplay between “Greek”, local and “Persian” cultural styles, see e.g. Nollé (1992); Summers (1993); Miller (1997); Lintz (2008); Summerer (2008); Kaptan (2013); Katchadourian (2013); Dusinberre (2015); Nieswandt and Salzman (2015); and Briant (2015). Recent studies of cultural interactions in the Hellenistic Near East and Central Asia have suggested that powerful individuals and social groups selectively adopted elements of court culture to construct and negotiate their position *vis-à-vis* the (Seleukid or Ptolemaic) empire, and something similar may be envisaged for local styles in the Achaemenid world (see now the excellent treatment by Colburn 2013).

40 Cool Root (1991).

41 Sahlins (2000). For the past in the past see Ker & Pieper (2014); Porter (2006); Marincola, Llewellyn-Jones, Maciver (2012).

line separating what an individual in Antiquity understood as Persianization and what we, from our 21st century scholarly perspective, might define as Persianism. As Richard Gordon underlines in his contribution to this volume: Roman-period ‘mystagogues’ “exploiting” (in our terms!) the alleged Persian origin of Mithras probably thought of themselves as continuing and affirming a genuine tradition they had inherited. Here Persianization and Persianism meet – even centuries after the fall of the Achaemenid Empire itself.

We believe such debates to be crucial for a proper understanding of the cultural dynamics taking place, but we hope to show with this volume that we can only engage in these debates if Persianism is recognized as an important historical phenomenon and acquires a place of its own in research agendas for (post-) Achaemenid Antiquity and the development of the modern “idea of Persia/Iran”. So far that has explicitly not been the case, as to date Persianization remains the overarching concept to understand the “diffusion” of Persian elements. In studying the “Persian legacy” in the post-Achaemenid Near East and Iran in particular, scholars have rarely made use of a reception-studies approach and concepts such as collective (cultural) memory or invention of tradition. Instead, they seem to reason, often implicitly, in terms of diffusion, tradition and acculturation: “things Persian” in the Hellenistic, Roman and Parthian Near East would have something to do with Persia, with Persians (in diaspora or not), or with things “originally Persian”.⁴² Even for areas not overlapping with what once was the Achaemenid Empire, such a framework of interpretation often prevails. This is why we emphatically think in terms of an *ongoing* process of appropriation and transculturation, thus building into our model of Persianism the element of (re-)assimilation of western ideas about Persia in the Iranian east, and *vice versa*.

The scholarly debate on the “Persian” god Mithras provides a significant example.⁴³ Our evidence for the cult of the Old-Persian deity Mithrā in the Middle East ends in the fourth century BCE, as this god apparently was somehow linked to the Achaemenid monarchy. From the Flavian period onwards, after a period of 400 years, Mithra becomes popular once again, but now in the Mediterranean, in the form of the well-known Roman deity Mithras. What can we say about the relation between the Persian god Mithrā and the Roman god Mithras? Reasoning in terms of diffusion presupposes some kind of direct link between the Persian and the Roman Mithra(s) and many scholars have intensively searched for precisely that. Thus far, however, no evidence has been brought to light that there indeed was a Hellenistic phase connecting the Old-Persian Mithrā and Roman Mithras.⁴⁴ A reception studies

42 De Jong, this volume.

43 See Gordon (2007) and his contribution to this volume.

44 Indeed, the first appearance of a post-Achaemenid “Mithra” takes place only after the collapse of the Seleukid Empire, centuries later, and not in Iran: on Mount Nemrut, the god, though ostensibly presented as “Persian” in the accompanying Nomos Inscription, is dressed in contemporary local (Armenian?) attire and associated with the Seleukid patron deity Apollo-Helios (see Jacobs, this volume). See also Hollard (2010), arguing that in the 4th century the Sasanians adopted Roman Sol-Mithra as Iranian Mithrā after the defeat of Julian the Apostate in 363.

approach in terms of Persianism might therefore be more useful in understanding the Roman Mithras. It will redirect our attention to the contemporaneous *use* of the idea Persia in the context of contemporaneous Mithraism. This will also raise a new and perhaps more fruitful question: *why* did people in the second-century Roman Mediterranean find it important to (re-)invent such a tradition and claim that the deity they worshiped was in fact “Persian”?

It will always remain difficult for us to establish whether from the perspective of the people involved they themselves were, so to speak, practicing Persianization or Persianism (see above), or perhaps both. Both concepts date back to Achaemenid times itself. What we now call Persianization – the adoption of selected cultural traits associated by contemporaries with the Achaemenid Empire, viz., the Achaemenid court – has been well attested in the archaeological record, particularly in western Asia Minor.⁴⁵ After the Greco-Persian Wars, Greek writers used the word “Medism” (μηδισμός) pejoratively for non-Persians working together with the empire and adopting the (luxurious) customs of Medes and Persians in clothing and behavior (*mēdízein, μηδίζειν*).⁴⁶ This indicates that already in Antiquity there was an awareness of Persia as a *cultural* concept.⁴⁷

PERSIANISM AND THE MNEMOHISTORY OF ANTIQUITY

The best illustration, perhaps, of the importance of distinguishing between Persianization and Persianism is to draw into the discussion a comparable paring of concepts: *Hellenization* and *Hellenism*. Debates on their meaning have clearly shown that where the majority of scholarship until recently used to think in terms of *Hellenization*, sc. the unidirectional flow from a (superior) sender culture to a receiving culture, the employment of *Hellenism* to understand what is “Greek” in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds might be more appropriate. “Hellenism” in recent scholarship has transformed from a term associated with the modern notion of “Classical” Greece, or even with European imperialism and colonialism, into a *non-ethnic* cultural term. In studies dealing with the culture of the Hellenistic Near East and Central Asia, the prevailing notion that non-Greek populations and Greek newcomers remained distinct from each other, emphasizing the *continuity* of “Oriental” culture, have been given up in favor of more complex models of interactions in which cultures are no longer seen as bounded, static entities.⁴⁸

45 For an overview of “provincial Achaemenid archaeology” see Katchadourian (2013).

46 Consult Graf (1984) for the uses and meaning of these words, with Graf (1979); cf. Fowler, this volume.

47 See the contributions by Almagor and Fowler to this volume. Also see Kaptan (2013).

48 There is a vast body of recent literature. “Indigenous” resistance to Hellenization is emphasized by e. g. Eddy (1962) and Will (1985). Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1987); Briant (1990); Aperghis (2008); Briant and Joannès (2009); and Dihle (2009) emphasize the resilience of Near Eastern traditions. Recent approaches more often see the development of Hellenistic-period “Greekness” as a series of complex changes rather than linear continuity or bipolar cultural interaction, emphasizing the agency of specific social groups within societies, see e. g. Ma (2003); Kouremenos, Chandrasekaran, Rossi (2011); Stavrianopoulou (2013); Mairs (2013); Naerebout

As underlined above, it is exactly that perspective – of *Persianism* (the appropriation of a concept) as opposed to *Persianization* (an acculturation process) – that this book seeks to explore. There is much to say about the fact that where Hellenism is now commonly understood as something of a “global glue” holding the Hellenistic and Roman worlds together, as a term (or concept) Persianism did not even exist. This, of course, has to do with the fact that from the early modern period scholars and intellectuals in western Eurasia have constructed Greece as their main point of historical reference. The overview provided by the present volume will show, however, that in the eastern parts of western Eurasia and in central Eurasia this was rather different. Places where Hellenism and Persianism meet, therefore, like the temple-tomb of Antiochos I on Nemrud Dağı, are of special importance for our project, as they might provide clues about the meanings of Hellenism and Persianism in relation to one another.⁴⁹ This is not to say, however, that Persianism and Hellenism are functioning in a similar way or would even be comparable concepts in terms of character and content.

The Persianistic self-presentation of Mithradates VI Eupator, the iconographical program of Antiochos I of Kommagene, or the quasi-traditional coin images and titlature of the *fratarakā* rulers of Persis bear witness to this development: they all seem to construct an Achaemenid identity for these dynasties but in all cases this takes place in a Seleukid, or post-Seleukid political context.⁵⁰ These “Persianisms” perhaps were first and foremost political cultures, connected with dynastic identity, as Matthew Canepa and Rolf Strootman stress in their contributions to this volume. However, as Canepa also argues, “[Persianism] shared with Hellenism its capacity to provide an open, encompassing space”, apparently because several interest groups were able (or felt the need) to relate to the concept. What matters to us in aligning them is to stress that we are dealing, in both cases less with history than with mnemohistory.⁵¹ This also allows us to compare the phenomenon we study in a wider, comparative perspective, because besides Persianism and Hellenism there are other important imaginaries constituting the Ancient World, for instance Egyptianism.⁵²

(2014); Honigman (2014); and Strootman (2007; 2014a). Recently, studies have also focused on the uses and changing meanings of Greekness *after* the Hellenistic period, see e.g. Swain (1996); Török (2005); Kaldellis (2007); Zacharia (2008).

49 This is why Versluys (2016a) sees Nemrud Dağı as a key to understand the late Hellenistic world (which covers large parts of both western and central Eurasia) – and why in discussions during the conference Kommagene was referred to constantly. We are very grateful to Bruno Jacobs, who could not be present in Istanbul, for contributing a paper dealing with Kommagene and questions of Hellenism and Persianism.

50 See Canepa, Lerouge-Cohen and Strootman in this volume; cf. Strootman (2015a).

51 For this concept see Assmann (1992).

52 A concept explored by M.J. Versluys in several recent publications (Versluys 2010; 2012a; 2013; 2015b; 2016b).

TERMINOLOGY: FROM PERSIA TO IRAN AND BACK AGAIN

Before concluding this introduction, a few words on terminology and etymology are in order, to clarify the uses of the words “Persia(n)” and “Iran(ian)”, among others. The key term in this book obviously is Persia, as this is the name by which the modern world commonly knows one of the most successful empires of the Ancient World: the Achaemenid Empire (c. 550–330 BCE). “Persia” however can be used to describe various things, and its meanings often shifted in the course of history. To begin with etymology, Latin “Persia” is derived from the Greek toponym “Persis” (Περσίς), which in turn is a cognate exonym of Old Persian “Pārsa”, a highland region in the southwest of the vast Iranian Plateau.⁵³ Ancient Pārsa (modern Fārs) today is a province of approximately the size of New York State or modern Greece, but its Ancient outlines are imprecise.⁵⁴

The empire was created through the conquests of Cyrus (from Gr. Kyros/OP Kūruš; r. 559–530 BCE), the “King of Anšan”, and his son, Cambyses (Kambūjiya; r. 530–522). “Achaemenid” is a modern designation for the dynasty that came to power with the usurper Darius I (Dareios/Dārayava(h)uš; r. 521–486 BCE), and goes back to a name first used on the trilingual imperial inscription of Darius I at Bīsotūn, where the king is described as descendent from a Hakhāmaniš (Gr. Achaimenes), and as an “Achaemenian” (DB-OP § 1–2).⁵⁵ Cyrus and Cambyses are sometimes seen as constituting a separate dynasty, called “Teispid” by some,⁵⁶ the matter is of little significance, as Darius himself in his self-presentation emphasizes dynastic continuity and no profound changes in monarchical style or imperial practice took place – only the political center of gravity shifted from Media to Elam and the Pārsa highland.⁵⁷

- 53 The name Pārsa is first recorded in the third millennium as the Old-Assyrian toponym *Parahše*, which in the Late-Assyrian and Babylonian forms *Parsumaš/Parsua* designate a region and a people in the Middle Zagros mountains, roughly corresponding to Media (now Hamadān Province); the name later became attached to the country known to the Greeks as Persis, modern Fārs, perhaps because the Parsumaš people migrated to the south and took the name with them; see De Planhol (1999); Rollinger (1999). See also Graf (1984) for Cyrus’ possible connections to Media.
- 54 On the Ancient country of Pārsa and its (elusive) boundaries consult Wiesehöfer (1994b), p. 11–22, and (1999); Rollinger (1999); for a detailed overview of the geography and archaeology of Pārsa see recently Henkelman (2012).
- 55 For commentary, references and translation (of the Babylonian version), consult Kuhrt (2007), p. 141–157.
- 56 Darius’ relationship with Cyrus is indistinct at best; moreover, in the early 1970s it was shown by Lambert (1972) and Reiner (1973) that Anšan was in fact a site known as Tall-e Malyan, an Elamite city in the border region between lowland Elam and highland Pārsa (Potts 2005). However, though Old Persian and Elamitic are distinct languages, the two regions are now thought to have been to a considerable degree integrated in other aspects of culture, including religion (Carter 1994; Potts 1999; Briant 2002, p. 13–27; Henkelman 2003 and 2008, cf. 2011 for a discussion of Cyrus’ connections with Elam and Elamite culture).
- 57 Jacobs (2010), p. 93, with Graf (1984) for the transition from “Medes” to “Persians”. A sharp break in royal style between Cyrus/Cambyses and Darius, *viz.* a transition from a “pagan” to an exclusive Zoroastrian religious affinity, as has been posited by philologists in the past, is no

Narrative accounts of Achaemenid history are provided by several contemporaneous Greek authors from the empire's periphery, including Herodotos and Xenophon. They do not consider the Persian Empire to even remotely resemble a state. Rather they refer to the conquest clan associated with the dynasty: an inner group within the mostly Iranophone "ethno-classe dominante" of Pierre Briant,⁵⁸ initially known as the "Medes" (Μῆδοι, from OP *Māda*) but since the reign of Darius I mainly as the "Persians" (Πέρσσαι).⁵⁹ This probably reflects an empire-wide practice that is first attested on the Bīsoṭūn Inscription, where the troops and individual nobles fighting for Darius are described as "Persian". In a similar type of text, the trilingual "Daivā" Inscription, Darius' successor Xerxes I proclaims:

I am Xerxes, the Great King, King of Kings, king of countries containing many kinds of people, king in this great earth far and wide, son of King Darius, an Achaemenian, a Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan, of Aryan stock.⁶⁰

In addition to "the Persians", Greek sources simply speak of the "Great King" (βασιλεὺς βασιλέων) to denote the Achaemenid imperial presence in Europe and Asia – a rather accurate rendering not only of the Achaemenids' self-presentation as universal rulers,⁶¹ but also of the actual centrality of the dynastic household within the intricate, ever-shifting network of reciprocal allegiance and protection that was the essence of the empire. In sum, in both official dynastic representation and contemporaneous historiographical writings, "Persian" is a socio-cultural term describing the dynasty, the central imperial elite and the core of the army; and in both cases "Persian" stands out as the key term to denote the Achaemenid imperial project.

The nature of this "Persian" culture however is difficult to grasp. It likely was much more than simply the sum of Pārsa and Elam. If anything, Achaemenid imperial style is selectively eclectic, as the rhetoric of the great inscriptions, the visual style of the reliefs, and the architecture of the major sites in the Persian heartland deliberately incorporate elements also known from Iranian, Elamite, Babylonian, Urartian, Anatolian, and Aegean *local* contexts to create a global and thus truly

longer tenable; see Jacobs (2010), esp. p. 93–94. The legitimacy of Darius' succession is still an open question; on this debate see Rollinger (1998); Tuplin (2005).

58 Briant (1988).

59 Graf (1984).

60 XPh § 2 = lines 6–13; transl. Schmitt (2000), p. 88–95. The OP version of XPh has been preserved on two slabs from Persepolis and one from Pasargadai, in addition to a Babylonian and fragmentary AE version, both from Persepolis. The significance of "Aryan" (OP *ariyā-*, precursor of MP *Ērān*), remains on open questions, though it seems likely that "Aryan" on this and two other early Achaemenid texts is no more than an ethnic label for the Iranophone people from the Pārsa region who constituted the core of Darius' and Xerxes' *Gefolgschaft*, and who appear to have based their identity on a shared narrative of nomadic origins and migration.

61 On both the Bīsoṭūn Inscription and the "Daivā" Inscription the empire is presented as the sum of the peoples inhabiting the known world (DB § 6–8; XPh § 3), and in typically imperial fashion is identified with the whole (civilized) "earth" (*būmi*), cf. Hdt. 7.8 and see Herrenschildt (1976); the universality of Darius' and Xerxes' kingship is emphasized also by their use of the imperial titles King of Kings (OP *xšāyaθiyānām xšāyaθiya*) and Great King (OP *vazraka xšāyaθiya*).

imperial style.⁶² The imperial inscriptions make use of Old Persian, Elamitic, and Babylonian, while Aramaic is usually seen as the empire's "administrative" language in which orders were issued to governors and other military commanders.⁶³ The god Ahuramazda (meaning "Wise Lord") is presented on the royal inscriptions as a dynastic tutelary deity of sorts from the reign of Darius, but the once-popular assumption that the Achaemenids therefore were devout Zoroastrians, and that they propagated an empire-wide, proto-monotheistic "religious policy" is no longer widely accepted.⁶⁴ In other words, though originally associated with a "conquest clan" of Iranophone nobles from Pārsa and the Middle Zagros, "Persian" culture for the Achaemenids above all seems to have been a "political culture", *viz.*, a form of *dynastic identity* emanating from the dynastic household. Like the later, "Greek" culture of the Seleukid and Ptolemaic courts, "Persian" imperial identity was simultaneously multi-ethnic *and* linked to a specific land and culture: the vaguely delineated country of Pārsa, where since the reigns of Darius and Xerxes the principal dynastic centers and sanctuaries were located, and which in due time would become the geographical nucleus of Sasanian dynastic identity.⁶⁵

"Iran" derives from "Aryan", an ethnic term of sorts that was sometimes used in the writings of Ancient Iranophone peoples as a reference to their own identity. The word first appears as OP *ariya-*, on three inscriptions of Darius and Xerxes from the early 5th century BCE.⁶⁶ Its meaning however remains an open question – and a source of controversy.⁶⁷ In the early Achaemenid texts, *ariya-* probably was not yet a *Gesamtname* for the Iranian Plateau or the empire, let alone evidence for a pan-Iranian consciousness,⁶⁸ and scholars may have overemphasized the significance of the rare occurrence of this term in the time of Darius and Xerxes only.⁶⁹ Later variants and uses are too divergent to allow generalizing statements before the early 3rd century CE, when the Sasanians began using the names Ērān and especially Ērānšahr to denote the territorial extent of their empire.⁷⁰ This usage, too, has its own controversies. According to Gnoli in his seminal essay on *The Idea of Iran*, Ērān/Ērānšahr as a geographical term was an innovation initiated by the Sani-

62 Nylander (1970); Cool Root (1979); Seidl (1994); Boardman (2000); Talebian (2008); Roaf (2010); Colburn (2013). An older use of "eclectic" in this context as a pejorative term to deny the Achaemenid cultural agency – found e. g. in Schlumberger (1969), p. 217–218 – has been all but abandoned. For "eclecticism" as a form of cultural innovation see Versluys 2016a.

63 Gzella (2010), cf. Folmer (1995). See however Tavernier (2008), drawing attention to the essentially multilingual character of Achaemenid communication, as also local languages, *viz.*, professional translators, were employed, and Elamite was preferred to Aramaic for record keeping at the dynastic centers; cf. Henkelman (2008), p. 86–89, for an inventory of the languages used in the Persepolis Fortification Archives.

64 See the summary of recent discussions by Colburn (2011), p. 89.

65 For "Hellenicity" as imperial culture in the Macedonian empires see Strootman (2014a; 2016a), and for the Sasanian revival of Achaemenid *lieux de mémoire* Canepa (2010).

66 DNa, DSe, and XPh.

67 For discussions see *i. a.* Gnoli (1994; 2002); Kellens (2005); Rossi (2010) and Rossi (forthc.).

68 Gnoli (2002), p. 86 n. 17, following Geiger (1882).

69 See Tuplin (2005), 226.

70 In this volume, the idea of Ērānšahr is discussed by Daryae and Wiesehöfer; also see Wiesehöfer (1986); Canepa (2010); Daryae (2010); Payne (2013).

ans; Gnoli moreover argued that the Sasanians in creating the notion of Ērān(šahr) appealed to the Achaemenids through their associations with the quasi-mythical Kayanids and the addition of their own monumental imprint the Achaemenid imperial sites at Bīsotūn and Naqš-e Rostam.⁷¹

The Sasanian idea of Ērān above all was an imperial concept, as it conceptualized the empire (Ērānšahr) as peaceful and united, surrounded by a barbaric, chaotic periphery (Anērān) that is to some extent controlled by the Sasanians. The concurrence of the (civilized) world and the (imagined) world empire characterizes also other universalistic empires of the Ancient World.⁷² Sasanian Ērān(šahr) was not primarily an ethnic construct as also non-Iranians were included in its pretensions.⁷³ The real innovation was, that in contrast to most other empires the geographical extend of Ērānšahr was rather well-defined, as expressed e.g. in the Middle Persian text *Šahrestānīha ī Ērānšahr*, in which the empire coincides more or less with the Iranian Plateau.⁷⁴ This area was known in Hellenistic times as the “Upper Satrapies”, and a Seleukid origin of the geographical concept Ērān should not a priori be excluded.⁷⁵

Already in Parthian times, the idea of “Persia” became obsolete in the lands to the east of the Zagros, surviving only as a provincial name, and under the Sasanians was given up in favor of the new idea of “Iran”. The Achaemenid “Persians”, however, had a long and varied afterlife in the Hellenistic Near East and the Roman Mediterranean. At our conference in Istanbul, it became increasingly clear how

71 Gnoli (1989). The idea that the Sasanians tried to recreate the Achaemenid Empire, as suggested by Yarshater (1971; 1983), has incited thunderous disagreements among scholars because only Greco-Roman sources of Late Antiquity *explicitly* link the Sasanians to the Achaemenids; for this discussion see e.g. Wiesehöfer (1986); Roaf (1988); Huysse (2002); Kettenhofen (2002); Börm (2008); Briant (2009). See now the take on this old problem by Shayegan (2011), who argues that the Sasanian engagement with the Achaemenid past was a response to Roman expansion in the east; see further Canepa (2010); Shayegan (2008; 2012). As Daryaee in this volume emphasizes, Sasanian cultural memory of the Achaemenids does not necessarily have to be historically correct, but can also take the form of a mythical past prior to the coming of Alexander, whose appearance, in the *Šāh-nāma*, marks the transition from mythical to historical time. The bibliography for Alexander (Aleksandar/Eskandar) in Iranian traditions is extensive; for the cultural memory of Darius III in particular see Briant (2003/2015).

72 Liverani (1979) is still valuable for his analysis of this ideology. For universalism as characteristic of premodern empires see Bang (2012); Strootman (2014b). Specifically Sasanian was the reference to Avestan cosmology implied in the appellation ‘Iranian’ (ēr), which, in the words of Payne (2013), p. 6, “evoked the sacred history of those who had promoted the struggle of Ohrmazd, Zoroastrianism’s good deity, against the evil Ahreman, under the tutelage of Iranian kings from creation to the present.” For the Zoroastrian dimension of the Ērān-Anērān dualism see Gnoli (1993) and Shaked (2008), and for the place of Ahreman/Angra Mainyu in post-Achaemenid Iranian religions see Duchesne-Guillemain 1981.

73 See Payne (2015), p. 23–58, arguing persuasively against “the myth of Zoroastrian intolerance”.

74 Daryaee (2002); on the boundaries of Ērānšahr see Daryaee, this volume. For the ambiguous position of the Roman Empire in Sasanian imperial cosmology see Canepa 2009, Wiesehöfer (2005), and Wiesehöfer, this volume.

75 For the structural misrepresentation and underestimation of Seleukid influence on Iran in current historiography see Strootman (2011b).

crucial the Hellenistic period, and especially the Seleukid Empire, was for the development of Achaemenid cultural memory in both east and west. While the first Seleukid kings encouraged a *damnatio memoriae* of the Achaemenids,⁷⁶ their imperial rivals, the Ptolemies, presented themselves as the champions of civic freedom by equating their enemies, the Seleukids, with the Achaemenids.⁷⁷ Perhaps in response to the Ptolemaic and later Roman presentation of the Seleukid east as a new Persian Empire, also a positive cultural memory of the Persians developed when several dynasties in Anatolia and Armenia created dynastic identities in which the Achaemenids were explicitly evoked as precursors and ancestors; the Greek historiographical tradition may have played a significant role in the construction of this cultural memory, as several contributors to this volume suggest.⁷⁸

The 5th-century BCE Greek image of the Achaemenids as aggressive despots aiming at world conquest was revived also by the Romans in the context of their war against Antiochos III, from 191 to 188 BCE. This war began when the Seleukid “Great King” invaded Greece, claiming to be the champion of Greek freedom: by presenting the Seleukids as the New Persians, the Romans created a counter-narrative in which they themselves became the liberators of Greece from Asian oppression; this is also the context in which the Romans first appropriated the memory of Alexander, and gave him the title of The Great in response to Antiochos III’s assumption of that title.⁷⁹ Similar imagery was later also used against Mithradates VI of Pontos and against Rome’s Parthian enemies. The Roman-Parthian peace treaty of 20 BCE spurred the development of a new image of the Arsakid kings of Parthia, this time derived from the image of the later Achaemenids as decadent and impotent despots in the Greek *Persika* literature of the 4th century BCE.⁸⁰ the Parthian realm was thereby redefined “as an *alter orbis*, a degenerate world whose conquest was undesirable for Rome”.⁸¹ In the first half of the 3rd century CE, yet another cultural memory of the Persians was highlighted by the Romans, when the emperors Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Severus Alexander sought support for their campaigns against the Arsakids and the first Sasanians by evoking Alexander’s invasion of the Achaemenid Empire. As Shayegan has argued, the Sasanians

76 Strootman (2013a); for the early Seleukids’ attitude to the Achaemenids Plischke, this volume.

77 Funck (1996); also see Agut-Labordère in this volume.

78 See Canepa, Lerouge-Cohen, and Strootman in this volume.

79 Strootman (2016a), cf. Overtoom (2013) on Polybios’ favorable comparison of Roman hegemony with Alexander’s empire. For the Roman image of Antiochos as an “Oriental” king see Flamerie de Lachapelle (2012), cf. *id.* (2010), and for the Roman appropriation of Alexander in general Spencer (2002); Kühnen (2008).

80 Shayegan (2011), p. 334–340, and Almagor, this volume.

81 Shayegan (2011), p. 340; cf. Gregoratti (2013). For the representation of the “Oriental” other in Augustan visual culture see Schneider (1998; 2007), with Lerouge-Cohen (2007) for a full discussion of the Greco-Roman image of the Parthians; for the image of Parthian “decadence” in the age of Trajan see Almagor (2014) and Almagor in this volume. For the underlying image of the Achaemenids in the *Persika* genre as a fascinating rather than dangerous “other” consult Llewellyn-Jones (2012) and Lenfant (2014), cf. Lenfant (2011), Burstein (2010).

responded to Roman anti-Persian propaganda by developing a positive counter-narrative of “Achaemenid revival”.⁸²

Another important form of Hellenistic Persianism, is the image of the Achaemenids as liberators and protectors of the Jews, as it developed in Judaism – discussed in this volume by Eckhardt – and subsequently became part of Christian traditions, too.⁸³ As a result, a positive view of the Achaemenids probably was widespread common knowledge in the Roman Near East, including Arabia, by the time of the Arab conquests in the 7th century CE. Though the conversion of Iranian peoples to Islam was a slow and complex process,⁸⁴ the Arab conquest of the Iranian Plateau had the immediate effect of the substitution of the name “Iran” by “Persia”,⁸⁵ and the amalgamation of western Persianism with the Sasanian idea of Iran. The discontinuity of Iran first of all was connected with the fact that this was a name for the Sasanian Empire (as *Ērān/Ērānšahr*), and the Sasanian Empire had been overrun by the Arabs.⁸⁶ But that does not explain the new prominence of that old appellation “Persia”. To understand the abrupt transition, Sarah Bowen Savant in an important 2008 article, followed by a book-length study in 2013, associated the preference for “Persia” with the western origins of Islam: in the Roman part of the Middle East, “Persia” had remained the dominant word for Jews, Christians and ultimately Muslims, and the introduction of this word on the Iranian Plateau, Savant argues, was one of several strategies employed by the new, Arabic-speaking rulers to replace existing identities focused on the Sasanian Dynasty by a new identity focused on Islam.⁸⁷ Thus, a cultural memory of the Achaemenids imported from beyond Iran may have profoundly influenced Iranian identity during the first five centuries of Islam, and thoroughly ingrained the idea of Persia in the collective memory of populations east of the Zagros.

The name Iran returned once again after the Mongol conquest in the 13th century, when the rulers of the Il-Khanate revived the Sasanian idea of Iran’s political and cultural centrality.⁸⁸ Ferdowsi’s *Šāh-nāma*, the *Book of Kings*, was an important focus of these Irano-Mongol cultural politics: it was in the Il-Khanate era that

82 Shayegan (2011), p. 340–349, cf. p. 361–368, for comparable views of the Sasanians as the New Persians during Julian the Apostate’s campaigns in the east, a century later, and Börm (2007) for the Roman image of the Sasanian enemy in the age of Justinian. See also Almagor and Sommer in this volume. Also see Daryae 2007, arguing that the Sasanians promoted a positive image of Darius III (*Dārā*) to counter Severus Alexander’s *imitatio Alexandri*, and finally assimilated also Alexander (*Iskandar*) himself. For the image and memory of Darius III see Briant (2003/2015).

83 The image of the Persian kings as liberators may for a significantly degree have been based on the Macedonian (Argead, Seleukid, Ptolemaic) self-presentation as liberators from Persian ‘suppression’; see Strootman (forthcoming) and Agut-Labordère, this volume.

84 Bulliet (1979), p. 18–19; De la Vaissière (2008); cf. Savant (2013), p. 4–5 with n. 7.

85 Savant (2008).

86 Wiesehöfer (1996), p. xi–xii, suggesting that the name *Ērān* may have become politically suspect under the new rulers; also see Shahbazi (2005), p. 106; Savant (2013), p. 5–12.

87 Savant, (2008), p. 76.

88 For the Iranian revival under the Il-Khanate see Krawulsky (1978) and Krawulsky (1989), 113–130; also see Kennedy (2009), suggesting that the Il-Khans worked in tandem with Iranian-speaking dynasties that had survived on the fringes of the Abbasid Empire.

this collection of epic poetry, written around 1000 CE but going back to Sasanian traditions, first became Iran's "national epic", and Ferdowsi the "national poet" of Iran.⁸⁹ The pre-Islamic character of the *Šāh-nāma* linked the Iran-centered Il-Khans and succeeding dynasties to the mythical kings and heroes of a primordial Iranian past located in the time of the Achaemenids. The period of the Il-Khanate also saw the beginning of another "quintessential" aspect of Persian culture associated most of all with the *Šāh-nāma*: the tradition of illuminated manuscripts, which flourished particularly under Safavid rule in the 16th–17th centuries.⁹⁰ A final blend of Iran and Persia took place in the late 19th and 20th centuries when the Qajar and Pahlavi rulers assimilated in their self-presentation modern European views of the Achaemenid Empire as the greatest of the "Seven Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World", to use Rawlinson's words, as we have already seen above.⁹¹

UNDERSTANDING PERSIANISM: THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This volume consists of three parts. Part I, *Persianization, Persomania, Perserie*, serves as a theoretical introduction by means of case studies. The authors explore in their contributions several of the categories and their definitions discussed in this introductory essay; they thus add depth and detail to what we have sketched above in a more general and theoretical vein. Albert de Jong deals with the important question what the term "Iranian" meant and how it functioned in what he calls the Achaemenid commonwealth itself. Margaret Miller shows us a similar contemporary perspective but one from the Achaemenid periphery, from Athens. In their analyses both authors illustrate that the line between culture and concept often is indeed a thin one. They also show that some concept of "Persia" developed already during the Achaemenid period. Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones discusses an important stage in this development: the distinctly Athenian, Greek discourse of Persia as the oriental Other. Together these three papers show how *ideas and associations revolving around Persia and appropriated in specific contexts for specific (socio-cultural or*

89 Marashi (2009). Non-Iranian cultures beyond the Iranian Plateau that absorbed to a significant degree Iranian visual culture and political ideology are sometimes referred to as "Persianite" in modern scholarship (e. g. the Moghul and Ottoman empires).

90 Babaie (2013), p. 30–36; cf. Babaie (2001); Melville (2011).

91 So already J.A. Lerner (1988), p. 165–166, suggesting that the Qajar interest in the Achaemenid heritage was in large part stimulated by Rawlinson's decipherment of Darius I's inscription at Bisotūn; cf. Harrison (2011), p. 53: "the crucial turning point in the representation of ancient Persia seems to coincide with the growth of contact between western Europe and Iran in the 19th century". For Qajar uses of the Achaemenid past see further Lerner in this volume. It has often been pointed out that the modern idea of a singular, continuous Iranian identity – with a single defining language (NP Fārsī, the language of the *Šāh-nāma*), religion (Shia Islam), and world view (the Avestan heritage) – reaching back directly to Medieval or Ancient times, discards the local, religious and linguistic (Turkic, Armenian, Arabic) heterogeneity of the Iranian past and present; for discussions see Gnoli (1993; 1998); Vaziri (1993); Fragner (1999); Marashi (2008); and in defence of the modernist view Bausani (1962, 1975); Ashraf (2006); and Axworthy (2008).

political) reasons looked like, how they functioned and how they started to develop when the Achaemenid Empire was still existing as a historical reality. The second set of three papers from Part I aims at doing exactly the same thing, but then for the early-modern and modern periods, and thus from what unmistakably is a reception approach. Omar Coloru shows how the perception of pre-Islamic monuments developed in early modern Iran, highlighting the important role of western travelers in their conceptualization. Judith Lerner discusses the fascinating case study of the revival and use of Achaemenid art in 19th century Iran. David Engels, lastly, zooms out and shows us the place Persia had in Oswald Spengler's philosophy of art, thus, in a way, testifying to "the result" of 2,500 years of Persian reception and its influence on a leading, 20th century European intellectual. As a contrasting set, the articles thus provide the reader with an idea of the reception and appropriation of Persia *during* the Achaemenid period and *very long after* the Achaemenid period, thus preparing the reader for Parts II and III in which the period in between is dealt with.

The seven papers in Part II deal with Persianisms in the East during the Hellenistic period, the three centuries after the collapse of the Achaemenid Empire. Damien Agut-Labordère first discusses how negative views of the Achaemenid Empire came into being in early Ptolemaic Egypt, showing how the new Macedonian rulers in association with Egyptian agents substituted the archetypal foreign enemies in the cultural memory of Egypt, the Assyrians, with the Persians. This laid the basis for the subsequent association of the Persians with the Ptolemies' archenemies, the Seleukids. Sonja Plischke then focuses on the Seleukids themselves, and in particular their sporadic use of the title "Great King". Contrary to a widespread belief, there is no evidence that the Seleukids ever used that title as a reference to the Achaemenids; however, Plischke argues, the Seleukids transmitted it in Greek form to the rulers who succeeded them, some of whom adopted the title to construct a memory of the Achaemenids. Rolf Strootman discusses the political background to the emergence of Persianistic identities among the dynasties of late Hellenistic Iran. Considering the emergence of these dynasties in the context of Seleukid imperial policy, he argues that increasing cooperation between the imperial court and local vassal rulers encouraged the development and pronunciation of Iranian identities by these rulers. Concentrating on rulers in the Anatolian and Armenian highlands during the late Hellenistic period, Matthew Canepa thereupon analyzes how after the fall of the Seleukids these former satrapal dynasties referred to the Achaemenids to create for themselves new political, dynastic identities in a world of rapidly changing power relations. Charlotte Lerouge-Cohen's contribution deals with one of these post-Seleukid rulers, Mithradates Eupator of Pontos, and his claims to Achaemenid ancestry, showing how these claims reinforced his actual Seleukid ancestry to gain prestige and legitimacy among a wide variety of peoples and polities. Bruno Jacobs discusses a comparable theme, as he sets out to investigate how Seleukid and Achaemenid ancestry were integrated in the dynastic iconography of Antiochos I on Nemrud Dağı, giving special attention to the question what models Antiochos had at his disposal for (re)constructing Persian royal style. Finally, Benedikt Eckhardt discusses another example of politically motivated Persianism in a post-Seleukid context: the Hasmonean "Achaemenid revival", which, in contrast

to the cultural politics of the other new kingdoms in the late Hellenistic Near East turned positive Jewish memories of the Persians *against* the Seleukids.

Where in Part II the focus is on the Middle East as the geopolitical center of gravity of the Hellenistic Age, in Part III this is complemented by views from the Roman west and Iranian east, as we move on to the first centuries CE when control over the Middle East was contested by the Roman, Arsakid and Sasanian empires. The eight papers collected in this section deal with both Roman and Iranian uses of the Achaemenid past, and the interplay between them.

Felipe Rojas and Valeria Sergueenkova aim to understand practices of commemoration of the Persian past in Roman Anatolia, three centuries after the collapse of the Achaemenid Empire. They take issue with the assumption that in Hellenistic and Roman Asia a neat division can be made between “Anatolian”, “Iranian”, “Hellenic” and “Roman” culture. By focusing on the proliferation of ostensibly “Persian” cults, documented in the epigraphical record and various narrative sources of the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, the authors are able to show how rich and dynamic the complex cultural interplay in Roman Anatolia actually was. Richard Gordon subsequently focuses on the best-known instance of Persianism from the Roman Empire: the theology and cult of the alleged Persian god Mithras. Gordon likewise emphasizes the dynamic and multiform nature of religious tradition; by focusing on the sources used by specific agents in the development of Mithraism, Gordon shows how this form of Persianism is neither entirely traditional nor entirely invented.

The next two chapters deal with historiography and literature. Eran Almagor first discusses Greek “nostalgic” writing during the Roman Empire: in the 2nd century CE, Greek authors like Plutarch and Pausanias drew upon the older Persika literature to revive the memory of the Achaemenids in order to create a glorious Hellenic past; the gallant Greek struggle against the Achaemenid Persians, and Alexander’s final triumph, was equated to the renewed clash between Rome and Parthia, thereby reinforcing the increasing prominence of Greek culture for the Roman Empire under the Antonine emperors. In the following essay, Michael Sommer examines the Herodotean echoes in the presentation of the Sasanians by the Roman historian Ammianus, showing how Herodotos’ multi-dimensional image of the Achaemenid Persians in Ammianus’ work is condensed to a one-dimensional image of an enemy that must, and can, be defeated.

Both Almagor and Sommer show how older views of the Achaemenids in upgraded, or distorted, versions were attached to the Parthians and Sasanians by Greek and Roman authors of the Imperial period. Richard Fowler’s contribution takes us east again, as he explores Jewish memories of the Achaemenids in relation to the Arsakid kings of Parthia in the writings of Flavius Josephus (1st century CE), addressing the difficult question whether Josephus’s image of the Arsakids reflects the dynasty’s own Persianistic ideology, or whether Josephus is himself “Persianizing” the Arsakids. A similar issue is taken up by the authors of the last three contributions to this volume, adding Sasanian perspectives to the discussion. Josef Wiesehöfer first considers how the Sasanian idea of *Ērānšahr* was a kind of counter-narrative to Roman imperial rhetoric: although the existence of Rome was acknowledged by the Sasanians, the Romans of “*Anērān*” were consistently presented

as inferior to the victorious and civilized King of Kings of Ērān. This issue is taken further by Touraj Daryaei, who uses written sources to show how Ērānšahr was a well-defined geographical concept coinciding with the actual extend of Sasanian imperial hegemony. Within this realm, which extended far beyond the Iranian Plateau and included multifarious non-Iranian peoples, the Sasanians created a sense of unity through the imposition of Iranian mythologies on newly acquired landscapes and sites. They thereby suggested a shared and interconnected heritage that went back to a mythical past of Iranian kings and heroes. Finally, Rahim Shayegan provides a rich “en guise de conclusion” bringing together many of the Persianisms discussed in the volume.

The twenty-one case-studies in this volume provide a rich overview of what we see as related phenomena. We have selected different appropriations of “Persia” in different historical contexts in order to try and provide something of a first overview of the phenomenon for Antiquity, but also to investigate how Persianism works as a *process*. Are always the same characteristics of “Persia” selected? Are new characteristics retrospectively added to the memory of the Achaemenid Empire? Can we define what, in its core-essence, the concept of “Persia” consists of? And have these different uses and appropriations of “Persia” influenced each other? Can we, in other words, say something about “Persia” in terms of a vertical transmission of cultural elements? These questions, going beyond both an inventory of Persianisms over time and the interpretation of individual case studies, form the overarching research theme of this book. As a whole, these case studies thus explore the question why “Persia” was such a fertile symbol to construct meaning with. Trying to answer that question is, from a comparative perspective, also important for debates on the meaning and functioning of elements like “Greece” or “Egypt” in Antiquity. Through this underlying theme, we hope this book will be also be able to provide food for thought for scholars not directly working on Persia, *Persianization* or *Persianism* but being interested much more generally in cultural dynamics in the Ancient World.

Taken together, the themes and subjects of the individual papers thus provide a long-term perspective on the “cultural biography” of Persianism in Antiquity. It goes without saying that the current collection of case-studies is far from exhaustive. We hope, however, that this first-time overview will lead to more identifications and analyses of Persianisms in Antiquity and beyond. To finalize this essay, we would like to end by discussing one particular reason why, in our view, this is important.

The East-West dichotomy that still characterizes contemporary politics and social imagination, as well as much modern scholarship, was created in Antiquity. It goes back first of all to a “Greek” grammar of identity and alterity, constructing “the Persian” as Other. This process is commonly referred to as Orientalism.⁹² This book deals with the question how this process was taken up and shaped in Antiquity, and thereby hopes to contribute to a debate that is crucial for contemporary

92 Said (1978); for the notion of Orientalism in Antiquity see Versluys (2013).

society, too. One of the things this volume hopes to make clear is that there is no use in maintaining the East-West dichotomy that has been so passionately evoked by several ancient authors – and has incited a considerable number of modern research. Already the categories of “Greek” and “Persian” were far more relative than we often think.⁹³ Societies in the Ancient World were not really in their essence Eastern or Western, as these are essentially modern concepts closely linked to the self-assigned cultural boundaries of contemporary Europe. As new directions in Hellenistic research have shown, there is little use in debating the Oriental versus Western, or “Classical” versus “Near Eastern”, nature of cultural developments in the context of the Middle East in the period after Alexander the Great.⁹⁴ It probably is more worthwhile to explore how, for example, in the context of dynastic legitimization the Seleukid Empire and its successor states used contemporaneous ideas associated with “Greek” and “Persian” and how, simultaneously, they were themselves influenced by those concepts. Of significance, too, is the fact that the appropriation of “Persia” in the Near East itself might well be a form of *eastern* Orientalism; an observation that provokes interesting conclusions on the functioning of “Orientalism” (and “Occidentalism”) in general.⁹⁵ To further refine the study of the Ancient World, we indeed may have to move from culture to concept.

93 Fundamental is still Hall (2002).

94 Strootman (2011b; MS); and see above, n. 48.

95 Said (1978); Buruma and Margalit (2004).

PART I
PERSIANIZATION, PERSOMANIA, PERSERIE

BEING IRANIAN IN ANTIQUITY (AT HOME AND ABROAD)

Albert de Jong

It is very much to be hoped that the concept of ‘Persianism’, as introduced by the editors of this volume, will be picked up by Iranists, although it is easy to predict that they will not immediately receive it enthusiastically. The present article attempts to do two things: 1) to test the limits of the usefulness of the concept by foregrounding the ‘Persian’ communities of Asia Minor and showing how they do not (wholly) fit the theory; and 2) to show the weak foundations of one of the most enduring ideas on which many Iranists have based their interpretations of Iranian culture: the coalescence of territory, people, language, and religion in the construction of an ‘Iranian world’.

INTRODUCTION: THE CONTINUITY¹ OF ACHAEMENID PRACTICE

The subject of the ‘memory’ of the Achaemenid Persian empire in Iran has traditionally been a bone of contention among specialists of pre-Islamic Iranian history.² Since it is this memory that the editors of this volume have foregrounded as one of the key elements of the phenomenon they call ‘Persianism’,³ any contribution of an Iranist to that phenomenon is likely to be immediately caught up in these debates over assumptions of a lasting memory of the Achaemenids among Iranians. Most Iranists have interpreted evidence of continuity of Achaemenid practice in terms of ‘survivals’: the continuation of practices first established by the Achaemenids, but naturalized or internalized to such an extent that they could survive without a real memory of their origins. There are two very clear examples, one religious and one secular in nature, of such aspects of continuity, both of which can securely be seen as continuations of Achaemenid innovations, but neither of which seems to have ensured an active memory of the Achaemenid kings.

- 1 The editors have asked me to make explicit my use of the term continuity. They are quite right that it is a problematic concept, but alongside the currently fashionable notion that ‘continuity’ is always a negotiation or a matter of choice, it can be maintained that there are substantial domains of human life and society that are maintained over vast stretches of time, becoming wholly naturalized or embodied, which cannot really be interpreted in terms of choice or negotiation (practices of purity seem to be a good example). It is the contention of this article that the practice of writing and the calendar are further illustrations of this type of continuity.
- 2 A good overview of the debate, with references to the relevant literature, is Shayegan (2011), p. 1–4.
- 3 See the introduction to this volume.

The first of these is the preservation of scribal traditions. As is well known, the Achaemenids from the time of Darius I onwards supplemented local practices of administration, where these had been found, with an empire-wide use of Aramaic, well attested from Egypt in the West of the Empire to Bactria in its East.⁴ It is commonly assumed that scribal schools came into being in the various satrapies of the empire, to facilitate a transition from Aramaean scribes to local ones, young boys trained to compose documents in Achaemenid Official Aramaic, and render these into the local language (Old Persian, Parthian, Bactrian, Sogdian etc.) more or less upon sight. Administration in Achaemenid Official Aramaic continued in the time of Alexander himself,⁵ but it has always been assumed that the Seleukids (at once or, probably, gradually) replaced it with an empire-wide administration in Greek, which is also attested.⁶ This assumption of a replacement, however, is difficult to maintain without qualifications in light of the ‘return’ of Aramaic in all or most former Achaemenid satrapies with the waning of Seleukid power. This phenomenon has been well attested in those parts of the ancient world where varieties of Aramaic were spoken, such as the kingdom of Edessa, where, however, the Aramaic used had developed with the living language.⁷ This is not the case in those former satrapies where Aramaic was never spoken to any extent, but from which materials in Aramaic, and increasingly in Aramaic formulas that are thought to record the local languages appear from the second century BCE onwards. This re-emergence of Aramaic (or of local languages written in Aramaic ideograms) is well attested for the Parthians,⁸ but also for Armenia⁹ and Georgia.¹⁰ Unlike the documentation from the Achaemenid period, in post-Achaemenid times, each region developed its own recognizable variety of the Aramaic script. The combined evidence of these materials has strongly suggested, therefore, that scribal traditions continued in these former satrapies alongside an ‘official’ administration in Greek, and had developed regional characteristics (and the first demonstrable steps towards the writing down of the local languages) in the period between the Achaemenid and the Parthian empires.¹¹ In this, as in so many other aspects of their empire, the Seleukids therefore can be seen as having continued the Achaemenid practice of a double bureaucracy: a local one (continuing Achaemenid practice, and hence in Aramaic) and an imperial one, in this case in Greek.

4 It has been well established by now, however, that this was not so much a new Achaemenid invention as a continuation (and strengthening) of administrative practices that had developed in the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires. An outstanding introduction, with references to all relevant sources is Gzella (2015), p. 157–211.

5 Naveh & Shaked (2012), p. 198–212, document C4, dated to the “seventh year of Alexander the king”.

6 Capdetrey (2007), p. 345–359.

7 Thus Gzella (2015), 368–369.

8 See in particular the large corpus of (early) Parthian ostraca from the first Arsacid capital, Nisa: Diakonoff & Livshits (1977–2001).

9 Perikhanian (1971).

10 Rapp (2014), p. 215–218 (with references).

11 Henning (1958), p. 21–40 remains fundamental.

The second example is the Zoroastrian calendar, which was introduced by the Achaemenids, in an attempt to harmonize ritual observance throughout the Empire.¹² This latter point is important to stress: many scholars have studied the Zoroastrian calendar primarily as a method of keeping time, and have duly noted the fact that it was not employed as such in the Achaemenid period, even though it is indisputably an Achaemenid creation. The Seleukids cannot really be expected to have used it, but it re-emerges in the documentation from all former parts of the Achaemenid empire with the gradual disappearance of the Seleukids. It is attested, therefore, in various permutations, among the Parthians (who restricted its use, seemingly, to the Iranian (Zoroastrian) parts of their empire alone, but used the Seleukid calendar(s) (with Macedonian month-names in Greek and Mesopotamian ones in Aramaic) for their dealings with non-Iranian inhabitants of their realm), the Armenians, the Georgians, and even in Cappadocia.¹³ As far as is known, these calendars operated in the same way in a structural sense, but they were sometimes distinct in their month-names – once again suggesting a process of unification (under the Achaemenids) followed by a regional diversification after (and because of) the break-up of the empire.

THE MEMORY OF THE ACHAEMENIDS

These examples of continuity without memory, being based in obviously practical ways of arranging the lives of (regional) communities and societies, are relatively clear, and they have allowed scholars to deduce similar, but less immediately attested, examples of continuity in the sphere of religion and literature – the two domains of Iranian culture for which the use of writing was consciously rejected.¹⁴ This rejection has been fundamental, it seems, in the ‘other side’ of the coin when it comes to the impact of the Achaemenids on the development of Iranian culture: the historical, or even legendary, ‘memory’ of the Achaemenids as former kings of the Persians. For this, there is hardly any trace. That is to say: there are no indications in Iranian sources of a cultivated memory of the Achaemenids in a narrative sense: neither their names nor any significant stories about them have survived in Iran itself, with the exception of the last of the Achaemenids, Darius III, whose role in the epic tradition (which is the main vehicle of Iranian historical narrative) is limited.¹⁵ He merely figures as the king who was defeated by Alexander. In the form in which we actually have it, the epic tradition is obviously late, but it incorporates earlier materials, and the fact that historical awareness of the Achaemenids was lost to the Iranians fairly soon after their demise is fully borne out by the surviving evidence from the Parthian and Sasanian periods.¹⁶ There is, moreover, a distant parallel to this historical amnesia in the names given to the most significant ruin sites of *all*

12 Boyce (2005) with references to the very extensive literature on this subject.

13 An overview can be found in Stern (2012), p. 174–191.

14 De Jong (2015a).

15 See now Briant (2015).

16 This is one of the main subjects of Shayegan (2011).

pre-Islamic Iranian dynasties, which are drawn from either Muslim (or Biblical) tradition (as in *Zendan-e Soleyman*, the “prison of Solomon”, for the tower-like structure in Pasargadae) or from the epic tradition (*Naqsh-e Rostam*, the “Image of Rostam”, for the site of the tombs of several Achaemenid kings, and of a large number of Sasanian rock reliefs, or *Taxt-e Jamshid*, the “throne of Jamshid” for Persepolis itself), in spite of (in this case) clear traces of the preservation of a continuing historical narrative on the Sasanians in early Islamic times.

Many scholars have expressed their difficulty with this amnesia, even to the point of flatly denying it.¹⁷ Since Greek and Roman authors regularly attribute an ‘Achaemenid’ programme to both Parthians and Sasanians, and since it is demonstrably the case that Parthians and Sasanians continued certain aspects of Achaemenid court tradition (such as the royal title King of Kings, which has even older, Mesopotamian, roots), they have surmised that both Parthians and Sasanians *did* have a strong sense of continuity with, and knowledge of, the Achaemenid kings. But none of this is even remotely supported by the Iranian sources. The title King of Kings was adopted for the first time in Iranian history after the Achaemenids by the Parthian king Mithradates II (r. 124–87 BCE), who is known for two further ‘innovations’ in Parthian traditions that were reminiscent of Achaemenid examples. He adopted the so-called ‘upright’ tiara on his coin portraits (an Achaemenid royal privilege, according to various classical authors), and he ordered a relief to be sculpted at the foot of the great (and holy) site of Behistun.¹⁸ In view of these clear examples of Achaemenid emulation, it is likely that it was during the reign of Mithradates II that a genealogical link between the founder of the Arsacid dynasty, Arsaces I, and the Achaemenid family was fabricated. The evidence for this genealogical link is, however, fairly weak.¹⁹ Nevertheless, these are possible examples of ‘Persianism’, but since the sources do not tell us even remotely how the Parthians viewed these matters (whether, that is, they consciously emulated the Achaemenids, or whether they arrogated to themselves styles of kingship, the memory of which they encountered as they slowly spread westwards from their homeland in North-Eastern Iran), it is difficult to use this as evidence for a ‘memory’ of the Achaemenids as an earlier Iranian dynasty. The same is true for the Sasanians, who emulated the Parthians, but seem to have been wholly unaware of the Achaemenids (even though they, unlike the Arsacids, rose from the exact area where the Achaemenids had once been based).

17 Thus, for example, Shahbazi (2001); Daryaei (2002).

18 A long discussion of all this is to be found in Boyce & De Jong (forthcoming)

19 The link is essentially based on a single quotation said to be from Arrian in the works of the Byzantine chronographer Syncellus (FGrHist 156 F 31). See Hackl, Jacobs & Weber (2010). P. 41–42, for the text and a brief commentary.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF 'IRANIANS', ZOROASTRIANISM,
AND THE 'PERSIANS' OF ASIA MINOR

The most prominent reason why scholars have generally felt comfortable, in the teeth of the evidence, with the notion of a 'revival' of Achaemenid traditions under Parthians and Sasanians is the fact that the Achaemenids, the Parthians and the Sasanians are all seen as 'Iranians' – and contrasted in this aspect with the 'foreign' Seleukids.²⁰ However intuitive it may be for modern writers, this assumption is hugely problematic for the entire stretch of pre-Islamic Iranian history. This is especially true if this 'Iranian' identity is grounded, as is most often done, in linguistic behaviour, grouping together speakers of languages we call 'Iranian'. If we want to ask the question what it meant, in antiquity, to be 'Iranian', the obvious question that needs to be asked first is whether there was such a thing as an 'Iranian' in antiquity. This question is surprisingly difficult to answer. As a starting point for that discussion, we could use two slightly different appreciations of a rather limited set of evidence: the Iranian personal and divine names in the epigraphic record of Asia Minor. The first is the third volume of Mary Boyce's *History of Zoroastrianism* (written together with Frantz Grenet), which covers 'Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule', and is overtly based on the assumption that Iranian names, and especially Iranian divine names, are evidence for the existence and persistence of Zoroastrianism throughout antiquity in lands that were no longer part, politically, of the Iranian world.²¹

The second, more recent, appreciation of much the same material (and both authors are equally indebted to the pioneering works of Louis Robert on this subject) is Stephen Mitchell's contribution to the volume *Old and New Worlds in Greek Onomastics*, bearing the title 'Iranian Names and the Presence of Persians in the Religious Sanctuaries of Asia Minor'.²² Mitchell does not engage with Mary Boyce's views of these matters at all (he does not, in fact, even mention her), but comes very close to her interpretations occasionally, while also looking at other possible scenarios. These can be summarized as localizing tendencies, or evidence for Persian (or Iranian) participation in locally meaningful manifestations of religion.

For Boyce, that is, Iranians – a category to which we shall return – are Zoroastrians, and the presence of Iranians (or of Iranian names) is evidence for the presence of Zoroastrianism, a religion that they would maintain, against all odds perhaps, because of its unique capacity to make them distinctive. The model she uses, if a model would be needed, is that of the Jews, although it is clear that her more immediate frame of reference lies in the experiences of the Parsi Zoroastrian community of India.²³

Mitchell has no intention to deny the possible strength of Zoroastrianism among some Iranians who settled in Anatolia, but records Persian participation in

20 This has given rise to the notion of an "Iranian revival" in the Parthian period: Curtis (2007).

21 Boyce & Grenet (1991), p. 197–352.

22 Mitchell (2007).

23 The parallel is made explicit in Boyce (1991).

seemingly non-Iranian religious practices, which he most often interprets as elements of ‘local religion’. Some of these are spectacular, in the sense that they are large-scale, politically and economically imposing, and indeed unique to the area. This is especially true of the temple-states, some of them governed by priests in the service of Iranian gods, some by priests in the service of Anatolian (‘local’) gods, and some in the service of gods whose ‘ethnic’ affiliation is irretrievably masked by an identification with a Greek divine name. These temples with their lands are often named after individual donors, possibly founders, some of whom likewise bear Iranian names. Again, for Boyce these would be endowments of a type well known from later periods of Zoroastrian history, while for Mitchell they would be examples of Persians acting according to cultural norms they had found when they settled in the lands where they were going to stay.²⁴ Much of the difficulty of understanding these matters seems to have come into being through an enthusiastic and largely uncritical use of notions of ‘Hellenism’ and ‘Hellenization’ that remain, in most cases, severely undertheorized.²⁵

There thus are three particularly tough clusters of assumptions, labels or hypotheses: one concerns Iranian ethnicity and religion (or ‘Iranian identity’); one concerns this mysterious process of Hellenization, of Hellenism, strongly based on the identification of linguistic behaviour with feelings of identity that is acutely questionable in most cases; and an even more mysterious evocation of the importance of ‘place’ in the assumption of ‘local’ realities appropriated in a Hellenizing way, a Persianizing way, of a combination of both.

EXPLAINING KOMMAGENE: HELLENISM, IRANIAN IDENTITY, AND ROYAL UNBALANCE

A good illustration of these problems is offered by the interpretation of the unique materials from the little kingdom of Kommagene, ruled by a family that traced its descent in a double way: to a branch of the Orontid dynasties, descendants of Persian satraps and kings of several Armenian kingdoms, and through a Macedonian line. Since the discovery of the tomb-sanctuary (*hierothesion*) of king Antiochus I of Kommagene on Mount Nemrut in the late nineteenth century, an endless discussion of the most likely interpretation of this site, and its related sites all over the territory of Kommagene, has ensued. After the initial enthusiasm caused by the size, quality, and strangeness of the finds, and the publication and analysis of the epigraphic, archaeological and artistic evidence, three streams of interpretation have almost continuously been competing with each other. The first of these stresses the Iranian-ness of Kommagene, the second focuses on the presumed madness of the king, and

24 A sober assessment is given in Briant (1985), with impressive updates and rich bibliographical data in Briant (2006).

25 Pioneering work on the temple-states was done by Boffo (1985); it is a matter of keen regret that the more recent appreciation of the subject by Dignas (2002) almost entirely ignores the ‘Persian’ temple-states.

the third one invokes the notion of ‘Hellenistic kingship’.²⁶ If one views the ways in which the arguments have been put forward it is often the case that the moment scholars introduce the notion of ‘Hellenistic kingship’, they are very quick to provide it with the adverb “simply” – and mainly suggest parallels of other ‘Hellenistic kings’ who did equally strange things, although they have failed, so far, to produce evidence for the type of sanctuary, the choice of gods, or the selection of rituals that were prescribed for this royal cult.²⁷ There was a reason, one would guess, why the word *hierothesion* had to be *invented* for the installations of the royal cult, and the most economic reason seems to be that no such institution existed to be emulated by Antiochos on his (assumed) wish to join the rank of ‘Hellenistic kings’.

These three interpretations all belong to the class of domesticating, familiarizing or de-exoticizing approaches that have been the subject of heated debate among students of religion for generations now.²⁸ Such approaches aim to ‘translate’ the ‘unknown’ (in this case the royal cult of Kommagene) into the ‘known’ by joining it up with (real or imagined) parallels and thus bringing it into a class. These classes (Zoroastrianism, Hellenistic kingship, megalomania) are most often problematic, but the problems inherent in them are frequently passed over in silence, and it is only in a case such as Kommagene – where competing classes have been suggested simultaneously – that deeper problems become evident. In this particular case, what emerges from the discussion is an intuitive ranking of cultural desirability that is not at all clear from the source material itself. This is obviously true of the one interpretation that has been generally rejected: the personal madness (or idiosyncrasy) of the king, which is by its very nature non-theoretical, but simply an acknowledgement of defeat. The other two, however, are treated very differently in much of the scholarly literature. There, it is the intrusion of Iranian names and realities that needs explanation, but interpretations on the basis of Hellenistic kingship are presented as natural – because they can be provided with parallels (however inexact, see below). A ‘local’ interpretation in this case has simply been dismissed.²⁹ What remains, therefore, is an abundant use of the concept of ‘legitimization’, and it is in the handling of this notion that the naturalness of an appeal to Greek and the unnaturalness of an appeal to Iranian elements of royal identity has often been stressed. Thus, Miguel John Versluys writes that the Greek aspects reveal “an active choice for progress and modernity”, whereas the Persian elements were used to “claim dynastic legitimacy”, showing that the king was “a legitimate heir to the great powers that had dominated the region”. Greek culture, apparently, revealed forward-looking elements, whereas Persian culture was a matter of the past.³⁰

The interpretive potential of the notion of ‘legitimization’ for cultural choices made in/by pre-modern societies has been subjected to trenchant criticism by Shel-

26 The literature is vast and sprawling. Much of it is summarized, though hardly in a balanced way, in Brijder (2014).

27 See, for instance, the recent dissertation by Schipperheijn (2011), the title of which means “Not as strange as you would think”.

28 See especially Smith (2004).

29 The importance of local traditions is stressed, however, by Blömer (2012).

30 M.J. Versluys in Brijder (2014), p. 604.

don Pollock, who qualifies the supremacy of the concept in explaining the spread of Sanskrit culture in South and South-East Asia as “not only anachronistic, but intellectually mechanical, culturally homogenizing, theoretically naive, empirically false, and tediously predictable.”³¹ In the case of the ‘Hellenistic’ interpretation of the royal cult of Kommagene it is in addition strongly ethnocentric, in postulating the naturalness of a wish for Greekness and the exoticism of Iranian elements. This is by no means an isolated case. Far-reaching conclusions on Hellenization, Romanization and elite acculturation have been drawn on the basis of the adoption of Roman names, titles, dress and jewellery by the notables of Palmyra,³² whereas the approximately equally abundant evidence for their adoption of Parthian names, titles, dress, jewellery and weaponry is still in desperate need of serious consideration, which should involve a long reflection on the capricious use of the term ‘indigenous’.³³ It was only by simply disregarding the evidence for oral narratives, whose presence we *can* actually plot over a remarkably vast territory and an incredibly long period of time, and by insisting, once more, on the importance of ‘local’ or ‘indigenous’ traditions rather than Parthian or Iranian ones that Fergus Millar could provide his arduous concept of ‘historical amnesia’ in the Hellenistic Near East with a minimum of historical plausibility.³⁴ One cultural stage further, in the Christianizing world of Parthian and Sasanian Mesopotamia, we find exactly the same strategies applied: from the earliest editors to the most recent commentators, scholars have analysed the *Cologne Mani Codex*, a devotional text in Greek in which the duties of the Manichaean elect are illustrated through episodes from the life of the prophet Mani, in the following way: whenever New Testament parallels present themselves (which happens extremely rarely), the story is interpreted along the lines of *imitatio evangelica*, and when this does not happen, the stories are basically accepted as historically true.³⁵ The *Hymn of the Pearl*, that little masterpiece of Syriac poetry included in the *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* (a composite text that itself bristles with Parthian names and literary conventions), has been interpreted as a “fairy tale” *because* of the fact that it is situated in, and derives its narrative logic from, the Parthian court.³⁶

31 Pollock (2006), p. 18.

32 See especially the valuable study of Yon (2002).

33 There is, however, the solid effort of Gnoli (2007); see further De Jong (2013), on the notions ‘local’ and ‘indigenous’.

34 The case of Iran is different, in that respect, from the case of Syria, for which see Andrade (2013). In a long and distinguished series of studies (including Millar 1993; 2006; 2013), Fergus Millar has attempted to gauge the impact of Greek culture on the peoples of the Near East, chiefly by looking at written sources, both literary and epigraphic. He used the evidence he gathered to pronounce on the depth of historical awareness, which he often found wanting, with the exception of Greek and Jewish cultures. See the cautious remarks on his latest work in this field by Papaconstantinou (2015).

35 De Jong (2014).

36 Beyer (1990).

PERSIANIZATION AND PERSIANISM AND THEIR LIMITS

The editors of the present volume have attempted to bring some clarity in these complicated debates by making a distinction between ‘Persianization’ and ‘Persianism’. The former, they write, would be “the cultural influence of Achaemenid Persia on other peoples and cultures resulting in the selective adoption of Persian cultural traits”, whereas the latter would be something different, more in the nature of a creative ‘appropriation’ of a remembered or constructed Persian past.³⁷ The questions asked in the present article do not fit easily in either category: there are difficulties with the latter, as mentioned above, in its reliance on ‘cultural memory’ of the Achaemenids (and their presumed prestige, which is difficult to locate in actual sources), and for the former there is the barrier of its restriction to ‘other peoples’ undergoing Persian influence. In this case, *tertium datur*: there were, in the world of antiquity but outside the Iranian lands, people who saw themselves as ‘Persian’, and to whom this meant something, people – in other words – who participated in their local societies, but complemented this participation with the knowledge that they also *belonged* to another community. This community can be called ‘Persian’, but since there are tiny indications of the presence of, for example, Bactrians (and later most certainly Parthians) in Asia Minor and Armenia, as well as Armenians themselves who participated in these communities at least in religious behaviour (see below), it has become customary to invoke the notion of ‘Iranian’ identity, which, as we have seen, quickly spills over into the assumption of Zoroastrian communities: communities, that is, that are not (so much) defined by ethnic, linguistic or historical-genealogical claims, but by participation in a shared religious culture.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ‘IRANIAN’ IDENTITY

This notion of ‘Iranian’ identity, as an identity overarching the clearly attested Persian, or Parthian, or Bactrian (Median, Sogdian, etc.), identities, is historically ambiguous. The notion has obviously been influenced by the modern academic field of Iranian studies. This field, as well as almost all conceptions of Iranian history, is based on linguistic behaviour.³⁸ We have isolated an Iranian language family, which presently includes Persian, Pashto, Ossetic, Balochi, Kurdish, etc. There is an abundance of evidence for earlier Iranian languages: Avestan, Old Persian, Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, Bactrian, Khotanese, and Khwarezmian.³⁹ For these historical languages, we have some documentary sources, but the bulk of textual evidence comes from religious literature: there are Zoroastrian sources in Avestan and Middle Persian, Manichaean ones in Parthian, Middle Persian, New Persian, Sogdian, and Bactrian, Buddhist ones in Khotanese, Bactrian and Sogdian, and Christian ones in Sogdian and Middle Persian.⁴⁰ All these languages, with the

37 See the introduction to this volume.

38 See the great summation in Paul (2013).

39 See for all these languages, old and new, Schmitt (1989).

40 See latterly Macuch (2009).

exception of Ossetic and its ancestors, betray in their terminology the fact that the ancestors of those Christians, Buddhists, and Manichaeans who wrote the texts had participated in a religious culture that made use of a distinctive Zoroastrian vocabulary. This enables us to postulate ‘Zoroastrianism’ – however defined – as a presence in what is most often called the ‘Iranian world’, but the construction of that ‘Iranian world’ in most cases relies on a postulate for which we have no real evidence. That is the importance of language. That is to say, there is no evidence at all for the notion that speaking an ‘Iranian language’ (which as a label is a modern European linguistic invention) meant something to the various peoples to whom we attribute an Iranian identity on the basis of their language use. We do not know if to them this was a building block in the construction of an ethnic or any other identity. We do not know, in other words, whether ‘Iranians’ in antiquity *knew* that Sogdian was more closely related to Middle Persian than Tocharian or any Indian language, and if so, whether they would attach any importance to this knowledge. In fact, even in modern times, after the successful transfer of the crucial notion of “language-based ethnicity” from Europe, where it means much, to other parts of the world, where it may have meant very little,⁴¹ it does not hold up for the Iranian languages. Kurdish and Persian are very closely related, but Kurds and Persians do not necessarily attach much meaning to this fact, nor do the Baloch or Pashtuns. The festival of Nowruz is widely celebrated by almost all peoples who live in what historians call the ‘Iranian world’, regardless of the question whether they speak an Iranian language or, as is the case with most Central Asian peoples, a Turkic one.

ARMENIANS, GEORGIANS AND IRANIAN CULTURE

A similar situation may have existed in the ancient world: we know, for example, that Armenians and Georgians participated in what we stubbornly call ‘Iranian’ religious and literary culture, while speaking very different languages. The evidence for this Georgian and Armenian participation in Iranian culture is varied and extensive: it stretches from a huge amount of Iranian loan-words in these languages through evidence for social structures and visions of kingship to the domains of religion and literature.⁴² For the latter domain, it is obviously true that Georgian and Armenian literature is the result of the momentous process which marked the dissolution of the Georgian and Armenian peoples from the most consistently traceable element of Iranian culture in antiquity: Zoroastrianism. Writing came with Christianity and it is a matter of marvel how quickly especially an Armenian literature of outstanding quality entered the scene: within a single generation after the invention of the Armenian script. This literature, all are agreed, is based partly on a heavy influence of Syriac and, through Syriac, of Greek and Latin literature, but it rests equally heavily on what must have been a flourishing oral literary culture, which was borne by a class of specialists known as *gosān*, who are known to have existed,

41 Highlighting just how little is one of the fundamental merits of Pollock (2006).

42 De Jong (2015b), with references.

and to have been employed, all over the Parthian world.⁴³ Both in the substance of this literary tradition and in the conventions of its style, Armenian and Georgian sources are part of Iranian culture. And while it remains true that linguists have explained the gargantuan number of Iranian loanwords in Armenian on the assumption of a very widespread bilingualism, it is equally clear that Armenians did not, as such, participate in Iranian culture linguistically, but retained their own language; and so did, of course, the Georgians. Neither people, moreover, applied the name *ēr* (often translated as ‘Iranian’, but a remarkably difficult concept to understand, see below) to themselves.

‘IRANIAN’ IDENTITY WITHOUT LANGUAGE: RELIGION AND LINEAGE

We thus face a number of tough choices: it seems to be the case that the language-factor as defining characteristic of Iranianness needs to be abandoned. That is, of course, also suggested by the epigraphic materials from Asia Minor, which shows that the ‘Persians’ there – those who called themselves Persians, who bore Persian names, and who worshipped Persian gods – had adopted Greek. That leaves religion and lineage as the only possible rallying points for the maintenance of a Persian identity. The question therefore becomes whether it is possible to distinguish ‘religion’ from ‘lineage’ in this period and in this part of the world. The answer to that question depends to a large degree on the ways in which we want to evoke or reconstruct the religion of the period and of the area. This, too, is highly ambiguous.

There is only one version of Zoroastrianism that has survived to the present. This is a type of Zoroastrianism that has come into being in the Sasanian period, and took its current form especially in the late Sasanian empire. A comparison with all other expressions of what seems to be the same religion, from earlier sources and from sources that have been found beyond the borders of the Sasanian Empire, shows that this Sasanian Zoroastrianism is a fairly distinct, well-organized, systematized, scripturalized version of a religion that was, in some of these other manifestations, decidedly diffuse, weakly organized, open-ended, unsystematic, and non-scriptural, even though it is difficult to imagine without the presence of Avestan as a liturgical language, and without the presence of the legend of Zoroaster.⁴⁴ The moment the importance of ‘lineage’ is introduced into this question, matters become even more complicated. It has been suggested, that the use of the term *ariya-* in Old Persian (the ancestor of Middle Persian *ēr*) is not so much an ethnic or a linguistic appellation, but evokes the notion of an imagined community that participated in a shared mythological past: the Iranian historical tradition of the Kayanian kings, into which the legend of Zoroaster and his patron Vishtaspa has been woven.⁴⁵ There are strong indications that this is a more likely interpretation than

43 Boyce (1957) remains the fundamental study.

44 De Jong (2015a).

45 Kellens (2005).

the other, more clearly ethnic, ones: we have already seen that the Armenians and the Georgians did not participate in this particular narrative (because they traced their origin to a distinct lineage), even though they enjoyed retelling stories from it as part of their own cultural and literary heritage. More strikingly, the Manichaeans did not participate in it. They, too, used parts of the epic tradition and could even refer to their own religion as the “Mazda-worshipping religion” (the most prominent self-designation of Zoroastrianism), but they never applied the term *ēr* to themselves. Nor, strikingly, did those Iranians who became Muslims after the Arab conquests. In fact, the term ‘Iran’ disappears from the record in the first five centuries after the Arab conquests. It is maintained *only* by the Zoroastrians, and replaced by Muslim Iranians by more clearly geographical indications (‘provincial’ ones, such as Persian, or city ones, such as Samarqandi or Nishapuri).⁴⁶

So, on the one hand, it has always been known that *ēr* means ‘Zoroastrian’, but it means something more (‘Iranian’ in the sense of a community that locates its origin in a very specific historical narrative). At the same time, there were Zoroastrians who did *not* refer to themselves as *ēr* (Armenians, Georgians), and non-Zoroastrians who called their own religion ‘Zoroastrianism’, but likewise refrained from applying the term *ēr* to themselves (the Manichaeans). What we do not know (yet) is whether there were people who thought of themselves as *ēr* (‘Iranian’ in the genealogical sense), but were *not* Zoroastrians. That possibility, it seems, only arose in the eleventh century, when Zoroastrianism had been reduced to such a small part of the population that the concept of Iran could be revived in a ‘national’ non-religious meaning.⁴⁷

BACK TO THE ‘PERSIANS’ OF ANATOLIA

If we now return to our initial inquiry into the ‘Persians’ of Anatolia, we may hope to reconnect also with the theme of the present volume. There were, we know, communities of ‘Persians’ in post-Achaemenid Anatolia, who can be traced through the epigraphic record and through literary sources over a very long period of time. We do not know exactly what kept them going, or what made these communities sustainable, for they appear to us in the sources as distinct on the one hand and completely acculturated (or ‘localized’) on the other. They are distinct through the inventory of their names, through the choice of their gods, and through their maintenance – sporadically attested, it is true – of Zoroastrianism, especially of Zoroastrian rituals.⁴⁸ They were distinct, moreover, by the fact that they *knew* or claimed that they were Persians, and expressed this in Greek. Their use of Greek, however, and some of their religious practices, as well as their integration into the social structures of the areas where they had settled seem to testify to their integration into the diverse cities and communities of Asia Minor. Some of them they may

46 Bowen-Savant (2013), p. 233–334.

47 Krawulsky (1978), p. 11. For the subject of “Iranian” identity, Gnoli (1989) is both indispensable and deeply problematic.

48 The literary sources are all discussed in De Jong (1997).

have impacted in a structural way. This seems to be true in two special cases: those kingdoms that continued to be ruled by the descendants of Achaemenid satraps, which is especially true of the Orontid kingdoms of Armenia, including (possibly) Kommagene; and those areas where they seem to have been at least a sizeable minority. Of this, Cappadocia seems to be the best example. It is there that they keep re-emerging, in Roman times, as well as in early Christian times, by which period at least in Armenia all traces of Hellenization fade away, but a substantial core of Iranian culture and religion remained. This, in turn, evokes the parallel situation of the Jews, who maintained their religion and their attachment to a homeland many of them never had even the intention to visit, while easily adapting their language and many other aspects of their daily lives to new surroundings. It would be as strange to call that process 'Hebraism' as it would be to call the persistence of Persian communities in non-Persian territories Persianism. These were not acts of creative mnemonic adaptations of imagined ideals, and there is often very little evidence for nostalgic reminiscences of days gone by – and for a real memory of the Persian Achaemenid empire. They were attempts of various local communities to remain distinct and to choose, each according to its own preference, in which areas of distinction investments were thought to be necessary.

QUOTING 'PERSIA' IN ATHENS

Margaret C. Miller

Over the long history of their engagement with the Persian Empire and its successors, the people of Athens variously responded to their comprehension of Persia and to the stimulus of the evolving idea of Persia (or, 'Persia').¹ Some facets of the phenomenon are explored here, with a focus on material rather than textual evidence, and social rather than literary expression, in an attempt to come to grips with the terminology for the shades of reception. It is argued that the contemporary elite of the western Persian Empire set at standard of elegance that from time to time inspired competitive emulation on the part of the socially ambitious Athenian, resulting in private *perserie*; *perserie* is defined as the selective incorporation of foreign elements to enrich the social vocabulary of prestige at home.² The appropriation of elements of Persian imperial vocabulary by the Athenian state may be read as a public version of *perserie*. Later, a late classical Athenian public monument uses imagery to make a specific appeal to Persian authority; the instance may approach actual 'Persianism', defined as the appeal to the constructed idea of Persia. It is posited that full Persianism may be suspected in the late Hellenistic re-construction of a Persian-looking building in Athens, the Odeion of Perikles, by a king of Kappadokia seeking to bolster his precarious position in the ultimately vain hope of appeasing the discordant parties that threatened his kingdom and life. Exploration of the full gamut of responses to the world of Persia as visible at Athens should help refine the semantic fields of 'perserie' and 'Persianism' in material expression.

TERMINOLOGY AND APPROACH

Sarah Morris once proclaimed "Greece was always Orientalizing".³ The statement succinctly articulates a realisation growing over the past 40 years of research and discovery, that to dub the 7th century BCE as the period of 'Orientalization' in Greece, as is common in the narrative of art history, is misleading: it implies that cultural indebtedness to the east was peculiar to this phase. Rather, indications of

1 I thank the editors for organising a most enjoyable and informative conference. I am much indebted to a number of colleagues for insight on aspects of this paper: Eric Csapo, Hans R. Goette, Stavros A. Paspalas, Kenneth Sheedy, and Jelle Stoop. Documents collected by the Sydney-based Australian Research Council-funded project "The Theatrical Revolution" (E. Csapo with J. R. Green, E. G. Robinson and P. Wilson), have been invaluable as has the Centre for Classical and Near Eastern Studies of Australia.

2 More fully discussed in Miller (1997); updated Miller & Paspalas (forthcoming).

3 Morris (1992).

exchange of goods and ideas go back as far as we have archaeological evidence, even if there were periods of greater or less receptivity to the lands and cultures of West Asia.⁴ In such a context the selective reception of Persian ideas by late archaic and classical Athens represents merely a phase in the millennia-long process of ‘Orientalization’, Foreign items from a range of sources had long served as vehicles for status-enhancing display among the Greek elite, and numerous examples of Greek emulations can be identified through the entire Iron Age.

Following Heinrich von Staden’s protests about the passive implications of the word ‘influence’, my formulation ‘*perserie*’ (on the analogy of the modern cultural historical terms *chinoiserie* and *Türkereii*) was intended to flag the active nature of the choices made by the recipient, which might also be conveyed by the intransitive rather than the transitive sense of ‘Persianize’.⁵ If we envision a process by which the recipient was an actor who was capable of choice, a focus on the operation of choice within the recipient community is required. The question, then, is whether there was any ‘value added’ that in the later 6th and 5th centuries the Asian model for emulation at Athens and elsewhere was Iranian rather than, say, Syrian, Assyrian, Lydian, Phoenician or Egyptian; or whether a response to an Iranian model might just *seem* different because we have more evidence and more kinds of evidence for the late archaic and classical periods in Greece than for the preceding centuries.

In this paper it is argued that the ‘Persian period’ was indeed different, not because the eastern prototype was Iranian but because, unlike their predecessors, the Persians controlled a world empire. Persia’s very imperial standing complicated Persia as a model: the Persia to which Greeks responded was by and large not the ‘core’ Persia of heartland Iran, but its projection in the western satrapies, where ‘Persia’ was already, in part, a deliberate construct from the heartland and in part contingent upon local patterns of reception⁶. In Athens even during the span of the Achaemenid Empire, the seeds of Persianism already began to take form, as the idea of Persia held power as a symbol, not of enervated luxury, but authority.

Sometimes enough can be deduced of the social and economic function of conspicuous wealth in past societies to enable understanding of its semiosis in society. In the case of Achaemenid Persia, visible opulence played an important role in maintaining social stability. In the social context of Athens, manifest opulence had a social role in times of aristocratic dominant ideology. Yet within the classical period, and emergent democratic ideology, display of wealth could be a point of contestation⁷. To some degree the fact that the model for leisurely lifestyle and status symbols derived from the elite of the Persian Empire figured in the equation.

4 For debate whether the very use of cultivars was a local independent development in Greece or an import from the Near East, see Perlès (2001). The full bibliography is immense; Morris (1992) gives much to her day; major contributors include: Dunbabin (1957), Akurgal (1966), Boardman (1980; and prior editions), Matthäus (1993). See also Burkert (1992), West (1997), and Gunter (2009).

5 Staden (1976).

6 See Summerer & von Kienlin (2010); Miller (2010); Miller (2011a); Dusinger (2013).

7 The opposition of ‘opulence’ and ‘luxury’ is explored in Miller and Hölscher (2014).

Others, more fully determined to tease out the nuances of the Greek, and especially, Athenian, literary sources, have traced back to Aeschylus' *Persai* the long history of Orientalism: the reading of Persians, notably Persian kings, as weak, luxury-loving, effeminate and impulsive⁸. While the kernel of such projections can be found in 5th-century literature, too often sentiments from select 4th-century orators have been retrojected back to the 5th and even 6th centuries. One thinks of Isokrates' famous formulation "The barbarian is soft and inexperienced in war and destroyed by his luxurious lifestyle" (5.124). It is best to balance such sentiments with the portrayal of Cyrus the Great in Herodotos and Xenophon – itself a mythicising construct to assist in the narrative strategy of each author. Then again, recent research in the material culture of Elam in the 7th and 6th centuries BCE challenges Greek notions that Persia was innocent of material opulence prior to the conquest of Lydia.⁹ In short, the ideas about Persia preserved for us by written texts are already polymorphous. There was no single 5th-century Greek discourse on Persia, nor could there be in the rich tapestry of relations between Greeks and Persians. It takes time and will to create a mono-narrative.

This volume aims to articulate, conceptualise and explore the phenomenon of Persianism, defined as the appeal to a myth of 'ancient Persia' that emerged after the end of the Achaemenid Empire. The material culture of classical Athens provides a glimpse into the process by which reception at the level of the state, as well as the individual, over time perhaps contributed to the construction of this myth. Private Persianization or *perserie* can be recognised in select instances of artefact employment for some generations before a state-level response is documentable, and, further, emergent Persianism can be suspected.

INTRANSITIVE PERSIANIZATION (*PERSERIE*)

1. Private: Material and Social

In Athens of the 6th through 4th centuries BCE it is possible to track various forms of reception to the dominant culture of the Persian Empire, mostly at the private level but also in the public sphere. Evidence comes partly from archaeological sources (ceramic shapes), epigraphic sources (lists of goods), iconographic sources (representation of clothing, items and activities in Attic vase-painting) and very occasionally literary sources. Sometimes a social context is suggested. More often the social standing of the individual engaging in such *perserie* is not fully clear, which adds challenges to social analysis. For example, in the case of the quotation in Attic plain black gloss ceramic of ideas from Persian metalware,¹⁰ at present find-spots give minimal evidence to the social standing of the users. Moreover, there is no

8 Said (1978); Hall (1989); Harrison (2000). For intimations of Orientalism in Attic 4th-century art, where opulence is especially stressed, see Llewellyn-Jones this volume.

9 See, notably, Álvarez-Mon (2010); Álvarez-Mon & Garrison (2011).

10 Fully explored with emulation hierarchy, ranges of modulation, examples and references in Miller (1993); Miller (1997). See now Tsingarida (2014).



Fig. 1 Attic persianizing 'bichrome' phiale, with horizontal fluting in coral red on bowl, from Capua. Late 6th c. BC, diam. 10 cm. Berlin V. I. 4498. Photo: bpk / Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / Johannes Laurentius, photographer

evidence to help determine whether there was (or how great was) a corresponding population of now-lost vessels in metal, whether locally-made or imported.¹¹

Secure archaeological contexts of some of the Attic emulative ceramic makes this group especially valuable in considering *perserie* in Athens: a fixed terminus ante quem for bichrome (black-gloss and coral-red) carinated horizontally-fluted 'Achaemenid phialae' shows that this imitative class of pottery was produced in Athens when the Persians were newly lords of West Anatolia, well before the infusion of Persian goods to Greece in the booty of the Persian Wars (Figure 1).¹² In other words, Persians in providing Athenians (and other Greeks) with a prestigious model for emulation simply supplanted their Lydian predecessors. Moreover, the discovery of fragments of this Attic ware exported to Persian-held Anatolia (Daskyleion) raises other questions: did Attic ceramic aid 'Persianizing' local populations affordably to emulate the precious metalware vessels in local circulation?¹³ Receptivity to the bowl type by local populations presumably reflects the new drinking 'style requirements' of Anatolia under the Persians; other evidence attests to the adoption there of the Persian mode of holding the drinking bowl on finger-tips.¹⁴

The case of the Persian shallow metal phiale adorned by lobes, best attested now for us in silver by the İköztepe tomb group, is also interesting. Tsingarida has collected the small but significant corpus of Attic iconographic evidence that makes

- 11 Note the absence of a mixing bowl in a ceramic 'symposium set' from a Persian War period well deposit published by Lynch (2011), despite the prominence of kraters and dinoi in the contemporary iconography of symposia, signaling, as Lissarrague (1987) put it, the 'espace du cratère' (p. 23–38). One presumes with Lynch (2011), p. 130, that this household had a metal krater whose fate differed from that of the ceramic components of the symposium set.
- 12 Berlin V.I. 4498: Attic phiale with coral-red fluted bowl. Dated contexts: Agora P23118, Deposit H 12:15, 520–480; Agora P11049, Deposit D 15:1, 500–480. Sparkes and Talcott (1970). Tsingarida (2014) places the group within the Euphronian workshop and provides (n. 40) a new list of known examples, showing that the distinctive phiale was exported across the Mediterranean and beyond. The term 'intentional red' is also used.
- 13 Daskyleion: fragments of Attic bichrome phialai are reported at www.daskyleion.tripod.com/123A_Abbildungen as Abb. 012–016. See also at Sardis: Ramage (1997), p. 72, 110 on Att 393; pl.52 (a black rather than coral red fluted bowl fragment); and cf. Att394, thought to be possibly Ionian.
- 14 Miller (2011b). For a Lydian production, see Dusinberre (1999).

Fig. 2 Persian metal lobed vessel held Greek-style (thumb to rim) by Hephaistos. Attic red-figured cup fragment, ca. 510, attributed to Euphronios, from Athenian Acropolis. Athens NM Acr 15214. Photo: National Archaeological Museum, Athens Copyright © Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs/ Archaeological Receipts Fund.

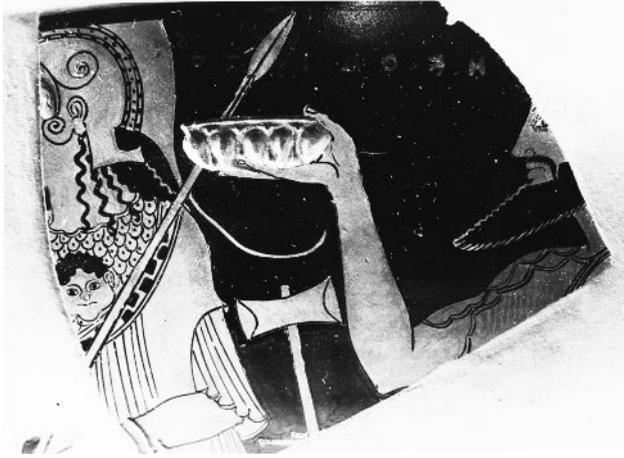


Fig. 3 Attic red-figured krater, with Greek symposiast using Persian 'finger tips' hold, ca. 350, from Pydna, Makriagialos Plot 947, pit burial T44. Photo: courtesy Besios (2010), p. 185.



it very clear that already in the later 6th century BCE lobed metal phialai were a prestigious vessel imported to Athens.¹⁵ It appears in the hands of Greek gods and heroes at symposia, though whether they use it for libation or drinking is often unclear; a fragmentary red-figured cup decorated by Euphronios about 510 offers a fine example (Figure 2).¹⁶ Here Hephaistos holds the lobed bowl in the palm of his hand, thumb on lip, in the Greek mode for pouring libations, at a wedding of Peleus and Thetis; the painter took pains to show that the precious item is metal. In fact, over the next 150 years, a small body of evidence attests to the occasional imitation

15 İkiştepe: Özgen & Öztürk (1996), e. g. cat. no. 40, Uşak 1.35.96. Tsingarida (2009).

16 Athens NM Acr 15214 (BADB 200081), Tsingarida 2009, fig.1; *Euphronios* (1991), cat. no. 44, gives whole profile. Libating gods: Patton (2009).



Fig. 4 Woman fans seated woman who wears sleeved garment. Attic white-ground lekythos, ca. 440, attributed to the Quadrate Painter, ht. 49.4 cm. Paris L96, MNB 1146. Photo © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Hervé Lewandowski.

of the Persian lobed bowl in Attic black-gloss ceramic, despite the uncongenial nature of the shape for the medium.¹⁷

How Athenians actually used the new vessel type so conspicuously lacking the handles required for Greek-style drinking has long been unclear. An important recent discovery throws new light on the question: a symposion scene on a mid-4th-century Attic krater excavated at Pydna (Figure 3).¹⁸ Here the central figure, in Greek dress, balances a carinated drinking bowl on his fingertips in the Persian mode; clearly by the 4th century an Athenian man might adopt Persian drinking practice along with the Persian vessel type to make a social statement at home.

Iconographic evidence combined with epigraphic sources bear witness to the parallel occasional adoption or modification of certain Eastern clothing types by Athenians. Individual items of dress were incorporated within the Greek dress system, in contrast with a phenomenon observable within the western Persian Empire, where the selective adoption of the whole dress system can be documented.¹⁹ In Athens imagery attests to the introduction of a decorated sleeveless over-garment (the *ependytes*), probably from the Levant, and of sleeved garments. The origin of sleeved garments is more securely Iranian, as sleeves are rare in the clothing repertoire west of Iran (Figure 4).²⁰ Any doubt that such iconographically attested garments are foreign is put to rest by the lists of dedications by women to Brauronian Artemis; of the many items of clothing inventoried there, some are explicitly Persian. Most notable is the

17 See Miller (1997) p. 135–152; esp. 140 with fig. 42–44 (Agora P25906, ca. 470 BC, and P16946). Detailed discussion Miller (1993), based on data in Sparkes & Talcott (1970). The later ‘calyx cup’ is a better-known and more widely-attested response to Persian metalware: Sparkes & Talcott (1970), p. 121–22. The corpus is larger if one includes the category I termed ‘derivation’, i.e. the use surface modifications on a vessel to suggest the plastic lobes of a metal model on an otherwise unexceptional form.

18 Attic red-figured bell krater, Pydna, Makriagialos Plot 947, pit burial T44, ca. 350. Besios (2010), p. 185, reproduced Paspalas & Miller (forthcoming), fig. 5.

19 Athens: Miller (1997), p. 153–187, with references. Asia Minor: Miller (2013).

20 Attic white-ground lekythos, Louvre S1660, Quadrate Painter, ca. 420, ARV² 1240.63; BADB 216718. The large scale (ht. 49.5 cm) is noteworthy.

appearance of the *kandys*, well known as a Persian garment (see Xen., *Anab.* 1.5.8; Cyr. 1.3.2, 8.3.13), and here described in terms that suggest it was precious.

Selective adoption of means of visible social distinction from the elite of the Persian world can also be observed, most notably in the increase in use of slave labour in non-productive roles, to enhance personal comfort and dignity. Curiously it is women who are the focus of attention when it comes to evidence for what Veblen termed "the conspicuous consumption of labour".²¹ The greater refinement in social stratification among the slave population can be witnessed in the new forms of personal attendance, especially of women, by fan-bearers and parasol-bearers (Figure 4; and see 5). For men such conspicuous consumption of labour had long been integral to the practice of the symposium; the only visible 5th-century accretion is in the literary tradition, the reference to Kallias' eunuch door-keeper (Plato, *Protagoras* 314C).

2. Public: Social and Material

The imperial character of Persian imports perhaps matters more in the public sphere, for which some work by David Cannadine is very helpful. In his 2001 study *Ornamentalism. How the British Saw their Empire*, Cannadine argued compellingly that an important feature of the British Empire in the 19th and earlier 20th centuries was the perception on the part of British elite that the elites of their imperial subjects were their own natural allies against a rising tide of industrial, urban egalitarianism.²² The British systematically co-opted the elites of their empire, developing new military-style decorations to create a hierarchy of service to the Queen, that is displayed most spectacularly in public events such as Curzon's carefully-orchestrated Delhi Durbar of 1903.

Whatever the social context intended in the procession reliefs of the Apadana of Persepolis, tidbits from different sources make it clear that the Persian kings knew well the power of the rhetoric of inclusion (and ranked inclusion) to ensure the longevity of their empire, in something very akin to British 'ornamentalism'. Both in the physical placement of individuals and representative commissions at court and on public occasions, as well as the presentation of the empire through depiction of individuals in the arts, the Persian imperial vision was perpetuated and reinforced.²³

In classical Athens an analogous procession rhetoric can be traced, tending in the same ornamentalist mode. Processions with sacrificial animals were intrinsic to the Greek ritual experience; the practice extended back into the hoary mists of time, but processions were nowhere fixed, being capable of elaboration and alteration of detail as circumstances suggested.²⁴ In Athens, two traditional festival processions, evidently elaborated in the 6th century, especially came in the 5th to provide a

21 Miller (1997), p. 192–217, with references. Veblen (1899).

22 Cannadine (2001), p. 46–48, for the Indian durbars.

23 Brosius (2007); Miller & Hölscher (2014), p. 383–385, with references.

24 For evidence for processions linked to religious practice already in bronze age Greece, see, e.g., Logue (2004); Marinatos (1984), p. 54; Palaima (2008).



Fig. 5 Satyr as parasol-bearer for Basilinna. Attic red-figured skyphos from Chiusi, ca. 440, attributed to the Penelope Painter, ht. 20.3 cm. Berlin F2589.

Photo: bpk / Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / Eva-Maria Borgwaldt

platform for imperial expression: the processions for the Greater Dionysia and the Greater Panathenaia.²⁵ In the former, representatives of the Greek peoples euphemistically called “the allies of the Athenians” were obliged to contribute a phallos in the second half of the 5th century and in the latter, a cow and panoply. The requirement made the festival processions an important locus for projecting the new imperial order. This ornamentation – this extension of the privilege of inclusion within the Athenian procession to allies – surely owed something to the Persian model, though it is not clear that the fact of debt contributed to the authority of the message.

It is also significant that at some point in the 5th century, the Athenian girls who as basket-bearers (*kanephoroi*) headed the Panathenaic procession were accorded social-enhancing visual distinction in the form of parasols held for them by the daughters of the metics, just as subordinates held parasols for the Great King in Persepolitan (and doubtless other) imagery and probably life²⁶. We have no visual testimony to Panathenaic parasol-bearing, but a curious scene on a skyphos of the same period is noteworthy (Figure 5).²⁷ Here a modestly-dressed woman processes under a parasol held for her from behind. The bearer is a surprise: it is a satyr. The imagery, owing to its the unusual inclusion of a parasol-bearing satyr, is often associated with the Anthesteria, a festival of Dionysos during which the ritual Basilinna (‘queen’ as wife of the ‘King’ Archon – Archon Basileus) symbolically married the god. What is also noteworthy, as Margaret Cool Root has observed, is that the satyr, walking in an uncharacteristically sedate manner, wears the Persian dentate royal crown.²⁸ An example of the dentate crown is visible on the ‘royal hero’ in the heroic

25 Miller (1997), p. 195–196 (Panathenaia); p. 241–242 (Dionysia); p. 256–258; with references. Cf. Raaflaub (2009), Parker (1996), p. 89–95, on evidence for 6th century elaboration of Panathenaia and Dionysia.

26 Ael., *VH* 6.1; see also Ar., *Birds* 1549–1551 and 1508–1509 with scholia; Hesych., *διφοροφόροι*; Harpokration *σκαφηφόροι*.

27 Attic red-figured skyphos from Chiusi, Berlin F2589, Penelope Painter, ca. 440, ARV² 1301.7; BADB 219002, with full bibliography. Miller (1997), fig.116. See also Miller (1992), pl. 5d.

28 Cool Root (2011), p. 90: “what strikes me as needing further explication is the fact that the



Fig. 6 Persian chalcedony cylinder seal and modern impression “from Marathon” with royal hero combat. Note crown on royal hero (London BM 89781; inv. no. 1772,0315,GR.419). Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

combat image of an Achaemenid cylinder seal that was allegedly found at Marathon (Figure 6).²⁹ Some sort of visual parody is surely intended, and it is a parody that presupposes a range of knowledge about Persian royal procession protocol, here inverted with the crown-wearer serving as parasol-bearer.

The Greater Dionysia festival procession at Athens similarly had had a long history in the festival calendar, as the ship-cart imagery of the 6th century BCE makes clear³⁰. It too, underwent modification as circumstances required, so that in the second half of the 5th century a clear connection between the Dionysia and the Athenian Empire was forged: at the time of the Dionysia “the allies of the Athenians” were required to bring their financial ‘contribution’ to Athens in the form of talents of silver, and to carry it into the orchestra of the Theatre of Dionysos, in an act of public accounting. A number of men would be required; Raubitschek suggested a porter for every talent of silver.³¹ The procession presumably followed the

satyr just happens to wear a very close approximation of the Achaemenid dentate royal crown with studded band [citing Garrison & Cool Root (2001), p. 68–70 on PFS 7*, a royal name seal of Darius]. This, combined with his jaunty, back-tilting pose, infuses the scene with extraordinary potential for humorous double meaning. We seem to witness sexual innuendo plus irony-barbed political commentary on the *Basilinna* as she emerges from her act of consummation, followed at the rear by the Persian king-as-satyr. The king-as-satyr may himself be a play on the *Basileus* (the ceremonial king of Athens), naked and pleased with himself as he holds his parasol for the *Basilinna* in her pious postcoital procession.”

29 London BM 89781 (inv. no. 1772,0315,GR.419), chalcedony cylinder heroic combat, purchased in 1772 from the Hamilton Collection. Wiseman (1959), pl. 104; Merrillees (2005), p. 62.

30 Most recently on Dionysian ship-carts and procession, see Csapo (2013), p. 21–25; especially attested on Attic black-figured skyphoi attributed to the Theseus Painter, two of which he illustrates: London B79 (BADB 4319); Bologna 130 (BADB 4321); also: Athens NM Acr1281 (BADB 465); the amphora Vatican 35632 (BADB 5921).

31 The sources are well known, though the details are debated. Most important are: the ‘Kleinias decree’, *IG I³* 34, and *IG I³* 68, to be read with Isokr. 8.82. Public accounting: Meiggs (1972),

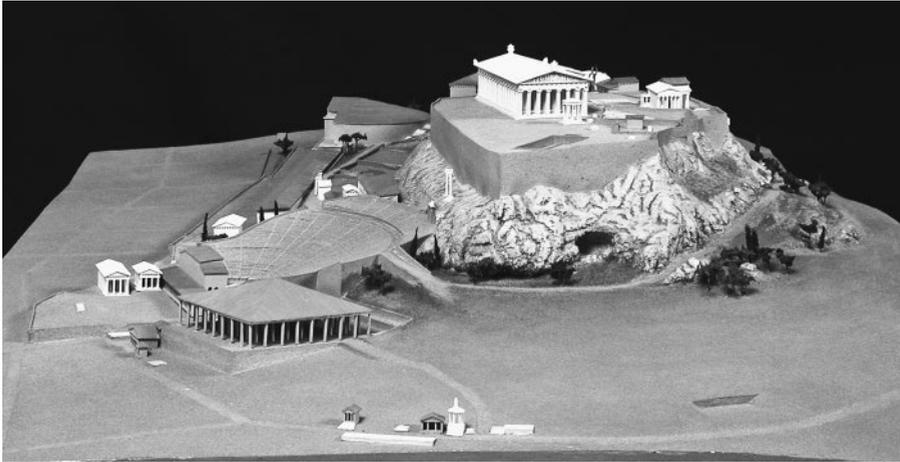


Fig. 7 Street of the Tripods skirting the east of the Akropolis, towards the Odeion of Perikles and the Sanctuary and Theatre of Dionysos on the south slope. Model of the Athenian Akropolis made in 1985 under direction of Manolis Korres, Akropolis Study Centre. (Courtesy M. Korres and H. R. Goette).

Dionysia procession route along the Street of the Tripods from the Agora beyond the lower slopes of the east end of the Akropolis past the Odeion of Perikles towards the sanctuary of Dionysos (Figure 7). Whether or not this ‘delivery’ of the *phoros* was integrated with the initial festival procession of the Dionysia, or a separate event on one of the following days of the festival, is not clear; the latter is more likely. Certainly the Greater Dionysia procession included representatives from the allied states bearing a *phallos*, so that procession embraced the allies within the body politic while placing them in a firmly subordinate position.

The structural parallels between the logic of Persian procession events and the evolution of ‘processing empire’ in classical Athens at the Panathenaic and Dionysiac festival processions are striking and significant. The Persian imperial example of advertising the many peoples of its domain through procession protocol presumably inspired the Athenians. The Persian example of displaying relative social rank through placement in a procession possibly inspired the Athenians. Yet the Athenian adoption of Persian processional rhetoric is still *perserie*. It made use of a foreign means of visual communication, as a social tool to articulate relations (even if it was possibly set in conscious opposition to the model; note the Athenian modification in the requirement of a uniform mode of contribution).³² The message did not depend upon Persian authority for its effect and so does not exemplify Persianism.

In contrast, one major public monument of 5th-century Athens, the so-called ‘Odeion of Perikles,’ relied on recognition of an allusion to Persia for its impact. So

p. 434 with the useful concept of ‘collective receipt’; Raubitschek (1941), p. 356–362. See, also, e.g.: Cartledge (1985) p. 120; Goldhill (1990).

32 Compare Lawrence (1951), esp. p. 118, asking whether the Akropolis building programme might be seen as ‘a thoroughly Athenian counterpart <to the programme at Persepolis>, likewise embodying the concept of the state, but a rival concept?’.

far as can be ascertained from the limited archaeological evidence, in conjunction with ancient descriptions of the structure, the Odeion in plan and elevation was a very unusual building for Greek architecture.³³ It was also closely linked in the Athenian mind with Persia, though the nature of the link is variously explained. The fullest description is late, from a passage of Plutarch:

With regard to its interior arrangement, the Odeion is many-sided and multi-columned; with regard to its roof it is constructed sloping on all sides down from a single point. They say that it is the image and imitation of the tent of the Persian King [...].³⁴

Plutarch's testimony is corroborated by brief mentions of its peculiar shape from the classical period and the excavated evidence, including most notably a row of column foundations. Like Plutarch, Pausanias understood that the structure imitated the Persian king's tent; Vitruvius knew a tradition that Themistokles roofed it with the masts and spars of Persian ships.³⁵ Yet the association of the structure with Perikles (as *epistates* in Plutarch) rather than Themistokles dates back to the 5th century BCE.³⁶

For our purposes what matters is that it was a major public building in a conspicuous location; it was the last structure before the Theatre and Sanctuary of Dionysos on the Dionysian procession route, the "Street of the Tripods" named after the many victory monuments incorporating tripods, the prize in the dithyrambic contests for Dionysos. We must await complete excavation for certainty but at present the evidence points to the structure as having been an open nearly square hypostyle hall, and fashioned with a pyramidal roof, just as Orlandos realised by 1922 and Korres has modelled it (Figure 7, left foreground).³⁷ There are individual foundations for columns. Evidently wood was an important construction material. No trace of exterior wall foundations survives, which vitiates any reconstruction

33 A full discussion of the literary and archaeological evidence in Miller (1997), p. 218–242, partly in response to Robkin (1976), with full bibliography of prior discussion and the history of excavation and interpretation.

34 Plut., *Per.* 13.9–11: See Miller (1997), p. 227, for an explanation for the unusual elements in my translation. The most important is that πολυέδρον is a term used, e. g., in Euclidian geometry meaning 'many-sided', an insight for which I am indebted to Istvan Bodnar (see Euclid, *Elementa* 12.17–18). The usual translation, 'many-seated', was inspired more by pre-conceived notions about the design requirements of something called a 'music hall' as a result of the later development of the *odeion* type.

35 Paus. 1.20.4; Vitr. 5.9.1 (text quoted below, note 49).

36 Kratinos, *PCG* IV, fr. 73 (Plut., *Per.* 13.9); see also, from later in the 4th century, Lyk. *Keph.* 2, ascribing to Perikles the Odeion together with the Propylaia and Hekatompedon (i. e. Parthenon), as well as various imperial achievements.

37 Pyramidal roof: Plutarch's words περικλινῆς καὶ κάταντες ἐκ μιᾶς κορυφῆς (*Per.* 13.9). Orlandos' comments published by Kastriotis (1922), p. 38. For the model made under Korres' supervision, see Korres / Spathari / Tanoulas (1985), p. 30–31. Reconstructions with solid walls are based on the erroneous presumption that walls were a requirement for a 'music hall'. Plans: Kastriotis (1929), fig. 1; Travlos (1971), p. 387–391 gives bibliography of excavation; his tidied-up and restored plan fig. 502 (dated 1968) includes exposed south column foundations; Korres (1980), fig. 1, updates the plan with choregic monuments to the south. Publication of a new surveyed plan with all the topographical and monumental information of this important area now available is a desideratum.

with closed walls. This means that the structure and design were conceptually radical for Greek architects: it was not made for a specific practical purpose, as was every other building. Rather, its function was symbolic.³⁸

The only way that the Odeion's peculiar features can be explained is as a deliberate quotation of the Persian hypostyle hall. The referent is clear despite a manifest conflation of disparate aspects of Persian architecture – columned porches and hypostyle interior – into one unwallled columned space. The imposition of a pyramidal roof above (perhaps for structural reasons) deviated from what we know of Persian hypostyle architecture.³⁹ At the time of its erection in the mid-5th century BCE, the Odeion was constructed to stand in striking contrast to all other buildings of contemporary Athens, and almost all of Greece. Its elevation several meters above the line of the “Street of the Tripods” procession route demanded recognition of its unique qualities.⁴⁰ The allusion is unmistakable: but how is it to be read? As a victory monument that through its form announces the vanquished?⁴¹ As an imperial structure that gains its authority through (mis-)quoting power architecture of the Persian Empire?

IMPERIAL QUOTATION: PERSIANISM?

Persianism is conceived of as a myth-making construction of cultural memory, a deliberate rhetorical strategy that harks back to the Achaemenid world towards the self-enhancement and legitimation of personal authority. There is one case in late classical Athens in which the allusion to imperial Persia may be argued to be a conscious quotation whose precise semantic value is entirely dependent on immediate recognition of the Persian model: an enigmatic panel in the decorative system of the marble Throne of the Priest of Dionysos Eleuthereus at the Theatre of Dionysos (Figure 8).⁴² The throne, discovered at the centre of the seating of the theatre in 1862, was certainly in place by the mid-4th century BCE.

38 The various reported uses of the Odeion are outlined in Miller (1997), p. 232–235. If the delivery of the *phoros* by the allies was not part of the main Dionysiac procession (organised at the Pompeion near the Dipylon Gate), the Odeion may very well have been a useful gathering place for organising the *phoros* display for presentation in the theatre one other day of the festival. Note that it was naturally protected by the rising Akropolis rock at north and the high retaining wall at south facing the Street of the Tripods.

39 The possibility that the roof – that seemed, above open columns, so tent-like – may have been so designed for engineering (pragmatic) rather than aesthetic reasons must be considered, though some instances of pyramidal roofing can be found in smaller buildings of Persian architecture.

40 Korres (1980), p. 18, calculated that a terrace retaining wall of ca. 8.5 m. high was required to adjust the level to compensate for the drop in ground level north to south. No trace of the terrace wall has been found; its location can be calculated on the basis of the choregic monuments between road and southern row of column foundations. Presumably its fine ashlar masonry meant that it was dismantled for its material, though whether to assist in the construction of the Rizokastro (as the Valerian Wall line is too far to the south) is not clear.

41 So, von Gall (1979), p. 446.

42 The following summarises a fuller discussion of the throne and its imagery in Miller (forthcom-

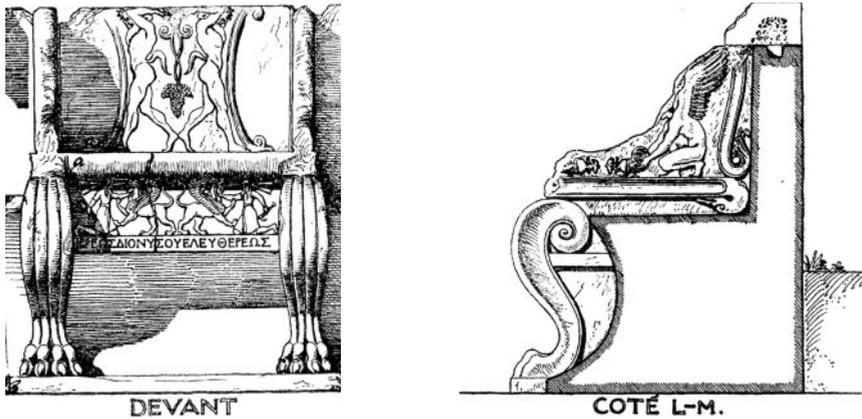


Fig. 8 Throne of the Priest of Dionysos Eleuthereus in the Theatre of Dionysos. State drawing by Risom, front and side. Photo after Risom 1913.

The throne was unique, though subsequently imitated; its elaborate programme of decoration, most easily studied in Risom's careful line-drawings, relates to the cult of Dionysos. On the two exterior faces of the arm-rests, the winged youths with fighting cocks squaring off across the seat of the throne are taken to be "a symbol of the larger *agon* of the dramatic competition"⁴³. On the backrest two satyrs back-to-back supported something on their raised arms, once depicted on a now lost upper element. Framing long arcs with thickened upper and lower termini look like metal vessel legs; what the satyrs supported was probably the bowl of the tripod that features prominently in choregic monuments as the prize of victory in the *choral* competitions for Dionysos.⁴⁴ Below the throne seat a narrow frieze offers a different kind of imagery: a mirror image of a figure in Iranian rider dress grappling with a Persian lion-griffin. The disparate qualities of the subject matter suggest that the whole programme of decoration was symbolic.

The Near Eastern character of the griffin panel was early recognised; the composition is one now termed "heroic encounter".⁴⁵ Yet many modern observers, steeped in Greek art and culture, have read the subject as an Arimaspians grypomachy and wondered what it is doing here.⁴⁶ In the Persian Empire, following the Assyrian tradition of the royal seal, the heroic encounter icon was especially linked with royal authority. By Cool Root's calculation, 10 of the 15 seal types inscribed

ing), where the possibility of a later 5th-century wooden prototype is explored. I am grateful to E. Dusinberre for the reminder that the iconography of the Throne needed study.

43 Risom (1913). Winged youths replace Nikai about 435: Csapo (2010), Cat. No. B11, B18. Quote: Csapo (1993), p. 5.

44 Images of satyrs, sometimes book-ended like this, linked with prizes for or celebrations of Dionysiac victory, are found in 5th and 4th century Attic art. See Csapo (2010), Cat. No. A3 and Cat. No. A4. For an attempt at a reconstruction, see Miller (Forthcoming b).

45 Müller (1886), p. 95 note, described the scene with comparative accuracy as 'Two figures in Median dress who battle lion-griffins' – but Perrot (1888), p. 23–24 actually saw it as Near Eastern. On 'heroic encounter' see Garrison & Cool Root (2001), p. 42–43.

46 Starting with Beulé (1862). Nb its inclusion in Gorbunova (1997), no. 16, pl. 431.

with the name of an Achaemenid King have the “heroic encounter”, either the aggressive *combat* composition or the “hieratic equilibrium” of the *control* composition.⁴⁷ The heroic combat is used to effect on selected doorjambes at Persepolis, but it is especially familiar in Persian glyptic.⁴⁸ In this portable form it could easily have made its way to Greece, as witnessed by the cylinder seal with alleged provenance of Marathon (Figure 6). Imitation of both aspects – control and combat – can be traced in the satrapies.⁴⁹

It can be argued that the griffin panel on the Throne represents a conscious use of such Persian power imagery, a specific quotation that conflates the heroic control and the heroic combat types in a manner that was evidently recognizable to Athenian viewers. In quoting that power imagery, the designer of the Throne chose a composition that obliquely evoked a quality in a manner parallel to the allusive messages of the other components of the Throne: dramatic competition through a cock-fight, choregic competition and victory through a processed tripod, and perpetual authority through Persian-style heroic encounter. If so, the use of the imagery of the last lies decidedly in the realm of Persianism.

PERSIANISM! ODEION OF PERIKLES, REPRISE

The unusual structure, appearance, and associations of the Odeion of Perikles were noted above in the context of a discussion of the few deliberate quotations of the Persian Empire on public monuments in Classical Athens. Noteworthy were the number of its columns, a conversational gambit of Theophrastos’ Chatterbox (*Char.* 3.4) and the large amount of timber used in constructing its (pyramidal) roof, which some said derived from captured Persian ships (Vit. 5.9.1). Possibly the columns were also wood on stone bases (as often at Persepolis). On account of the wood, the pro-Mithridatic Athenian tyrant Aristion, fearing its possible use for siege machinery by Sulla against the Acropolis, destroyed the Odeion of Perikles in the context of Sulla’s capture of Athens in 86 BCE (App., *Mithr.* 38.149).

The later history of the Odeion of Perikles is of particular interest in the context of Hellenistic royal architectural diplomacy: after it was burned in 86 BCE, an Ariobarzanes of Kappadokia chose to rebuild it.⁵⁰ The act of reconstruction, the selection of this particular building as a patronage target, must be taken as deliberate and significant, although our limited sources deny us details that would enable full understanding of the context and semiosis. Vitruvius and Plutarch, major sources of

47 Cool Root (1979), p. 118–122, Cat. XIII. Quote: Garrison & Cool Root (2001), p. 59.

48 For popularity in Persian glyptic: Garrison & Cool Root (2001), p. 54–56. The individual components can be paralleled by sealings on the Persepolis Fortification Tablets of 509–494 BC. See Miller (forthcoming) for comparanda, found in Garrison & Cool Root (2001).

49 See Uehlinger (1999) for production in Palestine, notably ‘heroic control’; Dusinger (2003), fig. 59 and fig. 85 (control schema); fig. 90 and fig. 92 (combat schema) for seals from Sardis excavated by the Butler expedition.

50 Vit. 5.9.1: *exeuntibus e theatro sinistra parte odeum, quod Themistocles columnis lapideis dispositis, navium malis et antennis e spoliis Persicis pertexit, idem autem etiam incensum Mithridatico bello rex Ariobarzanes restituit.*

Fig. 9 Silver drachma of Ariobarzanes II Philopator, King of Cappadocia, 63-52 B.C., 17 mm, 3.98 g. Diademed head / Athena Nikephoros. Photo courtesy: Classical Numismatic Group 222 (2009) lot 197; <http://www.cngcoins.com>.



information for us, knew the successor structure rather than the original; they seem to regard it as a replica of the original. No evidence contradicts that impression, with the exception that the successor possibly had stone columns. Some drums were excavated there in addition to the large amount of ash that may derive from its final destruction in the later 3rd century CE, usually ascribed to the Herulians (CE 267).

Who was Ariobarzanes? It was presumably the second of the new dynasty, that is Philopator, in favour of whom his father, Ariobarzanes I, self-declared 'Philorhomaïos', abdicated 63/62 BCE, about the time that the death of Mithridates VI of Pontus relieved Kappadokia of its greatest foe (63 BCE).⁵¹ The first Ariobarzanes, having been selected by the Kappadokian nobles, spent his over thirty years-long royal career struggling, with Roman help, to keep his throne in the face of threats by Mithridates of Pontus and Tigranes of Armenia. Ariobarzanes' name – whether natal or regnal is unclear – is Persian, and may signal that though he gained his throne with Roman support, he claimed direct descent from the peers of Darius, as had the antecedent Ariarathid dynasty.⁵²

Coinage provides essential evidence for this turbulent period of history on the margins of the growing Roman Empire.⁵³ Ariobarzanes I not only used a Persian name, like his predecessors, but he also retained the former dynasty's coin-type. In the distant past Ariarathid coinage had employed Persianizing imagery (tiarate head on the obverse with reverse of griffin attacking stag or horse themes), but since Ariarathes III in the later 3rd century BCE, a fully Hellenic imagery had been adopted: the obverse portrait on silver issues was typically a diademate head, and an Athena Nikephoros, presumably modelled on the Pheidian statue of Athena in Athens when standing, took the reverse. Yet even while retaining the Ariarathid diademate type, with the adoption of Roman 'veristic' style in the details of his

51 The chronology of this period of Kappadokian history is notoriously difficult, based as it is on limited historical sources, backed by numismatics. For an overview, see Sullivan (1990), p. 51–58 and 174–77; detailed discussion of some of the problems, e.g.: Sherwin-White (1977); Dmitriev (2006). Sullivan (1990), p. 57, points out that the epithet 'philorhomaïos' was an innovation of Ariobarzanes I, with mixed results. Abdication of Ariobarzanes I in favour of his son: App., *Mithr.* 15.105; Val. Max. 5.7, ext. 2.

52 Sullivan (1990), p. 56–57.

53 Numismatic evidence: Simonetta (1977), p. 39–49 for Ariobarzanes I–III. The main outline was already established by Reinach (1888), p. 56–64, followed by Wroth (1899), p. xxxii–xxxiii, 39–42.

portraiture, Ariobarzanes I declared his political allegiance.⁵⁴ Very few issues of his son, Ariobarzanes II Philopator, survive, but they are enough to show that he followed his father's lead in all lines of appeal: Persian name, Greek cognomen, Hellenic coin-type, with moderately Roman 'veristic' (with pointed nose) diademe portrait (Figure 9).

Athenian epigraphy bears witness to the activities of the Kappadokian dynasty in Athens in the 1st century BCE. One important Athenian inscription commemorating the many activities of the corps of ephebes includes an Ariobarzanes along with an Ariarathes in the list of ephebes appended at the end.⁵⁵ Unfortunately the inscription is lacunose at this point; a patronymic King Ariobarzanes appears to be present, but the case of the associated *philorhormai-* is unclear. The archon's name is missing, rendering its precise date a matter of dispute: if the decree dates 80/79, as commonly suggested, it may indicate that Ariobarzanes II participated in the Athenian ephebeia along with his brother, testimony, it would seem, to an education in Athens, perhaps during one of his father's many periods of exile. There is, however, otherwise no trace of a second son of Ariobarzanes I named Ariarathes, though one may well have existed;⁵⁶ certainly Ariobarzanes II had as sons both an Ariobarzanes and an Ariarathes, who succeeded him sequentially. Hence the suggestion by Mattingly that the decree be dated 65/64 and by Sullivan that the royal Kappadokians here belong to the third generation, the sons of Ariobarzanes II.⁵⁷ The same inscription attests to the fact that in the 1st century BCE ephebes played an active role in the ritual life of the city, including participation in the Dionysia. If the decree dates early and refers to Ariobarzanes II, son of Ariobarzanes I Philorhormaios, he was in Athens only a few years after the Odeion's destruction of 86 BCE and in this capacity took part in the annual Dionysiac procession along the old Street of the Tripods from the Agora past the then burned-out Odeion to the Sanctuary of Dionysos. If not he but his sons are here attested, the decree nevertheless provides a strong link with Athens and with its personal awareness on the part of Ariobarzanes II of the sad state of the famous Odeion after 86 BCE.

In any event, on one inscription known since 1743, Ariobarzanes II is named as sponsor of the rebuilding of the Odeion by the three architects in charge of the project, Melanippos and two with distinctly Latin names, Gaius and Marcus Stallius. On a second inscription, inscribed on a column drum that Kastriotis linked with the

54 For the "philorhormaios" type: Smith (1988), p. 130–134; Fleischer (1996), p. 37.

55 The list of ephebes: *JG II*² 1039 = *SEG* 22, no. 110, a more complete reading, dating inscription 79/78. Ariobarzanes and Ariarathes are named at col. II, 99. Habicht (1997), p. 336 accepts date of 80/79. Confidence in the matter is made more challenging by the fact that the crucial fragment is reported missing as of 1988 (*SEG* 38, no. 117). Perrin-Saminadayar (2008), p. 643–644, stresses the role of the ephebes in city ritual / festival activities.

56 The possibility has been observed by Badian (1969), p. 249, and in view of the complicated circumstances around the appointment of Ariobarzanes I, a nod towards the preceding Ariarathid dynasty in the naming of his own children may well be expected of him. There simply is insufficient evidence for this period for certainty.

57 Mattingly (1979), p. 166–167; Sullivan (1990), p. 176 and n. 108. Mattingly's dating has not been generally accepted.

rebuilt Odeion, the Athenian *demos* hails Ariobarzanes II as *euergetes*.⁵⁸ The phenomenon of Hellenistic royal euergetism is well known. The Attalid kings of Pergamon had mastered the art of architectural branding, their distinctive column capital declaring their patronage on stoas at sanctuaries and in towns in old Greece. The other Macedonian dynasties – the Seleukids, Antigonids and Ptolemies – did the same, though without a designer column type to advertise their patronage; they relied, rather, on prominent attic inscriptions.⁵⁹ The Persian dynasties, in contrast, did not generally 'do' this form of euergetism in old Greece.⁶⁰ Why did Ariobarzanes rebuild the Odeion?

One possible interpretation of the rhetoric of reconstruction was that it broadcasted Sulla's victory over Mithridates as a latter-day Xerxes; this would be an act of *pietas* as Sulla had returned Ariobarzanes I to rule in 92 and 85 BCE.⁶¹ Sullivan took the act of reconstruction as a normalization of relations between Kappadokia and Athens.⁶² Indeed, the allusion to the Athenian glorious past, through the agency of contemporary Roman design skills, adroitly massaged a wounded people. But in the delicate balance of Ariobarzanes' world perhaps the propagandee was not so much the people of Athens or even Rome, but closer to home, where a pro-Pontic faction still plotted. Hints of internal opposition in Kappadokia appear in our limited sources.⁶³ Building a Persian-looking structure in Athens might aid Ariobarzanes' struggle to keep the hearts and minds of the Kappadokians, riddled with intrigue owing to the machinations of the kings of Pontus and Armenia. By this means he essentially lay claim to being 'more Persian' than his neighbours.

In the complex of relations between ambitious neighbours and an expanding Rome, Ariobarzanes' appeal to the authority of the Odeion drew as much on its quality as a Persian as an Athenian monument. He could claim to be at once heir to

58 *IG II/III*² 3426 and 3427 (excavated in the Theatre in 1862), in both of which his parentage and nomenclature confirm the individual: "King Ariobarzanes Philopator, son of King Ariobarzanes Philorhomaïos and of Queen Athenais Philostorgos", Kastriotis (1914), p. 159, notes the presence of anathyrosis and cuttings at both ends of *IG II/III*² 3427 suggesting to him that the column was architectural rather than votive. Another reading would see it as a statue base; so, Habicht (1997), p. 336.

59 Martin (1974), p. 154–156 on Attalid; Pollitt (1986), p. 275–284; Hurwitt (1999), p. 272–274 on Seleukid and Attalid. For Athens, many are noted in Rathmann (2010), p. 69–70 and fully explored by Perrin-Saminadayar (2008), p. 137–169. Internationally the most consistent cluster showing the most adroit employment, the stoa, can be traced more widely in Coulton (1976), p. 55–74.

60 One possible exception is the North Stoa of the Agora of Priene, ascribed on the basis of a fragmentary inscription to Oropharynges or Ariarathes of Kappadokia: Wiegand & Schrader (1904), p. 215, fig. 208, as an architrave inscription. Miller (1978), p. 123–124 tried to disassociate the stoa from the battered inscription, suggesting that it derived from something like a statue base. While a statue would be more analogous to the examples of euergetism in Athens, the scale of the letters, each about 0.20 m. in breadth, better befits the architectural placement originally assigned.

61 Plut., *Sulla* 5.6, 22.9; App., *Mithr.* 57–58; Liv., *Per.* 70.

62 Sullivan (1990), p. 176.

63 e.g. Cic., *ad fam.* 15.4.6; and the appearance of 'Kappadokians' among the pro-Mithridatic defenders of Piraeus against Sulla (App., *Mithr.* 30).

an imperial Persian past *and* benefactor of contemporary Athens, and in so doing hope to secure his own future. If such was his aim, it did not work. He was assassinated in 52 BCE and shortly afterwards his son, Ariobarzanes III, found himself under threat (Cic., *ad fam.* 15.2.6).

CONCLUSION

It is a basic principle of historical reception studies that after such a lapse of time it is very difficult to be confident that one's reading of the intended message (and the actual response of the recipient) is secure. Classical literature attests to the intensity of the ancient discussion about and engagement with the problem of Persia; the pattern of misrepresentations and distortions that scholars have pointed to as the dawn of modern Orientalism in literature is genuine and part of the complex process of coping with social and political stress. Some of the Attic iconography relating to Persians in the 5th century is orientalist in tendency.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, the growing idea of Persia provided an important point of reference in Athens. Its ruling class set a standard of elegant behaviour in dress and life-style that was selectively emulated at Athens. Sometimes 'Persia' was an escapist haven: in Xenophon's *Kyropaideia* and the monumental relief lekythos of Xenophantos, Persia becomes a kind of mythical utopia.⁶⁵ Some of the Orientalism visible in the literature manifestly arose in response to fear of the actual power – financial and military – held by the King of the Achaemenid Persian Empire whose agents carefully manipulated the latter stages of the Peloponnesian War.

In Athens, the lasting inheritance is difficult to assess. Perserie had taken a number of forms (material and social) and had a range of associated semantic values. In order for allusion to Persian goods and modes to function meaningfully, immediate recognition of the referent was required of the target audience. The interaction between maker / commissioner and viewer then became more of a dialogue, as the item or act was read and interpreted in circles of communication against a background of understanding. Such visual dialogue provides a social context for the emergence of Persianism perhaps even already in the 4th century BCE; the appearance on the Throne of the Priest of Dionysos of a version of the Persian 'heroic encounter' that conflates the 'combat' and the 'control' types of royal Persian

64 E. g. camel rider of Attic red-figured pelike, Würzburg H4803, name-vase of the Painter of the Würzburg Camel, 440–430, ARV² 1219.1; BADB 216607; Koch & Rehm (2006), p. 150. Luxuriant court scene of Attic red-figured volute krater, Vienna AS IB 158, attributed to the Meleager Painter, ca. 400, ARV 1408.1; BADB 217917; Koch & Rehm (2006), p. 168. The latter is discussed by Llewellyn-Jones, this volume.

65 Hunt in a paradeisos: Attic red-figured relief squat lekythos, signed by Xenophantos, St. Petersburg Π1837.2, ca. 400, ARV² 1407.1; BADB 217907; Lezzi-Hafter (2008). Imagery discussed: Miller (2003); I do not accept the interpretation of Franks (2009), though she usefully introduces the concept of the *eschata*. The lekythos is discussed more fully by Llewellyn-Jones, this volume.

glyptic is best explained as nascent Persianism as it captures and conveys an idea of Persian authority transplanted into the heart of Athens.⁶⁶

It has been proposed above that the Odeion of Perikles in its initial construction is an instance of *perserie* rather than Persianism. The peculiar features of the structure that so deviated from standard Greek architectural practise in design, elevation and siting, attracted attention throughout its existence. An endangered Kappadokian king chose to rebuild it, evidently to the same design specifications albeit with a possible substitution of stone for wooden columns at least in part. This extraordinary decision is unlikely to have arisen from nostalgic sentiment relating to a time of happiness in a former place of exile; it is surely an act of true Persianism, a laying claim to a glorious imperial past on the part of a client-king of Rome desperate to craft a safety net of the divergent strands of his life (Kappadokian with Armenian and Pontic) on the safe ground of Athens under circumstances that declared loyalty to Rome.

66 In Miller (forthcoming) it is argued that the mid-4th century marble throne may be a replica of an original wooden throne of the previous century. In this case, the Persianism suspected in its detail would also need to be retrojected to the 5th century.

‘OPEN SESAME!’ ORIENTALIST FANTASY AND THE PERSIAN COURT IN GREEK ART 430–330 BCE

Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones

From the time they first encountered the military victories of Cyrus II in Asia Minor and first began to conceive of a powerful threat from the east, successive generations of Greeks fantasized, rhapsodized, feared, and scare-mongered about the delights and dangers of the Persians. We cannot underestimate the remarkable hold which the Persian Great King, his splendid and sophisticated court, and his vast and seemingly unending empire exerted over the Greek imagination. Greek art of the late Archaic period and throughout the Classical age erupts with an plenitude of images that are intended to show the Oriental Otherness of the Persians, representing them as pampered playboys, absolute despots, or as effeminised and defeated combatants. Greek literature overflows too with references to all kinds of diverse Persian exotica: Persian-sounding (but fake) names, references to tribute, to *proskynesis*, law, impalement, the King’s Eye, good roads, eunuchs, gardens, concubines, drinking, and gold. Christopher Tuplin presents a useful catalogue of the Persians as seen through Greek eyes:

They ... possess a large empire ... whose only (other) physical, floral or faunal characteristics are extremes of heat and cold, mountains, citrus fruit, camels, horses, peacocks, cocks, (perhaps) lions for hunting, *paradeisoi*, road systems measured in *parasangs* and travelled by escorted ambassadors and official messengers ... There is great wealth ... Persians are liable to pride, hauteur, and inaccessibility ... They enjoy a luxurious life-style (exemplified by clothing, textiles, food and drink, tableware, means of transport, fans and fly-whisks, furniture) in a positively organized, regimented fashion: but the queens are sexually virtuous and sometimes energetically warlike ... Their policy is defined by a tyrannical ideology and systems of differential behaviour and hierarchical control which deny equality ... [They] value mere power and are inimical to the principal of Law – except that there have been ‘good’ Persian kings to whom some of this does not apply. Eunuchs will be encountered; and impalement or crucifixion is employed as a punishment.¹

Such representations helped to mould ancient Greek self-identity.² It is interesting to note that from the late Archaic age to the era of Alexander of Macedon’s conquest of the Achaemenid Empire, each successive generation of Greeks had its own particular way of reconfirming, as needed, national identity against the ever-changing yet ever-present external Persian threat. The infamous cultural construction of the Persian as barbarian has been best explored in its fifth century context, but in this chapter I will concentrate on less familiar images of the Great Kings and their courts in fourth-century Greek sources, chiefly through the material evidence con-

1 Tuplin (1996), p. 164. For a further discussion of the sheer variety of ways in which Greek culture encountered the Persians see Miller (2006/7), p. 109–123.

2 The theme propounded by Hall (1989).

tained in vase paintings created (roughly) over a short period of fifty years between 380 and 330 BCE. These images drew on stereotypes of the Persians created in an earlier time, although they were softened and refined to make an adroit comment about a very different understanding of Persia in the decades following the Peace of Callias. The terror that the Greeks had so clearly felt during Xerxes' invasion, which in itself resulted in two-decades' worth of artistic images intended to belittle, humiliate, demean, and distance the Persian foe (the most notorious example of which is the so-called 'Eurymedon vase' of c. 465 BCE), had been neutralized at the end of the century through increasing diplomacy, negotiation, and trade with the Achaemenid Empire.³ As a consequence, in the period 430–330 BCE, the artistic vision of Persia underwent a paradigmatic shift in style and purpose as the 'barbarian' figure, devised through fear, confusion, and hostility, slipped into redundancy.

ENCOUNTERING POST-WAR PERSIA: THE LITERARY LANDSCAPE

Throughout the era of the Peloponnesian War and into much of the fourth century BCE the Persians remained central to the Greek world-view. The Persians were still a military, political, and economic power and although they remained an uneasy presence in the Aegean, any immediate danger they presented to the Greek mainland had been suspended through peace negotiations and diplomatic exchange. But Persia was very much part of the fourth century Greek cultural zeitgeist.

In literature the memory of the longstanding Persian involvement in Greek affairs continued to flourish and we know of several fourth-century tragedies with subjects set in the era of the Persian Wars: Theodectas' *Mausolus* (72 TgrF T 6–7) and Moschion's *Themistocles* (97 TgrF F 1) are cases in point. Moschion's play certainly included a vivid description of a battle, echoing Aeschylus' surviving *Persai* and the Persian War narrative itself seems to have undergone what might be seen as a canonization process in tragic theatre (as well as in oratory and historiography) during the fourth century. Lyric poetry also kept the image of Persia vital: apart from Simonides' lyric poem on Salamis (fr. 536), by the close of the fifth century BCE Choerilus of Samos' epic *Persica* was dealing in hexameter with Xerxes' invasion, while in 410/09 BCE the remarkable *Persai* of Timotheus of Miletus received its premiere. This flamboyantly baroque concert aria for solo voice involved the performer imitating a host of Persians, from the pidgin-Greek speaking soldiery to the lofty lamentations of Xerxes himself. All in all, as James Horden perceptively notes, 'the fourth century was ... clearly a fruitful time ... for Athenian interest in the [Persian] Wars', and he suggests that the upsurge in poetic activity which centred around the Wars can be explained by 'the political difficulties experienced by Athens in their resistance to Macedon.'⁴

3 For a new reading of the Eurymedon Vase see Llewellyn-Jones (2016). On the image of the Persian in Attic art, as well as on diplomacy between Greece and the Empire see most importantly Miller (1997).

4 Horden (2002), p. 123; Hall (2006), p. 270–87.

In addition to tragedy and lyric, a particular vogue for *Persica* flourished in this period too, through the works of Ctesias, Deinon, and Heracleides (indeed, even parts of Herodotus' Histories can be read as *Persica* too).⁵ *Persica* is the name given to a particular field of Greek history writing which developed throughout the fifth and fourth centuries BCE; they are works written about the Persians and their empire at the time when the Achaemenid dynasty was ruling the biggest land empire the world had ever seen.⁶ But the *Persica* focused their attentions not on the Empire itself, but on the somewhat enclosed world of the Persian court. In fact, Ctesias' *Persica*, the most influential of the genre, can be classified as a 'Court History', a style of history-writing that was perhaps current in Babylonia and the Levant in the later Achaemenid age and which centered on the affairs at the heart of government and, specifically, at the royal court.

As a consequence of the popularity of the court-centred *Persica*, the fourth-century view of Persia is, at best, one-sided and the realities of fourth-century Persian history are imperfectly understood. We do know however that the Persia of the late fifth- to mid-fourth-centuries was far from the moribund state depicted by Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Isocrates and others, but nevertheless the image of the inevitable Persian slide from greatness into degeneracy was the standard trajectory of the most dominant Greek narrative.⁷ Certainly the Epilogue of the *Cyropaedia* (8, 1–27) gives that impression, with its overarching desire to depict Persia at the nadir of its moral depravity, a technique achieved through the ruse of looking back to Persia's brief Golden Age – the reign of Cyrus – and comparing that halcyon age with the moral and political bankruptcy of a contemporary Persia. 'I maintain,' says the author (*possibly* Xenophon, but probably not), 'that the Persians of the present day... are less reverent towards to gods, less dutiful to their kin, less upright in their treatment of men, and less brave in warfare than they were of old' (8, 27).⁸ This *topos* is aired again in Isocrates' masterful anti-Persian rant of 380 BCE, the *Panathenaikos* where the easterners are cast as hostage to 'lack of discipline, softness, servility, combined with arrogance, luxury and corruption.'⁹ In a similar vein, but taking an even broader historical narrative sweep, in Book 3 of the *Laws* (c. 360 BCE) Plato reserves a relatively long exposition for Persian society (II, 639 c-698 a), dedicated by and large to a description of, and explanation for, its decadence and degeneracy.

5 See Llewellyn-Jones and Robson (2009) for a full discussion of the genre of *Persica*.

6 Of course the Greek fascination with Persia was reflected in literary genres other than *Persica* proper: Persia is frequently alluded to in legal orations, histories, drama, poetry, novels, and philosophy. See Stevenson (1997), p. 1–3 and Georges 1994. On the Greek interaction with the Persian world see Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2001.

7 Arguments for the flourishing of the empire under the later Achaemenids and into the reign of Darius III are neatly synthesized by Briant (2003). Nevertheless, it must be conceded that things were not always going well for the Persian Empire throughout the fourth century. For a narrative overview see Briant (2002), p. 681–90 and Dandamaev (1989), p. 306–13. See also Starr (1975) and (1977). For arguments for a deeply pejorative Greek view of the Persians see Isaac (2004), p. 257–303. For a counter-argument see Gruen (2011).

8 See, for example, comments by Hirsch (1985), p. 142.

9 Isaac (2006), p. 285–86; for a good overview and response to Isocrates' anti-Persian rhetoric see Erskine (2003), p. 88–93.

In a passage informed more by Greek prejudice than historical fact, Plato insists that ‘the Persians have failed to halt on the downward slope of decadence (*truphē*)’ (697 c).¹⁰

GREEK ORIENTALIST ART: PERSIA OF THE IMAGINATION

Set against these literary constructions of the decadence of the Persian court and Empire, the artistic vision of Persia created by the Greeks in the fourth century takes the fantasy of Achaemenid palace life to a new level of imaginary conjecture and offers some surprising evaluations of Persian culture. Of course, it is important to remember, as Margaret Miller emphasizes, that the hundred-or-so surviving images of Persians created by Greek artists ‘are not historical facts to be slotted into discussions of chronology or military history.’ Rather they express how the Persians were conceived of in the ever-shifting Greek mind-set. She rightly notes that painters, ‘drew on a variety of sources to inform their rendering of the Persians: autopsy, artistic traditions for depicting other Easterners (notably Scythians ...), and fantasy.’¹¹ Each of these facets are encountered with varying degrees of prominence in the vase-paintings of 380–330 BCE, although I have little doubt that in addition to the three signifiers Miller identifies, the painted representations of the Persian court were also informed by the popular literary imaginings taken from tragedy, comedy, historiography, and political rhetoric. If we read the images as adjuncts to, or better yet, deviations *from*, the literary *topoi*, then we truly enter into the world of *le roi imaginaire*. In these artworks we are permitted access into the inner court of the Persian ruler and we encounter a rich *mélange* of subject matter and a heady mixture of themes: revelry, sport, slavery, power, riches, and sheer opulence – in brief, the Greek artists fixate on the most eye-catching of all the Orientalist clichés.

The form of Orientalism encountered in these vase scenes is not, however, of the Saidian sort; the ideology which created the Greek images does not operate around the nexus of power, dominance, and hegemony which Edward Said identified and promoted as his central thesis.¹² In fact, Miller has rightly observed that, ‘the Orientalist discourse of classical Athens developed precisely to mask the real power structures.’¹³ No, the particular sort of opulent visual Orientalism encountered in the fourth-century vase paintings can best be understood by viewing them through Alain Grosrichard’s fascinating 1979 work *Structure de séraïl* (published in 1998 in English as *The Sultan’s Court*) since he regards the supposedly enigmatic and opaque royal court as the *locus classicus* of the Western fantasy of ‘Oriental

10 The contrast between the fates of the two pairs of kings (Cyrus-Darius/Cambyses-Xerxes) is equally unreal. The pairing occurs elsewhere in Pl. *Ep.* 332AB, 320D; *Phaed.* 258C. Antisthenes apparently wrote two dialogues on the pairing of Cyrus and Darius.

11 Miller (2006/07), p. 109.

12 Said (1978).

13 Miller (2006).



Fig. 1 Line-drawing of an Apulian *volute-krater* by the Darius Painter ('the Darius Vase'), Museo Archaeologico Nazionale, Naples (H3253)

Despotism.¹⁴ The figure of the Eastern ruler and of his viziers, bodyguards, slaves, eunuchs, and countless wives and concubines is central to this visualization of the court as the ultimate phantasmal 'Other' and, for his part, the Eastern monarch is to be seen primarily as a 'despot of enjoyment'; he consumes and even wastes an endless supply of desirables – women, food, wine, clothes, slaves, and even territories. For Grosrichard, 'Oriental Despotism' is not a system of brute force, but in terms of fantasy it is all about the excesses of pleasure and obedience. This, I believe, is what motivates Greek Orientalism for, as we now know, while the Greeks professed to despise the soft-living Persians and their luxurious Empire, they nonetheless readily and enthusiastically adopted the trappings of that imperial system.¹⁵ The fourth-century vase images of Persian court life are crafted through the eyes of inquisitive and aspirational outsiders; they are not critical of the Persians, nor do they lampoon the king or disparage the life of his court.¹⁶ On the contrary, the images' creation are motivated as much by the desire to own, enjoy, and indulge in the lifestyle they depict as they are by the inherent Greek need to express difference and diversity.

14 Grosrichard (1998). See further discussion in Llewellyn-Jones (2013b).

15 Miller (1997) and (2006/07).

16 In this I depart from Miller who, in her studies, tends to read a more disparaging tone into the representations. For a more extreme view see Isaac (2004).

Undeniably some of the representations encountered in the vase-paintings are informed by literary descriptions but others come from autopsy and the real-life experiences of the Greeks who encountered artefacts and images from the Persian Empire as part of a lived reality.¹⁷ How much these genuine Achaemenid products or motifs were understood and contextualized by the Greeks is open to debate, although I tend to be of the opinion that the nuances and intricacies of Persian culture were largely misunderstood or, more possibly, ignored. This offhand approach to the subtleties of Persian life resulted in some strange distortions of the Persian-created imagery as Greek artists reconfigured Achaemenid motifs and details and gave them a Hellenic spin (Miller neatly labels these follies ‘minor perversions’) which may reflect shifting ideologies or may simply be a product of a deep-centred artistic construct and language.¹⁸

PICTURING KING AND COURT

Let us start the investigation with one of the best-known fourth-century Greek renderings of the Persian court: an Apulian *volute-krater* known as the Darius Vase (Figure 1). Dated to c. 430 BCE, this huge and imposing vase, ornate in its intricate visualization of three registers of action, is typical of the Orientalizing trend in the depiction of the luxury-loving Persians.¹⁹ Edith Hall has suggested that it is in fact evidence for a splendid (but unknown) fourth-century play about the Persian invasion of 490 BCE. Certainly, a theatre setting for the vase-scene is plausible, but it would be short-sighted to limit it to only that context, and, of course, we must in no way think of it as a photographic record of a particular staging of some lost fourth century tragic *Persai*.

The centre of the *volute-krater* shows the enthroned, named, and imperious figure of the sceptre-bearing Great King Darius who dominates the scene in his gorgeous patterned robes and with an elaborate *kidaris* (or *tiara*) crowing his head.²⁰ A messenger stands to his side (i.e. in front of the king; the artist is rendering three-dimensions in a two-dimensional medium) and he holds up the fingers of his right hand as he makes a pronouncement. The round podium on which he stands bears the inscription *PERSAI*, which might refer to the title of the play or, more probably, to the location of the scene – the royal court in the city of the Persians. The messenger could well be a Greek, judging from his *pilos* and travelling cloak – the traditional get-up of the tragic messenger – although there is a possibility, of course, that he is a Persian messenger newly returned from Greece. His Greek clothing is not a cause for concern even if he is a Persian because in the topsy-turvy

17 As Miller (2006/07), p. 109 notes: ‘it is unlikely that there was anyone in Athens who had not clapped eyes on a person or an artefact from the empire.’

18 Miller (2006/07), p. 120.

19 On the dating of the vase and general interpretations of its iconography see Schmidt (1960); Dumas (1985); Sommerstein (1996), p. 69; Taplin (2007), p. 235–37, with a fine colour plate 92; Hall (1989), p. 84; Shapiro (2009), p. 84–85.

20 Tuplin (2007).

world of the Greek invention of the Persian court, several of Darius' councillors wear Greek *himatia* too. This is a familiar artistic conceit, and is even encountered in an earlier representation of a Persian king on a red-figure *skyphos* by (a follower of?) Douris (c. 450 BCE). No doubt based on genuine royal images of the so-called 'archer-king' found on gold Darics, this ruler too is depicted holding a bow and a spear, but he wears a *himation* slung over his zig-zag-patterned trousers and his long-sleeved tunic; it is, of course, a fantastical ensemble and has no relation to actual Achaemenid dress-codes.²¹

On the Darius Vase the Great King is flanked by an armed bodyguard holding spears and a scimitar, and he is attended too by a group of aged councillors, three of whom wear Oriental costume; two of the courtiers appear to be especially perturbed or agitated and are in the thick of a debate, judging from their animated gesticulation and the body language they adopt. Several councillors lean forward into the scene, intent on listening. For his part though, the Great King looks majestically aloof and calm.

Set in between two incense burners, the lowest register shows a royal treasurer seated at a low table (this cannot be another representation of Darius; the figure, in a Greek *himation* and short beard, is far too plebeian for that of a Great King). He is a royal treasurer or clerk (a representative of the monarch), counting pebbles and arranging them into correct columns as he tallies up on his wax tablet the value of the goods pouring in from the Empire in the form of tribute, brought to the court by well-dressed satraps who appear before him: there is a sack of money (?) about to be placed on the table and some gold or silver dishes being proffered too. This will all help provide funding for the war effort against Greece. The three empty-handed satraps perform an elaborate obeisance; their gift-giving has already taken place.

Taken together, the two court scenes on the Darius Vase suggest, on the most obvious reading, a (highly imaginative) moment around 490 BCE when the Persians set themselves on the course for war with Greece. But the outcome of the war is preordained: the top register leads the viewer into the divine plane, and in an almost Homeric assemblage of Greek gods, paralleling the Persian War Council below. Shapiro sensibly suggests that the Darius Vase presents a depiction of the clash of civilizations, played out in the opening decades of the fifth century BCE. The scene, with its 'delusional air of unreality' is a radical departure from the traditions of vase painting: 'no other artist has attempted ... to envisage a specific moment in the history of the confrontation between Persia and Greece,' Shapiro goes on to emphasize. I have suggested (elsewhere) that the conflict can actually be read on several layers and that the war-mongering Great King Darius can be read as any of the three Achaemenid monarchs who bore that throne-name.²² Yet behind the complex narrative and multi-layered chronological possibilities, the vase scene is conceived of in an entirely Greek manner and depicts the Persians in a way that conforms entirely to their views of Achaemenid hierarchy. The Great King is socially superior and sits above his subjects' heads, although a meaningful interaction

21 Berlin, Antikensammlung SMB, Inv. Nr.V.I. 3156. See Hansen, Wiczorek and Tellenbach (2009), p. 293, Cat. 111; Millar (1997), p. 74 and fig. 25.

22 Llewellyn-Jones (2012).

between sovereign and councillors is suggested – an image drawn from Herodotus' constitutional debate of Book 3 of the *Histories*, and other such Greek conceptions of the Great King in council. The middle register is, of course, a formal audience scene, while the lower register allows us to look at the workings of the Imperial bureaucracy inside the palaces' treasuries. The vase-painter steers us towards believing that we are observing the complex working-life of the Persian court.

In both registers many of the Persians wear what, at first glance, looks like Greek theatrical costume – sleeved and elaborately patterned robes and tall head-dresses – but it is hard to verify if these are theatre costumes *per se*: throughout the fifth century the Greek representation of Persians and other Orientals blurred the reality of dress with the costume of the stage, so that it is impossible to accurately tweak out the pure imaginary from the deliberately theatrical. Generally speaking the Greeks expressed distaste for what might be perceived as 'modification of body shape' through clothing: this can be seen in their attitudes to 'barbarian' dress, and in particular the shaped garments (sleeved tunics and coats, as well as trousers and other forms of leg-coverings) of the Persians. Achaemenid cavalry dress (erroneously termed 'Median' dress by the Greeks – an inaccuracy which still blights scholarship), for instance, consisted of a pair of trousers, a pair of *anaxyrides* (leather or suede 'chaps'), and a sleeved-tunic (*ependytēs*) long enough to be secured around the waist with a belt. The ensemble could be augmented with a coat with long hanging-sleeves (*kandys*) often draped over the shoulders like a cape, sometimes fastened over the chest with ties. The Greeks were as much fascinated with this outfit as they were puzzled and repelled by it. According to Herodotus, in the period before Marathon the Greeks were terrified by the sight of Persian garb and it was the Athenians who 'were the first Greeks ... to endure seeing Persian dress and the men who wore it.'²³ Yet by the opening decades of the fourth century, the Persian sleeved coats and fitted trousers were regarded as 'the most beautiful of all garments' and Xenophon was much struck by their splendour, noting (*Cyr.* 8.1.0):

Cyrus held the opinion that a monarch ought to excel his subjects, not only by being better than them, but by holding them under his spell. At any rate, he chose to wear the 'Median' style of dress himself (i. e., the riding habit), and persuaded his followers to adopt it too because he thought that if anyone had a personal physical defect that this clothing would help conceal it and that it made the wearer look very tall and handsome.

The depiction of eastern costume (a word I use deliberately to contrast with 'dress') had been vacillating, shifting, and changing in the half century or so since the Oriental first entered into the Attic artistic repertoire c. 520 BCE.²⁴ By the early fifth century a standard fantastical oriental costume had been created by Attic artists and the fully-covered Persian body was used as a stark contrast to the heroic nakedness of the Greek.²⁵ In the later vase paintings, however, the shaped and highly-deco-

23 Hdt. 6. 112.

24 See, for instance, the earliest known image of a king or satrap on a black-figure neck-amphora: Florence, Museo Archeologico 3845; Shapiro (2009), p. 59, fig. 3.1.

25 Llewellyn-Jones (2016).

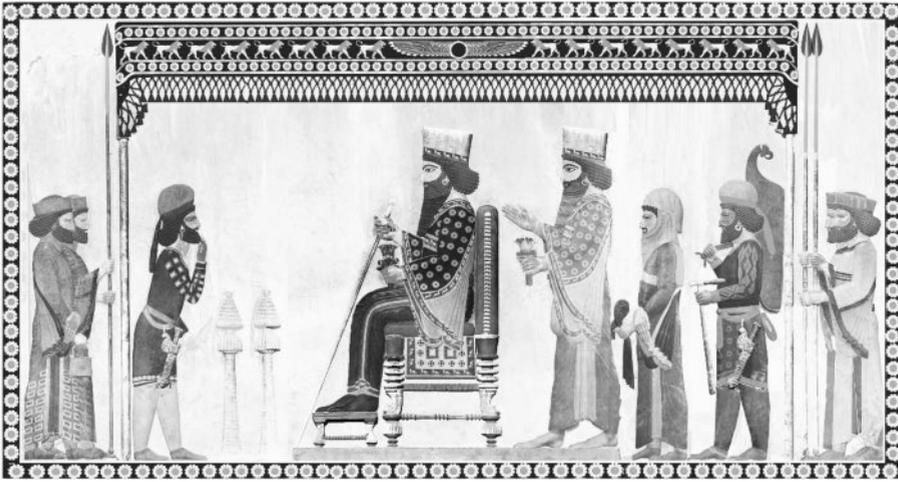


Fig. 2 Reconstruction of the audience scene relief from Persepolis, courtesy of Persepolis 3D.com

rated garments, so splendidly codified in the Darius Vase's Great King, are admired for their exotic beauty and demarcate Persian luxury from Greek austerity. However, I suggest that alongside the gorgeous robes and elaborate thrones depicted on the vase, there is a trace of the historically verifiable in the composition of the scene. Undoubtedly there are bone fide Achaemenid motifs located on the vase: the salaaming postures of the satraps in the lower register of the vase correspond neatly with figures found in a similar position on the base of a monumental Egyptian-style statue of Darius I from Susa; likewise the representation the spear-bearer behind Darius' throne (looking very much at ease with his ankles crossed and a scimitar casually slung over his shoulder), is, to all intents and purposes, fashioned on bodyguards regularly depicted (but depicted upright and standing to attention) on Achaemenid brick-reliefs from Susa, or relief sculpture from Persepolis, and the Bisitun relief of Darius I shows the king accompanied by weapon-bearers. The throne and footstool of the king are also lifted from the genuine Achaemenid artistic repertoire.²⁶

The Darius Vase's Achaemenid-style motifs appear to have been taken from authentic Persian iconographic sources in an informed way, suggesting that Greeks artists could be surprisingly *au fait* with centralized Persian royal imagery.²⁷ Indeed, the over-all feel of the audience scene is fashioned after the royal audience scene motif, an intricate iconographical composition that was deliberately disseminated by the central authority throughout the Empire in the form of painted stone reliefs (Figure 2), seals, gemstones, and other types of inlaid jewellery, and even in

26 See discussion in Llewellyn-Jones (2013a), p. 70–71.

27 On the process of how this informed use of Achaemenid imagery might have occurred see especially Miller (1988). On the dissemination of the Imperial audience-scene image see especially Allen (2005). On the cultural and artistic interaction between Greece and Persia, especially in Asia Minor, see: Dusinberre (2003); Llewellyn-Jones (2010); Roosevelt (2009). For a fuller picture of the cultural interaction see Darbandi and Zournatzi (2008) and Vlassopoulos (2013).

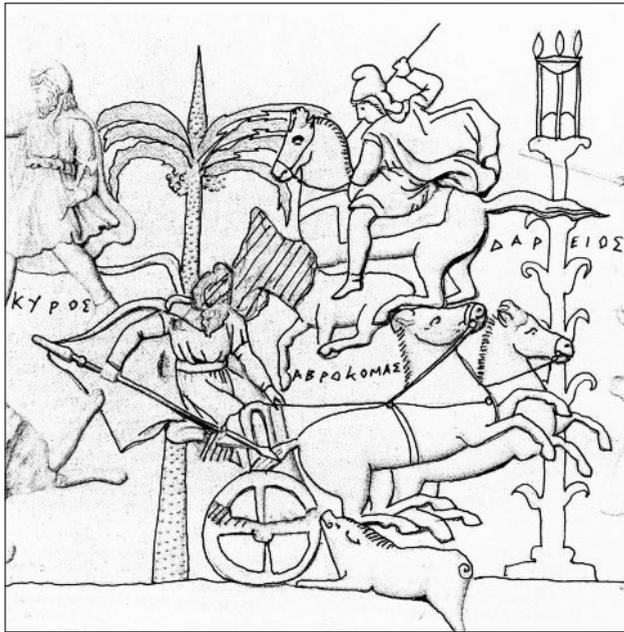


Fig. 3 Line-drawing of a detail from the Xenophanes lekythos showing hunting scenes; St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum P 1837.2.

painted leather panels and woven textiles, such as those reported to have decorated Alexander III's funeral catafalque.²⁸ It must have remained a well-known image throughout the lifespan of the Achaemenid dynasty because an unexpected detail taken from the 'Alexander Sarcophagus' from Sidon (c. 325–311 BCE) depicts – inside a Persian soldier's shield – an exact reproduction of the standard Imperial audience scene.²⁹

An interplay of genuine Achaemenid motifs and decidedly Greek visualizations of the Persian world are encountered in this important vase-painting as it skillfully plays on important Greek constructions of 'self' and 'other.' The same strain is encountered on a relief-scene on a squat *lekythos* of c. 380 BCE, signed by the Athenian artist Xenophantos (a detail is shown in Figure 3). It is a fascinating fantasy, a riff on one of the most important features of Persian court life: the royal hunt in a *paradisos*.³⁰ The body of the *lekythos* is loosely divided into two registers: at the base of the vase a charioteer named Abrokomas delivers a death blow to a wild boar while above him, mounted on a white horse, a youthful looking Darius spears a wounded deer. To the left of Darius are a group of Persians: the bearded Cyrus

28 D.S. 18.26.6.

29 See Allen (2005), p. 61, fig. 9.

30 St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum P 1837.2. For details see Stephani (1866); Tiverios (1997); Miller (2003); Cohen (2006), p. 141–2. See also Boardman (2000), p. 213–6 and Shapiro (2009), p. 83–4. On hunting as an Achaemenid Persian courtly art see Llewellyn-Jones (2013a), p. 129–133. The hunt theme is taken up by Xenophantos on other occasions too. In fact, the vase belongs to a group of six similar *lekythoi*, each of which depicts a hunt (of boar, lion, or deer), and all of which have been attributed to a single workshop. See Miller (2003), p. 32 with fig. 2.9.

holding an axe, moves towards his hunting dog which jumps up eagerly to greet him but is prevented from doing so by an unnamed page. To the left of Darius three Persians finish off another boar: the bearded Eurylaos aims his spear at it, Klytios (almost erased from the vase) thrusts his spear into its neck, and an unnamed youth awkwardly delivers a back thrust with his javelin. In the lower register, two hunters of two mythical beasts, a griffin and a horned lion-griffin, are named as Artamis and Seisames.³¹

In this lively (if somewhat chaotic) scene the worlds of fantasy and reality converge. To achieve this Xenophantos employs some *bone fide* Achaemenid imagery within the picture, but toys with its use.³² Many of the details of the hunting scene are derived from real Persian practices, which were well-known to the Greeks of the fourth century, who seem to have developed something of a passion for stories of the royal chase in the great *paradesoi* of the Empire.³³ The *topos* of the hunt had a lasting effect and is encountered time and again in the Greek novels of the late Hellenistic and early Imperial eras. Chariton, for instance, loses himself in a voyeuristic fantasy-hunt in his novel *Callirhoe* when King Artaxerxes, dressed in Chinese silk and seated on a white horse, sets out to hunt lions:

Horsemen rode out splendidly got up, Persian courtiers and the pick of the army. Every one of them was a sight worth seeing, but the most spectacular was the King himself ... He was an impressive sight in the saddle.³⁴

Some of the names of the hunting Persians on the Xenophantos *lekythos* are, of course, credible Achaemenid names: Darius and Cyrus are the names *par excellence* of the kings and princes of the Achaemenid royal house,³⁵ although the ostensibly Greek names of others hunters are out of place here. Michalis Tiverios suggests that they are Greeks in Persian service and therefore depicted wearing Persian court livery.³⁶ Certainly the hunters are easily recognizable as Persians and wear long-sleeved tunics over trousers; some also wear the *kandys*, a coat with hanging sleeves. They wear the *kidaris* on their heads. The appearance of the hunters on the Xenophantos *lekythos* are carefully constructed, which, together with their Persian names, leaves little doubt that they are supposed to represent Persian courtiers. It is likely that the names 'Cyrus' and 'Darius' would have either reminded the viewer of

31 See Miller (2003), although see further arguments by Franks (2009), p. 480, who suggests that the *lekythos* 'illustrates Persian territorial aspirations, which extend to the very limits and most extreme places of the world, and which, as the product of hubristic ambition, must ultimately go unfulfilled.'

32 Miller (2003), p. 23–39. I suggest that the griffin in the scene takes its inspiration from the Achaemenid-style *Homa*-bird found on column capitals at Persepolis and elsewhere.

33 Tuplin (1996), p. 80–131; Barringer (2001), p. 183–92. For Near Eastern hunting practices see Helck (1968); Allsen (2006); Llewellyn-Jones (2013a), p. 129–33, 196–98.

34 Char. *Cal.* 6.4.

35 Two Cyruses and two Dariuses were well-known in Greece by the early fourth century: Cyrus the Great, the founder of the empire, and Cyrus the Younger, best known for his rebellion against his brother Artaxerxes II; Darius I, best known for his invasion of Greece in the 490s BCE; and Darius II, the father of Artaxerxes II. However, there were several Crown Princes bearing the name Darius too. See Ctesias F13 § 24, 33, F14 § 34.

36 Tiverios (1997), p. 278.

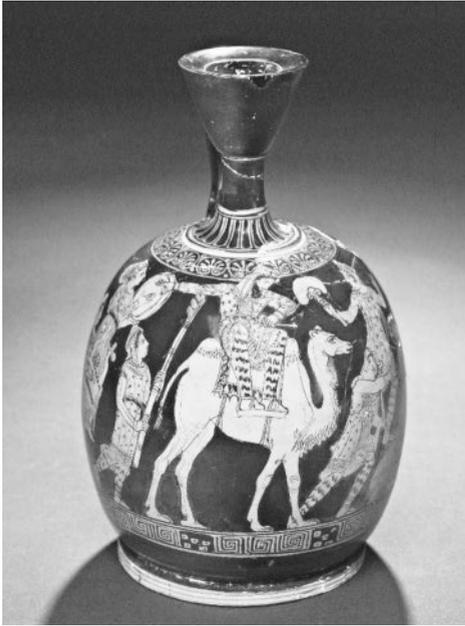


Fig. 4a Attic red-figure lekythos depicting the Persian Great King on camel-back, London, British Museum 1882,0704.1. Photograph courtesy of the British Museum.

the earliest kings of the Persian past, those who first pulled Greece into the powerful Persian orbit, or else would simply have called to mind a generic image of rather fantastical hunting expedition of the ‘court of royal Persia.’

The court of Persia is encountered too on a red-figured *lekythos* (c. 370 BCE; Figures 4a and 4b) which shows a procession.³⁷ Shapiro entertains the idea that the *lekythos* depicts Bendis or Sabazios or some other foreign deity whose popular cults erupted in Athens during the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War and that therefore the vase attempts to show the oriental origins of ‘the source of beliefs and

practices that were now *au courant* in Athens.’³⁸ Certainly the embracing of exotic gods in this period is consistent with the vogue for enthusiastically welcoming many aspects of Persian culture into Athens – ‘everything from dress and drinking vessels to music, dance, and religious ritual.’³⁹ But I am less convinced that this is a religious *pompē* than one of a distinct kind of Persian spectacle; it shows the peripatetic court of the Achaemenid monarch on the move, a spectacle that had enthralled the Greeks for more than a century before this image was created. Many stories of the Great King on the move are to be found in the works of Classical authors who seem to have a fascination for the notion of the peripatetic court and what it means for Persian identity. Some anecdotes tell of the enormous efforts undertaken to ensure that the ruler’s passage is both safe and smooth while others take an unexpected turn and depict the Great King as a kind and gentle recipient of humble gifts presented by the poorest people of the Empire who turn out to see the royal progress pass by.⁴⁰ Greek authors display more awe than approbation for the nature of the royal progress although one perverse expression of the Greek obsession with both Persian decadence and court nomadism is given voice by Aristophanes who conjured up an absurd fantasy wherein the Persian state *en masse* moved with the monarch merely to satisfy the king’s desire to empty his bowels, and the comic

37 Sánchez (2009), p. 314 and fig. 38; Isaac (2004), fig. 3.

38 Shapiro (2009), p. 79. Boardman (2015), p. 216 reads the vase as a depiction of Dionysus, his maenads, and dancing Persians.

39 *Ibid.* See further Miller (1997) and this volume.

40 *Ael. An.* 15.26; *Hist. Misc.* 1.31–33.

playwright subsequently pictures the ruler surrounded by his entire entourage defeating in the privacy of the mountains before returning to the royal place.⁴¹

The vase image is full of movement, life, and detail and easily captures the Greek fixation with Persian court-nomadism. It is full of detail, some observed from Achaemenid practices, although, as is always the case, many specifics are misread. In the centre of the scene a well-crafted Bactrian camel is guided forward with a halter by a Persian who points forward, as if to the path ahead. He looks upward towards the rider, the Great King himself, who is sitting in a kind of *howdah* decorated with richly woven cloths and with a projecting foot-rest.⁴² He cuts a dashing figure; his body is depicted front-on and his legs, resplendent in zig-zag-pattern trousers, are splayed apart as he balances nonchalantly between the camel's humps, a short whip in one hand – used to spur the beast forward no doubt – while his right arm is outstretched to afford some balance perhaps as the camel lurches along. Miller suggests that the camel was 'not an elegant or even prestigious mount: it was in fact the donkey of the east.' But for the Persians the camel was a status-enhancing animal: camels are not native to Iran and were therefore considered exotica by the Achaemenids. At Persepolis, Bactrian camels are included in the representations of several delegations from the north-eastern provinces of the Empire as high-status gifts and single-humped dromedaries are depicted with the Arab delegation too. One seal-image shows the Great King in a chariot pulled by a team of dromedaries and another illustrates the Great King spearing a lion whilst seated on a dromedary, suggesting that camels could be used in the royal hunt.⁴³ Darius I certainly employed camel troops (*ušabari*) in his campaign against the rebellious Babylonians and large herds of camels belonging to Darius' personal estate are attested in the Persepolis cuneiform texts being driven back and forth between Persepolis and Susa, following the route taken by the monarch.⁴⁴ Occasionally a king's much-beloved camel is attested in the sources – like the fortunate one housed in the royal stables by Darius I.⁴⁵ This suggests that the camel was very much regarded as a prestigious animal fit for the monarch's usage, in war, in sport, and in royal procession.⁴⁶

41 Ar. *Ach.* 81–83.

42 A similar contraption, and the same manner of depicting a seated rider (this time on mule-back), is represented on a red-figure *oinochoe* of c. 450 BCE; BM 1912.7–9.1; see Isaac (2004), fig. 4b and Sánchez (2009), p. 316, fig. 44.

43 See Rehm (2006), p. 135 and Collon (1987), p. 156–57, fig. 700. The two species of camel were used by the Persian cavalry. See Sánchez (2009), p. 313, fig. 32 and p. 314, fig. 36 for further images of camels in red-figure representation. For camels in Darius' quelling of a Babylonian revolt see DB I § 18; see further Sekunda and Chew (1992), p. 51. Camels are also found on seal images: see, for instance, a chalcedony sacraboid in London, BM, Walters no. 547, see Boardman (2015), p. 35, fig. 12. See Sánchez (2009), p. 313, fig. 32 and p. 314, fig. 36 for further images of camels in red-figure representation.

44 PF 1787 and PF 1786; Briant (2002), p. 464.

45 Str. 16. 1.3.

46 *Contra* Miller (2006/7), p. 121: the scene 'reduces the potency of Persian elite cavalry by portraying a low-class mount and equestrian style.'

For his part, sitting on camel-back, the king cuts a dashing figure. His face is rendered in sharp profile; he is a handsome man. While the origin and significance of the tradition of the good-looking king is unclear, from early on Greek texts and images fixate on the body and looks of the Persian monarch and they take an obvious delight in his splendid appearance, making him into an attractive, albeit inherently despotic, ruler. In literature successive kings are noted for their handsome demeanour and their impressive stature (and coincidentally, a hallmark of Achaemenid art is that kings are made taller and more masculine than their subjects);⁴⁷ they are all ‘the most valiant of men’ or ‘the best-looking of men’ and their wives and daughters are equally beautiful – a ‘torment’ for Greek eyes no less – and together Persian kings and queens are habitually tagged as being ‘the best looking in all of Asia.’⁴⁸ Of course, every prince and monarch aspired to match the standard of masculine good looks set by Cyrus the Great – his aquiline nose was allegedly the benchmark of beauty for generations of Persians: ‘Because Cyrus was hooked-nosed, the Persians – even to this day – love hooked nosed men and consider them the most handsome.’⁴⁹ In the vase painting though the king’s nose is straight and flawless – and very much the Greek conception of a handsome masculine profile.

As ever, dress, appearance, and accoutrements are important signifiers in this lively scene. Near to the king a clean-shaven attendant waves a fan. Another beardless Persian strums the *kithara* with a plectrum and another plays a *chelys* and one further smooth-cheeked individual holds (what appears to be) a flaming torch, although in all likelihood, this, in its original Achaemenid context, is a fly-whisk. There is little doubt that these beardless individuals are eunuchs, the most fascinating of all the Great King’s courtiers as far as the Greeks were concerned. These castrated males served at court as high-ranking officials, bureaucrats, and attendants and as a kind of ‘third-sex’ they were able to negotiate the permeable barriers of the court in their crucial capacities as messengers and trusted body-servants.⁵⁰ Eunuchs are frequently attested in the Achaemenid sources carrying fly-whisks, towels, and perfume bottles and it is probable that they were fan-bearers and musicians too; the Greek artists are certainly able to imagine them as such and on the tragic stage Helen’s Phrygian fan-bearer is most probably based on a Persian court eunuch.⁵¹

Alongside the eunuchs, the *lekkythos* also represents female musicians – concubines, no doubt – and bearded courtiers dancing the so-called *oklasma*.⁵² The world

47 See further Llewellyn-Jones (2015).

48 See Hdt. 7. 187; Pl. *Al.* 121d; Plut. *Art.* 1.1; *Alex.* 21.6.11.

49 Plut. *Mor.* 281e.

50 Llewellyn-Jones (2002).

51 Eur. *Or.* 1528.

52 With its distinct posturing, this dance is a standard in the Greek artistic repertoire. See, for instance, Athens, National Archaeological Museum 12683, c. 400 BCE; Shapiro (2009), fig. 3.20). See further, Schäfer (1997), p. 92–93. Historically, at least in the Greek (and Hebrew) sources, Persian royal concubines were generally considered to be beautiful girls, see Plut. *Art.* 27; D. S. 17.77.6; Esther 2.3; they could be bought as slaves (Hdt. 8.105; Plut. *Them.* 26.4), or were received as gifts and tribute from different parts of the vast empire (Hdt. 3. 97; Xen. *Cyr.* 4.6. 11, 5.1. 1, 5, 2, 9, 39; Esther 2.2–3). Concubines could also be regularly acquired as war booty or were captured from rebellious subjects (Hdt 4.19, 7. 83, 9. 76, 81). Herodotus

of the performing arts was an important part of Achaemenid court culture and we know of a courtly tradition for stories told through music from passing references to singers at the court. In the sources, royal concubines are expressly noted for their musical skills: 'During dinner (the king's) concubines sing and play the harp, one of them taking the lead as the others sing in chorus' and we learn that, 'at night they sing and play on harps continually while the lamps burn', which feasibly suggests that the court enjoyed a 'complex and developed form of musical entertainment.'⁵³ Where there was music, there must have been dance, and we learn that the court was not only entertained by professional dancers like Zenon of Crete, 'who was, by far, Artaxerxes [II's] preferred performer', but by the Great King himself, who during the feast of Mithra, was encouraged to drink and then dance the so-called *persica*, a war-dance, by 'clashing shields together, crouching down on one knee and springing up again from earth ... in measured time to the sound of the flute.'⁵⁴ Dance, it seems, was both a courtly art and an expression of manliness, 'for the Persians learn to dance as they learn to ride and they consider dance movements related to riding and very suitable for getting exercise and increasing fitness.'⁵⁵

While Benjamin Isaac agrees that the camel *lekythos* depicts an eastern court, rather than seeing the sophistications of the Achaemenid life which it articulates, he sees in it instead 'a hotbed of orgiastic dissipation' which, in turn, reminds him of the salacious tales of Ctesias' *Persica*.⁵⁶ In fact, actual decadence (in the sense of sexual license and debauchery) is hard to find in Ctesias' work and neither his later epitomists or critics ever cite him as an author with a particular penchant for the spicy or salacious; this is a modern misconception of his work. And no more is there anything scandalous or depraved to be found in the fourth-century vase-paintings studied here: the royal court of Persia may be opulent, but it is free from any kind of lascivious carrying-on (a feature, in fact, even of depictions of the Great King among his women – which is in sharp contrast to the erotic imaginings of Greek literature which tends to fixate on the sex-life of the Persian king).⁵⁷ Even with the

(6.32) confirms that after the crushing of the Ionian uprising, 'the most beautiful girls were dragged from their homes and sent to Darius' court'. Of course, the Greeks too acquired Persian concubines as war prizes: 329 concubines were part of Alexander of Macedon's post-Issus booty. Likewise, Parmenion captured a number of Persian women, of high status, at Damascus in 333 BCE. These included the wife of Artaxerxes III and three of his daughters, including Parysatis whom Alexander later married. On concubines see further details in Llewellyn-Jones (2010) and (2013a), p. 116–119.

53 Heraclides F1 & 2; Kuhrt (2010), p. 907.

54 Ctesias F31 = Athen. 1.22c; Xen. *An.* 6.1.10.

55 Athen. 10. 434e.

56 Isaac (2004), caption to fig. 3.

57 See for instance, Louvre, Campana collection 11164, c. 440 BCE – see Shapiro (2009), fig. 3.13; Stockholm Historical Museum V294, c. 430 BCE – see Shapiro (2009), fig. 3.14–15), and Rome, Vatican 16536 (H530), c. 450 BCE – see Miller (2006/07), fig. 1a-b); the scenes of the king with his wives and concubines are entirely humdrum, and lack any kind of exotic frisson, let alone sexual titillation. Interestingly, the queens and concubines are always dressed in Greek clothing (occasionally with a sleeved undergarment and a pinned cloth headdress) suggesting that the artists had no model for thinking about the appearance of Achaemenid women. The painters clearly had no pattern for representing Persian royal women and so they



Fig. 4b Line-drawing of the 'Camel *Lekythos*'

ubiquitous presence of eunuchs and concubines, the camel *lekythos* lacks erotic sensuality. It is rich in its evocations of joy and celebration, though, and I suggest that court festivity is the central theme here.

Eunuchs, concubines, and dancers are encountered again in a badly pitted if rococo-like Attic red-figure *bell-krater* of c. 370 BCE in which the sceptre-bearing Great King, seated on his throne, enjoys the cavorting of his court dancers (Figure 5).⁵⁸ He sits within a *naos*, or some other shrine-like structure, which is surely a misinterpretation of the baldachin which covers the royal dais in the Achaemenid audience-scene and demarcates the royal space (Figure 2). The Persepolitan relief is closely echoed in a description by Deinon – ‘the throne ... was gold, and round it stood four short golden posts studded with jewels; these supported a woven canopy of purple’ – but the vase painter turns the throne and the canopy into a piece of theatrical paraphernalia, very much in keeping with the generic theatricalization of the Persians in this period which we have already encountered in the Darius Vase.⁵⁹ The scene, with its female fan-bearer (perhaps the beardless eunuch of the Achaemenid reliefs was thought to be a woman), its languid courtiers lounging around in opulently patterned costumes, and the heady atmosphere of pleasure conjured up through the twisting bodies of the dancers, is the finest representation of the vogue for peeping into the inner quarters of a Persian palace – Susa, Ecbatana, or Persepolis. Not surprisingly, the scene has been interpreted as the court of the luxury-loving Sadanapallos, the legendary Assyrian ruler, but given the close (if perverse) paral-

dress them as elite Athenian wives. Shapiro (2009), p. 76 makes a similar observation: ‘no attempt is ever made to Orientalize the women.’ They perform submissive gestures of offering cups or dinking horns and are hardly the powerful viragos of the Greek literary tradition. A badly weathered stone base from Olympia, dating to 330 BCE which once held a statue of the celebrated Thessalian pankratiast Poulydamas, shows the court of Darius II, including figures of the royal women. These court ladies are certainly conjured from the Greek imagination and are dressed in Greek *chitōnes* and *himatia*, much in the style of the depictions of Hellas and Asia in the top register of the Darius Vase; the female at the front of the group is even shown in the standard Greek pose of raising her robe in a veiling gesture (on this gesture see Llewellyn-Jones (2003), p. 98–120). For a discussion of the Poulydamas base see Kosmopoulou (2002), p. 156–64. For the erotic adventures of Persian kings see Bridges (2015), p. 127–54, Llewellyn-Jones (2013b).

⁵⁸ Shapiro (2009), p. 78

⁵⁹ Deinon F1= Athen. 12, 514c.

Fig. 5 Attic red-figure bell-krater depicting the Persian court, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum 158. Photograph courtesy of the Kunsthistorisches Museum



els with Achaemenid royal imagery, we can be confident that we are supposed to be ogling at the luxury of the court of the Great King of Persia.⁶⁰ The Persian court was a place of sophistication, culture, pleasure, and delight, although for the royalty and nobility who inhabited this rarefied world, the pleasures of court-life was serious business too – as the Greeks all too-well understood:

Tyrants and kings, being in control of the good things of life, and having had experience of them all, put pleasure in the first place, since pleasure makes men's natures more kingly. All persons, at any rate, who pay court to pleasure and choose a life of luxury are lordly and magnificent, like the Persians ... For more than any other men in the world they seek pleasure and luxury, yet they are the bravest and most noble barbarians. Indeed, to have pleasure and luxury is a mark of the freeborn; it eases their minds and exalts them.⁶¹

CLOSING OBSERVATIONS

The few works I have highlighted for discussed here may well be set within the Persian court, and may even draw on genuine Achaemenid visual motifs, but they have a distinctly *laissez-faire* Hellenic flavor to them, typical of other themes found in Greek art of this period. Without doubt the scenes of Persian monarchs and their courtiers, of women and eunuchs, of entertainers, camel-leaders, and even of the Persian elite relaxing, hunting, and dancing are very much in the spirit of Classical Greek art. The Persian protagonists adopt decidedly Hellenized modes of behavior and, in a way, they are merely masqueraders in Oriental fancy dress.

In *bone fide* Achaemenid art the kinds of pedestrian subjects encountered in the vase-paintings are exceptionally rare and if they are encountered at all then they are seen only in small-scale glyptics but never in monumental imperial sculpture

60 Discussion in Miller (2006/07), p. 120 n. 47.

61 Athen. 12. 512a-b.

or relief.⁶² The official art of central Iran tended to concentrate on representations of audiences and tribute-bearers, or on heroic images of monarchs fighting ferocious beasts and thereby reconfirming Achaemenid world order. There was no room in the official art of Persia for depictions of the minutiae of daily life at court because, as odd as this may seem given the centrality of the court to Achaemenid dynastic policy, such images would not have served the purpose of reflecting Persian imperial dogma.⁶³ The Greek vase-images are as far removed from the artistic ideology promoted by the official centralized art of the Achaemenids as can be imagined.

There can therefore be little doubt to my mind that the Persian court we encounter in the Greek art is by and large a locale of Oriental fabulousness; the images have a fairy tale quality to them, a feeling of being set ‘Once Upon a Time in a Kingdom Far, Far Away’. As Alan Shapiro notes, ‘In one sense, they are descendants of the *Persians* of Aeschylus, with its imagined scenes of life at the Persian court, based on no first-hand knowledge ... there is nothing “realistic” about the scenes that appear to have a Persian setting.’⁶⁴ The scenes may nod towards Oriental *realia* such as dress and equipment but even these are, at best, rudimentary. The Greek artworks must be regarded as important contributors to a long line of beautiful, if deeply misunderstood and precarious, Orientalist clichés that permeate other Greek conceptions of the Achaemenid world.

Alain Grosrichard’s particular version of Orientalism, with its focus on the supposedly enigmatic and opaque structure of a despot’s power echoed through his collection of fawning courtiers, eunuchs, countless wives, and concubines finds a particular resonance, I suggest, in the Greek iconography of the late classical period which creates so vividly an ‘imaginative geography’ of the East which is symbolized by the image of the autocratic but curiously compelling King and which is set amid the splendour of his court. Orientalist art of any kind, including that created by the Greeks, prioritises visual pleasure and Persian scenes of the Greek imagination solicit the gaze. According to Grosrichard, the gaze is ‘the driving element of despotic power in the Orient’ and in the vase-scenes the viewer is invited to indulge in the pageantry and splendour of far-off Persia.⁶⁵ The picture created is of course an exotically fictionalized Persia of the imagination, a world in which all eyes are seduced into feasting upon the sights of the fabled hedonism of the royal court – the mandatory locale of all accounts of the Orient – but in no way should the scenes (even with their gender inversions and other types of distortions) be thought of as a caricature of the king and his court. The vase-paintings do not lampoon the Persians, nor do they make any form of disdainful criticism of them in the style of, for instance, fourth-century Attic oratory. No, in spite of their errors, misreadings, and delusions, the Greek artists offer an ‘open sesame’ to what they found to be a fantastical, puzzling, alien, but decidedly alluring world.

62 Llewellyn-Jones (2010).

63 See the classic study by Root (1979). See pertinent comments by Colburn (2013).

64 Shapiro (2009), p. 72, 76.

65 Grosrichard (1998), p. 56.

ONCE WERE PERSIANS: THE PERCEPTION OF PRE-ISLAMIC MONUMENTS IN IRAN FROM THE 16TH TO THE 19TH CENTURY

Omar Coloru

INTRODUCTION: WESTERN TRAVELLERS, THE PERSIANS AND THEIR PAST

The purpose of the present contribution is to explore how ancient Achaemenid and Sasanian sites in the geographical area corresponding to modern Iran were perceived by Iranians of the Early Modern period and how the latter related to the history of these places. Is it possible to detect the existence of *Persianism* in their perception of the past? In which form and to what extent? In order to provide an answer, our analysis will concentrate on the travelogues of European visitors to Iran in which many traditions which had developed around the pre-Islamic antiquities of the country are recorded. With a few exceptions, I will focus on travel journals belonging to the chronological interval between the sixteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, because it is by this time that a growing number of Europeans began to visit this country under the impulsion of the new course of commercial and political interactions with Europe opened by the Safavid dynasty and continued under the Qajars.¹

When Western travellers imbued with Classical education arrived in Iran, they discovered that a whole set of traditions, generally with no relation to the data transmitted by the Greco-Roman historians, had developed independently around Persian antiquities. In fact, the creation of narratives about the origin of a certain monument or landmark depends on several factors which vary from place to place, and sometimes the process of tradition formation can be ascribable to the travellers themselves.² From this point of view, European travellers did not exert any influence on the traditions of the country: the classical names of major Achaemenid sites such as Pasargadae and Persepolis gained popularity only in 20th-century Iran in the wake of archaeological campaigns, the consequent tourism, and the ideological and identity-making function assigned to them by the late shah Reza Pahlavi. Before

- 1 On recent contributions about the history of Safavid Iran and its relations with Europe, see Newman (2006), Matthee (2008) with large bibliography, Matthee (2012), p. 10–24, and the collection of studies edited by Langer (2013). For a history of the Qajar dynasty see Nezam-Mafi (2012), p. 319–345; for *Persianism* under the Qajars see Lerner in this volume.
- 2 For instance, a number of stories concerning ancient monuments in Europe were made up by modern travellers and then adopted by local inhabitants, as in the case of the Ear of Dionysus. In fact, this popular landmark of Syracuse does not owe its name to an ancient myth or historical episode related to the Greek presence in Sicily but to the painter Caravaggio, who visited the place in 1586. This tradition instantly became widespread and remains popular until this day.

that time, local names such as *Mašhad-e Mādar-e Solaymān*, *Chelmenar*, or *Takht-e Jamshid* had for centuries been the only designations used by the Persians. Incidentally, some travellers, frustrated by the impossibility of getting more information about the origin of a site, criticized local people's lack of interest in, and knowledge of, the history of their country. The perceived local ignorance of the past became a trope in these travelogues, with very few exceptions. For instance, the Dutch sail-maker Jan Struys (1630–1694) noticed that,

Far from loving antiquities, they [the Persians] neglect them so much that a son will never finish a building – no matter how beautiful it is – which his father has begun.³

A similar disappointment was expressed by the French traveller Jean Chardin (1643–1713), who concluded that modern Iranians must have come from another country and therefore did not know anything about the past of Iran. In order to bolster this statement, he added that when native people were asked to give more information on the subjects represented on the Sasanian rock reliefs at Naqsh-e Rostam, they confessed their ignorance and answered “God knows”. Alternatively, they often identified the sculpted figures as Rostam and other characters in the Persian national epic, *Shahnāma* (‘Book of Kings’). According to Chardin, also learned Iranians maintained that these works of art represented the deeds of ancient Iranian heroes.⁴ Indeed, Persian historians of the Islamic period – he writes – never used the name Persepolis for the site known by that name in Europe, but referred to it by the Iranian toponym *Istakhr*.⁵ These statements were the result of a mutual misunderstanding between the French traveller and their local informants: indeed, Chardin who relied on the Greco-Roman sources expected the Iranians to know of a toponym which was made up by the Greek historiography and never existed in the reality – actually, we still do not know what the real name of Persepolis was. On the other hand, the local population answered by drawing on the Arab and Iranian traditions which identified Persepolis with the nearby town from which the Sasanian dynasty originated.

A friend of Chardin, the Venetian Ambrogio Bembo (1652–1705), noticed that in Bisutun the Parthian relief of Gotarzes had been damaged by the Muslims because, so he writes, they were fiercely hostile towards such glorious memories.⁶ This however was not always the rule. The same Bembo observed in the account of his attempt to copy the inscriptions of the so-called Small Iwan at Taq-e Bostan, that the cleaning of the inscription from dust as well as the act of copying itself were observed with admiration by the Persians, who kindly allowed Europeans

3 Struys (1681), p. 316.

4 Chardin (1711), p. 122–123.

5 Chardin (1711), p. 137.

6 Bembo (1676), MS, 261[= Invernizzi (2005a), p. 332]. Ambrogio Bembo was an officer of the Venetian Navy and travelled in Asia from 1671 to 1675; in 1674 he explored Persia, where he became friends with Jean Chardin and the painter Joseph Grelot. The latter accompanied Bembo on his journey and made drawings of the places they visited together. Bembo's journal has been published and translated in English, see Bembo 2007.

much liberty in dealing with antiquities, a thing which would have been impossible among the Turks.⁷

As we already saw, the number of texts by Western travellers complaining about local attitudes to the past is quite high. The peak, however, may be observed in the nineteenth century travelogues: to this end, it will suffice to quote two characteristic passages, which provide a more coherent picture of this negative perception, and at the same time will introduce the key themes discussed in the main section of my paper. The first quotation is taken from the memories of the British orientalist William Ouseley (1767–1842). In discussing the ancient objects found at Rishahr (Bushire), Ouseley comments:

But here, also, are often found gems bearing sculptured devices, beads, rings, coins and arrow-heads, all of which by the peasants, are attributed, and not perhaps erroneously, to the ancient Gabrs or Atesh-perests, the 'Adorer of Fire'. That they should be right, however, in this instance, proceeds merely from their usual habit of describing whatever they do not understand, as either the produce of foreign regions, the work of preternatural beings, of magicians, or of those who lived in ages before the Mohamedan era.⁸

The second example is written by John David Rees (1854–1922) and concerns the statue traditionally known as the Lion of Hamadan:

The sights of the town are three [...] and a lion by the roadside, which was carved either before they [= the Persians] had learnt or after they had forgotten the art of sculpture.⁹

Both texts add two elements to the image of Iranian neglect of the past, which we can summarize thus: ignorance of their own history has led to the creation of fantastic stories accounting for the presence of ancient sites and objects, narratives that combine fantastic elements with vaguely remembered historical realities (the Zoroastrian fire worship, in this specific case). Furthermore, Rees holds that a consequence of the lack of historical memory is the loss and/or degradation of technical skills (here, the art of sculpture) which on the contrary had reached the perfection in the past.

These views were the result of an othering process that was inevitably part of the cultural background of the travellers as well as their attitude towards the Muslim world. Nevertheless, this 'proto-orientalistic' prejudice did not always exerted the same strength and, as we have seen, it could present some exceptions and could evolve in time. Matthee has rightly shown that the journal of a typical sixteenth century traveller "might describe the country but his own assignment and his own experience remained central to the narrative".¹⁰ On the other hand, the seventeenth century travellers were still "moved by official mandates or motives of personal gain" but were "determined to gather empirical knowledge, to portray what they observed realistically and accurately", and many of them "saw the world beyond Christendom largely within its own civilizational framework and as a part of a

7 Bembo (1676), MS, 266 [= Invernizzi (2005a), p. 334].

8 Ouseley (1819), I, p. 201.

9 Rees (1885), p. 29.

10 Matthee (2012), p. 12 as the other following passages in the paragraph. As for the nineteenth century see Lerner in this volume.

universal theater”. Finally, the nineteenth century traveller “had become a panoptic, omniscient European who operated in the context of institutions of power, knowledge, and culture. He, too, was firmly convinced of the superiority of his own world, which now had become a matter of civilization, of culture and race”. In the following pages, we will explore the evidence provided by the journals of modern travellers about the local traditions circulating around the Achaemenid and Sasanian archaeological sites in order to ascertain to what extent these traditions were generated by the phenomenon of *Persianism*.

THE MANY LIVES OF THE PERSIAN ANTIQUITIES

European travellers have recorded a wealth of information concerning traditions about the Persian historical places they visited. Sometimes they drew their information from native people living in the vicinity of an archaeological site, sometimes from local learned men or from their interpreters who accompanied them in their journeys. Translators, who were the main intermediaries between the travellers and the local population, usually belonged to ethnic minorities, e.g. Armenians like Jusepe Salvador, dragoman of Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa (1550–1624), the Spaniard envoy to king Abbas I, Jews¹¹, and Syrians like the polyglot Michel Angelo Corai (Fathullah Qurray).¹² Other important factors were the traveller’s cultural background and the motives of his journey. We will see that in general the stories associated with a certain place tend to be constant in the *long durée* while others experience several variations which depend on different factors such as the degree of education of the asked person, the influence of Iranian epic on his view of the past, or even his personal or erroneous interpretation of an archaeological site. In order to answer the question on the existence of *Persianism* in modern Iran, it may be useful to organize a selection of the available material by threefold typology of traditions, namely those concerning the Achaemenids, the Sasanians, and religion and magic.

1) The Achaemenids

Darius III is the only member of the Achaemenid dynasty whose memory is still linked to monuments or landmarks in Iran during the early modern period. This exclusivity is without doubt the result of the place occupied by Darius in the Sasanian narrative of Iranian history. In a later phase of their rule, the Sasanians had claimed to descend from the Kayanids, a mythical dynasty of Iranian kings celebrated in the *Avesta* and the Iranian epic for they were the first to bear the *xvarənah*, the Divine Glory which symbolized the power in the Iranian world. According to this reconstruction of the Iranian past, Dārā/Darius was the last of the Kayanian

11 See for example Chick (2012), p. 1048; Gil (2012), p. 165–166; p. 178 n. 37.

12 Federici (2014), p. 81–104.

kings who had lost his reign to Alexander, and the Sasanians were the descendants of Dārā through their ancestor Sasan. What is more, Alexander was also closely related to Dārā as in this version of the story he was his half-brother. By doing so, the Sasanians linked themselves to a prominent Avestan dynasty and set their kingship in the frame of the Zoroastrian history. In the words of Touraj Daryaee, “Still, by the fourth century the Sasanians gravitated toward a sacred historiography and chose Avestan dynasties, most importantly the Kayanids, as their ancestors. It was only through the Zoroastrian historical necessity that Darius (III) was remembered and inserted into the historical narrative of the Sasanian *Xwaday-namag* (Book of Kings).”¹³ Under the reign of Shapur II (309–379), Persepolis was only known under the name of *Sad Sotun* (‘Hundred columns’), which had become *Chelmenar* (‘Forty pillars’) from the end of the Middle Ages. Although the Sasanians had probably little knowledge of the Achaemenid history¹⁴, they revered the site as the work of the mythical kings of the Iranian tradition and wanted to establish a connection between their kingship and that expressed by the illustrious predecessors who had built that place. The imposing ruins kept their symbolic value even for the Muslim dynasties that ruled over Fārs in the centuries following the end of the Sasanian Empire. The extraordinary stories circulating on the site of Chelmenar attracted the curiosity of the European travellers who offered several interpretations about the origins of the ruins, but the first one to propose the identification of Chelmenar with the palace of Persepolis was Garcia de Silva y Figueroa in the early seventeenth century. During his visit to the site, Silva y Figueroa had brought with him a copy of the *Library of History* by Diodorus of Sicily which contained a passage describing the fire that Alexander set to Persepolis¹⁵. By comparing the information provided by Diodorus with the features of the site he was exploring, the Spaniard envoy reached the conclusion that he was walking among the ruins of the ancient Persepolis.¹⁶

The German naturalist, Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716), writes that native folklore had transmitted various names for the ruins of Persepolis. Apart from the most current name, *Chelmenar*, Kaempfer adds that of *Istakhr*. This toponym could be ascribable to the blurring of Persepolis with the nearby site of Istakhr which was celebrated as the place of origin of the Sasanian dynasty.¹⁷ Originally a suburb located at about 6km north from the royal palace, Istakhr had become the main political and religious centre after the destruction of Persepolis and was chosen as the seat of the dynasts of Persis¹⁸. It was in Istakhr that Pabak, father of Ardashir I, held

13 Daryaee (2010a), p. 33. On the historical memory of Darius III see Briant (2015).

14 For the Achaemenid reception among the Sasanians see Shayegan (2011), p. 1–38.

15 Diodorus of Sicily, XVII.70–72; the report of Silva y Figueroa on Persepolis can be found in Invernizzi (2005a), p. 197–204; see also Mousavi (2012), p. 97–98.

16 Mousavi (2012), p. 73–96, especially 97–98.

17 The site of Istakhr was excavated by Ernst Herzfeld in 1932 and 1934 (a brief account in Herzfeld (1935), p. 45–48, 276–281), and by Erich F. Schmidt in 1935 and 1937 (see Schmidt 1939, p. 105–121). See also the report by David Whitcomb (1979), p. 363–370. The site is now the object of new archaeological investigations by a joint Iranian-Italian mission, see Fontana et al. (2012), p. 167–180; Chegini et al. (2013), p. 7–20

18 Mousavi (2012), p. 77–94.

the wardenship of the important shrine of the goddess Anahita. According to our spokesman, however, there was yet a third name for Persepolis: this, transcribing the Iranian pronunciation into Latin characters, according to Kaempfer was *Choneh Darà*, ‘the house of Darius’.¹⁹ It is probable that we are dealing with a reference to Darius III. A possible explanation of the genesis of this toponym is offered by Jean Chardin, who records that the Achaemenid tomb that modern archaeologists nowadays attribute (hesitantly) to Artaxerxes III, in his own time was believed to be the last resting place of Darius.²⁰ Finally, the monument according to Chardin was called the palace of Darius and this designation had become popular even among the European residents in Persia. Interestingly, this latter interpretation – more or less correct as would later be established – was deemed ridiculous by Chardin.

The archaeological complex at Naqsh-e Rostam was generally thought to represent, as its toponym explicitly says, the legendary hero Rustam engaged in some of his celebrated deeds. Local traditions, however, were far from consistent. On his visit to the site, the Dutch painter Cornelis de Bruyn (1652–1727) heard contradictory stories about the relief today identified as the investiture of Ardashir I by the god Ohrmazd (Figure 1).²¹ Like Kaempfer had done at Persepolis, de Bruyn eagerly collected three different interpretations. In the first of these, the scene was still more or less understood as an investiture, but the two characters now had different identities, and also the historical period had been altered: de Bruyn was told that the relief commemorated how the last Achaemenid king, Darius (III), left his empire to Alexander the Great. The background of this interpretation probably was Ferdowsi’s epic poem *Shahnāma*, which was hugely influential in Early Modern Iran. In Ferdowsi’s version of Alexander’s conquest, based on the Alexander Romance, Alexander is not presented as a foreign conqueror but as a half-brother of Darius,²² thus continuing Achaemenid sovereignty over the Persian Empire. As we have seen before, the Sasanian kingship ideology had spread this story in order to strengthen the dynastic legitimacy of the house of Sasan and it exerted a strong influence over late antique and medieval Persian epic. It is difficult to know who gave de Bruyn this information as he bounds himself to the vague expression “someone pretends that”: Ferdowsi’s *Shahnāma* was extremely popular so that we cannot state for certain that de Bruyn’s informant/s just told him what he expected to hear. In addition, de Bruyn had read a certain number of literature about the Sasanians both in the Byzantine authors (especially Agathias of Myrina) and in the modern Persian sources, which he used to draw a historical table of this dynasty. It is also possible that this tradition have been reported to de Bruyn by local individuals in order to create a middle ground between their culture and that of the Dutch traveller via the Alexander figure. However, he was very sceptical about the stories he had

19 Kaempfer (1712), p. 325. For the importance of Kaempfer’s work for the Western study of pre-Islamic Iranian antiquities see Wiesehöfer (1993), p. 105–132.

20 Chardin (1711), p. 117–118.

21 De Bruyn (1718), p. 364–365.

22 According to this tradition, Alexander was the son of a daughter of Philip of Macedon and a king of Persia, and Darius was his half-brother. For the influence exerted by Alexander on the collective imaginary and folklore from Iran to Sumatra see Coloru (2013), p. 389–412.

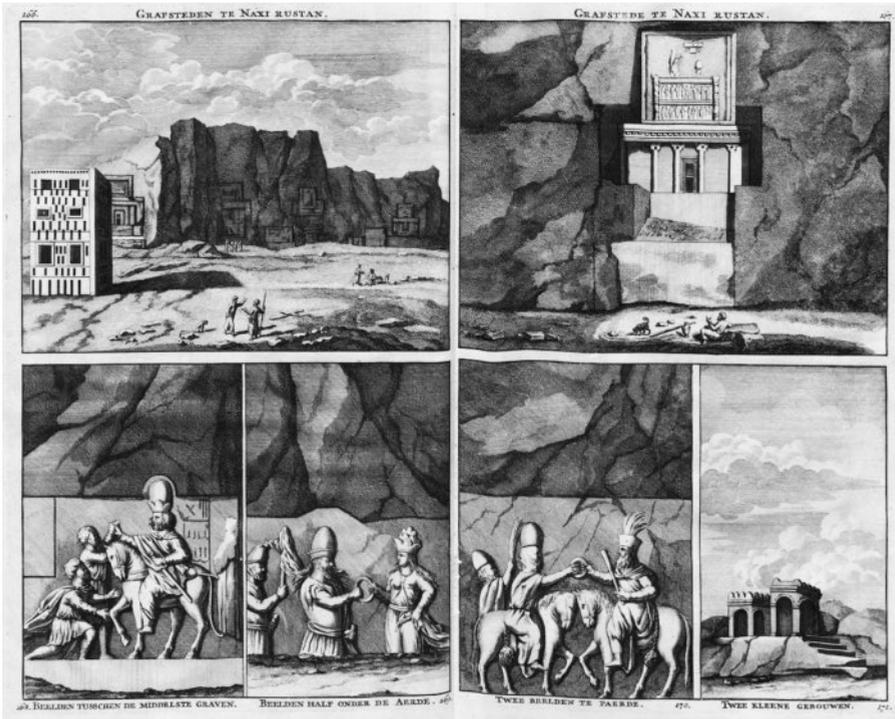


Fig. 1 The Investiture Relief of Ardashir I at Naqsh-e Rostam. Drawing by Cornelis de Bruyn, from *Reizen over Moskovië, door Persië en Indië* (1714). © University Library Utrecht University.

heard about this specific rock relief.²³ The second variant reported by de Bruyn identified the sculpted figures as two anonymous rival lords trying to establish their supremacy by catching the ring. This interpretation without any precise reference to characters taken from the Iranian history and mythology (or other cultures) could have been told by someone who was unaware of the epic tradition and just gave his own basic interpretation of the scene. The third variant is the customary identification with Rustam and as in the first case we are dealing with a name inspired by a popular figure in the Iranian epic.

Already at the outset of the fifteenth century, the Castilian Ruy Gonzáles de Clavijo (d. 1412), envoy at the court of Temür-i Lenk ('Tamerlane') from 1403 to 1406, reports that the town of Zanjan had been one of the greatest cities in the kingdom of Darius and the most beloved by him. It was from this town that Darius marched with his army to fight Alexander.²⁴ Another legend concerning Darius, is reported by the Scottish doctor John Bell (1691–1780). Concerning his stay in Isfahan in 1717, Bell relates that:

23 De Bruyn (1718), p. 364.

24 Gonzáles de Clavijo (1582), p. 31 v.



Fig. 2 Detail of the rock relief at Bishapur representing Shapur's triumph over Gordian III, Philip the Arab and Valerian (photo by M. Canepa).

About three or four miles to the southward of the city, are to be seen the ruins of a tower on the top of a mountain, where, it is said, Darius sat when Alexander the Great fought the second battle with the Persians.²⁵

This story, once again inspired by the Iranian epic, was made up to give these ruins an illustrious past.

2) The Sasanians

Many sites and natural landmarks were named after episodes of Sasanian history through the filter of the national epic. The activity of wandering minstrels, the *gosan*, who since the Parthian age had transmitted the Iranian epic and literary heritage, played an important role in the spread of these narratives. Kaempfer was the first European to give a brief description of the Sasanian rock reliefs at Bishapur. This town was founded by king Shapur I (240–270) in the Fārs region after defeating in battle the Roman emperor Valerian (Figure 2).²⁶ The latter was taken prisoner together with many soldiers, generals and senators and never came back to Rome. The Roman prisoners together with the same Valerian would have been employed to build Bishapur. Close to the town, along the gorge of Tang-e Chowgān, a series of rock reliefs celebrated the king's victories over Valerian as well as the Roman emperors Gordian III and Philip the Arab. At that time, nothing was known in Europe of the town built there by Shapur. The site was properly identified only in 1809 by another traveller, James Justinian Morier (1780–1849). Nevertheless, the account of Kaempfer makes clear that the memory of the founder still survived in local toponymy, for the mountain overlooking the site was called *Kuh – e Shapur*,

²⁵ Bell (1763), p. 125.

²⁶ On the history and archaeology of Bishapur see Keall (1989), p. 287–289.

‘the Mountain of Shapur’. Local traditions said that the sculptures commemorated a victory that Shapur had achieved in this place over an opponent who, according to the natives, was Alexander the Great.²⁷ This anachronism is interesting because it shows an inversion of roles: the Macedonian conqueror of the Achaemenid Empire is here presented as the loser in a war against a Persian king. In the *Avesta* and the Persian version of the Alexander Romance (*Eskandar-nāma*), the Macedonian Conqueror was thought to come from Rome/Constantinople and was called Eskandar Rumi, i. e. ‘Alexander the Roman’: it is possible that here we are dealing with the survival of this Iranian tradition mixed with the memory of the victorious wars of Shapur against Rome. In addition, the same Kaempfer witnesses another example of preservation of the memory of a Sasanian king when he describes the relief of *Sarab-e Bahram* which would celebrate a victory of Bahram (II, 274–293) over an enemy whose identity is not stated.²⁸

When he was approaching Bisutun, the French traveller Jean de Thévenot (1633–1667) inquired who the sculptor of the rock reliefs might be. Some of the people travelling with him in the same caravan said that the reliefs were the work of Ferhad for her beloved Shirin, who had a castle on that mountain.²⁹ As Thévenot rightly remarks, this explanation was based on a popular episode described in the poem *Khosrow va Shirin* by Nizami Ganjavi (1141–1209), where the poet narrated the tragic love story between the sculptor Fehrad and Shirin, wife of king Khosrow II Parvēz (590–628). The story goes that when Shirin was not yet married to the king, the sculptor Ferhad had fall in love with her, thus becoming a rival of Khosrow. Suffering from jealousy, Khosrow sent Ferhad to Bisutun and ordered him to carve a passage through the mountain. If Ferhad accomplished this impossible task, Khosrow would allow him to marry Shirin. Contrary to the king’s expectations, Ferhad was about to achieve his mission, so Khosrow sent him a letter where he communicated the false news of Shirin’s death. Out of desperation, Ferhad threw himself from the top of the mountain. Apparently, Thévenot was somehow familiar with this story as he states that a Persian manuscript of that poem was kept in the Royal Library in Paris, but we do not know whether he has ever read it or he just knew the main elements of the plot. In this case, the rock reliefs of Bisutun were made the object of a new narrative which had replaced the old one because its memory had been lost, but inscribed the monument into existing social memory of the Sasanian Empire. In time, this literary tradition had become historical in the eyes of the native population.

Myth, epic, and Sasanian history came together also in the complex of Taq-e Bostan. The equestrian statue of Khosrow in the Greater Iwan was believed to be Rostam on horseback, while the sculptures in the lunette upon it would have been the representation of Khosrow, Shapur and Shirin.³⁰

27 Kaempfer (1712), p. 364.

28 Kaempfer (1712), p. 365.

29 Thévenot (1674), p. 132–133.

30 Bembo (1676) MS 266–267 (= Invernizzi [2005a], p. 334).

3) Religion and magic

In the perception of the local inhabitants, the past of Persia was also reinvented under the sway of religions other than Islam, which in medieval and modern Iran were often associated with elements related to folklore and magical practices. Notably Zoroastrianism left its mark on Persian toponymy of the Islamic period. The best-known example is the funerary monument that stands in front of the Achaemenid royal tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam, the so-called Ka'ba-e Zardusht. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, William Ouseley reports three different names for this building:

Our guide called it the Kerennái Kháneh or 'Station of the Trumpets'; another man, the Nakáreh Kháneh or 'Kettle-drum house', and the Ked Khudá [= principal 'house holder'] before mentioned, assured me that it was the Caabah of ZARA'TUSHT, or Zoroaster.³¹

Even Naqsh-e Rostam was sometimes perceived as a burial place associated with the Zoroastrian faith. This seems to have been the opinion of the Iranians, or at least of some among them, at the time of Engelbert Kaempfer's visit to the place.³² In the eyes of the peasants living in the area, the tombs were protected by spirits. Some people who had entered the tombs had never come back because they were strangled by *djins*. But some well-informed people in the area told Kaempfer that these were the Tombs of the Guebre kings. 'Guebre', 'Gheber' and other variants of this word are more often found in the accounts of the European travellers. They were the transcription of the Persian word for 'infidel', *Gabr*, from the Arabic *kafir*. We know that this was the usual term employed by Persian Muslims to designate Zoroastrians. Jean Chardin confirms this, as local inhabitants told him, too, that Naqsh-e Rostam was known as *Kabrestan Gauron*, which Chardin translates as 'graveyard of the Guebres'.³³ We have already seen in the passage by the British orientalist, William Ouseley, quoted in the introduction, that the ancient objects found at Rishahr were associated with the Zoroastrians, too. Ouseley adds that,

[...] near the ruined fort of Ríshahr, is a spot which some denominated the Kabristán-e-Gabrán, or 'Cemetery of the Fire-worshippers', and supposed to contain sepulchral monuments two or three thousand years old.³⁴

The same interpretation was applied to a group of ruins along the road from Tehran to Shahrud. These ruins were explored by the Scottish traveller, James Baillie Fraser (1783–1856), in 1821. Baillie writes:

In the course of our march to this place we had observed upon the plain to our right several remarkable mounds, which looked like the sites of forts, and which we learnt, that tradition attributed to the Ghebres; and of course to an æra antecedent to the Mahometan conquest of Persia. [...] It was a mass of ruins imposing enough in appearance at a little distance, exhibiting the semblance of pillars and arches in great variety; but upon nearer approach, we found that it consisted of a mass of mud; the upper part of which was occupied by a quantity of ruins, chiefly

31 Ouseley (1819), I, p. 299, cf. p. 191.

32 Kaempfer (1712), p. 314.

33 Chardin (1711), p. 117.

34 Ouseley (1819), I, p. 201

of the same materials. [...] and had we not been assured that the place had been abandoned for more than two hundred years, we should have believed, that no considerable time had elapsed since it was inhabited. The people around vaguely named this ruin Ghebrabad or the abode of the Ghebres; which appellation is given to many places of a similar description in the vicinity.³⁵

Zoroastrianism, like the historical figures of Alexander, Darius and the Sasanian kings, became a means to emphasize the (sometimes presumed) antiquity of a place. Ambrogio Bembo writes that erudite Persians believe that the ruins of the Parthian-Sasanian Kangawar were once the castle of a Zoroastrian king.³⁶ The widespread idea that in the past the Zoroastrians were the custodians of an ancient wisdom is well exemplified by the Italian traveller Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri (1651–1725), who states that the cuneiform characters are thought to be an invention of the ancient Zoroastrians, even though the Zoroastrians of his own age no longer were able to read them.³⁷ The same remark is also made by Jean Chardin. While trying to understand the meaning and the origins of the inscriptions he saw on the walls of Persepolis, he states that although the Zoroastrians are supposed to be the guardians of Iranian history and traditions, they do not know how to decipher this ancient script.³⁸

In this multifaceted stratification of narratives, the entanglement of Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions in the Muslim world has contributed to the creation of popular traditions around Persian pre-Islamic antiquities. Biblical prophets were revered as prophets in the Islamic faith, too, and as Mousavi points out the attribution of an ancient site to figures such as Solomon may have protected it from iconoclasm during the Arab conquest of Persia.³⁹ In some cases, however, a biblical interpretation may have predated this phenomenon and this comes not as surprise when considering that Jewish communities lived in Persia at least since the Achaemenid period.

In his travel memories, George Thomas Keppel (1799–1891) recalls how in 1824 he visited a site near the village of *Serpool* (= Sar-e Pol-e Zahab). Here he was shown a rock relief representing a man wearing a long tunic and holding what it looked like a club in his hand. According to local folklore this was the image of King David. There was also a square chamber excavated in the rock, known as *Dakani Davoud* (= Dukkan-e Daud), i. e. ‘David’s shop’.⁴⁰ What our traveller unwittingly described, was in fact an Achaemenid tomb dating to the fifth/fourth century BCE, and the figure represented on the relief was actually a priest holding the *barsom*, the bundle of twigs used in some Zoroastrian rituals.⁴¹

Daniel was another popular figure in Iran. Despite the rabbinic tradition identified the land of Israel as the resting place of Daniel, the Jewish communities of Persia were convinced that the prophet was buried in Susa, where until this day

35 Fraser (1825), p. 289–290

36 Bembo (1676) MS 260 [= Invernizzi (2005a), p. 332].

37 Gemelli Careri (1699), p. 243–244.

38 Chardin (1711), p. 119.

39 See Mousavi (2012), p. 84–85.

40 Keppel (1827), I, p. 324–325.

41 On this Achaemenid tomb see Von Gall (1995).

an ancient grave is venerated as the prophet's tomb.⁴² This story may have been originated by the fact that in the biblical account Susa is the last known residence of the prophet.⁴³ The Jews who resided in town may have tried to use this detail to enhance the importance of their local community. Composed between the third and the second century BC, the book of Daniel circulated in different forms and could vary from a Jewish community to another. As Carol Newsom points out "by the time the book of Daniel existed in a version recognizable to modern readers, it had passed through the hands of Jewish scribes in the Persian Diaspora [...]. It is quite likely that these various groups who together wrote and rewrote the book of Daniel, separated by many miles and hundreds of years in time, did not understand the text in the exactly the same way".⁴⁴ For instance, in the first century CE Flavius Josephus reported a tradition connecting the tomb of Daniel to Ecbatana (present-day Hamadan), a town which was home of another populous Jewish community, possibly the oldest outside Israel.⁴⁵ In Book 10 of the *Antiquities of the Jews*, Flavius Josephus reports that Daniel had built a tower in Ecbatana and that this place also was the resting place of the bodies of the Median, Achaemenid and, in Josephus' own days, Parthian kings.⁴⁶ In the early Islamic period, the first attestation of the tradition locating Daniel's tomb at Susa is found in the writings of the historian Baladhuri (ninth century CE).⁴⁷ At the beginning of the nineteenth century this funerary monument became even more venerated by the inhabitants of Khuzestan because inside the tomb a sacred object was placed that had been discovered at Susa. This object, in fact a Babylonian boundary stone of the Kassite period (1595–1155 BCE), was believed to be a talisman created by Daniel himself to protect the region. That stone had been found by chance on the mound of Susa towards the very end of the eighteenth century by a local boy while accompanying his father in search for antiquities to sell to the *Farangi* ('the Europeans').⁴⁸ As the object was not made in precious material, he just rolled it down from the top of the mound for fun and left it neglected not far from the tomb of Daniel. A few years later, the same boy had become the keeper of the tomb of Daniel. In 1809, two British officials, major William Monteith (1790–1864) and Sir John Macdonald Kinneir (1782–1830)

42 For the figure of Daniel in Jewish and Muslim traditions see Netzer (1993), p. 657.

43 *Daniel*, 8.10.

44 Newsom (2014), p. 29.

45 On the history of the Jewish community of Hamadan see Sarshar (2003), p. 615–623.

46 *Jos.*, *AJ* 10.26–27.

47 An English translation of the passage in Baladhuri's *Futūḥ al-Buldān* dealing with the tomb of Daniel can be found in Murgotten (1924), p. 114–115: "Abu-Mūsa saw in their citadel a house upon which was a veil, and upon asking about it, was told that in it were the remains of Daniel the prophet. (Peace be upon him and upon the [other] prophets of Allah and upon his apostles.) Now the people of as-Sūs had been smitten with drought, and had asked the Babylonians to send Daniel to them in order that they might secure rain by his help. This was done. (Bakht Nassar had taken Daniel captive and had brought him to Babylon.) Thus Daniel came to die in Manādhir. Abu-Mūsa wrote about this to 'Umar, who replied, 'Wrap him in a shroud and bury him.' Abu-Mūsa dammed up a river until he could bury him (in the river bed) while it was stopped. Then he let the water flow above him."

48 The story of the Black Stone has been reported by its discoverer to Loftus (1857), p. 416–423.

noticed the stone during a mission to Susa. Even though they had recognized its archaeological value, they left the stone at its place and took a sketch of it. In 1810, other two British officials, N. P. Grant and Cornet Fotheringham, offered the keeper of the tomb of Daniel to buy the object on their return from a mission in Eastern Fārs, but they were never able to come back as they were murdered by the tribal chief Kelb' Ali Khan. The interest showed by the British as well as the fate of Grant and Fotheringham persuaded the local inhabitants that the object was in reality a sacred talisman made by Daniel and accordingly had to be protected by the *Farangi* who wanted to use its power at their own advantage. So, the stone was moved in the inner court of the tomb of Daniel and pilgrims began to flock to behold that marvel. The worship of the 'Black Stone', as they called it, is well attested by European officers and civil servants who visited the region in the first half of the nineteenth century, but it was short-lived.⁴⁹ In fact, before 1841 a pilgrim blew the stone up as he thought that a treasure was hidden inside the stone. To avoid the rage of the people he said that the responsible of the sacrilege were two Europeans in disguise who wanted the ruin of Khuzestan. This story was easily believed as a few time later the region was struck by an epidemic, the collapse of the bridge of Shushtar and the dam of Hawiza as well.

While visiting Persepolis and its surroundings, the Venetian envoy, Giosafat Barbaro (1413–1494), was shown the sculpture of a man standing before an arc who was identified by the natives as King Solomon; above this figure a second, rather similarly looking, figure in a winged circle was depicted. On the basis of information given by local Persians, this second figure according to Barbaro represented God. Barbaro furthermore writes that he also saw a relief of a strong man on horseback, which his guides told him was the biblical hero Samson.⁵⁰ Barbaro does not provide any hint about the identity of his informants apart for the detail that they are natives. If the identification with Solomon can be taken as genuine local tradition, the case of Samson is more complex in that he was accepted as a prophet by the Muslims, but he held a minor place in the Islamic tradition. Thus, it seems more difficult to determine what belongs to authentic local tradition and what is a manipulation made up by Barbaro's guides to meet the expectations of the foreign traveller. In the first case, the scene observed by Barbaro almost certainly belonged to one of the Achaemenid tombs of Persepolis; the second most likely was a Sasanian relief and therefore must have been seen by him at another place – a little further away from the ruins, as Barbaro indeed says – and presumably was the rock relief at Naqsh-e Rajab, displaying Shapur I's parade.

As the Arabian historian Mas'udi (893–956) reports,⁵¹ since the tenth century CE the ruins of Persepolis were called the Mosque of Solomon because they were thought to have been built by the famous king and prophet.⁵² The images of men

49 See e. g. Bode (1845), p. 187–194; Loftus (1857), p. 417–423; Layard (1894), p. 353–355.

50 Barbaro in Lockhart, Morozzo della Rocca, Tiepolo (1973), p. 149.

51 See Barbier de Meynard & Pavet de Courteille (1865), p. 605.

52 On the attribution of the building of Persepolis to Solomon in the Middle Ages see Mousavi (2012), p. 84–94. Thévenot (1674), p. 284, reports that according to the local inhabitants a group of ruins close to Naqsh-e Rostam had been built by *djins* at the orders of Solomon.

sculpted on the Persepolis reliefs were thought to be ancient prophets. Jan Struys wrote in 1681 that peasants living in the neighbourhood of Persepolis recognized Solomon in one of the reliefs representing an Achaemenid monarch wearing a diadem and holding a sceptre.⁵³ Several other Persian landmarks are named after Solomon, among the most popular are the Achaemenid tower at Pasargadae, called *Zendan-e Soleyman*, ('The prison of Solomon'), and the Zoroastrian shrine of *Takht-e Soleyman*, ('The throne of Solomon'). The strong relation between ancient Persian sites and the figure of Solomon was not only due to the king's status as a wise judge and prophet, but also his reputation as a magician and exorcist in Christian, Islamic and Jewish traditions. This ancient tradition is best known from the *Testament of Solomon*, an apocryphal text – actually a demonology treatise – written in Greek between the first and third centuries CE.⁵⁴ The place of composition is debated, but Babylon or Egypt are the most probable options. The *Testament* is fictionally written in first person by Solomon himself, who narrates how he built the Temple of Jerusalem by summoning demons and forcing them to work for the glory of God. The *Testament* was incredibly popular and exerted a strong influence on Arabian, Greek, and Persian literature, to name only a few. Islamic lore considerably developed the tradition by introducing even more fantastic elements.⁵⁵ The attribution of pre-Islamic monuments to Solomon could date back to at least the Muslim conquest of Iran. But if we bear in mind the popularity and diffusion of the *Testament*, one can also suppose that the stories about Solomon recounted by local inhabitants to Western travellers drew on a much more complex set of traditions whose kernel was derived from the *Testament*, but to which various Jewish, Arabian and Persian traditions were added. Once again, it may be interesting to entertain for a while the hypothesis that the attribution to Solomon originated with pagan Persians, who thereby might have hoped to prevent iconoclasm by Muslim conquerors⁵⁶; if this was the case, it would suggest that they were already well-acquainted with the tradition of Solomon. Several Jewish communities were present in important towns such as Hamadan, Hulwan, Rayy, Shushtar, Susa, and Isfahan.⁵⁷ This deeply-rooted presence of the Jews in the Iranian world brought to mutual cultural exchanges between those communities and the Sasanian society. More specifically Touraj Daryaee has highlighted the fact that "in the Judeo-Iranian context, the transfer of one set of knowledge about the Persian past, in a Biblical, to the Sasanians seems most probable, if not certain".⁵⁸ In fact, an interesting parallel to these influences is provided by one of the paintings from the synagogue of Dura-Europos which shows scenes from the Book of Esther. While the story is a Biblical one, we

53 Struys (1681), p. 317.

54 English edition and commentary in McCow (1922); Duling (1983), p. 935–987. The tradition of Solomon as exorcist would date back to the first century BCE see McCow (1922), p. 105–106; Duling (1983), p. 941–942. On the figure of Solomon see also the collection of studies edited by Verheyden (2013).

55 McCow (1922), p. 78–82; Walker & Fenton (1997), p. 822–824.

56 See Mousavi (2012), p. 84–85.

57 On the Jewish presence in pre-Islamic and medieval Iran see Amanhat (2011a), p. 17–36; Pourshariati (2014), p. 1–32.

58 Daryaee (2010a), p. 33.

may notice several elements connected to the Iranian world such as the Parthian dress, but more important is the fact that “Iranian notions of kingship and the receiving of the *xwarānah*”⁵⁹ are clearly detectable. We have also to keep in mind that the books of Esther and Daniel already offered a ‘Persianistic’ representation of the Achaemenid Empire, which drew partly on images about Persia developed in the Greek literature of the fourth century.⁶⁰ Moreover, magical practices related to the Jewish culture – Aramaic magical bowls – are well attested in the western part of the Sasanian Empire, and the Jews had a primal role in either the diffusion of angelology as well as demonology in the Iranian world.⁶¹ Middle Persian translations of the Bible were known in Late Antiquity, and Zoroastrian priests of the Sasanian period were familiar with Jewish religion.⁶² Thus, Jamshid, the most popular of the mythical kings of the Iranian tradition, is often associated with Solomon because of his magical powers and authority over the *devs* (demons). As the historian Istakhri reminds, in the tenth century CE both Jamshid and Solomon were blurred by some people.⁶³

The popularity of Solomon extended not only to Jamshid but to other comparable figures as well. Thus the mountain Kuh-e Bilqis owed its name to the Queen of Sheba. Although neither the Bible nor the Koran give the personal name of the queen, this is mentioned in several Muslim works, particularly the collection of biblical episodes compiled by the Koranic scholar Tha’labī (d. 1035), who says the queen’s name was Bilqis.⁶⁴ On the top of the Kuh-e Bilqis mountain are the ruins of a Sasanian fortress, later named *Takht-e Bilkis*, ‘Throne of Bilqis’, after the Queen of Sheba. The orientalist Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson writes that,

The view from the peak of Zindan is a fine one. On all sides rise lofty mountains. One of these to the north, called Takht-i Bilkis, ‘Throne of the Queen of Sheba,’ towers skyward to the height of ten thousand feet, and on its summit (so legends say) King Solomon built a summer palace for his beloved.⁶⁵

The tomb of Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae was traditionally known as the Tomb of the mother of Solomon. Included in a mosque in the thirteenth century, the tomb was visited by Giosafat Barbaro about two centuries later. Barbaro was the first European to see the building and described it as a burial place over which a monument in the form of a small church (i. e. a mosque) had been built. An inscription in Arabic characters stated that it was the grave of the mother of Solomon.⁶⁶ In the account of Jean Thévenot, local people seemed ignorant of the reason why the place was thus called, but the French traveller observes that pilgrims from Shiraz visited the tomb for the celebration of the sacrificial festival Eid-e Qurban.⁶⁷ In addition

59 Daryaei (2010a), p. 34.

60 I owe this observation to Rolf Strootman (July 2015).

61 Daryaei (2010b), p. 96.

62 Daryaei (2006b), p. 498.

63 See Mousavi (2012), p. 84–85.

64 Lassner (1993), p. 41–87.

65 Williams Jackson (1906), p. 125.

66 Barbaro in Lockhart, Morozzo della Rocca, Tiepolo (1973), p. 149–150.

67 Thévenot (1674), p. 272. A few decades earlier, the young German Johann Albrecht von Man-

Jan Struys notices that many female pilgrims visited the tomb no matter the weather.⁶⁸ Actually, the tomb had become a shrine where women would come to pray for fertility. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the British diplomat Francis B. Bradley-Birt (1874–1963) reports on the ongoing vitality of this popular cult:

On the walls is a modern Persian inscription with verses from the Koran, strangely out of place in the shrine of the great Zoroastrian king. Hung on a piece of string, stretched across from one corner of the tomb to the other, are a few pitiful votive offerings, bits of cloth and brass, a common tin chiragh, and many strips of paper placed here by women who pass this way in the hope that by the intercession of the mother of Suleiman they may become the mothers of sons.⁶⁹

Although it is impossible to demonstrate a direct connection, one cannot help but think of the cult performed on the tomb of Cyrus the Great according to ancient sources: the *magoi* entrusted with the task of guarding the tomb received on a daily basis a sheep, white flour and wine, and a horse every month, which they had to sacrifice to the soul of Cyrus.⁷⁰ What is remarkable is that during the centuries the same place kept its function of funerary monument and shrine tied to concepts of kingship: on the one hand, we have the dynastic cult for Cyrus, on the other, the devotion for the mother of an exorcist king and prophet.

The passage above brings us to the last part of this overview on popular traditions surrounding Persian antiquities. As for the Achaemenid period, we have already touched on the stories concerning the *djins* and ghosts haunting the royal tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam.⁷¹ The tunnels underneath Persepolis were believed to be full of treasures, as many travellers report, including Chardin,⁷² and later William Francklin (1763–1839), who recounts the legends associated with Persepolis' sub-structures as follows:

The natives call this place the Cherk Almàs; that is, the Talisman, or diamond of fate: they affirm that at the end of the passage is the Talisman, and that whoever arrives thither, and asks questions of future events, will be answered from within; but they say that no one has ever yet been able to penetrate to the extremity of the passage, being opposed by the Demons and Genii, whom they believe to dwell there; and superstitiously imagine that all lights taken in there will go out of themselves [...] it may not be deemed presumptuous in giving a conjecture, that

delslo (1616–1644), who in 1633 had accompanied Adam Olearius (1599–1671) on his diplomatic mission to Persia, was informed by the Carmelite missionaries in Shiraz that the place was named after the mother of Suleiman, the fourteenth caliph since Ali; this cannot be correct because the tomb was already known under that name well before the reign of the caliph Suleiman; See Mandelslo (1658), p. 10.

68 Struys (1681), p. 315.

69 Bradley-Birt (1910), p. 243.

70 Arr., *Anab.*, 6.29.4–7; Strabo 15.3.7; see also Canepa (2010b), p. 1–5.

71 See e. g. Jean Thévenot (1674), p. 284: a treasure is hidden inside the chamber above the Shapur rock relief (the tomb of Darius I), protected by a stone wheel; it was said that the wheel had once overrun and killed a man who tried to steal the treasure.

72 Chardin (1711), p. 171–172. In the fifteenth century a man in urgent need of money succeeded in finding a room full of gold under the ruins of Persepolis. The precious items he brought with him however did not suffice to pay all of his debts, so that he was forced to explore the tunnels once again in search for more treasures, but he never came back.

they were originally intended as places for concealed treasure, a custom time immemorially observed and to this day subsisting among Eastern Princes.⁷³

It was believed that a correct interpretation of the cuneiform inscriptions would allow to people to open the passage to the treasure chambers hidden underground. The German traveller, Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo (1616–1644), is one of the first Europeans to allude to this tradition.⁷⁴ Gemelli Careri was likewise told that if he had been able to read the inscriptions, he would have found a treasure. He also would have died, people assured him, had he indeed ventured to explore those tunnels. The Armenian servant of the Italian adventurer became so afraid by these stories that he waited for his master a mile away from the ruins of Persepolis.⁷⁵ Jean Chardin reports the opinion of certain wise men of the country who thought that the cuneiform inscriptions of Persepolis were talismans preventing access to the treasures hidden in the tombs and the ‘temple’ (as that is what they thought Persepolis was). They also said that Alexander the Great had the inscriptions translated, and was shocked by the secrets he had learned. They added that during the reign of king Abbas I (1588–1629), a European who was able to read the cuneiform engravings had come to Persepolis with Imam Qoli Khan (d. 1633), the powerful governor of Fārs. He read two lines of an inscription and had Qoli Khan cleave with his scimitar a stone lion which had been taken from the ruins. Suddenly the ground opened revealing a room full of gold and silver. The treasure was so huge that it took sixty camels to bring it to king Abbas.⁷⁶

The loss of the ability to read cuneiform script had been essential for the process by which historical monuments and objects became magical items. Several travellers and explorers recorded that cuneiform inscriptions were often considered to be talismans for protection from disparate calamities such as droughts and epidemics, as witnessed, for instance by Robert B.M. Binning (1814–1891). The latter also says that the growing curiosity expressed by Europeans towards these mysterious writings was often seen with suspicion by the local populations because they thought that the *Farangi* knew the secret of the cuneiform script and thus were capable of steeling the treasures or appropriate the wonderful powers recorded by those inscriptions.⁷⁷ Next to the inscribed walls of Persepolis, the most renowned example of this popular belief were the two Achaemenid trilingual inscriptions (Old Persian, Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Elamite) carved by Darius I and Xerxes near the waterfall a few kilometres from Hamadan. These epigraphic documents were known under the evocative name of *Ganj-nāma* (‘Book of Treasure’). They were

73 Francklin (1788), p. 215–216.

74 Mandelslo in Olearius (1659), II, p. 90.

75 Gemelli Careri (1699), p. 252.

76 Chardin (1711), p. 171–172. The story may have been inspired by the fact that Imam Qoli Khan had material from Persepolis removed and sent to Isfahan on the request of Abbas I, and also to Shiraz to decorate his own residence. He furthermore had some Persepolitan reliefs and structures damaged in order to discourage other to visit the site: the accommodation expenses for foreign visitors and diplomats were considerably high and had to be paid by the governor of Fārs (see Mousavi 2012, p. 104).

77 Binning (1857), II, p. 38.

thought to record a magical spell capable of opening a treasure chamber. The earliest reference to the inscriptions is by Ibn al Faḡīh al-Hamadānī (ninth century), according to whom they existed long before Alexander. When the latter visited the place and asked for a translation, he was told that the inscriptions contained a message on the importance of sincerity.⁷⁸ The accounts of the western travellers, however, relate only the story of the magic spell. For instance, the British diplomat, William Hollingbery, who visited Iran from 1799 to 1801, writes,

This place the natives call Gunj-namah, from a supposition of treasure being concealed underneath it; which they say is guarded by genii, and that whoever can decipher the meaning of these inscriptions will possess the treasure.⁷⁹

To round off this section, it will be useful to dedicate a few words to the Hellenistic sculpture of a lion at Hamadan that we already encountered above.⁸⁰ Similarly to the *Ganj-nāma*, the earliest sources attesting its existence date back to the works by the historians Hamadānī and Mas'udi (before 893–956). The first holds that it was created as a talisman against the cold by Balinas the Greek, who had been ordered to do so by the Sasanian king, Qobād the Great.⁸¹ Mas'udi, by contrast, states that the lion was in front of one of the city gates, which was named Bab el-Ased ('Lion's Gate') after the lion.⁸² According to a local tradition which the inhabitants of Hamadan received from their fathers, the statue was built by Alexander on his return from India and it functioned as a talisman protecting the town, its walls and inhabitants. In 931, the Lion was mutilated by Mardāvīj (d. 935), the founder of the Ziarid dynasty. It is interesting to note that this episode was perhaps echoed in the story of Qoli Khan and the stone lion of Persepolis that some local learned men had told to Chardin.

The sculpture was the object of a popular cult, which was still vital in the nineteenth century. A religious procession was organized every year by the inhabitants of Hamadan in order to bring offers to the stone lion. The following is what Robert Cotton Money saw in 1824:

Every autumn the inhabitants of all the villages around walk in procession to it, decorate it with flowers, and sacrifice a sheep on it. The Moollahs while they affirm it to be an animal killed by Ali and turned into stone on the spot, are puzzled at its having assumed the colossal form; but others do not hesitate to allege that therein consists the miracle. The annual procession to it from time immemorial is curious, as its explanation is not written in any Persian history.⁸³

Contrary to what Hamadānī and Mas'udi reported, the core of the story which was alternatively set in the times of Alexander and the Sasanian period, had been changed into a Muslim tradition centered round the figure of Ali. The persistence

78 Massé (1973), p. 294.

79 Hollingbery (1814), p. 102.

80 Lushey (1968b), p. 115–122; Mousavi (2003), p. 612–615.

81 Massé (1973), p. 290. 'Balinas' is an Arabic corruption of the name of the famous sage and miracle worker, Apollonius of Tyana; see Loinaz (2012), p. 209–211.

82 Barbier de Meynard – Pavet de Courteille (1877), p. 21–22.

83 Cotton Money (1828), p. 196. R. Cotton Money (nineteenth century) was a civil servant of the East India Company.

of this tradition was noticed by the Spaniard traveler Adolfo Rivadeneyra (1841–1882) when he visited Hamadan in 1874: the stone lion had been a real lion that was petrified by Ali.⁸⁴ Black stains were visible on its face because unmarried girls and childless women would sit on it, praying for hours and spilling honey or oil on it in order to obtain a miracle.

CONCLUSION

'Persia' as it was imagined by Western travellers was completely different from the 'Persia' of local Iranians during the early modern period. A new past, deeply rooted in local traditions, had been created and the Europeans were left to speculate on the origins and functions of ruins such as those of Chelmenar. In Persia, the memory of the Achaemenid Empire had survived only through the filter of Sasanian construction of the Persian history. As time passed, other traditions were added to this core, originating from a complex set of narratives that would emerge at given periods or stay constant across the centuries. In this cultural and historical framework, are we allowed to speak of a survival of *Persianism* in early modern Persia? I think that the answer can be partly affirmative. On the basis of the traveller's accounts, we gain additional evidence on the fact that the Achaemenids had become pale shadows in the collective imaginary of the Persians. Darius III represented an exception because of the role he was attributed by the Sasanian dynasty in its kingship ideology, a role which however remained strong in the centuries following the Arab conquest of Persia. Although the memory of the Achaemenids and Darius had in fact been relegated to a mythical past, it nonetheless remained part of the historical heritage of the country. On the other hand, it is more difficult to think to a revival of *Persianism*. The concept of revival implies that a group of individuals choose more or less consciously to renew the interest on something, but in our case I suspect that we are dealing more with continuity of a tradition under different forms than a deliberate reviving of a determined culture or historical phase: the figure of Darius III, as we have seen, was functional to a legitimacy discourse developed in Late Antiquity, while the toponymy related to the Zoroastrians finds its origin after the Arab conquest when the followers of this religion had to resist to the Islamisation of the country, and it is not coincidence that this toponymy is moulded on an Islamic view (Guebre/infidel). The exception represented by the Ka'ba-e Zardusht may be explained by assuming that this place was so strongly tied to the memory of the Sasanian state religion that the name of Zoroaster managed somehow to survive. Biblical characters connected to the Achaemenids such as Daniel, had enjoyed a certain popularity well before the Islamic period thanks to the strong influence exerted by the local Jewish communities. A few cases such as that reported by Barbaro about Samson could be the result of a manipulation made in order to meet the expectations of the Venetian traveller. However, the evidence we have examined so far seems to show that the European travellers were generally frustrated in their

84 Rivadeneyra (1880), p. 73.

expectations derived from the Classical authors. The answers they received from the local population with or without the intermediation of the interpreters did not match what they hoped to hear as they consisted in a mixture of narratives where the Achaemenid Empire survived only through the lens of the Sasanian ideology to which were added further elements taken from the Jewish and Islamic traditions as well. Such an entanglement prevented the western travellers to gain information on ancient Persia, and this led the Europeans to think that the modern Iranians did not have any knowledge of their past. As a matter of fact, it was a cultural short-circuit that was taking place: the travellers asked questions in the light of what they knew about Achaemenid Persia, the natives answered according to their cultural background.

Even if the original history of a place had been lost, its ancient function or its emotional significance still somehow survived through a newly created view of the past that found expression in the traditions that in the course of time had developed around it. The identification of the Tomb of Cyrus as the tomb of the mother of Solomon may offer a good example of *Persianism* 'in disguise'. On the other hand, sites that were *not* related to the ancient glories of the Persian Empire were later ennobled with an Achaemenid (Sasanian filtered) origin because of the status they had as old ruins, thus becoming *de facto* part of a shared view of the Iranian past. This is the same phenomenon known for old sites and building attributed to Alexander the Great because of the popularity of the Persian version of the Alexander Romance.⁸⁵ However, it seems that this particular toponymy predated the arrival of the Europeans: in this cultural encounter with the local population the role played by the travellers was not as significant as it would have been after the first archaeological missions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁸⁶ Ancient 'Persia' in early modern Iran, as it was recorded by European travellers, meant a place that looked like a *One Thousand and One Nights* story. It was a past made of mythical kings, demons, and hidden treasures. This is the form *Persianism* assumed in the social memory of early modern Iranians when they tried to explain their ancient monuments to a foreign visitor.

85 See Coloru (2013), p. 389–412.

86 See Lerner, this volume.

ANCIENT PERSIANISMS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY IRAN: THE REVIVAL OF PERSEPOLITAN IMAGERY UNDER THE QAJARS

Judith A. Lerner

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to this volume Rolf Strootman and Miguel John Versluys clearly distinguish between the terms *Persianization* as “an acculturation process”, and *Persianism* as “the appropriation of a concept”. Both terms refer to the Achaemenid or Persian empire of Cyrus, Darius, and their successors, which was formed in the mid-sixth century BCE and grew to dominate the ancient world from the Mediterranean to the Indus before its complete destruction by Alexander the Great in 330 BCE. The appropriation of the concept – or, more concretely, the revival and use of Achaemenid Persian visual motifs in Iran (or Persia, as it was known before 1935) – in the latter half of the nineteenth century is the subject of this paper. In particular, it is the use of imagery drawn from the Achaemenid ceremonial capital in Fars province, *Parsa* in Old Persian, and more widely known by the Greek, *Persepolis*, or its Persian name, *Takht-e Jamshid*. Contradictory as it may seem, the explanation for such appropriation of ancient motifs, as I hope to demonstrate, has much to do with Qajar Persia’s modernization – ideologically and technologically – and the recovery of part of its historical past.

As a historian who studies the visual culture of pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia, I have long been interested in echoes and continuities of pre-Islamic *Iran* in the art of Islamic *Persia*.¹ Most prevalent are the major pre-Islamic pictorial themes of *razm-o-bazm*, “fighting and feasting”, as well as hunting and enthronement that continue in the art of successive Islamic dynasties.² These themes, however, derive from the art produced under Sasanian Persian rule (224–651 CE), which provided the tropes for Islamic Persianate artistic expression into pre-modern times.³ The

- 1 Aware of the political and linguistic implications of these two terms that I have italicized, I make the distinction between “Iran” and “Persia” here in order to designate the several visual cultures that existed on the landmass we now call Iran prior to the founding of the first Persian Empire in the sixth century BCE. But “Persia” and “Persian art” are more appropriate for the country and its cultural heritage – despite its occupation and geographic position as a crossroads by a variety of other groups; cf. Yarshater (1989); Kadoi and Szántó (2013), esp. p. 7–8.
- 2 Sims (2002; Fontana (2008); Shepherd (1974); Scarce (2006). Such continuity is not restricted to the visual arts, e. g., Hanaway (1971).
- 3 In addition to these major themes, specific visual quotations appear in isolated examples in Islamic Persian art, such as the fragmentary ceramic vessel of Nishapur ware (10th century) decorated with two confronted standing male figures, one of whom extends a wreath to the other – reminiscent of Sasanian investiture (and oath-taking) imagery on rock reliefs, metalwork and seals (Ettinghausen 1969).

Achaemenids, although acknowledged by the early Sasanians, were essentially forgotten by late Sasanian times. Indeed, the identity of Parsa/Persepolis, which was close to Istakhr, the “home” of the Sasanian dynasty, seems no longer known when a brother of Shapur II (r. 309–379 CE) left an inscription of his visit there, calling the site *sad setun* (“hundred columns”). By the Islamic period the site was associated with the legendary kings, Solomon and Jamshid, both considered divinely-appointed kings, the first also revered as a prophet in the *Qur’an*, the second the heroic and universal ruler in the national epic, *Shahname* (completed in 1010 by Ferdowsi, but based on earlier epical literature).⁴

Yet Persepolis, specifically its art in the form of relief sculpture on the platforms on which stood its buildings and in the doorjambs of these buildings, served in the latter part of the nineteenth century – as well as in the early twentieth century – to connect Iran with its past as the country sought to fashion its identity as a modern nation-state.

REBIRTH AND DEATH OF AN ANCIENT MEDIUM

As already noted, in the art of successive Islamic dynasties pre-Islamic pictorial themes remained popular in painting, metalwork, ceramics, and textiles, all media that had been used in the art of pre-Islamic Iran. But one medium prevalent in pre-Islamic Iran had, with the coming of Islam, all but disappeared: sculpture in relief carved from living rock.⁵ Although utilized in Iran from at least as early as the second millennium BCE, and to great effect by the successive Elamite, Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sasanian dynasties, figurative rock carving had been dormant for more than a millennium until its revival under the second Qajar ruler, Fath ‘Ali Shah (r. 1798–1834).⁶ As it had been for Sasanian monarchs, rock carving was a major medium of artistic and imperial expression during the long reign of this shah (Lerner 1998; Luft 2001). Of the eight known Qajar rock-carvings, *all but one* were commissioned by Fath ‘Ali Shah or by one of his sons or grandsons during his reign. After his death, except for a relief carved in 1878 by his great-grandson, Nasr al-Din Shah (r. 1848–1896), monumental relief sculpture was no longer made.⁷

Instead, relief carving on a much smaller scale appeared on the stone foundations and dados of Qajar buildings, mainly in the southern city of Shiraz, in Fars province. The stylistic and iconographic contrasts between these two modes of sculptural expression is striking: the rock reliefs of the first half of Qajar rule draw

4 Soucek (1975); Shahbazi (1977).

5 Mousavi (2014; 2015).

6 See Vanden Berghe (1983 for a listing of all the rock reliefs known at time of publication (the Sasanian relief at Rag-e Bibi, Afghanistan, had not yet been discovered by Western scholars).

7 This relief, carved in northern Iran to commemorate the building of a modern road through the Tang-e Band Borideh, was greatly influenced by photography of which this Shah was a devotee. See Lerner (2015), p. 167–168; and Fallah and Sabri (2013) for an historically accurate presentation of this relief but otherwise naïve discussion of Qajar rock relief sculpture.

upon Sasanian models that feature enthronement scenes, while the later architectural reliefs quote Achaemenid sculpture, specifically that from Persepolis, only 70 km to the northeast, with its processions, heroic combats as well as kingly enthronement.

What prompted this change? As already observed, the shift from Sasanian to Achaemenid imagery coincides with the increasing desire in nineteenth-century Persia to forge a national identity and to build a modern nation-state.⁸ But why Persia's Achaemenid rather than its Sasanian pictorial past? As also previously observed, Persian art from post-Sasanian or early Islamic times through the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth was indebted to Sasanian iconography and compositional formats. In this essay I offer an explanation for this shift. First, however, I present a brief survey of the Qajar reliefs dating to the reign of Fath 'Ali Shah.



Fig. 1 Rock relief of Fath 'Ali Shah hunting with sons and attendants. Tang-e Savashi, near Jalisjand, Firuzkuh district. 1817–1818. Photograph: after travital.com/tangeh-vashi-iran/.

EARLY QAJAR *RAZM-O-BAZM* AND ENTHRONEMENT RELIEFS

One of the earliest Qajar rock reliefs was carved in northern Iran in the mountainous district of Firuzkuh, which served as the main summer quarters of the Qajar tribe and where Fath 'Ali Shah had a hunting lodge. There, on a rock face in the Tang-e Savashi, in 1817–1818 the Shah (accompanied by sixteen of his sons plus attendants) commemorated his hunting exploits (Figure 1). This teeming composition

8 For a summary discussion of nation building and growth of a national identity under Qajar rule – *i.e.*, in the 19th century – see Ashraf (2008), and notes 30 and 31, below.

reproduces on a grand scale the painted hunting scenes popular with the Shah and his court that decorated more intimate objects, such as book covers and serving trays (Diba 1998, fig. 14a and b; Sims 2002, p. 113, no. 29). The activity of this scene harks back to ancient Iranian images of the royal hunt, with the density of the composition strikingly reminiscent of the great Sasanian hunting scenes in the large grotto at Taq-e Bustan in Kermanshah.⁹

Among Fath ‘Ali Shah’s several enthronement scenes is that situated above the Qoran Gate, the traditional entrance to Shiraz from the north (Figure 2).¹⁰ This imposing – though now poorly preserved – image of Fath ‘Ali Shah shows him seated on the *Takht-e Marmar* or Marble Throne, flanked by his heir, ‘Abbas Mirza (also with a long beard), and a beardless youth who I identify as his grandson, Muhammad Mirza, who succeeded his grandfather in 1834 as Muhammad Shah. The frontal hieratic pose of Fath ‘Ali Shah recalls that of the Sasanian Bahram II, whose enthronement relief at Sarab Bahram is not far from Shiraz and surely served as a model (Lerner 1990, p. 36 and fig. 9). Another of Fath ‘Ali Shah’s reliefs – his penultimate one – was inspired not only by Sasanian reliefs, it was carved directly over one on a boulder at Kuh-e Sorsorreh, near Rayy, now known only from the 1811 drawing made by the English Orientalist Sir William Ouseley.¹¹



Fig. 2 Rock relief of Fath ‘Ali Shah on the *Takht-e Marmar* (Marble Throne), flanked by ‘Abbas Mirza (right) and Mohammad Mirza (left). Tang-e Allahu, Shiraz. Before 1825. Photograph: J. A. Lerner.

9 Vanden Berghe (1983), pl. 38–40; cf. Diba (2005), p. 284.

10 Lerner (1991).

11 Qajar relief: Diba (1998), p. 41, fig. 11a; Sasanian relief: Ouseley (1823), pl. 65.

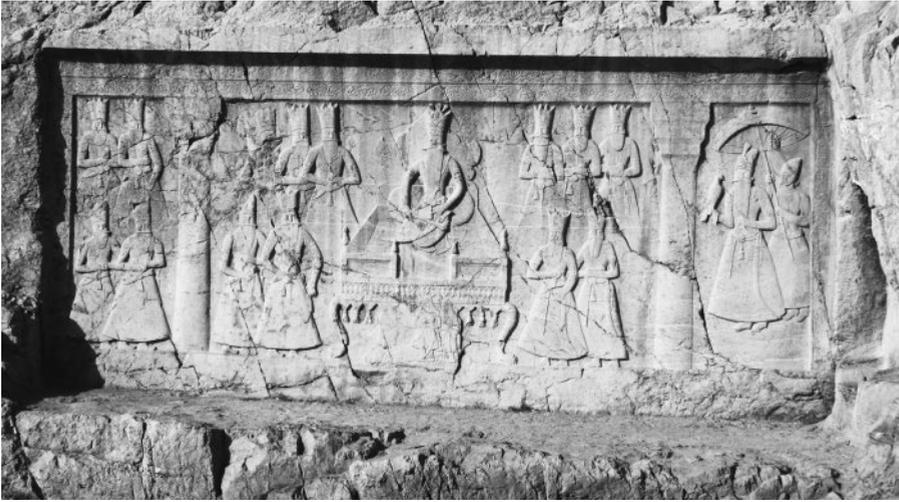


Fig. 3 Rock relief of Fath 'Ali Shah enthroned on the Takht-e Tavoos, surrounded by some of his sons. Cheshmeh 'Ali, Rayy. 1812/1813. Photograph: © 2007 Akbar Nematī.

Fath 'Ali Shah's final relief is the enthronement at Cheshme 'Ali, carved three years before his death (Figure 3). It reprises a portion of the much earlier and much-copied wall painting by 'Abd-Allah Khan, made in 1812/1813 for the Negarestan Palace in Tehran (Diba 1998, p. 174 and no. 34a–c). This life-size painting shows the enthroned Shah flanked by his sons and retainers, as well as by the ambassadors from Britain, France, Sind, Arabia, and the Ottoman Empire, all of whom he had received although never at any one time as depicted in the painting. In its composition we may sense an echo of the great Sasanian reliefs at Bishapur that portray the Sasanian king – on horseback or enthroned amidst courtiers, soldiers, and defeated enemies – that reverberated across the centuries of Persian art in royal and princely enthronement scenes. In searching for earlier models it would be logical to see in this conceit of foreign envoys converging all at once on the Qajar court to pay their respects the evocation of the great processions of the Achaemenid subject nations that are carved on the northern and eastern staircases of the Apadana (Ghirshman 1964, fig. 211). But this Achaemenid connection would be incorrect, because this composition, with its rows of gift- or tribute-bearers moving towards a central panel that displayed the enthroned king and his crown prince, was actually *never seen* by the Qajars. Already in Achaemenid times the central panel of each staircase had been replaced with one bearing an inscription flanked by guards; this is, then, what was visible in Qajar times, and remains visible to us today.¹² Further, the

12 The panels showing the enthroned Darius, his Crown Prince standing behind him, receiving a Median dignitary were uncovered in the building identified as the Treasury in 1936 by the American Archaeological Expedition of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago; see Ghirshman (1964), fig. 255; Tilia (1977), fig. 1. The relief from the Eastern stairway remains at Persepolis but that from the Northern stairway was taken to the Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran. Giuseppe and Ann Britt Tilia showed that the reliefs were originally set in the center of the

pristine grandeur of the entire procession on the eastern staircase was unearthed only in 1932, and, while a good part of the northern staircase had remained visible, its reliefs were badly damaged, had fallen or decayed due to centuries of exposure, or had vanished as a result of theft.¹³

Thus, Fath ‘Ali Shah and his artists did not draw directly upon the reliefs of Persepolis. As already observed, the enthroned ruler as the central figure flanked by courtiers is one of the most widespread *topoi* in Persian art.¹⁴ However, this association with Persepolis, albeit tenuous, paves the way for my discussion of Achaemenid sources in Qajar art.

THE REVIVAL OF ACHAEMENID MOTIFS IN THE LATER QAJAR PERIOD

Some time in the third quarter of the nineteenth century grand houses were being built in Shiraz, decorated with stone relief sculpture along with plaster carvings and ceramic tiles that copy motifs from Persepolis. Two examples have survived the vicissitudes of Shiraz’s expansion and modernization: the pleasure garden of Afifabad (“Place of Chastity”), begun in 1863 (Anonymous, n.d.), and the Nareng-estan-e Qavam (“Orange Orchard of the Qavam”), built between 1879 and 1885 (O’Donnell n.d.). Also known as the Bagh-e Golshan (“Rose Garden”), the pavilion, which is Afifabad’s main structure, rests on a high stone socle that recalls the

Apadana stairways and were replaced by Artaxerxes I (Tilia 1977, p. 70). Presciently the early nineteenth-century British traveler and artist Sir Robert Ker Porter speculated that the two converging processions on the stairway “point[ed] immediately to the presence of the Great King” (quoted by Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1991, p. 188).

- 13 For example, the upper rows of both wings of the northern stairway of the Apadana had been broken off from at least the seventeenth century (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1991, p. 180 and 185; see her complete chapter for a chronological account of what European travelers saw and what they noticed about the reliefs remaining from this stairway).
- 14 Along with the royal enthronement, two other subjects, the royal hunt and the king in battle, characterize Qajar court painting. These themes prompted B. W. Robinson’s observation that they are in ‘direct line from the bas-reliefs of the Achaemenids and Sasanians,’ being ‘fundamentally a tradition extending back for 23 centuries’. This tradition, however, had been mediated through successive Muslim dynasties, and as Robinson (1963), p. 97–98, acknowledges, ‘maintained in miniature painting executed for the Timurid princes ... [and then in] the Safavid period’.

A seemingly isolated example of the impact of Achaemenid art as early as Fath ‘Ali Shah’s reign is a painting in the palace of ‘Abbas Mirza at Tabriz, showing Fath ‘Ali Shah’s victory over the Turks. To the French architect and archaeologist Charles Texier, who travelled in Persia between 1838 and 1840, its row of enchained Turkish prisoners recalled the captured rebel leaders in Darius’ Bisitun relief (quoted by Robinson 1963, p. 98). Texier’s analogy, however, may only represent an efficient and thus long-used means of restraining prisoners rather than a conscious attempt of the Qajar artist to link an ancient ruler (his identity unknown to Persians in the first half of the nineteenth century) to the victorious Crown Prince. Nevertheless, the location of Bisitun above the crossing of two major east-west and north-south trade and communications axes would have made the relief especially familiar to those with business in Tabriz.

platforms that support the buildings at Persepolis. Among the many quotations from Achaemenid as well as Sasanian sculpture that decorate the pavilion are the soldiers carved on its foundation. Although only some are in Achaemenid robes and the others wear what is meant to be the military dress of successive Persian dynasties the use of such guardian figures was surely inspired by the guards at Persepolis (Figure 4a and b; Lerner 1980, p. 6–10 and figs. 7–9).¹⁵

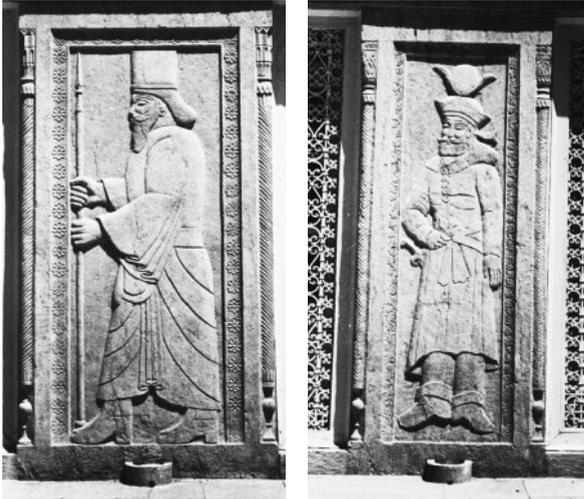


Fig. 4a and b Bas-relief panels of “Achaemenid” and “Sasanian” guards. Afifabad, Shiraz. Limestone. 1863–1865. Photograph: J. A. Lerner.

The Narenjestan, as it is known today, is part of an urban complex built by the hereditary mayor of Shiraz, the Qavam ol-Molk, that contained offices, a reception hall and guest accommodations (the *biruni* or men’s quarters), a private residence (the *anderun* or women’s quarters), and a garden. Decorating the stone sicles and doorjambs of the *biruni*, along with such interior furnishings as a marble fireplace, are a range of Persepolitan motifs – the enthroned ruler in audience; the ruler fighting monsters; and processions of servants (Figures 5a and b, and 6; also Lushey-Schmeisser 1983, figs. 31,1 and 3; Curtis 2005, p. 255, fig. 72; Lerner 1980, figs. 10–12).

Along with these Persepolitan motifs other Achaemenid monuments, such as the reliefs of Darius the Great at Bisitun, began to inspire a range of crafts in cities elsewhere in Iran, the products of which continue to be made and sold in the bazaars of Iran: *e.g.*, tile (Figure 7; also Lushey-Schmeisser 1983, fig. 31,4; Curtis 2005, p. 255, fig. 73), stucco (Ministry of Culture n.d., p. 8 and 9), and metalwork

15 In 1839, Muhammad Shah (1834–1848) standardized military uniforms with the idea of fostering the “homogenization of all people” and promoted this reform by explaining that, in addition to its practicality, it was modeled after pre-Islamic attire (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001, p. 107). The military dress adopted was actually European in style, part of the overall modernization of the army that was undertaken by, among others, Col. Henry C. Rawlinson, much better known for his translation of Darius’ trilingual inscription at Bisitun (see text below and note 23).

(Loukonine and Ivanov 1996, nos. 281 and 282).¹⁶ The textile industry embraced Achaemenid motifs enthusiastically, specifically, the makers of block-printed cotton (*qalamkari*) and woven carpets. This last phenomenon warrants its own study, but here I mention a series of large carpets woven in the early twentieth century that reproduce nineteenth-century drawings of Takht-e Jamshid, arranged according to the site's actual plan.¹⁷

Fig. 5a and b Bas-relief panels with Persepolitan motifs: the king enthroned and the king fighting winged monsters. Narenjestan, Shiraz. 1879–1885. Limestone. Photograph: J. A. Lerner.

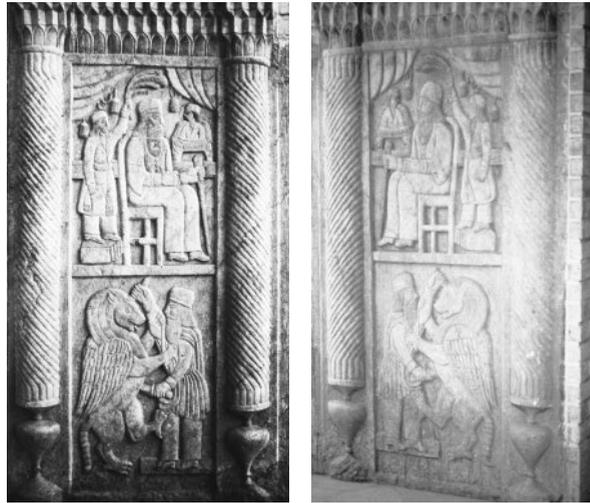


Fig. 6 Fragmentary bas-relief of the enthroned Achaemenid king with three rows of courtiers(?) before him, set into wooden frame. Last quarter of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth century. Limestone? H. 22 cm; W. 24.6 cm (relief without frame). The British Museum 2012.6028.1. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

- 16 This last medium has suffered the most esthetically as craftsmen have adapted the ancient motifs to the European tourist market (see Melikian-Chirvani 1992, p. 317).
- 17 These are the lithographed drawings of Forsat od-Dawla that illustrated his *Asar 'Ajam*, published in 1896, and that served as the design for a series of carpets produced in Kerman. How this came about and the significance of these carpets is a work-in-progress. This group is to be distinguished from the sizable corpus of carpets with individual Persepolitan images, sometimes combined with visual quotations from other periods of Persian history (most often Sasanian), that were produced in abundance in many weaving centers throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, through the twentieth, and today, mainly for the tourist trade, both domestic and foreign (for an example, see Lushey-Schmeisser 1983, fig. 31,5).

Fig. 7 Ceramic tile with the Achaemenid king enthroned; written beneath the throne is “King Jamshid.” Last quarter of the nineteenth century or beginning of the twentieth. H. 30 cm; W. 31 cm. The British Museum, 1981.0604.2; AN38 820001. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.



THE USE OF ACHAEMENID MOTIFS IN THE LATER QAJAR PERIOD

How do we account for this shift in interest from Sasanian to Achaemenid, and mainly Persepolitan, imagery in the second half of the century? From the rock reliefs with their echoes of the Sasanian past to the Persepolitan themes found on architectural stone sculpture and in ceramic, metal, and textile arts?

The impetus for this new visual vocabulary, I propose, was Henry Creswicke Rawlinson's transcription and reading of the Old Persian version of Darius' trilingual inscription at Bisitun, which he undertook from 1836 to 1841 and began publishing in 1847.¹⁸ This activity coincided with the growing concern among some of Persia's noble and privileged classes about the viability and independence of their country in light of its territorial losses and economic problems. In the first quarter

18 Rawlinson (1810–1895) was the first to climb to the relief and copy its inscriptions, a feat he began in 1835. His publication of the Old Persian was first published in 1847 as *The Persian Cuneiform Inscription at Behistun: Decyphered and Translated; with a Memoir on Persian Cuneiform Inscriptions in General, and on that of Behistun in Particular* (London: J. W. Parker, 1846), and in an entire volume of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 10 (1848) and continued in volume 11 (1849). See Lerner (2015), p. 158–160; for the history of Rawlinson's accomplishments, Ruby (1996).

It should be remarked that Rawlinson was not the only scholar to unlock the secrets of cuneiform, and specifically Old Persian cuneiform; others, such as the German philologist Georg Friedrich Grotefend (1775–1853), and the Irish country parson Edward Hincks (1792–1866) made major contributions. However, it was Rawlinson who actually copied all three versions and read the Old Persian (see Wiesehöfer 2001, p. 231–242).

of the nineteenth century, Iran had ceded its Caucasian territories to Russia and was worried about colonization by Great Britain; the economy was weak and disintegrating due to internal strife, lawlessness, and corruption. At the same time, contacts with the West, which had developed under Fath 'Ali Shah, were expanding. From the second quarter of the nineteenth century Persian young men began traveling to Europe to study scientific and technological subjects as well as art. Once home, many were dismayed – even angered – by what they considered the backwardness of their country. Coinciding with their exposure to European technological, legal, and economic systems, European ideas of nationhood, and an interest in western learning (not only from study abroad but from European travelers and residents in Persia itself), was a growing desire among Persian intellectuals and many of the returnees to recover Iran's *pre-Islamic* history beyond the poetic mythology of the *Shahnama*. In short, they desired to incorporate actual historical knowledge of ancient Iran into the creation of a national identity and a modern Iranian state.¹⁹

The feats of the historical Cyrus and Darius were well known through the Greek historians, but mainly to Europeans who had read Herodotus, Xenophon, Arrian, and others. Rawlinson's translation of Darius' words revealed Achaemenid history from the Persian side. An authentic voice – no longer a legendary ruler – spoke to Persians about the *first* great Persian Empire, which was also the *first* world empire. Such was the interest in Darius's words that the reigning Muhammad Shah (the youth in Fath 'Ali Shah's Shiraz enthronement relief) became a supporter of Rawlinson's work after receiving from Rawlinson a translation into modern Persian. As Rawlinson reported to the Society of Antiquarians in a communiqué of April 23, 1850, "a copy of my translation into modern Persian of the inscription at Behistun, which overturned all the popular histories of Persia, having been sent to the Shah, he had accepted in full faith, and by way of doing it honour had ordered that a portion of the rock beneath the original inscription should be cleared away and [my] interpretation be engraved, under [my] own direction, on the vacant space."²⁰

- 19 See Alavi (1983); Ashraf (2008); Cole (1996). On the development of nationalism during the Qajar period, Alessandro Bausani writes: "It should not be forgotten that the best aspects of modern Persian nationalism (often considered a special characteristic of the Pahlavi régime) were born not in that epoch but in the Qajar period. Even the reevaluation of the ancient glories of pre-Islamic Iran, that assumed in the neo-Achaemenianism of the Pahlavi's its worst aspect, had started in Qajar times, perhaps already at the time of Fath 'Ali Shah, though, more wisely, the Qajar preferred the Sasanian empire, better known to Muslim Iran and whose continuity with post-Islamic Iran could perhaps be more easily demonstrated, to the Achaemenid one, which was after all discovered chiefly by Western orientalism" (1983, p. 259).
- 20 As reported in *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review* (May, 1850), p. 511. The report continues: "The shortness of the Major's stay had prevented his accomplishing the task at that time, but he hoped to do so on his return to the East." Of course, this never happened. Interestingly, Rawlinson's remarks had been prefaced by those of Lord Mahon, who observed, regarding Rawlinson's feat, "on the singularity of its being reserved for a far distant European people to teach the tribes of Asia the meaning of their own ancient inscriptions." The Persian translation of Rawlinson's book, *Tarjumah-i Kuh-i Bistun*, had an introduction by the important Qajar poet and chronicler, Mirza Muhammad Taqi Lisan al-Mulk (pen-named Sipahr; 1792 or 1801–1879); a copy is in the National Library, Tehran, manuscript MS F/291 (Tavakoli-Targhi 2009, p. 9 and 267, n. 28).

Thanks to Rawlinson's reading, the names and deeds of actual personages began to supplant those of the Pishdadids and the Kayanids, the mythical Iranian dynasties of the *Avesta* and the *Shahnama* that preceded the historical Sasanians. It is therefore not surprising that Persians of the nineteenth century (and of previous centuries) were ignorant of the Achaemenids; the names and deeds of its kings were unknown, except for Dara (Darius III), who became the last Kayanid when defeated by his half-brother, Alexander.²¹ Thus, the ancient monuments that had been ascribed to these legendary, rather than historical, figures took on an entirely new meaning and interest.²² To be sure, since Sasanian times Persians had shown an interest in Persepolis and other Achaemenid sites, but, although they recognized in these structures an ancestral connection, they were unaware of these places' true identities.²³ Engagement with a site such as Persepolis was less in terms of the need to know who built it than as a glorious reminder of the impermanence of earthly structures or as evidence of superhuman and miraculous accomplishment.²⁴ Indeed, as noted previously, the different names that over the centuries had been given to Persepolis – *Takht-e Jamshid* ("Throne of Jamshid"), *Chehel Situn* ("Forty Columns"), *Sad Situn* ("One Hundred Columns"), *Masjid-e Sulayman* ("Mosque of Solomon") – attest to the loss of its identity for Persians since early Islamic times, if not before.²⁵ The histories written in the early Qajar period – that is, under Fath 'Ali Shah and Mohammad Shah – perpetuated the "time-honored historiographical tradition" of threading "dynastic accounts into a linear narrative connecting the Pishdadid and Kayanid legends of the *Shahname* to the contemporary dynasties,"²⁶ with little, if any, awareness of ancient or European histories. Further evidence of this are some of the early nineteenth-century travel accounts of European travellers which

21 Meisami (2001), pp. 38–39.

22 Rawlinson's work certainly must have inspired the new interest among Persian intellectuals in Iranian historiography. Jalal al-Din Mirza (1826–1872), author of perhaps the most influential book, the illustrated multivolume, *Name-ye Khosrovan* ("The Book of the Khosrows, *i.e.*, Sasanian kings"), published between 1868 and 1872, went beyond traditional Persian sources and used Perso-Indian and Parsi (Zoroastrian) ones, and to some degree for the Parthian and Sasanian periods drew upon modern Western studies; but he apparently was unfamiliar with Rawlinson's translation (Amanat 2011, p. 328–329; Amanat and Vejdani 2012). Although Jalal al-Din drew his illustrations of pre-Islamic rulers from the reliefs at Persepolis (but identifies the Persepolitan enthroned Achaemenid king as Jamshid [Amanat and Vejdani 2012, fig. 2]) as well as from the Sasanian kings' rock reliefs and coins, stylistically his illustrations reflect a European mode of representation instead of following the archaistic style of contemporaneous Qajar decorative relief sculpture. For more about this freethinking author and the influence of this work, see Amanat (1999). I plan to explore the origins and influence of Jalal al-din's illustrations in a future publication.

23 See Soucek (1975), pp. 195–200; for documentation, see Shahbazi (1997; 2001) who refutes the notion that the Sasanians had lost touch with the Achaemenid historical past. For a more even-handed presentation of this seemingly unresolvable argument, see Callieri (2006).

24 Mousavi (2002 [2003]), pp. 213–215; see also Melikian-Chirvani (1971).

25 For the early Sasanians' response to Persepolis, see Callieri (2006).

26 Amanat (2011), p. 308: "[Such accounts served] as indigenous prototypes for a national history long before Iranians learn[ed] of Western ideologies"; and, I would add, actively used Western sources.

report discussions with learned Persians about their country's past that showed that they had knowledge of Sasanian history, but were ignorant about earlier dynasties – the Achaemenid as well as the Parthian.²⁷

CONCLUSION: THE APPEAL OF ACHAEMENID IMAGERY

With the Achaemenids taking on the substantiality of historical fact, I suggest that incorporation of Persepolitan motifs in the art of Qajar Iran in second half of the nineteenth century was due not only to pride in discovering the historicity of a Persian dynasty, older than that of the Sasanians, but because that dynasty established ancient Iran – and thus, nineteenth-century Persia – among the world's oldest civilizations; indeed, well before Rome and even Greece, it was the world's oldest empire. Such imperial reach – albeit in the distant past – was a potential source of pride and a kind of psychological bulwark against the British, French, and Russian powers, who throughout the nineteenth century sought to bring Qajar Persia into their respective spheres of influence;²⁸ it also helped to define and shape the growing desire for nineteenth-century Persia becoming a modern nation state with both a national historical narrative and identity, along with historically-defined national borders.²⁹ Of the surviving Achaemenid monuments, Persepolis best symbolized Persia's rich and ancient heritage and, in this way, became an agent of modern

27 Thus, the British diplomat James J. Morier reports his conversation with a group of educated Persians: "We then entered on matters of chronology, which introduced a discussion on the relative antiquity of particular remains, as Persepolis and Nakshi-Rustam. The Chief Secretary, who seemed to have read much Persian history, knew that part which related to Shapour, and mentioned that he had carried his arms to Syria, and had taken prisoner a Roman Emperor. Yet the subject of the sculptures at Nakshi-Rustam had still escaped their observations; and they had still, according to the popular belief, substituted Rustam for Shapour, as the hero of those representations" (1812, p. 203).

28 For Anglo-Iranian relations in this period, see www.iranicaonline.org/articles/anglo-iranian-relations-ii; for Franco-Iran relations, see Hellot-Bellier (2012); for Russian-Iranian relations, see Andreeva (2014).

29 See Amanat (2011), p. 365. In his comprehensive discussion of the historical narratives that emerged in nineteenth-century Persia, and in particular with those that began with its ancient past, Amanat cites Aqa Khan Kermani's *A'ine-ye Sekandari* ('Alexandrian Mirror'); this work, completed ca. 1894, contrasted the glory of Iran's ancient past with its less-than-glorious present, and "converted the transcriptions of ancient Greek and other foreign proper names to their correct ancient Persian equivalent as they appear in the Behestun [sic] inscription," as read by Rawlinson. He notes, "this is probably the first usage of such proper names as *Hakhāmaneshi* instead of Achaemenids in modern Persian sources" (2011), p. 337, n. 86). A sizable literature exists about the discourses on nationalism and nationhood in nineteenth-century Iran – even on the matter of whether the nation is "Persia" or "Iran." Associated with recovering lost national glories (real and perceived) was the matter of a millennium of domination by "alien" Muslim-Arabs. See Tavakoli-Targhi (2001; 2009), as well as Kashani-Sabet (1997). As Mohammad-Taqi Imanpour correctly writes, "The recognition and gradual revelation of Persepolis and Pasargadae and the exploration of Achaemenid history, of which Iranians had little knowledge, was a great development in Iranian history This development provoked nationalism and interest in ancient Persia among Iranians (2015), p. 517.

nation building. Persepolitan motifs borrowed for contemporary architecture and the decorative arts were reminders of ancient Persia's imperial glory; the Achaemenid (as well as Sasanian) past with its imperial associations and native Persian (rather than Islamic) origins helped foster a new national pride.³⁰ Such powerful symbolism was not lost on the Qajars' successor, Reza Shah, who also utilized the Achaemenid past, particularly in architecture and ceremony, to legitimize his rule and create a new dynasty, the Pahlavis.³¹

30 In discussing how "nations and cultural groups" may manipulate the past to validate a culture identity, Jerome A. Voss observes, "Emphasis upon the past in any form may be a method of establishing identity," adding that "ancient monuments are effective in promoting an identity ... because they are visible connections with the past (1987, p. 85). Thus, the appearance on stamps in the late Qajar period of the buildings and reliefs at Persepolis (Errington and Curtis 2007, p. 177, fig. 169).

31 For example, Grigor (2009).

IS THERE A “PERSIAN HIGH CULTURE”?
CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE PLACE OF ANCIENT IRAN
IN OSWALD SPENGLER’S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

David Engels

The notion of ‘Persianism’ is, as stated in the general introduction to this volume, not so much about the hard political facts and concrete material legacy of the Achaemenid Empire than rather about the role played by the mental image created by the Achaemenids, not only in Ancient history itself, but also in contemporary thought and research. And as there is no such thing as absolute objectivity when it comes to the reconstruction of the past, and as even the most disinterested historian is inevitably rooted in the subconscious psychological, intellectual and cultural framework of his own era, it is crucial for our investigation of the evolution of ‘Persianism’ not only to consider individual cases of single historians, but also to take into account the impact the diverse streams of the philosophy of history may have had on the evolution of the general spiritual framework of modern historiography on the Achaemenids. In the following, we will try to show the fertility of such an approach by presenting the complex attitude of one of the most influential philosophers of history of the 20th century towards the history of Iran: Oswald Spengler.

Given the sorry state of our sources and the lamentable lack of a proper ancient Iranian historiography, the reconstruction of even the most basic facts of the history of the Achaemenid, Seleukid, Parthian and Sasanian dynasties depends on a thorough examination of scarce, incongruous and often contradictory evidence; a state of affairs vividly contrasting with the situation of the Greco-Roman or the classical Muslim world, whose historiographers provided us with generous amounts of chronological and political data. However, though the often very frustrating and hypothetical activity of reconstructing Iranian history frequently incites us to restrict our research to sometimes very selective and punctual issues, we should not let this deter us from considering, at least from time to time, the general picture that emerges when we look at Iranian history in its ‘longue durée’. Indeed, we must never forget what should always be the most important aim in the study of history: to understand its underlying mechanisms and dynamics and to define, through comparison and analogy, our own place within this broad framework in order to make sense of our individual existence. History, in its real meaning, is thus always a philosophical enterprise, and if we do not want our discipline to decline into mere antiquarian and indiscriminating erudition, we must endeavour, at least occasionally, to put our individual research into the broadest context possible.¹

However, when we try to look at the place Iranian history has occupied until now as paradigm for greater questions within the philosophy of history, the result

1 Cf. the reflexions outlined in Engels 2015a.

is fairly disappointing. Though there have been some notable exceptions,² nearly everywhere in Western thought, Iranian history has been reduced, on the one hand, to the stereotyped role of an ‘oriental despotism’, a role it largely owed to the Athenians’ constant self-adulation as champions of liberty and which diminished thus Iran’s eventful and complex millenary history from the Achaemenids to the Sasanians to a mere static and oppressive background of the development of Greco-Roman society. On the other hand, the influence of the Old Testament – for many centuries the only source for the reconstruction of Near- and Middle Eastern history – and its inevitable focus on the Fertile Crescent convinced many European historians to interpret the Achaemenids as mere ‘successors’ to a long line of archaic empires all centred on Syria and Iraq and to ignore the cultural originalities of the Iranian culture.

Hence, already Voltaire, who incidentally invented the expression of “philosophy of history”, opposed the alleged religious repression organised by the Egyptians, Persians, Chaldeans and Indians to the Greek liberty of thought:

Il parait que chez les Égyptiens, chez les Persans, chez les Chaldéens, chez les Indiens, il n’y avait qu’une secte de philosophie. Les prêtres de toutes ces nations étant tous d’une race particulière, ce qu’on appelait la sagesse n’appartenait qu’à cette race. Leur langue sacrée, inconnue au peuple, ne laissait le dépôt de la science qu’entre leurs mains. Mais dans la Grèce, plus libre et plus heureuse, l’accès de la raison fut ouvert à tout le monde ; chacun donna l’essor à ses idées ; et c’est ce qui rendit les Grecs le peuple le plus ingénieux de la terre. C’est ainsi que, de nos jours, la nation anglaise est devenue la plus éclairée, parce qu’on peut penser impunément chez elle.³

And though in many respects, Hegel’s philosophy of history is quite antagonistic to Voltaire’s, even Hegel was quite in agreement with the traditional vision opposing Greek ‘liberty’ to Oriental ‘slavery’ and based his whole system of history on the premise of a dialectic progression from Oriental monarchy through Greek civic aristocracy to European liberty:

Mit dem, was ich im allgemeinen über den Unterschied des Wissens von der Freiheit gesagt habe, und zwar zunächst in der Form, daß die Orientalen nur gewußt haben, daß Einer frei sei, die griechische und römische Welt aber, daß einige frei sind, daß wir aber wissen, daß alle Menschen an sich frei, der Mensch als Mensch frei ist, damit liegt die Einteilung, die wir in der Weltgeschichte machen und nach der wir sie abhandeln werden, vor.⁴

It is not surprising that Droysen, in the footsteps of Hegel, adopted this stereotyped vision of Persia when writing his seminal and highly influential biography of Alexander the Great, and described the Achaemenid Empire as follows:

2 Except the obvious examples of Herodotus and Ctesias in Antiquity, one may cite, for modern history, the philologist Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron or, to some extent, the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, though it is sometimes difficult to assess to what extent these highly open-minded approaches of Oriental cultures do not belong, at least partially, to the larger context of orientalism and thus ultimately relate to the same biased (though in a reverted form) picture of „the“ Orient. See Osterhammel (1998) for the political context of 18th century attitudes towards the Orient, Hösle (2013) for a systematic reconstruction of the interpretation of the „Orient“ in German Idealism and Harrison (2011) for a general overview of the place of Persia within this debate.

3 Voltaire (1956), Part I, Section 1, chapter ‘Les Grecs’.

4 Hegel (2nd 1923), Introduction.

Erst das Geschlecht der Perser war berufen, diese Völker alle zu beherrschen und von der hohen Burg Iran hinab seine Waffen und seine Ketten bis in das Abendland zu tragen; ihr Reich lehnte sich an den Westabhang des großen Gebirgswalles, der Asien teilt, es knechtete die Tiefländer nordwärts und südwärts, die Völker von Baktrien und Syrien, es bezwang die Länder des Taurus und Libanon, des Halys- und Nilstromes, die Brücken nach Europa und Afrika; aber das Meer und die Wüste ward seine Grenze; hier brach seine Kraft an der toten Gluthitze Libyens, dort an der lebendigen Kraft der europäischen Freiheit; die Riesenmasse des Reiches, nur durch die mechanische Bewegung weiterer Eroberungszüge zusammengehalten, begann sich zu lösen und zu verwesen; das Herz des Reiches ward die Totenstadt Persepolis.⁵

Unfortunately, even after the numerous archaeological discoveries of the Modern age and the new image of the Near East that has emerged since, this simplistic concept of Iran has lost nothing of its influence on many philosophers of history. It suffices to recall Karl Jaspers, who presented Iran as some kind of ‘dead end’ of the Axial age,⁶ or Karl Wittfogel who, only some decades ago, conflated the traditional Iranian, Chinese and Egyptian monarchies with the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union in order to describe the ‘general’ functioning of these alleged cases of ‘oriental despotisms’.⁷

Given the obstinate persistence of this stereotype, it is hardly surprising that, while even the smallest details of Greco-Roman history have been commented over and over and have been used as (positive or negative) examples for the most diverse features of European culture, the history of Iran, from the Achaemenids to the Sasanians, is generally presented, from a philosophical standpoint, as a static bulk, barely structured by a sequel of impersonal kings and dynasties, and only of interest in its opposition to classical Greece. Thus, no philosophy of history seems ever to have tried to consider the history of Iran on its own right and to see through its alleged static uniformity in order to stress its inherent dynamics – except for Oswald Spengler.⁸ Spengler is probably one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century, and his broad historical vision, if we believe Adorno, ‘hat kaum einen Gegner gefunden, der sich ihm gewachsen gezeigt hätte: das Vergessen wirkt

5 Droysen (1833), Introduction.

6 Jaspers (1949). Cf. in general Arnason, Eisenstadt, Wittrock (2005); Bellah & Joas (2012).

7 Wittfogel (1957).

8 Of course, when speaking about Oswald Spengler, one inevitably thinks of his most important intellectual successor, Arnold Toynbee, who, though much less interested in philosophical and metaphysical issues than Spengler, presented his readers with a much more nuanced and complex, though in some ways also diluted and not always rigorous historical morphology of his own. As Spengler, Toynbee considered Iranian history not on its own right, but rather as a quite secondary annex to the neighbouring societies. Hence, in a first stage, the Achaemenids appear as ‘barbarians’ taking over the Neo-Babylonian Empire, and Zoroastrianism is considered (as well as Judaism) as the religious by-product of the ‘Babylonian’ culture. At the same time, however, Toynbee also interpreted the Achaemenid kingdom as the ‘universal empire’ corresponding to the final stage of the ‘Near Eastern culture’ (whose links to the Babylonian culture are not always very clearly defined). As Toynbee also considers the (roughly 1200 years younger) Arabian Caliphate as yet another avatar of the near Eastern culture’s ‘universal empire’, this leaves the reader somewhat perplex as to the chronological categories employed by Toynbee. Concerning Toynbee’s attitude to Spengler, see below.

als Ausflucht'.⁹ In the following, it shall be endeavoured – for the first time – to consider more precisely what philosophical place Spengler assigned to the history of Iran, to compare it with our current state of knowledge and to reflect on how Spengler's morphology of history may still inspire us when outlining the broad framework of pre-Islamic Iranian history and trying to reconstruct the importance of 'Persianism' as an ideological cardinal point of the history of the Orient.

OSWALD SPENGLER

Oswald Spengler,¹⁰ despite the current Renaissance of studies devoted to his work,¹¹ is still largely forgotten by modern historiography or reduced to a handful of generally misinterpreted concepts like the idea of the 'Decline of the West',¹² and it may be useful to recall shortly the broad outlines of his philosophy. Spengler's general approach is based on two main assumptions.

The first one is the idea that there are certain types of societies, labelled 'high cultures', whose historical development stands out from the general framework of human history, as it forms a specific dynamic pattern. Spengler differentiates a total of eight (or nine) 'high cultures' in human history: Pharaonic Egypt, Ancient Mesopotamia, pre-imperial China, Vedic India, Classical Antiquity, the 'Arabian' Culture, pre-Columbian America, Europe and – possibly – Russia, out of which only the two latter are still considered as extant, though the history of Europe slowly approaches its end.

The second assumption is the hypothesis of historical biologism, a specific form of determinism supposing that collective entities follow the same evolutionary patterns as biological bodies; an idea we already find expressed in Cato, Cicero, Livy, Florus, Seneca, Ammianus, Bacon, Vico, Goethe, Hegel, Nietzsche and Danilewski¹³ and which has been impressively rendered by many romantic artists like, for instance, Thomas Cole with his well-known 'Course of Empire' depicting the same cityscape in four stages of civilizational evolution.¹⁴ Thus, for Spengler, each culture follows a pre-determined cycle of evolution assimilated to the different stages of life or to the four seasons, living through spring and youth, summer and adult age, autumn and old age and, finally, winter and death:

9 Adorno (1955), p. 52.

10 Spengler's main work, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (first published in two volumes in 1918 and 1922, then, as revised edition, in 1923), will be cited as UdA and follows the Munich edition from 1997 (13th ed.).

11 Concerning the philosophy of history of Oswald Spengler, cf. in general Schröter (1949); Stuart Hughes (1952); Koktanek (1965); Koktanek (1968); Merlio (1982); Felken (1988); Fischer (1989); Swassjan (1998); Demandt & Farrenkopf (1994); Conte (2004); Lisson (2007); Gasimov & Lemke Duque (2013); Merlio & Meyer (2014); Ludz (1980).

12 Concerning the sources of Oswald Spengler, cf. Schoeps (1955); Zumbini (1994).

13 Concerning biologicistic philosophy of history, cf. now the recent overview by Engels (2015).

14 Parry (1988); Noble (1853/1997).

‘Kulturen sind Organismen. Weltgeschichte ist ihre Gesamtbiographie. Die ungeheure Geschichte der chinesischen oder antiken Kultur ist morphologisch das genaue Seitenstück zur Kleingeschichte des einzelnen Menschen, eines Tieres, eines Baumes oder einer Blume.’ ‘Jede Kultur [...] hat ihre Kindheit, ihre Jugend, ihre Männlichkeit und ihr Greisentum.’ ‘Eine Kultur stirbt, wenn diese Seele die volle Summe ihrer Möglichkeiten in der Gestalt von Völkern, Sprachen, Glaubenslehren, Künsten, Staaten, Wissenschaften verwirklicht hat und damit wieder ins Urseelentum zurückkehrt. [...] Ist das Ziel erreicht und die Idee, die ganze Fülle innerer Möglichkeiten verwirklicht, so erstarrt die Kultur plötzlich, sie stirbt ab, ihr Blut gerinnt, ihre Kräfte brechen – sie wird zur Zivilisation.’ (UdA 140–144)

For Spengler, every culture first emerges from pre-cultural primitivism and enters a phase of roughly thousand years of genuine cultural evolution, during which it gradually transforms into what he calls a ‘civilisation’, before finally petrifying and declining into a post-historic state of stagnation and sterility. From this perspective, all possible differences between spiritual, political and artistic life disappear, all human creations becoming a mere symbol or symptom of the same underlying and implacable historical dynamism, leading from the dark ages of humble, yet soulful beginnings through an early critical and urban stage to the zenith of creativity and enlightenment, only in order to gradually decline into a megalopolitan, materialistic, technological and imperialistic civilisation, whose dwindling creative forces can only lead to the establishment of a decadent world-state where archaic and atavistic features become again more and more prominent before it crumbles either from the within or from the outside.

Several additional features make Spengler’s theory even more intriguing and controversial. Thus, Spengler, contrarily to Hegel for example, refuses to anchor his vision of history in a broader metaphysical framework: as follower of the philosophy of vitalism, Spengler attributes no teleological or ethical sense to the history of mankind in general and of the ‘high cultures’ in particular; as for Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Dilthey, human history seems to be, at most, an aesthetic phenomenon, and nothing more.¹⁵

Furthermore, Spengler categorically denies the possibility that a culture can actually influence another culture: Phenomena of cultural reception always stem from an erroneous re-interpretation of other cultures through the lens of one’s own vision and interest:

Man kann daraufhin alle Kulturen durchsuchen, man wird überall bestätigt finden, daß statt der scheinbaren Fortdauer der früheren Schöpfung in der späteren es immer das jüngere Wesen war, das eine ganz geringe Anzahl von Beziehungen zu älteren Wesen angeknüpft hat, und zwar ohne die ursprüngliche Bedeutung dessen zu beachten, was es damit für sich erwarb. Wie steht es denn mit den „ewigen Errungenschaften“ in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft? Wir müssen immer wieder hören, wieviel von der griechischen Philosophie noch heute fortlebt. Aber das bleibt eine Redensart ohne eine gründliche Aufstellung dessen, was erst der magische und dann der faustische Mensch mit der tiefen Weisheit ungebrochener Instinkte abgelehnt, nicht bemerkt oder unter Beibehaltung der Formeln planmäßig anders verstanden hat. (UdA 621)

15 Concerning the possibility to re-interpret Spengler on the basis of Hegel’s historical dialectic, cf. however Engels (2009).

This specific outlook on reality is, following to Spengler, deeply affected by what he calls the ‘soul’ of a culture, a subconscious archetype determining how each culture sees and interprets the world around it, and which can never be truly shared with anyone not belonging to the respective culture.

Finally, Spengler’s determinism is, contrarily to Toynbee’s theory of challenge and response,¹⁶ unrelenting and monistic. Once the evolution of a culture starts, nothing can stop it from living through all predetermined phases until the bitter end. This rigidity has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it enables Spengler to propose a nearly mathematical mechanism of history not only able to predict the future of our current civilisation,¹⁷ but also to fill in gaps in our knowledge concerning past cultures. But on the other hand, Spengler’s monolithic approach makes his theory quite vulnerable, as it may suffice to prove that Spengler is wrong on only one point for the whole system to break down. And this is exactly why Spengler’s interpretation of Iranian history has to be considered as an important element either in the refuting, or the consolidation of his theory, as we shall see.

IRAN AND SPENGLER’S ‘ARABIAN’ CULTURE

Spengler was, by scholarly formation as well as by personal preference, mainly interested in Classical Antiquity¹⁸ and in the history of contemporary Europe, and it is not surprising that most parts of the ‘Decline of the West’ are devoted to the parallels between these two cultures. Thus, Spengler refers only cursorily to other cultures like Pharaonic Egypt, India or pre-imperial China, whereas Ancient Babylonia or South America are virtually absent from the bulk of his argumentation. Nevertheless, this obvious weakness of Spengler’s work has never been considered as a fundamental problem, as the history of these still largely archaic cultures with reduced mutual interaction seemed indeed to follow the general outlines of Spengler’s morphological framework.¹⁹ However, there was one portion in Western history that did not seem to fit in as easily, as Spengler himself knew very well: the history of the first millennium AD, whose analysis takes the most important place in the ‘Decline’ of the West after the description of Antiquity and Modernity.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the political history of the first millennium was still largely interpreted in terms of political, religious and cultural caesurae and transitions, with the Roman Empire declining in favour of the Germans, Slavs and Arabs, whereas, at the same time, Christianity and Islam steadily supplanted polytheism. Hence, this complex period of an alleged transformation of the decaying Greco-Roman world into the fresh world of the Christian Middle Age in the north and the brilliant Muslim society in the south must have seemed to Spengler quite

16 On the links leading from Spengler to Toynbee, cf. Kissinger (1950); Schischkoff (1965), esp. p. 62; Joll (1985); Wangenheim (2015).

17 On Spengler’s vision of Europe’s future, cf. Engels (2007).

18 Spengler’s PhD-Thesis concerned Heraclitus; cf. Spengler (1937).

19 An overview over the reactions of the academic world to Spengler’s ‘Decline of the West’ has been most usefully compiled by Schröter (1922).

obviously as the one period potentially invalidating his whole theory, as it did not seem to fit into any of Spengler's biologist patterns.

This is when Spengler had one of his keenest and most controversial inspirations²⁰. Instead of analysing the first millennium in terms of caesura, transition and transformation and abandoning the absolute autonomy of his 'high cultures', Spengler postulated the idea that the whole history of the territories stretching from Egypt to Central Asia and from the Dardanelles to Ethiopia and Arabia and lasting from the battle of Actium in 31 to the fall of Baghdad in 1258 had to be seen as forming one single and compact entity which he christened sometimes 'Arabian', sometimes 'Magian' Culture, a telling ambivalence, as we shall see:

Die magische Kultur ist geographisch und historisch die mittelste in der Gruppe hoher Kulturen, die einzige, welche sich räumlich und zeitlich fast mit allen anderen berührt. [...] Aber gerade sie ist aus philologischen und theologischen Vorurteilen und mehr noch infolge der Zersplitterung der modernen Fachwissenschaft bis jetzt nicht erkannt worden. [...] Die eigentlichen Historiker hielten sich an das Interessengebiet der klassischen Philologie, aber deren Horizont endete an der antiken Sprachgrenze im Osten. [...] Die Literaturforscher, ebenfalls Philologen, verwechselten den Geist der Sprache mit dem der Werke. [...] Die Religionsforschung zerlegte das Gebiet in Einzelfächer nach westeuropäischen Konfessionen, und für die christliche Theologie ist wieder die 'Philologengrenze' im Osten maßgebend gewesen und ist es noch. [...] Das ist die gelehrte Vorbereitung der größten Aufgabe, welche der heutigen Geschichtsforschung gestellt ist. (UdA 785–787)

Under these circumstances, the obvious differences between the Western and the Eastern, viz. the Greco-Roman and the Iranian half of the 'Arabian' Culture had to be considered as results of the oppressing influence the old civilisations of Classical Antiquity and Ancient Babylonia exerted on the young and still mouldable 'Arabian' Culture;²¹ a hypothesis which had the practical side effect of explaining why the Islamic conquest was to be such a success: it finally 'liberated' the 'Arabian' Culture and gave it back its original soul.²² And indeed, exactly as the other cultures, Spengler considers the 'Arabian' Culture as being influenced by a specific, inimitable outlook on life: Whereas the Classical or 'Apollinian' Culture is characterised by a mainly static and plastic psychological archetype and the European or 'Faustian' Culture by an insatiable wish of expansion and space, the 'Arabian' Culture is guided by an intrinsically dualistic vision of metaphysics and mankind.²³

20 For a general criticism of Spengler's 'Arabian' culture, cf. Becker (1923); Demandt (1980).

21 'Die arabische Vorzeit selbst, die sich bei Persern und Juden verfolgen läßt, lag völlig im Bereiche der alten babylonischen Welt, die Frühzeit aber von Westen her unter dem mächtigen Bann der antiken, eben erst voll ausgereiften Zivilisation.' (UdA 605)

22 'Der Islam hat dieser Welt endlich und viel zu spät das Bewußtsein der Einheit verliehen, und darauf beruht das Selbstverständliche seines Sieges, das ihm Christen, Juden und Perser fast willenlos zuführte.' (UdA 606)

23 'Das faustische und das apollinische Seelenbild stehen einander schroff gegenüber. Alle früheren Gegensätze tauchen wieder auf. Man darf die imaginäre Einheit hier als Seelenkörper, dort als Seelenraum bezeichnen. Der Körper besitzt Teile, im Raum verlaufen Prozesse. Der antike Mensch empfindet seine Innenwelt plastisch. [...] Das magische Seelenbild trägt die Züge eines strengen Dualismus zweier rätselhafter Substanzen, Geist und Seele. Zwischen ihnen herrscht weder das antike, statische, noch das abendländische, funktionale Verhältnis, sondern ein völlig anders gestaltetes, das sich eben nur als magisch bezeichnen läßt. [...] Eine den

In a scientific context still very much influenced by the neat boundaries created by philology, we have to credit Spengler with an extraordinary ability of transgressing the borders of the historical disciplines in order to present a coherent image of the Near and Middle Eastern society of the first millennium, and it is undeniable that Spengler's powerful description of the political, cultural and intellectual similarities between early Christianity and Islam, as well as between the Byzantine and the Muslim states is a pioneering work in interdisciplinarity.²⁴ It is also true that Spengler was not the only one understanding the history of the first millennium not so much as a hiatus between Antiquity and European history, but as a homogeneous cultural era on its own right, if we remember Dopsch, Kornemann and Pirenne.²⁵ Unsurprisingly, there have been many objections to the idea of an 'Arabian' Culture, often coming from the ranks of contemporary church historians, and a thorough discussion of the arguments involved would easily fill a volume of its own. However, quite curiously, Spengler's assumption that the history of Iran was an integral part of the 'Arabian' (or, in reference to the Iranian priesthood of the Magians, the 'Magian') Culture has, hitherto, only rarely been discussed, as research has mainly focused on the differences (or similarities) between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, rather leaving aside the Mazdaean East. Before dealing more closely with the specific place Spengler assigns to Iranian history, let us first recall the general picture.

Given the fact that Spengler postulated, on the one hand, a basic cultural identity between Judaism, Late Antique syncretism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Islam and, on the other hand, a fundamental difference between the Christian religion of the first millennium and the Christianity of the European Culture, it is only logical that Spengler devoted most of his energy to the analysis of the spiritual evolution of the 'Arabian' Culture.²⁶ Thus, for Spengler, after a preparatory phase (500–0) characterised by the Old-testamentary prophets and by Zarathustra, the 'spring' of the 'Arabian' Culture (0–300) begins with the awakening of its cultural 'soul' through primitive Christianity, Gnosis and Mithraicism, corresponding to the genesis of Classical myth or German Catholicism. The protagonists of the first mystical and metaphysical shaping of this new vision were thinkers like Origen, Plotinus, Mani or Iamblichus, corresponding to theologians like Thomas Aquinas or Duns Scotus, whereas the canonisation of the Avesta, the Talmud and the New Testament corresponded to the canonisation of science and knowledge in medieval Scholasticism. The 'Summer' of the 'Arabian' Culture (300–650) is inaugurated by the 'Reformatory' zeal of the Nestorians, the Monophysites and the Mazdakites, whereas the Byzantine, Jewish, Syrian, Coptic and Persian literature of the 6th and

Leib durchdringende Substanz befindet sich in deutlichem Wertunterschied gegen eine zweite, die sich aus der Welthöhle in die Menschheit herabläßt, abstrakt, göttlich, auf welcher der Consensus aller an ihr Teilhabenden beruht. Dieser "Geist" ist es, der die höhere Welt hervorruft, durch deren Erzeugung er über das bloße Leben, das "Fleisch", die Natur triumphiert.' (UdA 389–390)

24 Concerning current analyses of the inner cohesion of the first millennium and the importance (or not) of the fall of Rome, cf. Demandt (2014).

25 Cf. Kornemann (1912), p. 205; Dopsch (1918/1924); Pirenne (1937).

26 Concerning the sources of following summary, cf. mainly the comparative chronological tables after the introduction of the 'Decline of the West (infra)'.

7th century is supposed to correspond to the Pre-Socratics and to 17th century philosophy. Islam, then, together with the Paulicians and the Iconoclasts, becomes the main representative of Puritanism. The 'Autumn' (650–1000) corresponds to the classical age of Islam, with the Mu'tazilites and Sufis parallelising the European Enlightenment and Greek Sophism, and the philosophers Alfarabi and Avicenna are equivalents to Plato and Aristotle or to Goethe and Kant. 'Winter' (from 1000 onwards) finally sees the emergence of materialism, scepticism, "lecture-room philosophy" and compendium literature, corresponding to the 19th and 20th century and leading to the practical fatalism of Islam since 1000.

In order to provide the reader with an impression of the density and also the visual coherence of Spengler's morphological considerations, we reproduce here the comparative table of the parallels between the main spiritual developmental stages of the Indian, the Greco-Roman, the 'Arabian' and the Western cultures as it can be found at the end of the 'Introduction' to Spengler's 'Decline of the West', as it is here that most allusions to Iranian history can be found:

I. Tafel "Gleichzeitiger" Geistesepochen			
<i>Indische Kultur seit 1500</i>	<i>Antike Kultur seit 1100</i>	<i>Arabische Kultur seit Chr.</i>	<i>Abendländische Kultur seit 900</i>
Frühling			
Landschaftlich-intuitiv. Mächtige Schöpfungen einer erwachenden traumschweren Seele. Überpersönliche Einheit und Fülle			
1. Geburt eines Mythos großen Stils als Ausdruck eines neuen Gottgefühls. Weltangst und Weltsehnsucht			
1500–1200	1100–800	0–300	900–1200
Religion des Veda	Hellenisch-italische "demetrische Volksreligion" Olympischer Mythos	Urchristentum Mandäer, Marcion, Gnosis Synkretismus [Mithras, Baale]	Germanischer Katholizismus Edda [Baldr] Bernhard v. Clairiaux, Joachim v. Floris, Franz v. Assisi
Arische Helden-sagen	Homer	Evangelien	Volksepos [Siegfried],
		Apokalyptik	Ritterepos [Gral]
	Herakles-, The-seussage	Christl., mazd., heidn. Legende	Abendländ. Heiligenlegende
2. Früheste mystisch-metaphysische Gestaltung des neuen Weltblickes. Hochscholastik			
In den ältesten Teilen der Veden enthalten	Älteste, nicht schriftl. Orphik	Origenes [† 254], Plotin [† 269]	Thomas v. Aquino [† 1274]
	Etrusk. Disziplin	Mani [† 276], Jamblich [† 330]	Duns Scotus [† 1308]
	Nachwirkung: Hesiod		Dante [† 1321], Eckart [† 1329]

I. Tafel "Gleichzeitiger" Geistesepochen			
<i>Indische Kultur seit 1500</i>	<i>Antike Kultur seit 1100</i>	<i>Arabische Kultur seit Chr.</i>	<i>Abendländische Kultur seit 900</i>
	Kosmogonien	Awesta, Talmud, Patristik	Mystik und Scholastik
Sommer			
Reifende Bewußtheit. Früheste städtisch-bürgerliche und kritische Regungen			
3. Reformation: Innerhalb der Religion volksmäßige Auflehnung gegen die großen Formen der Frühzeit			
Brahmanas, älteste Elemente der Upanishaden [10./9. Jahrh.]	Orphische Bewe- gung	Augustinus [† 430]	Nicolaus Cu- sanus [† 1464]
	Dionysosreligion	Nestorianer [um 430]	Hus [† 1415], Savonarola
	"Religion des Numa" [7. Jahrh.]	Monophysiten [um 450]	Karlstadt, Luther, Calvin [† 1564]
		Mazdak [um 500]	
4. Beginn einer rein philosophischen Fassung des Weltgefühls. Gegensatz idealistischer und realistischer Systeme			
In den Upani- shaden enthalten	Die großen Vorsokratiker [6./5. Jahrh.]	Byzantinische, jüdische, syrische, koptische, persische Literatur des 6/7. Jahrh.	Galilei, Bacon, Descartes, Bruno, Boehme, Leibniz 16./17. Jahrh.
5. Bildung einer neuen Mathematik. Konzeption der Zahl als Abbild und Inbegriff der Weltform			
Verschollen	Die Zahl als Große [Maß] [Geometrie, Arith- metik] Pythagoreer seit 540	Die unbestimmte Zahl [Algebra] Entwicklung unerforscht	Die Zahl als Funktion [Ana- lysis] Descartes, Pas- cal, Fermat um 1630 Newton, Leibniz um 1670
6. Puritanismus: Rationalistisch-mystische Verarmung des Religiösen			
Spuren in den Upanishaden	Pythagoreischer Bund seit 540	Mohammed 622 Paulikianer, Bilderstürmer seit 650	Englische Puri- taner seit 1620 Französische Jansenisten seit 1640 [Port Royal]

I. Tafel "Gleichzeitiger" Geistesepochen

<i>Indische Kultur seit 1500</i>	<i>Antike Kultur seit 1100</i>	<i>Arabische Kultur seit Chr.</i>	<i>Abendländische Kultur seit 900</i>
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Herbst

Großstädtische Intelligenz. Höhepunkt strenggeistiger Gestaltungskraft

7. "Aufklärung": Glaube an die Allmacht des Verstandes.

Kultus der "Natur". "Vernünftige Religion"

Sutras; Sankhya; Buddha, Jüngere Upani- shaden	Sophisten des 5. Jahrh. Sokrates [† 399] Demokrit [† um 360]	Mutazilisten Sufismus Nazzâm, Alkindi [um 830]	Englische Sensu- alisten [Locke] Französische Enzyklopädisten [Voltaire], Rous- seau
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8. Höhepunkt des mathematischen Denkens.

Abklärung der Formenwelt der Zahlen

Verschollen	Archytas [† 365], Plato [† 346]	Unerforscht [Zahlentheorie, sphärische Trigonometrie]	Euler [† 1783], Lagrange [† 1813]
	Eudoxos [† 355]		Laplace [† 1827]
[Stellenwert Null als Zahl]	[Kegelschnitte]		[Infinitesimal- problem]

9. Die großen abschließenden Systeme

<i>des Idealismus:</i> Yoga Vedanta <i>der Erkenntnis-</i> <i>theorie:</i> <i>der Logik:</i> Nyaya	Plato [† 346] Aristoteles [† 322]	Alfarabi [† 950] Avicenna [† um 1000]	Goethe Kant	Schelling Hegel Fichte
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Winter

Anbruch der weltstädtischen Zivilisation.

Erlöschen der seelischen Gestaltungskraft. Das Leben selbst wird problematisch.

Ethisch-praktische Tendenzen eines irreligiösen und unmetaphysischen Weltstädtertums

10. Materialistische Weltanschauung: Kultus der Wissenschaft, des Nutzens, des Glückes

Sankhya, Tschar- vaka [Lokoyata]	Kyniker, Cyre- naiker, letzte Sophisten [Pyrrhon]	Kommunistische, atheistische, epikureische Sekten der Abbassi- denzeit Die "lauteren Brüder"	Bentham, Comte, Darwin, Spencer, Stirner, Marx, Feuerbach
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11. Ethisch-gesellschaftliche Lebensideale: Epoche der "Philosophie ohne Mathematik". Skepsis

Strömungen der Buddhazzeit	Hellenismus Epikur [† 270], Zenon [† 265]	Strömungen im Islam	Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Sozialismus, Anarchismus Hebbel, Wagner, Ibsen
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I. Tafel "Gleichzeitiger" Geistesepochen			
<i>Indische Kultur seit 1500</i>	<i>Antike Kultur seit 1100</i>	<i>Arabische Kultur seit Chr.</i>	<i>Abendländische Kultur seit 900</i>
12. Innere Vollendung der mathematischen Formenwelt. Die abschließenden Gedanken			
Verschollen	Euklid, Apollonius um 300 Archimedes um 250	Alchwarizmi 800, Ibn Kurra 850 Alkarchi, Albiruni 10. Jahrh.	Gauß [† 1855], Cauchy [† 1857] Riemann [† 1866]
13. Sinken des abstrakten Denkertums zu einer fachwissenschaftlichen Katheder-Philosophie. Kompendienliteratur			
Die "sechs klassischen Systeme"	Akademie, Peripatos, Stoiker, Epikureer	Schulen von Bagdad und Basra	Kantianer "Logiker" und "Psychologen"
14. Ausbreitung einer letzten Weltstimmung			
Der indische Buddhismus seit 500	Der hellenis- tisch-römische Stoizismus seit 200	Der praktische Fatalismus des Islam seit 1000	Der ethische Sozialismus seit 1900 sich verbreitend

The evolution of art history closely follows the structure developed by Spengler for the spiritual evolution of his high cultures: Achaemenid and Seleukid art (500–0) only belong to a 'pre-cultural period' analogous to Merovingian and Carolingian or to Mycenaean art. The iconic, then gradually non-iconic art of the Sasanians, Byzantines or Syrians during the first half of the first millennium corresponds to Romanesque and Gothic art in Europe and to the Doric style in Greece, while the invention of the central dome, the progress in mosaic, the invention of the arabesque style are to be seen as parallels of Baroque and Rococo. The Ommayad period presents Arabian art as it finest, as well as the 18th century in Europe or the classical 5th century in Greece. The art of the Abbasids then corresponds to Classicism and Romanticism in Europe or to the art of the age of Alexander and forms a transition leading to the age of 'civilisation', where the Sultan dynasties of the 9th and 10th century are considered as 'contemporary' to Hellenistic art and the aesthetics of skyscrapers, before creativity petrifies since the Seljuk and Mongol age, in analogy to the Roman Empire or the Western world from 2000 onwards.

It is probably no coincidence if Spengler, when it comes to depict the analogies between diverse cultures in comparative tables, provides us with rather complete data for the religious and the artistic evolution of the 'Arabian' Culture, but omits any clarification of its political history. Nevertheless, the general argumentation of the 'Decline of the West' makes it easy to reconstruct the broad outlines of the political evolution of the 'Arabian' Near and Middle East as Spengler saw them. Thus, the Achaemenids appear as equivalents to the Carolingians or the age of Agamemnon, the Parthian domination in the East and the Roman rule in the West as parallels of the early Roman-German Imperial period, the early Sasanian and the late Roman Empires as beginning of a 'feudal' age, the late Sasanian and the early Byzantine Empires as parallels to the corporate state of the 16th century, the Om-

mayad Califate as culmination of the 'Ancien régime', the 'Abbasid revolution' as equivalent of the Napoleonic or Hellenistic age, and the wars between the diverse sultans of the 10th century as prefiguration of modern imperialism.

IRAN AS PART OF THE 'ARABIAN' CULTURE – SOME BASIC PROBLEMS

Spengler's analysis of the place of Ancient Iran within the framework of his morphology of history contains a certain number of problems contributing to the quite unconvincing nature of Spengler's whole 'Arabian' Culture, once rightly called, by Joseph Vogt, as 'das Fragwürdigste in der ganzen Konstruktion'.²⁷ Of course, Spengler's attitude towards Iran is partly induced by the deficient state of historical knowledge on early Iranian history around 1918, but it is also due to his endeavour to present his reader with a coherent explanation for the history of the first millennium, even at the price of deforming reality when necessary. In the following, we will examine some major points of criticism, first from a political point of view, second from a religious.

4.1. Political History

Concerning Spengler's presentation of the political history of Iran, we cannot but notice that, despite the impressing sheer size of the 'Decline of the West', there are merely a handful of passages actually speaking about the concrete evolution of Iranian history and society. First, we have to mention Spengler's somewhat ambivalent appreciation of the Achaemenids.²⁸ Though the Achaemenid dynasty appears only very rarely in the 'Decline', Spengler considers it on the one hand as a mere epilogue to the Babylonian civilisation:

Aber indessen ging die babylonische Welt selbst aus einer Hand in die andere. Kossäer, Assyrer, Chaldäer, Meder, Perser, Makedonier, lauter kleine Heerhaufen mit einem kräftigen Führer an der Spitze, haben sich da in der Hauptstadt abgelöst, ohne daß die Bevölkerung sich ernsthaft dagegen wehrte. [...] Der Perser Kyros [...] hat] sich als Reichsverweser gefühlt. (UdA 602)²⁹

27 Vogt (1961), p. 64.

28 On the Achaemenids, cf. in general Hinz (1976); Cook (1983); Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1987–1997); Briant (1996); Jacobs & Rollinger (2010).

29 See also: 'Ob in Babylon die Kossäer als wüste Soldatenhorde oder die Perser als feine Erben sitzen; wann, wie lange und mit welchem Erfolg sie das tun, ist von Babylon aus gesehen ohne Bedeutung. Für das Behagen der Bevölkerung war es gewiß nicht gleichgültig, aber an der Tatsache, daß die Seele dieser Welt erloschen war und deshalb alle Ereignisse einer tieferen Bedeutung entbehrten, änderte sich damit nichts' (UdA 614) On the political events leading to the capture of Babylonia by the Achaemenids, cf.: Smith (1975); Sarkosh Curtis & Stewart (2005). Concerning Achaemenid Babylonia, see Wiesehöfer (1999). For Babylonian (and Assyrian) influences on Achaemenid art and culture, see: Boardman (2000).

On the other hand, however, Spengler also considered the Achaemenid empire as a ‘preparation’ of the ‘Arabian’ history (though the real beginning of this culture is only dated half a millennium later):

In dem weiten Bereich altbabylonischen Fellachentums leben junge Völker. Da bereitet sich alles vor. Die erste Ahnung regt sich um 700 in den prophetischen Religionen der Perser, Juden und Chaldäer. [...] Die zweite Welle erhebt sich steil in den apokalyptischen Stimmungen seit 300. Hier erwacht das magische Weltbewußtsein und erbaut sich eine Metaphysik der letzten Dinge [...] Die dritte Erschütterung erfolgt in der Zeit Cäsars und führt zur Geburt der großen Erlösungsreligionen. Damit bricht der helle Tag dieser Kultur an. (UdA 862 f.)³⁰

Furthermore, Spengler insists on the ramshackle notion of a Persian ‘people’, considering them rather as a heterogeneous group bound together only by language and political ideology than as proper ethnic group.

Das “persische Volk” des Kyros und Darius kann sich erst von da an aus Menschen verschiedener Herkunft, aber aus einer starken Einheit des Erlebens heraus gebildet haben. Als die Makedonier aber kaum zwei Jahrhunderte später ihre Herrschaft auflösten – waren da “die Perser” in dieser Form überhaupt noch vorhanden? [...] Es ist sicher, daß die weithin verbreitete persische Reichssprache und die Verteilung der wenigen tausend erwachsenen Männer aus Persis über den ungeheuren Kreis von militärischen und Verwaltungsaufgaben das Volkstum längst aufgelöst und an seine Stelle als Träger des persischen Namens eine sich als politische Einheit fühlende Oberschicht gesetzt hatten, von deren Ahnen nur sehr wenige aus Persis sein konnten. Ja, es gab nicht einmal ein Land, das man als den Schauplatz der persischen Geschichte bezeichnen kann. Was sich von Darius bis auf Alexander ereignet, hat seinen Ort teils im nördlichen Mesopotamien, also unter einer aramäisch sprechenden Bevölkerung, teils im alten Sinear, jedenfalls nicht in Persis, wo die von Xerxes begonnenen Prachtbauten gar nicht fortgesetzt worden sind. (UdA 758)

In principle, this somewhat dismissive attitude towards the Achaemenids and early Persian history is induced by Spengler’s system itself, as he also analyses the Mycenaean or Carolingian age in quite a similar fashion and describes it as rooted in the framework of former civilisations and only gradually developing its own identity. However, what seems more problematic is the fact that Spengler, in his attempt to centre his ‘Arabian’ Culture on the Fertile Crescent, totally misjudges the ‘Iranian’ dimension of the new power rising from Persis. The laborious conquest of Eastern Iran, the importance of Bactria, the relations between the Persians and the other Iranian people, the importance of Indo-European antecedents in the description of the early Iranian societies – all these points are never even alluded to in the ‘Decline of the West’, though Spengler must have been well aware of them, and even the fact that the Achaemenid rule set up a crucial paradigm for royal representation and ideology that was to influence a whole millennium of Iranian history is utterly left aside.³¹

Spengler’s obvious underestimation of the importance of the Achaemenids for the construction of Iranian identity may partly be due to the biased image contempo-

30 On the ethnogenesis of the Persian people, cf. now Khoury & Kostiner (1990); Derakhshani (1999); Sims-Williams (2003).

31 Concerning the longue-durée issue of Achaemenid royal representation and titulature, see e. g. Engels (2014c) and (2016b).

rary scholarship had of its successors, the Seleukids³² and the Parthians.³³ Indeed, as the first were generally considered as foreign invaders blindly imposing Hellenistic civilisation and ignoring Iranian traditions, whereas the latter appeared unable to restore the power and glory of the Achaemenids, the 500 years between Alexander and Ardashir were essentially interpreted in terms of a long historical hiatus, minimising thus also the impact of the Achaemenids themselves. This probably explains the virtual absence of the Seleukids and the Parthians from the ‘Decline of the West’. The first are only once cursorily mentioned and described as utterly philhellenic:

Es bestand die Möglichkeit, die russische Welt nach Art entweder der Karolinger oder der Seleukiden zu behandeln, altrussisch nämlich oder “westlerisch”, und die Romanows haben sich für das letzte entschieden. Die Seleukiden wollten Hellenen, nicht Aramäer um sich sehen. (UdA 789)

Needless to say that such a vision, though widely accepted during the major part of the 20th century, has now become considered as utterly obsolete in modern research,³⁴ not only with regard to Hellenistic Babylonia, but also since we know about the strong Seleukid acculturation to Iran and the cooperation of the Persian elites with the Hellenistic power.³⁵

The Parthians however, probably due to their Scythian origins, appear quite inaccurately under the designation of a “Mongolian tribe” taking control over Iran and artificially adopting the Persian language – Spengler never really differentiates between the different Iranian languages – in order to legitimate their power.³⁶ At the same time, however, Spengler also describes the Parthian rule as equivalent to the medieval stage of the ‘Arabian’ Culture and compares the Parthian campaigns against the Romans to the crusades³⁷ (omitting the fact that most Romano-Parthian wars were, in fact, induced by the Romans, not the Parthians, and that the rare Parthian offensives were generally unfruitful):³⁸

Die Partherscharen, die wieder und wieder gegen römische Legionen anritten, waren ritterlich begeisterte Mazdaisten. Es lag Kreuzzugsstimmung über ihren Heeren. (UdA 796)

Even the Sasanians are quickly dealt with,³⁹ though Spengler seems to have made some efforts to distinguish individual political phases. As Spengler believes that

32 On the Seleukid Empire, cf. in general Engels (2016c), Grainger (2014); Kosmin (2014); Wolski (1999); Schmitt (1964).

33 On the Parthian Empire, cf. Lerner (1999); Sarkhosh Curtis & Stewart (2007); Shayegan (2011); Wolski (1993).

34 For the ‘Oriental’ aspects of Seleukid rule see Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993); Kuhrt & Sherwin-White (1987); Strootman (2011b; 2013a); Engels (2011).

35 Concerning Hellenistic Persia, cf. Wiesehöfer (1994); Strootman (2011b); Engels (2013); Plischke (2014).

36 ‘Die Parther waren ein mongolischer Stamm, der eine persische Mundart angenommen hatte und inmitten dieser Bevölkerung das persische Nationalgefühl in sich zu verkörpern suchte.’ (UdA 758) On the origins and early history of the Parthians, cf. Wolski (1962); Wolski (1969).

37 On the Parthian cataphracts see Mielczarek (1993); Rubin (1955).

38 Cf. e.g. Ziegler (1964); Lerouge-Cohen (2007); Engels (2008).

39 Concerning the Sasanians, cf. in general Christensen (1944); Sarkhosh Curtis & Stewart (2008); Wiesehöfer & Huyse (2006).

each high culture develops, after an initial monarchic phase, into an hereditary feudal system,⁴⁰ and as he considered that the ‘real’ beginning of the ‘Arabian’ Culture had to be dated around the time of the Christ, he was compelled to look upon the early Sasanian Empire as a feudal society. He thus identified for example the Dehkanans⁴¹ with a caste of medieval knights, explicitly parallelising the Sasanian society with the 12th century empire of the Hohenstaufen and omitting the fact that the links between Iranian aristocracy and highly armoured cavalry can be traced back at least half a millennium earlier:

Im Sassanidenreich herrschte die Ritterschaft der Dinkane, und der glänzende Hof dieser “Stauferkaiser” des frühen Ostens ist in jedem Betracht für den byzantinischen seit Diokletian vorbildlich geworden. Noch viel später wußten die Abbassiden in ihrer neugegründeten Residenz Bagdads nichts Besseres, als das Sassanidenideal eines höfischen Lebens in großer Form nachzuahmen. (UdA 796)

Furthermore, as Spengler also needed to show that the later evolution of the Sasanian Empire saw the emergence of something resembling the Early Modern Age in order to integrate Iranian history into the predetermined dynamics of the ‘Arabian’ Culture, he dated the beginning of this transformation to around 300 AD.⁴² Consequently, the reign of Khosrau I⁴³ and his conflict with Mazdakism is presented as an equivalent to the time of the ‘Fronde’ and thus 17th century Europe:

Es ist das Loswollen vom Kalifat, das einst von den Sassaniden und nach deren Vorbild von Diokletian in den Formen des Feudalstaates begründet worden war. Es hatte seit Justinian und Chosru Nuschirwan den Ansturm der Fronde zu bestehen, in dem neben den Häuptern der griechischen und der mazdaischen Kirche der persisch-mazdaische Adel vor allem des Irak, der griechische vor allem Kleinasien und der nach beiden Religionen gespaltene armenische Hochadel voransteht. Der im 7. Jahrhundert schon fast erreichte Absolutismus ist dann durch den Ansturm des in seinen politischen Anfängen streng aristokratischen Islams plötzlich gestürzt worden. (UdA 1090 f.)

Once again, Spengler appears as victim of his own wishful thinking, coupled with his general misinformation about Iranian history, as the arguments he puts forward in favour of a ‘feudal’ Sasanian Empire could also apply to the Parthian, Seleukid and even Achaemenid periods, whereas the identification of the Dehkanan with the knights of the Middle Ages contrasts with the fact that Spengler himself presents Khosrau, who incidentally was the one who created this new class of society, as contemporary to the emergence of an Iranian ‘Ancien Régime’.

40 Concerning Iranian feudalism, cf. Engels (2011); Engels (2014a).

41 On Sasanian knightly nobility, cf. Lambton (1953). On the Sasanian cataphracts, see Nell (1995); Farokh (2005).

42 ‘Die Sassanidenregierung, die um 300 vom Lehnswesen zum Ständestaat übergang, ist in jeder Beziehung das Vorbild von Byzanz geworden, im Zeremoniell, im ritterlichen Kriegswesen, in der Verwaltung und vor allem im Typus des Herrschers.’ (UdA1029, Anm. 1)

43 On Khosrau I, see Rubin (1995); Rubin (2004); Wiesehöfer (2009); Engels (2016a).

4.2. Religious History

Whereas Spengler’s interpretation of Iranian pre-Islamic society suffers from obvious shortcomings due to the needs of his system as well as to an insufficient knowledge of Iranian history, he seems to have made a certain effort in making himself familiar with Iranian religious history. What seems most striking to the modern historian is Spengler’s wish to include Mazdaism and its major variations like Mazdakism, Zrvanism and also, in some ways, Manicheism into the greater group of Near Eastern monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam.⁴⁴ Once again, this tendency goes not without a certain number of scientific problems.

Let us first consider the debate about the essence of the religious movement created by Zarathustra, described as follows by Spengler:

[...] innerhalb dieser mitten in der babylonischen Welt aufrecht erhaltenen Religion erscheint nun Zarathustra als Reformator aus dem unteren Volke. Daß er kein Perser war, ist bekannt. Was er schuf – ich hoffe das noch nachzuweisen – war die Überführung der vedischen Religion in die Formen des aramäischen Welt Denkens, in welchem sich ganz leise schon die magische Religiosität vorbereitete. [...] Zarathustra ist ein Weggenosse der israelitischen Propheten, welche den mosaich-kananäischen Volksglauben ebenso und gleichzeitig umgewendet haben. Es ist bezeichnend, daß die gesamte Eschatologie ein Gemeinbesitz der persischen und jüdischen Religion ist und daß die Awestatexte zur Partherzeit ursprünglich aramäisch geschrieben und dann erst in Pehlewi übertragen worden sind. (UdA 758)

Zarathustra’s religion is then characterised with the following words:

Der Kern der prophetischen Lehre ist bereits magisch: Es gibt einen wahren Gott als Prinzip des Gute, mag es Jahwe, Ahura mazda oder Marduk Baal sein; die andern Gottheiten sind ohnmächtig oder böse. An ihn knüpft sich die messianische Hoffnung, sehr deutlich bei Jesaja, aber mit innerer Notwendigkeit in den folgenden Jahrhunderten überall durchbrechend. Es ist der magische Grundgedanke; in ihm liegt die Annahme eines welthistorischen Kampfes zwischen gut und böse, mit der Macht des Bösen über die mittlere Zeit und dem Endsieg des Guten am Jüngsten Tage. Diese Moralisierung der Weltgeschichte ist Persern, Chaldäern und Juden gemeinsam. (UdA 807)

This paper is not the place to reopen the old discussion about the date of Zarathustra or the question to what extent Mazdaism should be really considered as a rigidly dualistic religion,⁴⁵ and anyway, the fragmentary state of our sources as well as the simple fact that there was never a monolithic Mazdaism unaffected by the passing-by of the centuries make it impossible to bring forth a simple solution. However, contrarily to Spengler, we cannot ignore that the theology of dualism influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam in only a very marginal way and always ended up as proscribed and persecuted,⁴⁶ whereas it constituted an intrinsic part of Mazdaean thinking and feeling from the beginning on. Indeed, the emotional

44 See e. g.: ‘Im Osten erlebte der Mazdaismus eine gewaltige Erneuerung, welche der Geburt des Messias im Judentum entspricht und von der wir aus den Trümmern der Awestaliteratur nur schließen können, daß sie stattgefunden hat. Hier sind auch der Talmud und die Religion Manis entstanden.’ (UdA 605)

45 On ancient Mazdaism, cf. in general Dhalla (1938); Boyce & Grenet (1965–1991).

46 On the reactions of monotheistic religions to forms of dualism in Gnosis, Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism, cf. Jonas (1954); Amighi (1990); Klein (1991); Hafner (2003); Kosack (2014).

opposition and even theological personalisation of good and evil, right and false, Iran and Non-Iran, order and chaos was an all-pervading form of thought in ancient Iranian culture and ideology. The absolute ontological supremacy of the Abrahamic God, however, has never really been questioned by its followers. Even at times when dualistic heresies appeared within Christian communities, such as the Marcionites (significantly linked to Iranian cultural groups even by Spengler)⁴⁷ or the Paulicians, these sects never succeeded in converting larger groups to their creed.⁴⁸

A further fundamental difference between Mazdaism and the Abrahamic religions is the fact that, as far as we can see, Mazdaism never developed a Monotheism as strict and intransigent as the Abrahamic religions. Whereas the diverse gods of the Pagans were always either rejected as simply non-existing or interpreted as dangerous demons and devils by Judaism, Christianity or Islam, we know of no occurrence where they were upgraded to the status of angels or semi-divine beings as it happened in Mazdaism where Mithra, Anahita and numerous others continued to be venerated and depicted without any apparent theological problem until the very end of the Sasanian dynasty.⁴⁹

Furthermore, we should notice that, contrarily to the numerous links between Judaism, Christianity and Islam who considered each other, though without great sympathy, as *religiones licitae* stemming from the same Abrahamic core, there has never been a similar attempt to create a genealogical link with Mazdaism which always stood apart,⁵⁰ perhaps with the telling exception of Manichaeism, whose endeavours to construct numerous genetic links with other world religions were never considered as convincing and ultimately caused its downfall.⁵¹

Another notable difference between the religions emanating from Mazdaism and the Abrahamic religions is the restraint of missionary activities: Certainly, individual phases of Sasanian history have seen attempts of imposing the veneration of the fire to religious communities outside Mazdaism or of persecuting other religions. However, and contrarily to Christianity, Manichaeism, Islam and even Judaism, there has never been a serious missionary activity of Mazdaism⁵² outside the

47 'Das magische und im besonderen persische Grundgefühl ist ganz unverkennbar. Marcion stammte aus Sinope, der alten Hauptstadt des mithridatischen Reiches, dessen Religion schon durch den Namen seiner Könige bezeichnet wird. Hier war einst der Mithraskult entstanden.' (UdA 834)

48 On the one hand, this demonstrates their limited attractiveness for mainstream Christianity; on the other hand, it is notable that even when the dualistic groups succeeded to establish themselves more strongly in some territories, their influence remained confined to regions with strong Iranian diaspora communities, suggesting thus once more the strong links between dualism and Iranian culture and its difference from traditional Judeo-Christian societies. Concerning the Marcionites and Paulicians, cf. Garsoïan (1967); Blackman (1948); Hoffman (1984).

49 On the polytheistic substrate of Mazdaism, cf. Nyberg (1938); Widengren (1965); Widengren (1978); Malandra (1983).

50 On the links between Mazdaism and other religions, see de Jong (1997); Neusner (1965–1970); Mustafa, Tubach, Vashalomidze (2007); de Menasce (1967); Bulliet (1979); Shaked (1990).

51 On the links between Manichaeism and other religions, see now Engels (2014b).

52 One of the possible explanations may be that the expansion of Mazdaism and the extent of the power of the 'king of kings' (On the place of the king within Mazdaean religion, cf. Frye (1964); Choksy (1988); Gnoli (1998); Daryaei (2003); Soudavar (2003); Engels (2014c) were

Parthian and Sasanian realm.⁵³ Furthermore, contrary to what Spengler implies, there has always been a rather strong awareness of what people (or region) could be seen as part of 'Iran' or not, so that he clearly errs when considering the belonging to the Iranian culture as motivated by religious aspects only:

Die Perser der Sassanidenzeit kennen, im Gegensatz zu denen der Achämenidenzeit, ein persisches Volk nicht mehr als Einheit der Abkunft und Sprache, sondern als Einheit der Mazdagläubigen im Gegensatz zu den Ungläubigen, mochten sie wie die meisten Nestorianer von noch so reiner persischer Abstammung sein. (UdA 637)⁵⁴

IMPROVING SPENGLER?

It would be fairly easy to end this paper at this point and to argue that the numerous shortcomings of Spengler's vision of Iranian history represent a decisive proof against Spengler's whole morphology of history, as already suggested by Alexander Demandt, who stated:

Die Einbeziehung dieser magischen Kultur wird zum *experimentum crucis* für die ganze Theorie, weil dann, wenn eine Subsumierung unter das Grundschema mißlingt, dieses selbst zerbricht. Denn in einem solchen Falle müßte entweder für das Geschehen des ersten Jahrtausends ein abweichender Kulturtypus geschaffen werden oder aber dieses Geschehen aufgeteilt und den räumlich und zeitlich angrenzenden Kulturen zugeschlagen werden. Das wiederum brächte diese aus der Fassung.⁵⁵

considered as inseparable, communities living outside the realm being probably only considered as eagerly awaiting their reunion with the kingdom (as suggested in a decree by Diocletian: Coll. Mosaicarum 15,3), whereas the Abrahamitic religions never considered themselves as intrinsically tied to the political authority of the Jewish king, the Roman emperor or the Calif of Baghdad. Once again, only Manichaeism deviated from this pattern, as it tried not only to fusion Mazdaic and Abrahamitic traditions, but also to launch an important missionary activity outside the Sasanian Empire, but it is not improbable that it was precisely this deviation from the fusion between religion and politics which constituted the ultimate reason of the Mazdaic clergy's hostility to Manichaeism rather than theological issues.

53 Cf. in this context the inscription of Kartir: Gignoux (1991).

54 See also: 'Aber schon in der Partherzeit hat sich bei Persern wie bei Juden jene tiefinnerliche Wandlung vollendet, welche den Begriff der Nation nicht mehr nach der Stammeszugehörigkeit, sondern der Rechtgläubigkeit bestimmt. Ein Jude, der zum Mazdaglauben übertrat, ist damit Perser geworden; ein Perser, der Christ wurde, gehört dem nestorianischen "Volke" an. [...] Diese neue Nation ist das "persische Volk" des Sassanidenreiches. Damit hängt es zusammen, daß Pehlewi und Hebräisch gleichzeitig aussterben und das Aramäische die Muttersprache beider Gemeinschaften wird. Will man die Bezeichnungen Arier und Semiten verwenden, so waren die Perser zur Zeit der Amarnabriefe Arier, aber kein "Volk", zur Zeit des Darius ein Volk, aber ohne Rasse, zur Sassanidenzeit eine Glaubensgemeinschaft, aber von semitischer Abstammung. Es gibt weder ein persisches Urvolk, das sich von einem arischen abgezweigt hätte, noch eine persische Gesamtgeschichte; und es läßt sich nicht einmal für die drei Einzelgeschichten, welche lediglich durch gewisse Sprachbeziehungen zusammenhängen, ein einheitlicher Schauplatz angeben.' (UdA 758 f.) Concerning the question of defining Iranian identity, cf. Shaked (2008); see also the contribution by Josef Wiesehöfer to this volume.

55 Demandt (1980), p. 36 f.

Nevertheless, such a harsh judgement might be somewhat rash, as modern research in the history of Iran may enable historians still wanting to argue from within the basic framework of Spengler's 'morphology of history' to correct some individual assumptions without necessarily discrediting the theory as a whole. In the light of the problems stated above, such a revised version of Spengler would have to be based on the presupposition of the existence of an autonomous 'Iranian' Culture totally independent from the rest of the 'Arabian' Culture (whose evolution doubtlessly fares better without being riveted to the Iranian sphere of influence). Let it thus be permitted to play the 'advocatus diaboli' and to show how it might be possible to give a Spenglerian interpretation of Iranian history more or less consistent with current research.

First, let us consider politics and society. As explained above, Spengler thought that the history of each culture spanned roughly over a thousand years and evolved, after a preparatory phase, from a universal monarchy through gradual feudalism to the emergence of the complex equilibrium of an 'Ancien régime', based on the economic coexisting of town and country and the political coexisting of the three estates. This fragile harmony is then shattered by a 'Napoleonic' age of 'Warring states', social revolutions and military expansion, leading gradually to the emergence of a universal civilisation empire gradually transforming into an atavism of the initial monarchy. If we consider the history of greater Iran on its own, without trying to tie it by all means to the political evolutions west of the Tigris as Spengler felt compelled to think, and if we recall the basic features of new research into Iranian history, it becomes quite obvious that the political evolution from the Achaemenids up to the Sasanians indeed corresponds quite well to such an a priori pattern. However, its beginning has to be placed not somewhere in the middle of the Arsacid period, as Spengler thought, but right at the beginning of the Achaemenid age.

From this point of view, the Achaemenid Empire, whose rise was prepared by the cultural and social stirring notable everywhere in north-eastern and south-western Iran in the 7th century, would constitute the initial universal empire of the 'Iranian' Culture and correspond roughly to the Ottonian period, creating an ultimate emotional reference-point for all subsequent evolutions.

Concerning the advent of the Seleukids, we know today that they went into great pains in order to respect Achaemenid traditions and have thus to be regarded not as a hiatus in Iranian history, but as a simple change of dynasty, eased by the fact that Antiochos I was of half-Iranian descent and that the so-called colonisation of the Iranian East was, from the beginning on, a multi-cultural enterprise even providing the new inhabitants with fire temples. From a Spenglerian point of view, the Seleukid age would have to be considered, at least in the Upper Satrapies, as corresponding to a gradual feudalisation of the empire which already started under the Achaemenids and found its culmination under the Seleukids with the emergence of powerful regional dynasties like the Arsacids, the Frataraka, the Artaxids, the Diodotids, or the house of Charakene, all still linked to the king through bonds of fealty, as is most notable when considering the feudal reorganisation of the Seleukid Empire by Antiochos III.

The decline of Seleukid power, the gradual conquest of Iran by the Parthians and their uneasy hegemony over the numerous principedoms emerging everywhere on the periphery of the realm would then correspond to the slow dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and the transformation of its constituent parts into semi-independent states, nominally subjected to the hegemony of the Habsburgian lands. From this point of view, it would be erroneous to consider the age of the Parthians as characterised by the weakness of the Arsacid kings, as is often put forth. To the contrary, from a Spenglerian point of view, we should rather put forward their success in establishing their power over the Mesopotamian, Median and Parthian heartland of their dominion, the control they managed to exert over their numerous smaller neighbours and their successful fights against the Roman danger in the West and the nomad menace in the East, exactly like the Habsburgs of the Ancien Régime who successfully transformed their diverse territorial possessions into a coherent state, managed to control as much as possible the Holy Roman Empire and fought off the Turks from their frontiers.

The advent of the Sasanians then marks the transition to what Spengler described, in analogy with China, as an age of "Warring states". Thus, the new dynasty's military expansionism, the annexation of the smaller peripheral kingdoms, the rational reorganisation of the state, the colonisation of major parts of Arabia, the thriving of the many new cities in the Iranian heartland and the many structural improvements and progresses would broadly correspond to the main features of 19th century imperialism.

After inner upheavals caused by social turmoil coalescing into the revolts of the Mazdakites, the accession of Khosrau Anushirwan would then represent the final stage in the history of the Iranian lands and correspond to the age of Augustus and the Caesarist turn Spengler announced in Europe for the period around 2100's. Khosrau's military expansion, cultural exploits, messianic ideology and religious reforms created a long-lasting memory of a cultural 'golden age' that should become the very epitome of the past glory cherished by the Iranians after the Muslim invasion had brought a sudden, yet, from a Spenglerian perspective, not untimely end to their exhausted civilisation.

This pattern could also be applied to the spiritual evolution of Iran. We may recall that, for Spengler, the universal monarchy corresponded to the birth of a new God-feeling – often preceded by a preparatory phase – and its earliest mystical shaping. Feudalism, then, is synchronous with a time of reformation and growing popular opposition to the initial form of religion. The 'Ancien Régime' with the culmination of complex state-forms is characterised by counter-Reformation, Puritanism and Enlightenment. The age of the 'Warring states' corresponds to nationalism, materialism, socialism, universalism and atheism, whereas the final civilisation-state transforms an exhausted religion into an artificial expression of political loyalty, casting what remains of its traditions into a canonised form in order to save it from oblivion for the centuries to come.

This evolution, once its morphological necessity admitted, could be considered as applying fairly well to the history of Mazdaism, though the nature of our sources

makes it very hypothetical to put precise dates on individual developments. Thus, after a preparatory phase characterised by the advent of Zarathustra and early Mazdaism, it was the expansion of the Achaemenid Empire that caused the diffusion, strengthening and early institutional shaping of the belief in Ahura Mazda. The Seleukid age with the growing influence of Hellenistic philosophy and polytheism as well as of Indian religions would then correspond to a deep crisis in belief and cult, attributed by later sources to the demonic nature of Alexander the Great's religious policy. The Parthian age seems to have witnessed certain conservatory measures in order to reform Mazdaism as well as a continuing popularity of Greek philosophy and the puritan anti-ecclesiastical movement of Mani. The age of the Sasanians then saw the emergence of the materialistic heresy of Zurvanism, the socialist reforms of Mazdakism and the seesaw between a nationalist Mazdaean orthodoxy and other, more tolerant and universalistic attitudes towards other religions, until Khosrau Anushirwan completed the canonisation of Mazdaism in analogy to Augustus' restoration of the *religio Romana* and defined his own place within Mazdaean salvation history through a quasi-messianic ideology. Once Mazdaism definitely canonised, its development became stagnant, and though it gained the force to resist the pressure of Islam, it ceased to remain the principal motor of Iranian history, exactly as Roman paganism was gradually supplanted by Christianity or Chinese traditional religion by Buddhism.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, it should have become clear that Spengler's analysis of the place of Iranian history within the more general framework of the history of high cultures represents an original, though very composite blend of conventional and highly innovative ideas, both implicitly tied to a specific vision of 'Persianism', even despite the fact that the explicit focus of Spengler's 'Decline of the West' lies less on Achaemenid history than on the history of the Iranian world in the first millennium AD.

Indeed, on the one hand, Spengler's endeavour to interpret the History of the Near East in between Greco-Roman Classical Antiquity and the European Middle Ages not as somewhat chaotic interlude characterised either by 'decline' or by 'preparation', but rather as a separate high culture undeniably helped to sharpen the awareness of contemporary research for the inner cohesion of early Christianity, post-exilic Judaism and Islam, and that despite the often artificial frontiers of linguistic disciplines and political spaces. However, on the other hand, the inclusion of the history of Iran into the general framework of this 'Magian' or 'Arabian' culture represents as well a step forward as, at the same time, at least one step backwards.

A step forward, because Spengler endeavoured not to reduce the history of Iran to a series of static dynasties indistinctly viewed as similarly 'violent' and 'despotic' and only of interest as contrasting picture of Greco-Roman Antiquity, but to establish a morphological parallel between the history of Iran and the evolution of all other high cultures and thus to help Iran to be interpreted on its own terms. With this endeavour, Spengler, of course, stood not alone, as he was evidently under the influence of the increasing scholarly interest in the history of the Near and Middle

East notable at the beginning of the 20th century (one may only think about Eduard Meyer, who by the way entertained an intense correspondence with Spengler) and undoubtedly contributing to the abolition of many stereotypes developed by 19th century ‘Persianism’ and its classical *topos* of an eternal conflict between Western dynamic ‘liberty’ and Oriental static ‘despotism’.

But Spengler’s re-interpretation of Iranian history also represented a step backwards, as he failed to recognise the originality of Iranian history and fell into another trap of ‘Persianism’, i.e. the tendency to reduce Iranian history to a mere produce of the influences of its more prominent neighbours. Thus, and although Spengler largely avoided the temptation to follow the pattern inherited by Biblical literature and to interpret the history of the Iranian dynasties solely as nearly ‘post-historical’ annex to the Babylonian and Assyrian monarchies of old, he appended the history of Iran to yet another high culture, though this time, it was the ‘Arabian’ or ‘Magian’ culture. And though it must be said that Spengler took great efforts to underline the dynamic role of Zoroastrianism within the spiritual evolution of this newly-invented culture and even tried to show how the eventful political history of Iran fitted into this general framework, it is obvious that, for Spengler, the history of Iran remained largely peripheral to events rather centred on the Levant. Hence, though Spengler contributed to the dissolution of the simplistic ‘Persianising’ pattern of the ‘eternal’ conflict of ‘East’ and ‘West’, he failed to realise the inner originality of Iranian spirituality and adopted yet another element of classical ‘Persianism’ by viewing Iran through the lens of its geographical and chronological neighbours only.

In conclusion, we hope to have shown the important intellectual stimulation still emanating from the ‘Decline of the West’. Indeed, even the argumentative effort needed to reject Spengler’s theses still represents a powerful tool for the clarification of our general viewpoint on ancient Iran, as the stimulus to argument against Spengler in order to prove the autonomy of Iran and its millenary history seems to provide interesting insights into the subliminal dynamics of Iranian society. It becomes quite obvious that the temptation to rivet the history of Iran to the history of Islam – temptation even Toynbee should yield to – cannot be maintained anymore in the light of our current historical knowledge. Thus, the structural differences between Mazdaism and the Abrahamic religions are so important that all attempts to blur the distinctions between both systems must lead to historical inaccuracies. Similarly, recent research makes it impossible to consider Achaemenid, Seleukid and Parthian Iran as a mere ‘preparation’ for an evolution that is to start only with Christianity, as our growing understanding of the Seleukid state as crucial political and ideological link between Achaemenid and Parthian Iran has revealed a much more complex and dynamic evolution of pre-Sasanian Iran.

Thus, it becomes increasingly clear that, beyond the obvious limits imposed on the Iranian civilisation by landscape, tradition and cultural heritage, the history of Iran is not a simple up and down of kings and dynasties all looking alike and simply variegating the leitmotiv of ‘Oriental despotism’ ad libitum, but a multilayered long-term process, leading Iran, similarly to the Greco-Roman world, through all the stages and phases typical for an independent ‘high culture’. Far from being only ‘epigones’ of the Babylonians, ‘antagonists’ of the Greeks, ‘preparers’ of

monotheism or 'predecessors' of the Abbasids, the Iranians of pre-Islamic times can even be considered as representing an independent high culture with its own laws and dynamics, and whose evolution, even from a rigidly Spenglerian point of view, corresponds as fully to the fundamental morphological patterns of history as that of all other major human societies.

PART II
THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

PERSIANISM THROUGH PERSIANIZATION: THE CASE OF PTOLEMAIC EGYPT*

Damien Agut-Labordère

In general terms, the Achaemenid imperial model seems not to have had a long-lasting allure in Hellenistic Egypt. Nevertheless, as known from Egyptian written documents and, more broadly, through Egyptian material culture, the *souvenir* of both Persian dominations cannot be reduced to a Dark Age either. As an introduction to this article, I will first present a case study on one of the few examples of Persianization in Egypt. The “Persian banquet”, profusely described by classical authors, influenced some Egyptian forms of sociality during and, what is more remarkable, *after* the Achaemenid period. This Persianization of elite commensality suggests that the Persians were not entirely negatively perceived by the Egyptians, contrary to the historical memory constructed by the Ptolemies. This difference in perception could be explained, I suggest, by a process of substitution whereby the Assyrians, who had been the archetypal foreign enemies in Egyptian memory, were replaced with the Persians in some Ptolemaic official texts that refer to the lootings of Egyptian temples by Asiatic invaders. Modest Persianisation can thus result in major Persianisms.

BANQUETING IN A PERSIAN ATMOSPHERE

The carinated silver bowls of the Tukh el-Qaramus treasure found in the eastern part of the Delta present a remarkable example of Persian influence on luxury tableware in Egypt.¹ Dated between the middle of the 4th and 3th century BCE, these pieces establish the use of Persian forms in Egyptian metalwork. This influence is also clearly attested by a scene from the late fourth-century tomb of Petosiris at Hermopolis Magna, which shows Egyptian craftsmen making Achaemenid-style rhytons (Figure 1).²

* I want to thank Michel Chauveau and Gilles Gorre for letting me know their unpublished works and the editors for their patience and their relevant and often essential advice. I am grateful to Marike van Aerde for her help in correcting and polishing the English.

1 Pfrommer (1996), p. 171–175 and Pfrommer (1999), p. 37–44.

2 Lefevre (1924), t. I, p. 51–55, t. II (inscrip. 27–40). Cherpion et al. (2007), p. 34–35 (Scène 30).

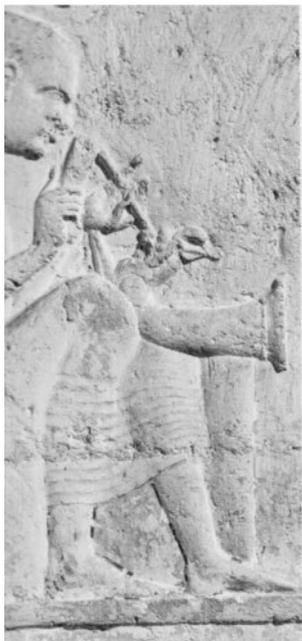
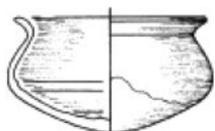


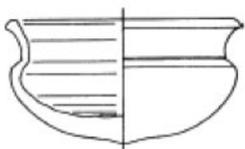
Fig. 1 Tomb of Petosiris. Detail of Scene n°30. North wall of the pronaos, Silversmith (or goldsmith?) at work. © IFAO

Such metal-working scenes are attested primarily in the Theban tombs of the New Kingdom. The forms of the pieces of jewelry which are crafted by Egyptians from the 4th century, however, are often typically Achaemenid/Persian.³ It looks as if the elite tableware could not be of any other style other than the Achaemenid court style at that time. This phenomenon was not restricted to the Egyptian “national” elite, but is also attested in the remote rural village settlement in Ayn Manâwir (South basin of Kharga Oasis), where small carinated bowls made from local clay were found at the Persian archaeological levels (Figure 2).⁴

The presence of such bowls that are derived from Persian metal wares forms⁵ reveals how powerful the appeal of the tableware used by the Achaemenid elite was even in the Egyptian peripheries, where there were few traces of Achaemenid power. This fashion continues during the Hellenistic period, when it is also attested in the Delta, in the Fayyum, and also in Nubia.⁶ Similar to the Bes figure vases that are also connected to Achaemenid prestige crockery, these carinated bowls fall within the area of banquet culture.⁷ From this perspective, it is interesting to note that, following the description made by Callixeinos of Rhodes (Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, V, 197b), the floor of the marquee erected by Ptolemy II in Alexandria for banqueting was covered with “smooth (ψυλαί) Persian carpets (...) having beautiful designs



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Fig. 2 Carinated bowls of local clay found in Ayn Manâwir. Drawings by Sylvie Marchand © IFAO. Wuttmann et al. (1996), p. 418.

- 3 Ogden (2000), p. 148–176, p. 150 (Fig. 6.1) and p. 155 (Fig. 6.2).
- 4 Wuttmann et al. (1996), p. 417 (Groupe 1).
- 5 Marchand (2011), p. 612–613.
- 6 Defernéz (2010), p. 118, note 47; Marchand (2011), p. 613 (fig. 10.c). Similar “Persian bowls” were also discovered in Nubia, in the Pyramid tomb Begarawiya South 3, Török (2001), p. 107; p. 371, pl. 12.
- 7 Defernéz (2010), p. 123.

of figures woven in them with minute skill.” (tr. Loeb).⁸ For royal and local elites – both Egyptian and Greek – drinking wine and feasting were apparently associated with a Persian atmosphere. This feature of the elite commensality coincides with Persianization – which appears during the empire’s existence- and with Persianism – because it is still attested after the end of the Achaemenid dynasty and remains a reference to it.⁹ Far from anecdotal, the fact that Egyptian elite table culture was so deeply impregnated by Persian decorum indicates that many Egyptian dignitaries embraced the political rites of the Persian empire, which manifested the power of the Great King and of the Persian aristocracy in the conquered territories.¹⁰ Even more striking is the fact that this trend continued well after Alexander’s conquest, which means that the practice of what we call Persian banquets had finally fully integrated into the usage of the Egyptian elite, and had maybe even been deprived of its Achaemenid connotation.

FROM CULTURAL TO POLITICAL PERSIANISM: THE USE AND ABUSE OF MEMORY CONCERNING THE LOOTING OF EGYPTIAN TEMPLES DURING THE PTOLEMAIC PERIOD

As these cases of Persianism through Persianization in Hellenistic Egypt are quite limited, I would now like to move to what is clearly about the memory of Persia¹¹: the alleged looting of Egyptian temples by the Achaemenid troops and their sequestration in “Persia” before their final restitution by the Ptolemies. This story, which is depicted on stelae and papyri of great historical importance, constitutes a striking evocation of the Persian period in the documentation of Hellenistic Egypt; and therefore many historians have attempted to examine this small but complex epigraphical dossier. As in the case of the supposed murder of the Apis-bull by Cambyses, famously related by Herodotus, some of these stories and depictions have transformed their subject by means of judiciary reporting: were the Persians guilty or not of having robbed and sequestered Egypt’s sacred items? Pierre Briant has made an incisive remark about this subject:

“Si l’on examine les argumentations dans leur ensemble, on se rend compte qu’elles sont majoritairement construites et organisées autour de la notion de vraisemblance et d’invraisemblance. L’importance d’un tel élément indique suffisamment que personne ne peut prouver que les Séleucides et les Lagides ont bel et bien rapporté les statues divines réellement déportées par les Perses.”¹²

All depends on sources that were later rewritten, emanating from the Ptolemaic power or the Egyptian clergy, and for this reason the only certitude we have are that we are dealing with one or several cultural memor(ies) from the Ptolemaic and Ro-

8 See Pfrommer (1999), p. 74 (abb. 109ab).

9 See the introductory chapter of this volume.

10 Briant (1989), p. 37. Capdetrey (2013), p. 176–177.

11 For the overlap and difference between Persianization and Persianism, I refer to the Introduction of this volume.

12 Briant (2003), p. 179.

man Period related to the looting of Egyptian temples by Oriental invaders. In other words, the ‘hard facts’ are not supported by the content of these texts, but by the texts themselves. This means that, during the Ptolemaic Period, Persian times became a *lieu de mémoire*.¹³ However, there were several collective memories within the multiethnic framework of Ptolemaic Egypt, implying the simultaneous coexistence of several Persianisms within the same society. When examining the different texts that mention the lootings, it conveniently appears that they are related in different ways according to the cultural context of their writing. Those that were drawn up by Egyptian priests were different from those involving the Greco-Macedonian power (see further below in Part 2). Following the distinction made by Aleida and Jan Assmann between cultural and political memories¹⁴, we suggest that the first Ptolemies tried to manipulate the Egyptian *cultural* memory in regard to the lootings in order to give rise to a common *political* memory that was compatible with their own perception of the Persians. This manipulated memory was used to federate both Egyptian and Macedonian elites in addressing the war against the Seleucids, as I will discuss in Part 3. First, however, in Part 1 I will briefly review the most important sources at our disposal together with their interpretative problems.

1. Sources and problems

1.1 Sources

The six Hellenistic documents referring to the robberies of Egyptian sacred items are presented here in chronological order¹⁵. It is noteworthy that the dates of these texts are spread out over the end of the 4th century to the end of the 3rd century.¹⁶ Therefore, we must take into account that this evocation is particular to the first century of Ptolemaic rule in Egypt.

- 13 “Un objet devient lieu de mémoire quand il échappe à l’oubli, par exemple avec l’apposition de plaques commémoratives, et quand une collectivité le réinvestit de son affect et de ses *émotions*. Au contraire de la *généalogie*, qui investit essentiellement l’histoire et la filiation de familles, en se limitant à l’histoire personnelle ou à celle des personnes entre lesquelles existe un lien, les lieux de mémoire se réfèrent à l’histoire collective.” Nora (1989), p. 7.
- 14 A. Assmann (2006) and J. Assmann (2010), p. 122: “cultural memory is an externalization and objectivation of memory, which is individual and communicative, and evident in symbols such as texts, images, rituals, landmarks and other “lieu de memoire”; political memory finally shares its externalized, symbolical character with cultural memory, but is a top-down institution which depends on the political organization that institutes it”.
- 15 A first list was established by Devauchelle (1995), p. 71–73. See also Matthey (2011), p. 317.
- 16 It is noteworthy that, in spite of several periods of civil war, the Egyptian sources do not provide many examples concerning such looting committed by the Egyptians themselves, see for example the so-called decree of Antef V in Coptos, Petrie (1896), pl. VIII, l. 4–5 analyzed by Martin-Pardey (1990).

a. The so-called Satrap Stela (Caire CG 22182) is dated to 311–310 BCE.¹⁷ This document features engraved hieroglyphs from the very beginning of the Hellenistic Period under the reign of Alexander IV, during which time the future Ptolemy I was still satrap of Egypt, and was created by the initiative of the priests of Buto in the Western Delta. The objective of the text is to confirm the renewal of a royal donation of a large area of land called “the land of Patanut” to this institution. This area includes not only several villages (and their inhabitants), but also cattle and hunting areas. The land of Patanout was owned by the temples of Buto “since immemorial time”, and was then confiscated by a king to whom the text refers as “Xerxes the enemy”. It was subsequently returned to its original owners by the ephemeral Pharaoh named Khabbabach, who ruled during the second Persian domination. According to the text, Ptolemy himself confirmed the previous royal donation. The restitution of stolen sacred items is mentioned at the end of the eulogy dedicated to the new master of Egypt.

^(1.3)He (= the satrap Ptolemy) brought back all the statues of the gods found in Syria and all the sacred tools and all the books of the temples, ^(1.4)he put them at their (original) places.

b. The text inscribed on the Pithom Stele (Cairo CG 22183) was composed under the reign of Ptolemy II (285/283–246 BCE), and reports events dated between 279 and 264 BCE¹⁸. It was written in hieroglyphs by the priests of the god Atum of Tjekou in the Wadi Tumilat to commemorate visits made by Ptolemy II to the district’s main cities and temples. The aim of these royal journeys was to prepare the defense of the wadi and to supervise the digging of a canal linking the Pelusiac branch of the Nile with the Red Sea.¹⁹ In 279 BCE, prior to the so-called First Syrian War (ca. 274–273/2 BCE)²⁰ and soon after the annexation of Coele-Syria by his troops, Ptolemy II discovered nothing less than the statues of *all the gods of Egypt* during a royal visit to Palestine:

^(1.10) The king went ^(1.11) to the province of Syria (*r tš Stt*). When he reached Palestine (*Pžrstt*), he found all the gods of Egypt (*ntr.w Bžq.t*²¹) and he brought (*in*²²) them back in Egypt. They went with the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, lord <of the Two Lands> Ptolemy in ...²³. His Majesty sent (*hd*²⁴) them to Egypt and they were received (*šsp*) by the guardians of Egypt, full of joy because of the trip (*wdy.t*) of these gods. After that, His Majesty did what was helpful for the return ^(1.12) of the gods of Egypt (*ntr.w Bžq.t*) in Egypt (*r Km.t*). They (=the priests ?) went in front of His Majesty to distinguish him from the (other) kings (*tn=t(w)w=f r nsw.w*²⁵) and to glorify his rule for ever. He was on the bank (when) they stopped from the mouth of the

17 Schäfer (2011).

18 See Thiers (2007), p. 11.

19 For a recent overview of the history of this canal see Agut-Labordère (2014) who fails to quote Aubert (2004).

20 Concerning this poorly (to say the least) documented conflict, Will (1979), I, p. 144 is still valuable. See also, Huss (2001), p. 265–271.

21 The use of the word *Bžq.t* seems restricted to the term *ntr.w Bžq.t* “The Gods of Egypt”, see Thiers (2007), p. 42–43 n. (76).

22 The reading of the sign is uncertain, see Thiers (2007), p. 39 (a) and p. 40 n. (69).

23 The reading of this place name is problematic, see Thiers (2007), p. 40–41 n. (70).

24 Also uncertain, Thiers (2007), p. 42 n. (71).

25 Following Thiers (2007), p. 43 n. (77).

East land to Memphis. The entire Lower Egypt (*T3-mry*) was in joy, glorifying (his) might ; so, the king ... to these gods. Nothing of the sort was done in this country. They (=the Gods) went to the throne of Ptah and they remained (here) during nine months <in> the House-of-the-Morning.

c. The lost Greek inscription called the Inscription of Adulis is dated to the reign of Ptolemy III.²⁶ It was found at the Eritrean port of Zula, next to the Bay of Annesley, by an Alexandrian traveler of the 6th century CE, Cosmas Indicopleustes, who copied it. The military campaign mentioned in the text is the Third Syrian War (246–245 BCE).

He (= Ptolemy III) crossed the river Euphrates and, submitting Babylonia, Susiana, Persia and Media and all the countries as far as Bactria, seeking all the sacred items taken from Egypt by the Persians and bringing them back to Egypt with all the other treasures coming from these places.

d. The so-called Decree of Alexandria was promulgated in the capital of Egypt during the 5th year of Ptolemy III's reign (243 BCE). Similar to the Inscription of Adulis, the decree of Alexandria relates to the beginning of the Third Syrian War (246–245 BCE). The foreign countries where the stolen Egyptian gods were found are mentioned with thorough detail in both Demotic and Hieroglyphic versions (the Greek version is absent).²⁷

Demotic version

^(1.26) It is by his own arms that he rushed against numerous foreign countries which were stood up against him, seizing {his} goods, accomplishing numerous feats, capturing many soldiers, horses, elephants and boats. ^(1.27) He stopped, being victorious in fighting, (and) brought them to Egypt and he performed his benefactions [...] he searched them, [the statues] of the gods [...] which were taken toward Egypt, the land of the Assyrians (*t3y=w r Km.t r p3 tš n p3 Išr*), the land of the Syrians, the land of the *Hnyrg.w*, Persia, Elam, in the time of the violence accomplished by the Medes ^(1.28) against the temples (*n p3 wš n gm' i.ir n3 Mty.w r n3 irpy.w*). He made numerous inquiries, he brought them back in Egypt, he had celebrated feasts, holocausts, drink offerings [...] ensuring that the [gods] of Egypt were spared by the war at all times, fighting for them in a distant country.

Hieroglyphic version²⁸

^(1.8) His Majesty himself took care for the statues of the gods which had been taken away ^(1.9) from their places in the temples in Egypt to the two Retenu, Syria, Cherek (*Hrk*), Seger (*S(n)gr*) and Susa (*S.t-3wš*) at the time when the vile Asiatics of Persia (*St.ty.w hsy.w nw Prs*) did harm to the temples. He went around through all the foreign countries seeking them; His Majesty brought (*them*) to Egypt (*qbh.wy*) with great festivity.

e. The Decree of Canopus was promulgated in the 9th year of Ptolemy III's reign (238 BCE). The restitution is not the subject of a narrative passage, but it is briefly mentioned in a long list of good deeds done by the king for the Egyptian gods:

26 OGIS 54 and, at last, the extensive overview given by Fauvelle-Aymard (2009).

27 El-Masry, Altenmüller, Thissen (2012), p. 100–102.

28 El-Masry, Altenmüller, Thissen (2012), p. 23, p. 204.

Demotic version (Kom el-Hisn stela)²⁹

... and to expend money and to prepare many things³⁰ on behalf of the divine images (*n3 slym (n) ntr*) which the Persian took away from Egypt (*n3 rmt.w (n) Prs r bl (n) Kmy*) – the king having gone to the foreign territories^{31 (1.4)} [and having captured them and brought them to Egypt, returning them to their temples, from which] they had been taken in the first place.

f. The Decree of Raphia was promulgated in 217 BCE, after Ptolemy IV won the battle of Raphia against Antiochos III.³²

Demotic version (Tell el-Maskhuta stela)³³

He (= Ptolemy IV) took all care^(1.22) on behalf of the images that had been taken out of Egypt to the country of Syria and the country of Phoenicia at the time when the Persians did harm the temples of Egypt. He ordered they be sought diligently. Those that were found, apart that those his father had (already) brought (back) to Egypt, he sent them to Egypt,^(1.23) celebrating feasts and making sacrifices before (them), and sent them to the temples from which they had been removed in the past.

1.2 False controversy and real consensus

The issue of the Persian looting of Egyptian temples first gave rise to a controversy, even though a consensus has been gradually reached. The contemporary starting point of the debate is the groundbreaking study of Winnicki published in 1994³⁴, in which he firmly rejects Bouché-Leclercq's assertion that the return of the statues was an act of propaganda organized by the Egyptian priests with the intention to flatter the Macedonian kings. According to Winnicki, the Assyrians (Essarhadon and Assurbanipal) and the Persians (Cambyses, Xerxes, but also Artaxerxes III) were guilty of this hostage-taking. The statues were probably stored in both imperial capitals, Niniveh and Susa.

These conclusions were partly rejected by Briant in a paper published in 2003 that was already mentioned before. According to him, the weakness of the Winnicki's arguments lies in the fact that it was supported by documents that are not contemporary of the factual deeds attributed to the Persians, while there is no trace of the deportation of statues in the entire documentation dated to the Achaemenid Period. In 2007, Christophe Thiers tried to find a *via media* between these two positions in his important publication on the Pithom Stela. According to him, Winnicki is right in claiming that the robberies and the restitution cannot be exclusively considered as a motif of propaganda, and Briant is correct in underlining the improbability of systematic deportation of Egyptian statues by Persians: "les pillages perpétrés dans les temples égyptiens ont davantage résulté de la conquête assyrienne que des deux dominations perses." A more precise examination of the context

29 Simpson (1996), p. 226–227; Pfeiffer (2004), p. 84–88.

30 "to make many preparation" (*mtw=w spte 'š3y*) in the Tanis stela (l.11–12).

31 The hieroglyphic version (l. 6) is more precise: "against the Asiatic land (*t3 Stt*)".

32 Simpson (1996), p. 224–241. For valuable comments concerning the hieroglyphic version see Klotz (2013).

33 Simpson (1996), p. 242–257

34 Winnicki (1994).

of redaction will help to understand the political motives of what seems to be a deliberate confusion between the Assyrian and Persian invasions in the Ptolemaic texts that mention the lootings.

2 Three contexts of redaction

2.1 Royal, synodal and sacerdotal texts

All six texts that mention deportations and restitutions of Egyptian sacred items are decrees, but three of them proceed from royal synods convened by Ptolemy III and IV in the second part of the 3rd century BCE, which brought together representatives of Egyptian temples (decrees of Alexandria, Canopus, and Memphis). Two texts are local sacerdotal decrees promulgated unilaterally by the Egyptian priests of Bouto (for the Satrap stela) and Tjekou (for the Pithom stela). The context of redaction of the Adulis inscription is yet again different, as it seems that this inscription was drafted by the Ptolemaic chancery only.

This implies that, from a strictly political point of view, we have to distinguish three categories of texts:

- One that was produced by the royal power: the inscription of Adulis.
- Two that were drafted by Egyptian priests: the Satrap and Pithom stelae.
- Three (the synodal decrees) that were written by Egyptian priests, but under the direct supervision of the Macedonian king.

2.2 Sacred items in Persia, or stolen by Persians?

When we classify these different versions according to their political origin, it is noteworthy that the texts produced by the synodal and royal decrees are not exactly similar to those that are attested in texts of strictly sacerdotal origin.

Royal inscription	Synodal decrees	Sacerdotal decrees
<p>Greek Inscription of Adoulis <i>He crossed the river Euphrates and, submitting <u>Babylonia, Susiana, Persia and Media</u> and all the countries as far as <u>Bactria, seeking all the sacred items taken from Egypt by the Persians and bringing them back to Egypt with all the other treasures coming from these places.</u></i></p>	<p>Decree of Alexandria <i>he searched them, [the statues] of the gods [...] which were taken toward Egypt, <u>the land of the Assyrians</u> ($\tau\zeta\upsilon=w$ r Km.t r p3 tš n p3 lšr), <u>the land of the Syrians, the land of the Hnyrg.w, Persia, Flam, in the time of the violence accomplished by the Medes</u> ^(1,28) against the temples (n p3 wš n gm' i.ir n3 Mty.w r n3 irpy.w).</i></p>	<p>Satrap Stela ^(1,3)<i>He brought back all the statues of the gods found in <u>Syria</u> and all the sacred tools and all the books of the temples, ^(1,4)he put them at their (original) places.</i></p> <p>Pithom Stela ^(1,10) <i>The king went ^(1,11) to the province of Syria (r tš Stt). <u>When he reached Palestine</u> (P3rstt), he found all the gods of Egypt (ntr.w B3q.t) and he brought (in) them back in Egypt</i></p>

Royal inscription	Synodal decrees	Sacerdotal decrees
	<p>Canopus Decree <i>to prepare many things³⁵ on behalf of the divine images (n3 šhm (n) ntr) which <u>the Persian took away from Egypt</u> (n3 rmt.w (n) Prs r bl (n) Kmy) – the king having gone to the foreign territories³⁶</i></p> <p>Decree of Raphia <i>He took all care on behalf of the images that had been taken out of Egypt <u>to the country of Syria and the country of Phoenicia at the time when the Persians did harm the temples of Egypt.</u></i></p>	

It is striking that the Persians are presented as plunderers only in texts composed by or together with the Macedonian royal power. The stories emanating from the Egyptian priests only mention that the sacred items were found in Palestine or Syria without indicating the identity of the pillagers. For the Egyptian priests of the 3rd century BCE, it would therefore have been difficult to blame the Persians for the robberies of their sacred items. They charge the Achaemenids only in the synodal decrees co-written with the Macedonian authorities. This supports what Pierre Briant wrote ten years ago: “Aucun texte d’époque achéménide ne fait mention de déportations de statues de culte depuis l’Égypte, et aucun texte ne parle explicitement de l’arrivée de telles statues dans l’Empire perse, après une expédition militaire.” From the viewpoint of “Persianism”, this seems to indicate that the Egyptian memory of the Persian period was, at least in the synodal decrees, influenced by the Greco-Macedonian perception of the Persians.³⁷

Nevertheless, seen from the perspective of the Egyptian priests of the Hellenistic Period, if the Persians were not responsible for the deportation of the sacred statues, some of those objects would still have been present in “Syria”. The *topos* that some Egyptian sacred items were lost somewhere in Asia is, however, not properly Hellenistic.³⁸ It already also seems to have haunted the mind of the Egyptian priests in the decades preceding Alexander’s conquest, as confirmed by the dedicatory inscription of the Naos of Nectanebo I from Saft el-Henna (CG 70021), the historical

35 “to make many preparations” (*mtw=w spte* ‘šzy) in the Tanis stela (I.11–12).

36 The hieroglyphic version (I. 6) is more precise: “against the Asiatic land (*t3 Štt*)”.

37 This feature has been already underlined by Minunno (2008), p. 143: “La propaganda tolemaica potè così sfruttare il motivo del sovrano pio la cui dinastia succede, col favore degli dèi, a quella precedente, resa indegna dalle proprie colpe; un motive già adottato, come si è visto, da Dario I contro Cambise, ma esteso poi, in Egitto, a tutto il dominio persiano.”

38 This weakens the idea that this theme was “a Ptolemaic innovation”, Gozzoli (2006), p.136.

importance of which was recently highlighted by David Klotz³⁹. This text relates how Nectanebo I discovered the divine statues depicted on the naos after they were “hidden since the time of the ancestors, when turmoil had come to pass in Egypt” and how Sopdu, the main local god, revealed himself to the king:

He (Nectanebo I) was requesting to see his radiance (*ꜥḥ.w=f*), while this god was in remote location (*s.t-štꜥ.t*), which was unknown even by those charged with secrets, as the entire Ennead of this district were hiding their bodies.

The god put it in the mind of the Lord of the Two Lands, to make an effort to see the perfection of his majesty ... (after) many years when nobody knew was happening.

One (Nectanebo I) suddenly saw him in astonishment, jubilantly proclaiming it in the streets saying: “The Ruler has returned from the East! He has illuminated the earth with his radiance.” tr. Klotz (2010), p. 154.

Upon reading this passage, it seems that the King’s gift of the naos was preceded by Sopdu’s epiphany, which might mean that the Naos of Saft el-Henna was merely a type of gift box that contained a new cultic statue of the god, which was offered by Nectanebo I and formed the centerpiece of the royal donation. In this scenario, the alleged “return from the East” helps to explain the appearance of a sacred item that had supposedly existed throughout all eternity. Hence, it would seem that the text of the naos of Saft el-Henna provides the earliest attestation of the topos that some Egyptian sacred items were lost in the East – but, as in this case, not in Persia.⁴⁰ It is noteworthy that, while the Achaemenids were deadly enemies of Nectanebo I, the text written on the naos does not blame them for Sopdu’s departure to the East, as if it was inconceivable for the Egyptians of the 4th century that the Persians were responsible for the misfortune of their gods. Hence, we have to determine the identity of those that –within the Egyptian cultural memory– were truly guilty of the sacrilege.

2.3. *The Assyrians as plunderers of Egyptian temples*

Valuable indicators can be found in the historical demotic literature, which has been carefully unearthed by Kim Ryholt. While the Persians are relatively absent in these texts⁴¹, the Assyrians appear as archetypal enemies of the Egyptian kings and heroes.⁴² The ten-year long period⁴³ during which Assyrians and Kushites fought for

39 Klotz (2010), p. 153–154.

40 This topos also forms the framework of the *Bentresh Story*, which is also known from two hieroglyphic inscriptions (including the famous *Bakhtan Stela*, Louvre C 284) dated to the early Ptolemaic period, Ryholt 2015: 65–66. In this story, the statue of the Theban god Chons-who-Exercises-Authority was detained by the “prince of Bactria”.

41 See P.Carlsberg 555 v° edited by Ryholt (2012), p. 143–155, other references are quoted on p. 152.

42 According to Ryholt (2009a), p. 237, the Assyrian invasions are, with the Hyksos era and the Amarna Age, one the “three distinctly traumatic periods” present in the historical narratives of the Greco-Roman period.

43 Here, I follow the dates given by Kahn & Tammuz (2008), p. 59 excluding the dubious campaign of Sennacherib in 701 BCE which is only documented by Herodotus 2.141.

control of Egypt is one of the most frequently mentioned periods in these historical demotic texts. It ended in 664 BCE, with the ascension of Psammetichus I and the subsequent re-unification of Egypt. This period forms the background, and to some extent also the subject matter, of several epic cycles.⁴⁴ Among these texts, one fragment contains an evocation of a deportation of Egyptian sacred statues by Asiatic invaders. This so-called *Story of King Djoser and his chancellor Imhotep* is preserved in a single papyrus from the Tebtynis temple library (P.Carlsberg 85)⁴⁵. Kim Ryholt proposes to date this document paleographically “to the first or perhaps the second century CE”.⁴⁶ The two main fragments describe an expedition to Assyria undertaken to find and retrieve “the forty-two divine limbs”, the remains of Osiris, after he was dismembered by his brother Seth.⁴⁷ Kim Ryholt is probably right in proposing that the limbs of the god were in fact related to the statues, books, and sacred tools that were removed from Egypt during the various periods of foreign invasion. This well-known metaphor of the political reunification process through the reconstruction of the body of Osiris, whose relics were scattered between the different nomes of Egypt,⁴⁸ is thus extended to include the foreign countries of Asia. In the second largest fragment of the tale, the forty-two divine limbs were discovered by King Djoser near Niniveh in a fortress named ‘*n-Bl*, which implies that, for the Egyptian author of this text, the Assyrians were clearly guilty of crime of the god-theft⁴⁹ that was committed against the Egyptian temples.

The same applies to the demotic prophetic text called *Prophecy of the Lamb or Lamb of Bocchoris*⁵⁰:

^(3.23) *We will learn about the existence of the naoi of the Egyptian Gods (n3 g3.w n3 ntr.w Kmy) made around Niniveh in the land of ^(3.24) Assyria and when the Egyptians will go to the land of Syria and when they will seize these provinces, they will ^(4.1) find the naoi of the Egyptian Gods.*

The Story of King Djoser and *The Prophecy of the Lamb* confirm what we already know from the Assyrian historical sources themselves, namely, that the Assyrians were accustomed to deporting sacred items from the countries that they defeated.⁵¹ A single fragment of historical narrative (P.Carlsberg 555 v^o), recently edited by Kim Ryholt, may imply that Persians plundered the Egyptian temples.⁵² Although the text is too damaged to provide a coherent translation, it is perfectly clear that the story concerns a conflict between Egypt and Persia. The fragment 2 (l. x+13)

44 Ryholt 2009a: 235–236.

45 Ryholt (2009b), p. 308–311.

46 Ryholt (2004), p. 500.

47 The main tradition mentions 16 Cities-Reliquary for the divine limbs of Osiris, see Beinlich (1984); Coulon (2005), p. 29. For another tradition concerning the Osiris’ bodies, see Favard-Meeks & Meeks (2010).

48 Beinlich (1984), p. 16–17; Coulon (2010), p. 16.

49 Livingstone (1997), p. 168.

50 P. Wien D 10000. See also, Hoffmann & Quack (2007), p. 181–193. We follow the French translation by Michel Chauveau. This is an opportunity to thank him warmly for having shared his still unedited edition of the *Prophecy of the Lamb* with me.

51 See the impressive list established by Holloway (2002), p. 123–114.

52 Ryholt (2012), p. 143–155.

contains a sentence fragment mentioning “the interior (of) the shrines (of) ’Ba’[I-amun]⁵³” (*p3 hn n3 hm.w ’P3y’-[ir-Imn ...]*). It is very unfortunate that the badly preserved state of P.Carlsberg 555 hinders our understanding of this piece. Nevertheless, it seems quite probable that it refers to exactions committed by Persian troops against the gods of Egypt. Therefore, from the perspective of the Egyptian priests of the Roman Period, the plundering of Egyptian temples and, moreover, the deportation of divine statues, was overwhelmingly associated with the Assyrian invasions of the first part of the 8th century BCE.

3. The Egyptian Memory of the Persian Periods and the political manipulation by the Macedonian Power

Winnicki and Thiers reject the idea proposed by Bouché-Leclercq on the return of the divine statues to Egypt as a motif of propaganda and agree with Briant that the Persians were not mainly responsible of their deportation. Following their line of thought, we subsequently have to explain why it was so important for the Ptolemies to find the Egyptian statues in “Syria”. The crucial point here is the fact that the Ptolemies’ restitution of sacred items, commemorated by the stela, is associated with two other kinds of royal deeds. This can help us understand the political context of these restitutions, namely, the military inspection of the territories where the beneficiary temples were located and a *mise en scène* of the restitution was orchestrated by the Macedonian power.

3.1. Restitution and military inspection: inclusion of Egyptian clergies in the Ptolemaic war effort in “Syria”

On the Satrap stela, the statue’s restitution is linked to a royal journey undertaken to prepare the defense of the territories of Lower Egypt, where the beneficiary temples were located. The priests of Buto praise the military qualities of the “great leader whose name is Ptolemy” and support their champion’s war against the Antigonids. At the end of the conflict, the statues became part of the war loot.

^(1.4) He gathered many Greeks with ^(1.5) their horses, as well as many warships with their crews. He set off to the land of the Syrians. They fought with him. He advanced in their country, his heart was as powerful as the falcon swooping down on a prey. He grabbed them in one shot and he took their leaders, their horses, ^(1.6) their boats and all their wealth in Egypt.

This emphatic evocation of Greek military operations in a text written by Egyptian priests demonstrates the existence of a political collusion between the clergy of Buto and the Macedonian satrap. The alleged presence of stolen sacred items in Asia creates a consensus between the Ptolemaic power and the priests concerning the need to attack the Antigonid positions in Syria. Within this framework it is noteworthy that, according to the *Prophecy of the Lamb*, the return of the *naoi* from

53 Following Ryholt’s reading and interpretation of the place name *P3y-ir-Imn*.

Niniveh is connected with the oracle that evokes the time *when the Egyptians will go to the land of Syria*, which probably indicates the so-called Third Syrian war (246–241 BCE), during which the Ptolemaic troops temporarily seized Assyria and pressed on to Babylon itself.⁵⁴ Because the stolen Egyptian items were disseminated across Asia, the Ptolemies' war against the Antigonids and the Seleukids also became the war of the Egyptian priests.⁵⁵ Returning to the satrap stela, it should be noted that the area of Buto – similar to the territory of Tjekou on the Pithom Stela – was a strategic site during the conflict between the Ptolemies and the Antigonids. It was well connected to the sea through the Sebennyitic branch, and offered an ideal location to organize a landing of troops in Egypt. By ensuring the collaboration of local elites through donations of land and gifts of sacred items, the Macedonian satrap could enforce his political control over the strategic cities of Egypt for the expected war against the Antigonids.

3. 2. *The purification of the statues: a political mise en scène*

To be effective, the return of divine statues and sacred items required a political *mise en scène* that would connect them with the royal entry of the victorious king.⁵⁶ Parts of these ceremonies are described on the Pithom stele. All representatives of the temples included in the restitution were summoned by royal letter:

In consequence, His Majesty said^(1.13) to his royal scribe: “Write a royal ordonnance for the temple of Upper and Lower Egypt to convene the epistates, the priests-elected and the wab-priests in office in their temples (?), saying: The Gods of Egypt, they came back to Egypt.” And they (= the Priests) went to the place where His Majesty was in front of the gods. They found it was the statue of the Oriental Harpoon (= the nome of Tjekou): that is what they did with His Majesty here. The gods of Egypt went back to Egypt; the gods of Tjekou went back to rest here because it is their place forever. His Majesty felt great joy about that.

After this first ceremony, during which the representatives of the Egyptian priests identified the divine statues discovered by the Macedonian, the king promulgated a decree informing all Egyptians that the Ptolemies' campaign in Syria was a sacred war supported by the Egyptian gods.

After that, His Majesty promulgated a decree about these gods: proclaiming ... these treasurers; the king put them (= the gods) on his fleet; they ... and they ... reached Tjekou, and it is there where they rest forever. They distinguished His Majesty in the presence of his father Atum, great god of Tjekou, as king forever. Egypt lies in his hand and all the foreign countries are under his soles until his son is firmly established on the throne of Re; on the throne of Horus who governs the livings, as Re forever. May the king of Upper and Lower Egypt^(1.15) (The two names of Ptolemy II in cartouches) remain on the throne of his father Re to rule the Two Lands.

54 Clancier (2012).

55 Briant (2009), p. 31.

56 Concerning royal entries, see Yoyotte (2013), p. 266–267.

The restitution of the statues helped Ptolemy II to establish his authority over the Egyptian clergies and to promote the hierarchy that he wishes to instill among the temples. To this purpose, the items were conducted, before their restitutions, by the king in Memphis in the so-called “House of the Morning”, situated in the precinct of the temple of Ptah.⁵⁷ For nine months, the clergy of Ptah was in charge of their purification. This scenario enforced the preeminence of the clergy of Ptah, which Ptolemy had promoted as most prominent among all the Egyptian clergies. This fits with the unification policy of the Egyptian temples elaborated by the Ptolemies, which would reach his height with the great synods of the second part of the 3rd century BCE.⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

Analyzing the theme of the deportation/restitution of the Egyptian sacred items by the first Ptolemies through the prism of history of memori(es) helps us to clarify at least one point, namely, the fact that the Egyptian priests of the 3rd century BCE were less inclined to accuse the Persians of robbing their sacred statues than the Macedonian power was. This enforces the arguments developed by Briant and Thiers on the effective responsibility of the Assyrians in this affair, and subsequently suggests that the references contained in the synodal decrees from the 3rd century BCE are the result of the conflation of two cultural memories: 1. The Egyptian cultural memory of the trauma caused by the Assyrian plundering of temples during the first decades of the 7th century BCE; an incident that remained a vivid memory in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods⁵⁹ and 2. The Greco-Macedonian cultural memory of the sacrileges committed by Xerxes during the Second Greco-Persian War.

In this type of memory graft, the Egyptian “Assyrian trauma” assumes the role of rootstock while the Greco-Macedonian “Persian impiety” constitutes the bud. This latter operation was supervised by the Macedonian kings for the purpose of building a political consensus on the war against the Seleucids. Therefore, it is evident that all documents in which these incidents of god-theft are mentioned are closely connected with the Ptolemaic campaigns in Asia. The Decree of Raphia helps us understand how this theme aided the Ptolemaic power in building a narrative that featured the Seleucids as the forerunners of the Achaemenids. In a few

57 Thiers (2007), p. 44 (86) and p. 103–104.

58 Agut-Labordère and Gorre (2015), p. 31–34.

59 Concerning the divine statues, the depth of the Egyptian trauma is due to their conception of the divine images as sole media between men and gods: “la face (du dieu), c’est ce qui permet à l’homme d’entrer en contact avec la divinité, de communiquer avec elle” Meeks (1986), p. 179 cleverly quoted by Razanajao (2006), p. 228–229. In regard to the changes affecting the temple as place of communication between men and gods during the First millennium BCE, see Frood (2010), p. 123. The notion of “emotional experience” elaborated by Jörg Rüpke concerning the Roman religiosity involving divine statues deserves further investigation in the framework of Egyptian religion, Rüpke (2010) quoted by Bonnet and Grand-Clément (2013), esp. p. 55.

lines before the passage that evokes the search of the images of the Egyptian Gods that were stolen by the Persians, the decree mentions another sacrilege that was also repaired by Ptolemy IV:

^(1.17)... and of the divine images that had been in the temples and which Antiochus (= Antiochus III) had damaged, ^(1.18) he (= Ptolemy IV) ordered that others should be given as replacements for them and should be installed in their place and he gave much gold and precious stones for them; likewise; moreover, for the sacred objects which had been in the temples and which the same men had taken: he took care to have replacements made for them; the things which used ^(1.19) to be given to the temples but which had been cut off he ordered to be given according to their initial manner so that nothing might perish among what is customarily done for the gods.⁶⁰

The political strength of the narrative elaborated by the Ptolemaic power lies in the fact that it is rooted in *both* cultural memories. It perfectly illustrates that the concept of middle-ground can be usefully applied to Ptolemaic ideology, as recently also shown by Ian Moyer regarding the study of the Hellenistic history of Egypt.⁶¹ The Egyptian trauma resulting from the Assyrian lootings and the Greek trauma concerning Xerxes' destructions provided a common and mutually comprehensible political experience, thus creating a connection between the Egyptian priestly elite and the Macedonians.⁶² The political exploitation of this point of contact between both cultural memories required three conditions to be fulfilled:

- The Egyptian cultural memory had to be adjusted to the Macedonian one; i. e., the Assyrians, which are quasi-absent from Greek cultural memory, had to be replaced by the Persians, who constituted ill memory for both ethnic groups.
- To be of interest for the Ptolemies, the exploitation of these cultural memories had to target an enemy that could be assimilated to the late Achaemenid Empire, such as the Seleucid Kingdom.⁶³
- The Egyptian priests had an interest in accepting this deformation of their cultural memory because the restitution of the stolen statues, images, and items was accompanied by royal gifts to the temples, as is attested in all documents (with the exception of the Inscription of Adulis).

In conclusion, if our reasoning is correct, the case of the alleged looting of Egyptian temples by Persian troops provides an example of the exploitation and the distortion of cultural memory in order to convert it to political memory. In the sacerdotal decrees of the 3rd century BCE, the Egyptian cultural "Assyrianism" was provisionally occulted by the Greek political "Persianism". The manipulation of Egyptian cultural memory during the 4th and the 3rd centuries BCE clarifies on the confusion

60 Following the translation of Simpson (1996), p. 247.

61 Moyer (2011).

62 ... "le nom de Xerxès est là [*in the satrap stela*] utilisé, au début de l'époque hellénistique dans une fonction discursive fort proche de celle qu'elle revêt dans les textes grecs évoquant la restitution, par les Séleucides, de statues dérobées par Xerxès, en Grèce ... ", Briant (2009), p. 31. Concerning the mobilization of Greek cultural memory by Alexander during his conquest of the East, see Bonnet and Grand-Clément (2013), p. 41–42.

63 As in one of the demotic graffiti of the temple of Satet, see Vittmann (1997). Nonetheless, this interpretation is now contested by Quack (2011), p. 111–116.

between Assyrians and Persians, and probably also explains the conflation between the two invasions, as can be observed in the historical texts dated to the first centuries of the Roman Period.⁶⁴

64 See Ryholt 2004, p. 493 and 504–505.

PERSIANISM UNDER THE EARLY SELEUKID KINGS? THE ROYAL TITLE ‘GREAT KING’*

Sonja Plischke

Since the theoretical definition of ‘Persianism’ discussed at the conference in Istanbul – a statement which was further qualified in the ensuing debate – implicates a certain temporal and/or spatial displacement between the Persian Empire as a historical fact and ‘Persia’ as a mental image, the question arises if it is possible to find any indications of ‘Persianism’ already under the early Seleukid kings, that is, shortly after the collapse of the Achaemenid Empire. At first sight this might seem self-evident as the dynastic founder Seleukos I was part of the Eastern campaign of Alexander III and thus a contemporary of the last Achaemenid ‘Great King’ Darius III whom he encountered personally. Additionally, the geographical space of the Seleukid Kingdom from its beginning about 311/10 BCE until the middle of the 1st century BCE was more or less (in later times much less certainly) identical with the extent of the former Achaemenid and consequently Alexander’s Empire. Thus it is a particularly interesting approach to look for the transmission of certain phenomena through Seleukid times which are known not only from ‘historical Persia’ but also as ‘revisited invention’ of the 2nd century BCE. In my contribution I will trace this path by taking an exemplary look at the royal title ‘Great King’ to assess the importance of Achaemenid or Persian traditions under Alexander III and the early Seleukids in order to qualify to what extent the connection with Persian traditions understood as the phenomenon of ‘Persianism’ was part of the ruling concept in the Asian territories.

Although the Seleukids reigned for about three centuries over the mainland of Alexander’s empire, respectively the Near Eastern heartland, there is a lot of discussion in modern research regarding the role of the Seleukid kings as heirs of the Achaemenids, as Macedonian kings or as rulers with a new Seleukid shaped ruling system. Concerning this Briant frequently has firmly argued that Alexander was not only “le premier d’une longue lignée de rois hellénistique”, but also “le dernier des Achéménides”. In his opinion, Alexander’s continued reign was consciously based on many traditions from his Achaemenid predecessors. Between 334 and 323 BCE Alexander was acting as the restorer of the former system as he united the whole Achaemenid territory under his rule and maintained their established methods of administration.¹

* I would like to thank the editors, Rolf Strootman and Miguel John Versluys, to let me participate in this volume with my contribution.

1 Cf. Briant (1979), p. 328–330; Briant (1980); Briant (2002), p. 875–876. Against this view Wiemer (2007).

It is quite evident that on his way through Asia Alexander adopted a way of ruling as well as administrative methods from the Achaemenids. But it should not be forgotten that the Macedonian king only stayed about seven respectively eleven years in the East and that he was formally busy with military operations and overtly ambitious attempts of expansion. It is therefore questionable to what extent Alexander was actually able to encourage and to realize structural changes. Perhaps it was just due to his restless urge of conquest.²

Based on similar reflections Tuplin argues that the restart respectively the process of changes in the East had already started in the 4th century BCE in the years before Alexander reached Asia. The Macedonian king who had no long-lasting influence in the East had left this task to his Seleukid successors. In Tuplin's view the Seleukid kingdom thus is a plain example for what Alexander had done and planned on doing with the Achaemenid realm. The priority of the Seleukid kings was the formation of a Macedonian empire.³

The authors of the ancient literary sources as well as a great number of modern scholars have perceived the Seleukid as a Macedonian Empire. Justin mentions the Seleukid king as a *rex Macedonus* in an *imperium Macedonicum*; Strabo also equates the Seleukids with Macedonians.⁴ Edson has firmly pointed out that the coexistent Ptolemaic Empire in Egypt was never mentioned or seen as a Macedonian one; due to the fact that up to 168 BCE a 'Macedonian' Empire under the rule of the Antigonids existed in Macedon he concluded that the Seleukids had no choice but to name their empire Macedonian.⁵ Recently, Brüggemann referred to the Seleukid Empire as "eine formal unbestreitbar makedonische Monarchie".⁶

By contrast Downey already emphasized the "dual personality [of the Seleukid kings] – one thing to the Greeks, another to the orientals".⁷ Strootman evaluates the imperial ideology of the Seleukids as 'Hellenistic', *i. e.*, a "non-ethnic" umbrella culture creating cohesion among various, culturally heterogeneous, local elites.⁸ It is quite remarkable that we can find the perception and the promotion of the Seleukid kings as successors of the Achaemenids, as "König Perserfreund"⁹ in the Ptolemaic territories, which must be understood as the denigration of a political rival's image. By contrast, Aperghis interprets the connection between the Achaemenids and the Seleukids as a teacher-pupil-relationship, while Tuplin has firmly emphasized that the Seleukid Empire either in introspection or in the awareness of others was never mentioned as Persian Empire which prompts him to negate continuities between the Achaemenid rule and the Seleukid Empire as well as the following Parthian or Arsakid Empire.¹⁰

2 Cf. also Tuplin (2008), p. 108.

3 Tuplin (2008), p. 112/117. Cf. also Capdetrey (2008), p. 59.

4 Iust. (36,1,10); Strab. 11,11,16; 7,2; 9,1; 15,3,3/24.

5 Edson (1958), p. 154–165.

6 Brüggemann (2010), p. 51; similar to Capdetrey (2007), p. 25; Capdetrey (2008), p. 59.

7 Downey (1941), p. 166.

8 Strootman (2011a), p. 89.

9 Funck (1996), p. 201.

10 Aperghis (2008), p. 145; Tuplin (2008), p. 114.

Nevertheless it must be explicitly emphasized that there is an important difference between the ways a reign is perceived by the subjects and the dynasty itself. The fact that the Macedonian dynastic founder Seleukos held on to the marriage with the Iranian princess Apame arranged by Alexander and that his successor Antiochos I was therefore half-Iranian indicates that he was well aware of the special situation in Asia and its particular demands for his rule.¹¹ By contrast there are almost no indications which allow for the assumption that the Seleukid kings tried to proclaim themselves as direct heirs of the Achaemenids. The features of Seleukid rule in the Iranian East rather indicate a specific Seleukid concept of ruling which was characterized by continuities and breaks with the traditions of the Achaemenid predecessors, the effects of Alexander's policy, and the adoption of elements from the Mediterranean West. The Seleukid focus was not on the accurate adoption in every detail but the practicability of each measure. The Seleukid *raison d'état* therefore should best be understood as a combination of the adoption and transformation of proven elements with new specific Seleukid ruling practices.¹²

THE ORIGIN OF THE TITLE 'GREAT KING'

The origin of the title 'Great King' dates from Sumerian times of the 3rd millennium BCE in Mesopotamia. From the second half of the 2nd millennium BCE it is also used as a common title for rulers of Egypt, of the Hittites, of Babylonia, of the Mitanni Empire, and finally of the Assyrians. Under Achaemenid rule the title was not only adopted but also in wide use so that it functioned as a synonym for the Achaemenid or Persian king.¹³ From the 16th century BCE onwards the title 'King of kings' also was widely used and in the following period both titles were combined. Although they are mostly understood synonymously, the title 'King of kings' was used less commonly from the Neo-Babylonian times on to the Achaemenids. But it is quite interesting that in the 7th century BCE the Assyrian ruler Assurbanipal used the title 'King of kings' to dissociate himself from the subordinated kings.¹⁴

The earliest and most important epigraphic sources of the Achaemenid respectively Teispid kings are the Cylinder of Cyrus II, a report of the downfall of the Babylonian king Nabonidus and Cyrus' capture of Babylon after 539 BCE, as well as the inscription of Behistun, the "res gestae" and the legitimation of Darius' I sovereignty. For our context the king's self-designation is of concern: Cyrus calls himself 'King of the World', 'Great King', 'Mighty King', 'King of Babylon', 'King of Sumer and Akkad', and 'King of the four quarters'. Subsequently, he mentions his genealogic descent: He is the son of Kambyeses, who already was 'Great King' and 'King of Anshan'; he is the grandchild of Cyrus, who already was 'Great King' and 'King of Anshan', and he is the great-grandchild of Teispes, who already was

11 Cf. Plischke (2014), p. 173–204.

12 For this aspect cf. Plischke (2014); *esp.* p. 327–334.

13 In general cf. McEwan (1934); Schäfer (1974); Artzi and Malamat (1993).

14 Frame (1995) B.6.32.5, 1–3. In Seleukid times there is no evidence for it.

‘Great King’ and ‘King of Anshan’.¹⁵ In this text a few aspects are remarkable: Cyrus II, Cyrus I and Teispes all held the title ‘Great King’. But Cyrus II was not an Achaemenid but a Teispid king and neither Cyrus II nor his ancestors called themselves ‘King of kings’.

Secondly, Darius I used a very different self-designation in the Behistun inscription: He is ‘Great King’, ‘King of kings’, ‘King of Persia’, and ‘King of the lands’; furthermore, he is the son of Hystapes and the grandchild of Arsames, who is mentioned as an Achaemenid.¹⁶ Apart from the specific regional references Darius I bore both titles ‘Great King’ and ‘King of kings’ and all subsequent inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings follow this model up to Artaxerxes III, who is the last Achaemenid ruler documented by inscriptions.

From Parthian or Arsakid times to the Sasanian rulers – where the successor to the throne was mainly mentioned as ‘Great King’ whereas the ruler itself held the title ‘King of kings’ – there are a lot of examples indicating that the appellation of a ruler as ‘Great King’ was very common. We can also find the Latin pendant *rex regum* which was used in the *orbis Romanus* to explicitly express the Roman claim of superiority over Eastern empires. Therefore, it is remarkable that the use of previous and generally accepted royal titles such the ‘Great King’ seems to have been less common during the reign of Alexander III and the Hellenistic empire of the Seleukids.

ALEXANDER III – THE ‘KING OF ASIA’ OR THE ‘GREAT KING’?

The literary sources prove that since the 5th century BCE the title ‘Great King’ was used and understood as a synonym for the Achaemenid, i.e. Persian king.¹⁷ Thus it is quite surprising that Alexander, who is known to have been called ‘the Great’ in the very late 3rd century BCE¹⁸, never referred to himself using this title, although there are a lot of examples in which he seems to have depicted himself as ‘Great King’ and acted in this way. This included, for example, the proclamation to revenge Darius III.¹⁹ On his way back to the Persian heartland he also visited the tomb of Cyrus II at Pasargadae.²⁰ He even ensured that his former enemy Darius was buried in the royal tombs of the Achaemenids at Persepolis.²¹ The killing of Kleitos at a banquet 328 BCE after a quarrel between the king and his satrap of Bactria²² as well as Kallisthenes’ criticism of Alexander’s adoption of Persian customs expressed in the conflict of performing the proskynesis²³ are further steps

15 CB Fragment A §20–21.

16 DB §1,1–3.

17 Thus already Herodotos (1,188) and Aischylos (Pers. 24).

18 Plaut. Mos. 775.

19 Cf. Diod. 17,73,4; Arr. an. 3,22/30.

20 Strab. 15,3,7; Plut. Alex. 69; Arr. an. 6,29. Aristobol also mentioned that Alexander gave orders to restore the decamped and plundered tomb of Cyrus.

21 Plut. Alex. 43; Diod. 17,73,3; Arr. an. 3,22,1.

22 Plut. Alex. 50; Arr. an. 4,8.

23 Plut. Alex. 53–54; Arr. an. 4,10–12.

in Alexander's transformation from Macedonian monarch to Achaemenid 'Great King'. Furthermore he married several Iranian princesses: his most important wife was Roxane, the daughter of the Sogdian partisan Oxyartes²⁴, but at Susa he also married Stateira, the daughter of Darius III.²⁵

By contrast, later references to Alexander invented the title 'King of Asia' for the ruler. The earliest evidence is mentioned in Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, where the author describes that Alexander has claimed himself 'King of Asia' after the battle of Gaugamela.²⁶ A generation later Arrian mentions a correspondence between Alexander and Darius after the battle of Issos in which the Achaemenid king pleads for the release of the royal family. In his response, Alexander demands to be addressed as 'King of Asia' by Darius in their following correspondences.²⁷ The ancient sources therefore suggest that Alexander has introduced this new title to proclaim his imperial rule in the East, which rather resembled an 'absolute monarchy' than the adoption of the Achaemenid kingship. With this interpretation Fredericksmeier has already tried to explain the surprising absence of the title 'Great King' for Alexander and the creation of the new title: Alexander did not want to be seen as Persian or 'Great King'; he was more, he was the master of Asia.²⁸ Admittedly, the very late evidence for the title 'King of Asia' is probably a later invention by Plutarch or his sources, which reflects the Greek perception of Asia as the former Achaemenid territory. Nevertheless, this evaluation of Alexander's rule which is implied in choosing the title 'King of Asia' and in dissociating from the Achaemenid rule would explain Alexander's actions and the absence of the title 'Great King' very well.

There are no direct indications for the use of the title 'King of Asia' in the first years after Alexander's death.²⁹ For the following years the Greek sources often employ 'Asia' as a term to give geographical limitations or to separate the Seleukid dynasty from other Hellenistic dynasties. There is also mention of the Seleukids ruling as kings over most of the territory of Asia or kingly over Asia, while the Greek and Roman authors explicitly name smaller Asian territories over which the Seleukids are kings – Syria, Babylonia, or Media for example. This evidence implies that there is no official royal title 'King of Asia' which the Seleukids added to their royal titles when referring to Alexander.³⁰

24 Plut. *Alex.* 47; *Mor.* 338d; *Arr. an.* 4,19–20.

25 Plut. *Alex.* 70; *Diod.* 17,107,6; *Arr. an.* 7,4; *Iust.* 12,10,10.

26 Plut. *Alex.* 34; *Iust.* 11,14,6 without mentioning the title explicitly. Cf. Nawotka (2012).

27 *Arr. an.* 2,14,7–9: βασιλέα τῆς Ἀσίας.

28 For this aspect cf. Fredericksmeier (2000), p. 136–166. Recently, Strootman (2016b) has argued to understand the title "King of Asia" as an informal Greek adaptation of the universalistic title 'Great King', used in communication with the *poleis* on the Greek mainland to emphasize their autonomy vis-à-vis captured Asia; a different opinion is expressed by Nawotka (2012), who interprets the word "Asia" as referring to the Persian Empire.

29 For this aspect see Muccioli (2004).

30 There are a lot of examples in the Syrian book of Appian, where the royal Seleukid rule in Asia is mentioned but always with verbal constructions. Cf. *App. Syr.* 1,1: [...] τοῦ μετὰ Ἀλέξανδρον Ἀσίας τῆς περὶ Εὐφράτην βεβασιλευκότος [...]; *Syr.* 1,2: [...] ἄρχοντι τῆς Ἀσίας [...]. Previous rulers of Asia are sometimes called kings of Asia. Cf. *App. Syr.* 1,2: [...]

THE 'GREAT KING', KING OF THE WORLD –
THE ANTIOCHOS CYLINDER OF BORSIPPA

One of the most important sources for the early Seleukid rule in Babylonia is the so-called Antiochos Cylinder from Borsippa. This inscription is also the most obvious source when discussing how the early Seleukid kings tried to legitimize their rule by appropriating local traditions and conventions of ruling. The complete extant cuneiform text describes how Antiochos I himself ordered the reconstruction of the temple named Ezida of Borsippa and begged for divine favor. The text also testifies that Antiochos I was in Borsippa in 268 BCE.³¹ The Cylinder was found in 1880 at Birs Nimrud, the former Borsippa, about 20 km to the southwest of Babylon. It was located in the temple complex Ezida which was dedicated to the Babylonian moon god Nabû.³² In keeping with Mesopotamian traditions it is made of barreled clay. Although the spoken language in Hellenistic Mesopotamia was Aramaic at this time, the text is written in the old Babylonian language which was only used for official and cultic purposes.³³ Bidmead holds the opinion that the Antiochos Cylinder was connected to the Akitū Festival because the Cylinder is dated to the month Nisannu. This well-documented Babylonian New Year Festival was dedicated to Marduk, the father of Nabû, and the principal deity in the Babylonian pantheon. The sources show that the festival survived from Neo-Babylonian times and was performed both under Achaemenid and Seleukid rule.³⁴ This kind of text was placed inside the most important buildings of the city or into the walls so that and thus emphasizes the multifaceted significance of the Cylinder. Moreover, this kind of text is often related to royal accessions and the resulting consolidation of power.

The inscription can be divided into three parts. The first part lists Antiochos' titles. He bears the titles 'Great King', 'Mighty King', 'King of the World', 'King of Babylon', and 'King of the lands; he is the provider of Esagil and Ezida and the son of Seleukos, whom Antiochos explicitly names Macedonian,³⁵ and also as 'King of

πάλαι τῶν τῆς Ἀσίας βασιλέων [...]; Syr. 12,45: [...] τοῖς βαρβάροις βασιλεῦσι τῆς Ἀσίας [...]. In an inscription of 166 BCE (OGIS 253) Antiochos IV is called 'saviour of Asia', σωτήρως τῆς Ἀσίας.

- 31 BM 36277. It is a feature of the text that Antiochos himself emerges as the builder; cf. Boiy and Mittag (2011), p. 105. It is also remarkable that Antiochos' rebuilding of the two temples traces back to the urge of his own heart and no divine actor is responsible for Antiochos' actions – as it is common for a traditional Babylonian ruler; cf. Stevens (2014), p. 77–78. For analyses of the Antiochos Cylinder as also reflecting Seleukid ideology see now Strootman (2013a); Kosmin (2014b); Stevens (2014).
- 32 For further details of the archaeological excavation see Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991).
- 33 Strootman (2013a), p. 73. Because of the place of finding Stevens (2014), p. 84, argued for a rather Borsippan than Babylonian reading of the inscription of the Antiochos Cylinder.
- 34 Bidmead (2004), p. 143–145. For the *Akitū* Festival in Hellenistic times see Linszen (2004), p. 79–87; in general Boiy (2004); Waerzeggers (2010). For Seleukid participation in this and other Babylonian festivals see Strootman (2013a), p. 78–83; Plischke (2014), p. 201–204; 285–286; 292.
- 35 Stevens (2014), p. 76 suggests a qualification of the word 'king' by using 'Macedonian' and explains this mention with reference to the 'Macedonian' or Hellenistic kingship through its link to Alexander. She also cites some parallels within the inscriptions of the Mesopotamian

Babylon'.³⁶ The second part describes Antiochos' merits regarding the restoration of the Babylonian sanctuaries and beside the Ezida of Borsippa it mentions the Esagil of Babylon, too. The laying of the foundation stone of the Ezida is dated to the 28th of March 268 BCE (20th Addaru 43 SE).³⁷ The third part is a prayer to Nabû in which the Seleukid king begs for support against his enemies, for a long life and his dynasty, for the stabilization of his rule, and for his personal protection to ensure further conquests. In return Antiochos promises to use his successes to establish a permanent ritual care of the Esagil in Babylon and the Ezida in Borsippa. He also begs for divine aid for his eldest son and co-regent Seleukos and his wife and co-regent Stratonike.³⁸

Kuhr and Sherwin-White have rightly stated that the material configuration, the representation of the text, and the individual textual components of the Antiochos Cylinder from Borsippa directly conform to the traditional Babylonian building inscriptions. The text creates the image of a perfect king and a perfect rule, which is marked by the victory over external enemies, an ensuing peace, and political stability. However, the basis of this ideal type of monarchy is the correct worship of the Babylonian gods.³⁹ Consequentially, the Antiochos Cylinder also continues an oriental tradition by using the language in which the gods had been worshipped for century: Babylonian.⁴⁰ Therefore, it clearly emphasizes the interest and the appreciation of local, in this case Babylonian or Mesopotamian, traditions by the Seleukid kings and puts their rule in close relationship to oriental or indigenous customs and rites. This adoption of the Babylonian traditions of hegemony was the key to the establishment of Seleukid rule in Babylonia.⁴¹

Against this background one may ask to which prototype this idea of representation refers. A few other Cylinder inscriptions⁴² from Neo-Babylonian times have survived, so it will be useful to have a look to them, too. In this light the

and Persian precedents who often refer to the royal status of their predecessor to raise their own legitimacy.

36 Col. 1,1–6. Stevens (2014), p. 73 outlines that only the titles 'King of Babylon' and 'provider for Esagil und Ezida' were consistently used by Neo-Babylonian rulers, but they were also very prevalent under Assyrian kings of Babylonia. The title 'King of the lands', firstly known from Achaemenid times, correlates very well with the older Assyrian title 'magnificent King of the lands'. The titles 'Great King', 'Mighty King' and 'King of the World' date probably also from Assyrian times.

37 Col. 1,6–16.

38 Col. 1,16; Col. 2,29. For the diction and the archaizing elements of the text cf. Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991), p. 77–78. Stevens (2014), p. 70; 79–82 outlines that the three separate prayers for different members of the royal family might be a reflection of shifting to a more dynastic focus in accordance with Seleukid precedence. Erickson (2011) argues in favor of parallels between the royal and the divine families in the third part of the inscription. That would imply an overlay of the Seleukid dynastic model onto the divine world. Cf. also Kosmin (2014b), p. 182–184.

39 Cf. Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991), p. 78–79; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1993), p. 36–37.

40 Cf. Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991), p. 81. At this point it is quite irrelevant if the king understood the language – he probably did not.

41 For this aspect cf. also Haubold (2013), p. 135–142; Kosmin (2014b); Stevens (2014).

42 Important for our question are the Cylinder of Assurbanipal, the Cylinder of Nebuchadnezzar,

Antiochos Cylinder offers the greatest similarity to the Nabonidus Cylinder from Sippar (after 542 BCE).⁴³ At this point it is important to notice that in his last years as ruler of Babylonia, Nabonidus seems to have adopted the Assyrian model of domination to inscribe his reign into Assyrian rule.⁴⁴ Apart from the material representation and the configuration of the text, the Cylinder declares Nabonidus as ‘Great King’, ‘Mighty King’, ‘King of the World’, ‘King of Babylon’; he was also mentioned as provider for Esagil and Ezida and the text referred to his father, Nabopolassar. Instead of ‘King of the lands’ Nabonidus was called ‘King of the four quarters’, which appears already in the Assurbanipal Cylinder and later in the Cyrus Cylinder.⁴⁵ In addition Assurbanipal, as already mentioned, bore the title ‘Great King’ – also ‘King of kings’ – ‘Mighty king’, ‘King of the World’, and ‘King of Assyria’.⁴⁶ On the basis of this comparison one might of course draw the conclusion that the Seleukids – or better the redactor⁴⁷ – not only tried to tie the ruler to the Achaemenid kings but also to the traditions of the Assyrian rulers known from the latest period of reign by Nabonidus. In addition, Antiochos like his father had already established his rule and his legitimation by accepting and encouraging local traditions and by staying in close contact with the indigenous elites which is shown in the inscription.⁴⁸

The body of epigraphic source material for the Seleukid rule of the Eastern territories is absolutely meager. Indeed, the Cylinder is the only extant Seleukid royal inscription in cuneiform and therefore the sole evidence for the heading of such titles as ‘Great King’, ‘King of the World’, or ‘King of the countries’ in the Babylonian context. There are no other examples in which the Seleukid king is mentioned with an official indigenous title in the Asian territories.⁴⁹ Moreover, in comparison with the Cylinder of Nabonidus and Cyrus the reference to the title ‘Great King’ is clearly not that unique and therefore loses its value at this point.⁵⁰ So the main question concerns the fact that the Seleukid king, with the exemption of the Antiochos Cylinder, usually appears as a local ruler indicated through the use of indigenous titles.⁵¹ In my opinion the answer lies in the exceptional situation in

and the Cylinder of Nabonidus. A collection and comparison is given by Stevens (2014), p. 72–77.

43 For the inscriptions of Nabonidus in general cf. Schaudig (2001).

44 Cf. Beaulieu (1989), p. 143; Stevens (2014), p. 73.

45 BM 91110; BM 83027; Cf. Schaudig (2001), 2.12 I 1–6.

46 Frame (1995), B.6.32.5, 1–3.

47 Cf. Stevens (2014).

48 Cf. Strootman (2013a), who argues that the priestly elite ruling Babylon during the 3rd century BCE owed their positions of prominence to Seleukid patronage (in contrast to the later Achaemenid period, when as far as we know these priests were not all-powerful).

49 Naturally, there is the possibility that prospective excavations will unearth more inscriptions but one cannot necessarily assume this.

50 Cf. Stevens (2014), p. 69–72. Worthington (2012), p. 146–156 calls this method “a ‘cut and paste’ redaction”.

51 Most of the other surviving inscriptions (e. g. BCHP 5,9,10,12) of Seleukid kings like the report about the support of Seleukos III for the *Akitu* Festival never mentioned royal titles different from the term ‘king’ (βασιλεύς in Greek and šar in Cuneiform texts). This corresponds perfectly with the evidence of references of the Achaemenid kings and Alexander which were all

Babylonia which necessitated concession to local elites and their methods of ruling. In adopting established and efficient traditions, the Seleukids transformed their modes of reign as much as the local forms. This document is no proof of Seleukid tendencies for a revival of either Neo-Babylonian or Assyrian or Achaemenid traditions that can be understood as an early form of 'Persianism'.⁵² Antiochos did not necessarily have to be responsible for the written style and the use of archaizing words in the Antiochos Cylinder; the configuration of the inscription was the prerogative of Babylonian officials who were used to construct official documents as they had done for the past centuries.⁵³ The major aspects of concern to Antiochos were the content of the text, the link to the local elites and priesthood to legitimize his rule in Babylonia, and the presentation of the Seleukid royal ideology in which the king is legitimized by individual abilities of the ruler in Hellenistic tradition.

KING ANTIOCHOS THE GREAT OR 'GREAT KING' ANTIOCHOS

Starting with the reign of Antiochos II (in the middle of the 3rd century) up to Seleukos III, the Seleukid Empire experienced numerous dynastic, political, and military conflicts. Emanating from the difficult foreign situation under Antiochos II the Seleukid controlled territories dwindled away drastically in the following two decades. When Antiochos tried to resolve the conflict with the Ptolemaic dynasty by marrying the daughter of Ptolemy II, Berenike, he did not declare which of his sons – his eldest son Seleukos II from his first wife Laodike or his youngest son Antiochos from his second wife Berenike – should succeed him and he also omitted to put one of his sons in the position of co-regent in order to build his powerbase. This negligence fostered a struggle between the wives after the death of Antiochos II and later provoked the conflict between Seleukos II and Antiochos Hierax, known as the war of the brothers.⁵⁴ Due to the very short reign of Seleukos III who succeeded his father Seleukos II to the throne in 226 BCE and was murdered in Asia Minor in 223 BCE it was not before Antiochos III that the Seleukids were able to restore the

solely mentioned as kings. So it seems that this was the common way of composition without using specialized titles; cf. Shayegan (2011), p. 247. There is just one king list (BM 35603, ll. 10/13) in which the title 'Great King' is mentioned for Antiochos I. For this aspect Del Monte (1997), p. 229–230 on the one hand has rightly emphasized that the title was only used to differ between Antiochos I and his son Antiochos II. On the other hand the reference of this title solely for Antiochos I matches perfectly with the evidence of the Antiochos Cylinder and therefore highlights the important relevance of Antiochos I for Babylonia but not the common use of the 'Great King' title under the Seleukid kings. In this way also Stevens (2014), p. 67.

52 Stevens (2014), p. 75 speaks of a "specifically Seleucid version of kingship", which is expressed by the mixture of elements from different traditions.

53 For this aspect cf. Shayegan (2011), p. 45–59, who expresses a similar assumption for Babylonia in Parthian times when under Mithridates II the title 'King of Kings' reappeared. Stevens (2014), p. 69, no. 8 focuses on this aspect when she explains her use of the verb to redact for describing the relationship between the person responsible for the inscription and the person responsible for the content.

54 Cf. Plischke (2014), p. 204–239.

Seleukid Empire in its former boundaries. During the first decade of his rule Antiochos was busy reconquering the western parts of the Seleukid Empire against his cousin and viceroy in Asia Minor, Achaios.⁵⁵ In 212 BCE Antiochos started his anabasis to recapture the seceded satrapies of Armenia, Parthia, Bactria, and India.⁵⁶

Although belittled in modern research the Eastern campaign was stylized as the military event in the Seleukid Empire which is confirmed by the fact that Antiochos was subsequently addressed as king with the epithet μέγας in epigraphic sources, for the first time in Greek.⁵⁷ Due to the different use of forms it is important to have a closer look at the epigraphic sources.⁵⁸ The first evidence for this title is located in two decrees of the Carian city Amyzon dated to 202 and 201 BCE. Each inscription started with the formula Βασιλευόντων Ἀντιόχου Μεγάλου καὶ Ἀντιόχου τοῦ νίου.⁵⁹ There is another decree from Teos probably dated around 203 BCE which mentions the phrase βασιλεὺς Ἀντιόχος Μέγας in a cultic context.⁶⁰ The connection to Antiochos' success in the East is also given by Appian who begins his report in his Syrian Book with a description of Antiochos who has marched into Media, Parthia, and other seceded territories, who has performed many great things and who has received the epithet μέγας.⁶¹ In this context Ma was right in emphasizing that before 201 BCE the epithet μέγας had yet nothing to do with the title 'Great king' but was merely a nickname originated at the royal court or came from the cultic context.⁶²

From about 199/8 BCE onwards there is some evidence for a different use of the epithet μέγας. The first example is a letter by Ptolemy, son of Thraseas, governor and high-priest of Koile-Syria who sent a petition to [Βασι]λεὶ μεγάλῳ[ι] Ἀντιόχῳ.⁶³ An inscription from Antioch on the Orontes honouring a Seleukian for his goodwill and dated to 198/7 BCE mentioned εἰς βασιλέα μέγαν Ἀντιόχον.⁶⁴ In 197 BCE at Soloi Ptolemy, son of Thraseas, made a dedication to Hermes, Herakles, and βασιλεὶ μεγάλῳ Ἀντιόχον.⁶⁵ Probably also in 197 BCE Βασιλεὺς μέγας Ἀντιόχος dedicated the same city to Leto, Artemis, and Apollo written in an inscription.⁶⁶ After the Seleukid defeat at Iasos in 197 BCE there appear three official documents which each mentioned the title 'Great King' Antiochos.⁶⁷ During his missions to Rome in 193 and 192 BCE the Seleukid ambas-

55 Cf. Ma (2000), p. 54–63; Plischke (2014), p. 247–250/263–265.

56 Cf. Plischke (2014), p. 265–276.

57 Cf. Ma (2000), p. 63–73.

58 At this point I follow Ma (2000), p. 272–276, who has assembled the evidence very precisely.

59 Ma (2000), no. 9–10.

60 Ma (2000), no. 18. Arguments for a high date (203 BCE) and a low date (197/6 BCE) cf. Ma (2000), p. 260–265.

61 App. Syr. 1. For the cultic importance of the epithet μέγας cf. Muccioli (2013), p. 397–398.

62 Ma (2000), p. 273.

63 SEG 29,1613.

64 BE 65,436.

65 OGIS 230 = Ma (2000), no. 21.

66 Ma (2000), no. 22.

67 Ma (2000), no. 26b; 27; 28.

sador Menippos dedicated a statue of the 'Great King' Antiochos on Delos.⁶⁸ At Klaros a statue was dedicated to the son Antiochos: Βασιλέα Ἀντίοχον βασιλέως μεγάλου Ἀντίοχου which must have been erected before 193 BCE when the son Antiochos died.⁶⁹ The last document to refer this title is a dedicatory inscription in which the Athenians on Delos dedicated two statues to Antiochos IV, son of the 'Great King' Antiochos.⁷⁰

This evidence supports the conclusion that after adopting the epithet μέγας for his victories during his Eastern campaign Antiochos bore the title 'Great King' after 201/200 respectively in 197 BCE which matched with his conquest of Koile-Syria and his following triumph in the 5th Syrian War.⁷¹ Especially the takeover of Koile-Syria was of great importance to Antiochos because of the conquest of a territory which had been awarded to Seleukos I after the battle of Ipsos in 301 BCE, only to be immediately occupied by Ptolemy I. The evidence also seems to point to the fact that the use of the full title 'Great King' was reserved for ceremonious and solemn circumstances only. It was not used in the standard communication among Seleukid officials or on any other occasion mentioning Antiochos. Therefore, the inscriptions in which the title 'Great King' was used were often ordered by citizens or officials who tried to legitimize their matter in a special way, but not by Seleukid officials in general.⁷²

These developments point to the fact that the title 'Great King' which dates back to the Achaemenid predecessors was introduced under Antiochos III in the context of the conflict with the Ptolemies over Koile-Syria. Antiochos wanted to highlight the connection to his principal ancestor Seleukos. It is also discussed to what extent Antiochos tried to evoke Alexander III with this epithet.⁷³ Antiochos, however, never referred to Alexander. He always advocated the argument that it was his hereditary title which entitled him to these campaigns. This is further elaborated by the explanation that he did not attempt to regain the cities of the Chersones and Thrace in order to benefit from the mistakes of Philip V, but for his own right (ἴδια δίκαια) in order to rule over the territories which were lawfully his as part of the booty fallen to his ancestor Seleukos after the defeat of Lysimachos.⁷⁴ Therefore, if he wanted to imitate anything at all, it would certainly be the Eastern campaign of his great-great-grandfather Seleukos. This also becomes clear dur-

68 OGIS 239.

69 Ma (2000), no. 42.

70 OGIS 249; 250.

71 At this point I follow Ma (2000), p. 275. For the events of the Fifth Syrian War and the importance of Antiochos' occupation of Koile-Syria cf. Grainger (2010), p. 245–271.

72 Cf. Ma (2000), p. 275.

73 In this way Hornblower (1994), p. 877, who made a direct connection between Alexander's Asian campaign and Antiochos' anabasis and his subsequent adoption of the title 'the Great'.

74 Pol. 18,51,3–6. Spranger (1958), p. 31–32 has already shown that there can be no connection between Alexander and Antiochos both titled as 'the Great' because Alexander never held this title in lifetime. The first isolated evidence for it appears after the first evidence for Antiochos' use of the title. Additionally, Schmitt (1964), p. 95 n. 5 has pointed out that Polybios also never referred to Alexander as 'the Great', but to Antiochos, about who Polybios (20,8) tells us that he has held the epithet μέγας.

ing the 5th Syrian war against the Ptolemies when despite great success Antiochos made no attempt to invade Egypt, but confined his demands to the extent of the Seleukid Empire under Seleukos I.⁷⁵ It might have been a secondary benefit that the designation ‘Great King’ made it easier for Antiochos to admit royal titles to vassal states connected with the Seleukid Empire like Armenia, Parthia, or Bactria with a coincident Seleukid supremacy as sometimes argued. However, viewing this aspect as the only reason for holding this title does not take the insufficient official propagation of the title into account. Moreover, the title ‘King of kings’ would be much more suitable to express this claim to power in the case of Assurbanipal and in later Sasanian times.⁷⁶

At this point one should ask why Antiochos thought that adopting or using the title ‘Great King’ would have been the best response to the Ptolemaic claims. Central to this thesis are two earlier Ptolemaic inscriptions: The first example is the inscription of Adulis also known as the ‘res gestae’ of Ptolemy III in which the Ptolemaic king had also acclaimed himself as ‘Great King’ after his invasion of the Seleukid Empire in 246 BCE during the 3rd Syrian War. In the course of his desire to revenge his sister Berenike he was able to occupy Antioch on the Orontes and Babylon for a while.⁷⁷ The description of the Ptolemaic kingdom by Ptolemy was just fictional of course; on the 11th of July 245 BCE a cuneiform document of Uruk dated after Seleukos II again.⁷⁸ The second one is the so-called Raphia Decree in which Ptolemy IV called himself ‘Great King’ after his victory over Antiochos III 217 BCE at the battle of Raphia in the war over Koile-Syria.⁷⁹ Therefore, the distinction between these two phenomena cannot be underestimated: While Antiochos assumed solely the epithet μέγας in the context of his victory in the East after 204 BCE, his adoption of the title βασιλεὺς μέγας after 200 BCE was linked to a long lasting conflict with the Ptolemies about the heritage of Seleukos I, Koile-Syria. Neither the reference to the Achaemenids nor the connection with Alexander were the main focus.⁸⁰

75 Cf. Grainger (2010), p. 263: “In view of future developments it may have been a pity that Antiochos did not seize the opportunity which seems to exist in 198 to march on Egypt and unite it with his own lands. A combined Seleukid-and-Ptolemaic kingdom would have faced the Roman assault much more successfully than the separate states.” For the claim of power under Antiochos III cf. also Plischke (2014), p. 279–285.

76 Cf. for example Engels (2014c), p. 339 and his additional papers on this point.

77 OGIS 54. For this document cf. Beyer-Rothhoff (1993), p. 42–67. For the further use of the title μέγας under the Ptolemies see Muccioli (2013), p. 395–397. See also Ma (2000), p. 276; Capdetrey (2008), p. 78. Beyer-Rothhoff (1993), p. 55 is absolutely right in emphasizing that the self-presentation of Ptolemy III remembered Alexander III both as person and his transgression of the ‘real’ boundaries of events to the fiction of an Alexandrian conquest of the whole world. Muccioli (2013), p. 395 in this context also argues for Achaemenid references.

78 BRM 2,17. Beyer-Rothhoff (1993), p. 38; Boiy (2004), p. 150.

79 SEG 8,504a.

80 Against the main perception in a greater part of research; e.g. Bevan (1902); Schmitt (1964), p. 92–95; Sayar (2001), p. 228; Engels (2014c), p. 339. Muccioli (2013), p. 399 is right in saying that it is absolutely doubtful if Antiochos would have proven himself to be a new Alexander, especially regarding contact with the Romans, so the perception as an “*vero restitutor imperii della dinastia seleucide*” is much more preferable. His attempt to connect the adoption

CONCLUSION

In summary, it can be stated that with regard to royal titles the Achaemenid rule had little to no effect on the succeeding empires, especially the Seleukid, with regards to forms of 'Persianism'. While Alexander seems to have separated his own superior claim from the former Achaemenid rule which he identified with the title 'Great King', indigenous or oriental royal titles were hardly ever mentioned in the first century of Seleukid reign. The evidence of the epigraphic sources has made it obvious that the kings did not avail themselves of adopting Achaemenid traditions to represent their rule as Persian heirs especially in the early time of Seleukid dynasty. The only reference to the royal title 'Great King' occurred in a Babylonian inscription and his essay, however, demonstrated that the Babylonian traditions of Cylinder inscriptions as way of local communication were responsible for this application of the official terms and royal titles rather than a Seleukid ruling concept based on the perception of the ruler as 'Great King'. The use of this title was an external rather than a self-designation. The relationship between the Seleukid family and the local elites, priesthood, and people was important for Antiochos – how this policy was expressed did not matter as long as it was dressed in Seleukid robes.

At the turn-of-the-century Antiochos III was the first Seleukid king under whom the formula βασιλεὺς μέγας increasingly occurs. First used solely as an epithet after his reconquest of the Eastern territories, the meaning changed to the title 'Great King' after his triumph in Koile-Syria. Although he adopted the royal appellation known from the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid predecessors he gave it new meaning by recurring to his principal ancestor Seleukos I and his claim of power. The former title 'Great King', for the first time used in Greek, was connected to Seleukid modes of ruling at that time.

Nevertheless, the absence of any indication that Antiochos called himself 'Great King' is remarkable. Whenever this title appears it is employed by others as part of his appellation. The surviving decrees (the three Laodike Decrees, for example) which Antiochos himself ordered to introduce his functionaries show that the title was not used by Antiochos himself.⁸¹ Additionally, the epithet or the title are missing in the whole source group of coinage.

Finally, it has to remain open whether the behaviour of Antiochos III in this context should be seen as the first tendencies in the invention of a new memory on the Persian heritage. Rather, it should be seen as the point of contact which was used by the following Iranian dynasties⁸² to create a new perception of Persian

of the title with the Achaemenid dynasty based on the fact that Antiochos named his younger son Mithridates, the later Antiochos IV, is doubtful. The Iranian name is rather due to the close alliances with Iranian dynasties since the rule of Antiochos I. Strootman (2016b) argues that Alexander's epithet μέγας was a Roman invention, created in reaction to Antiochos III's adoption of that title.

81 Merkelbach and Stauber (2005), no. 301–303.

82 Strootman (2011b), p. 26, rightly argues that the presumption of the title of 'Great King' certainly was not yet an effort to make recourse to the Achaemenids, but a generic 'universalistic' title expressing the Seleukids' imperial pretensions.

traditions in the sense of ‘Persianism’. But it also have to be considered that the direct successors of the Seleukid dynasty, who adopted the title ‘Great King’ from their predecessors also used it to delimit their own rule from the former Seleukid one. In the former Seleukid ruled Bactria, Eukratides I assumed the title βασιλεὺς μέγας, as it is mentioned on coins, after his victory over the Seleukid vassal king Demetrios I of Baktria.⁸³ In 164 BCE the former Seleukid satrap of Media, Timarchos, refused to accept the rule of Demetrios I after the death of the Seleukid king Antiochos IV Epiphanes. Coins with the inscription genitive βασιλέως μεγάλου prove his attempt of independent rule.⁸⁴ The best example is the Parthian ruler Mithridates, who adopted the title ‘Great King’ after his victory over the Seleukid king Demetrios II and his conquest of Babylonia around 140/139 BCE. These rulers therefore chiefly appropriated the Seleukid shaped form of the title ‘Great King’, not the one known from Neo-Babylonian or Achaemenid times. This is particularly clear by the fact that Mithridates used the Greek version βασιλεὺς μέγας.⁸⁵ Antiochos of Kommagene, who was the son of Laodike II Thea, a Seleukid princess and daughter of Antiochos VIII Gryphos, and mentioned himself βασιλεὺς μέγας in the great inscription of Mount Nemrut, finally linked the Seleukid title of ‘Great King’ with the former Persian one and created his own perception when he attributed his rule to his Seleukid and Persian ancestors.⁸⁶

83 Boppearachchi (1991), no. 43–46.

84 SC 1604. From the middle of the 2nd century BCE on in Elymais the rulers of the Kamnaskiri established their reign. Coins of their rule have also survived and show the title βασιλεὺς μέγας. But the title is connected with Kamnaskires Soter, probably the second man of this name, already again a Arsakid vassal ruler in Elymais from 132–130 BCE. For this aspect cf. Fischer (1971) with an earlier chronology; Shayegan (2011), p. 94–101.

85 Cf. Sellwood (1971), type 10. The title primarily appears on Parthian coins, here of course in genitive βασιλέως μεγάλου, but resulted from the very well-known title βασιλεὺς μέγας.

86 OGIS 383; cf. Strootman (2015a). For the use of the titles ‘Great King’ and ‘King of kings’ in post-Seleukid times see Muccioli (2013), p. 400–417; Engels (2014c), p. 342–351.

IMPERIAL PERSIANISM: SELEUKIDS, ARSAKIDS AND *FRATARAKĀ*

Rolf Strootman

In the Introduction to this volume, “Persianism” was defined as a form of cultural memory. Specifically, we proposed to understand Persianism as the multiform ideas and associations revolving around the Achaemenid Empire, and the frequent appropriation of these notions in later historical contexts. The evolution of these notions, we claimed, was a selective process of appropriation *and* invention in specific socio-political contexts for specific purposes. We also emphasized that the crystallization of these various uses of the past into a more timeless idea of “Persia” (or “Iran”) should be understood as an entangled, transcultural process of interaction on a global scale, as the two major powers of Late Antiquity, the Roman and Sasanian empires, made this idea central to their competing world views. The post-Achaemenid memory of the Achaemenids underlies the notion of an East-West dichotomy that still pervades modern political rhetoric.

In my contribution, I will focus on the first social and political identities that can be classified as Iranian (in modern terms) since the disappearance of the Achaemenid Dynasty. These first emerged in Iran, northern Anatolia, and the Armenian highlands in the Hellenistic period.¹ Particularly in the second and first centuries BCE, local dynasties at the fringes of the Seleukid Empire ostensibly included in their self-presentation elements of Iranian culture, sometimes also explicitly referring to “Persia” and its Great Kings. These dynasties include the Mithradatids in Pontos, the Ariarathids in Kappadokia, the Artaxiads in Armenia, the Orontids in Kommagene, the Arsakids in Parthia, and the *fratarakā* rulers in Persia (Pārsa) itself.

The persistence of indigenous rural aristocracies in Iranian lands after the Achaemenids is not at issue here. Their continuing presence is a generally accepted

1 I use the adjective “Hellenistic” for convenience, and in the now common understanding of the term as referring to the historical period in which the Near East was politically dominated by the competing Macedonian dynasties of Seleukids, Ptolemies and Antigonids, approximately the last three centuries BCE; as in the Introduction, the noun “Hellenism” is used as a non-ethnic *cultural* term. In my view, Hellenism first of all must be understood as a transcultural style connected with the royal courts, elements of which were adopted by local (civic) elites to create an *imperial identity* for themselves; this enabled them to communicate with the imperial center as well as with other local elite groups, and express a sense of belonging to a bigger world: the cosmopolitan *koinē* that was the empire. The partial and contextual adoption of an imperial identity moreover was a means by which elites that had risen to power in collaboration with the empire distinguished themselves from other social groups within their own communities. For Greekness as imperial identity and a marker of social distinctiveness in the Hellenistic world see Strootman (2006; 2007a, p. 18–30; 2010b). Also see Hoo (forthcoming), arguing that Greek culture was associated with the civic public sphere in Central Asia.

fact, and the fundamental place of Iranians within the Seleukid fabric of power has been emphasized also by this author.² Iranian languages were still spoken in Iran and many other parts of the Hellenistic world, and some of these late Hellenistic rulers may even have had Achaemenids, or Achaemenid grandees, among their ancestors in actual reality. But this does not explain their sudden, and conspicuous, preference for this aspect of their wide-ranging and pliable legacies. The Seleukids themselves have been called “half-Iranian” due to their frequent intermarriage with these Iranian dynasties. But they never referred to an Achaemenid legacy in their representation.³ They used only Hellenophone throne names,⁴ and made no effort to create an Iranian dynastic identity for themselves – *despite* their frequent intermarriage with Iranian dynasties (and despite the fact that they likely made extensive use of Iranian troops in their campaigning armies from the reign of Seleukos I to Antiochos IV). The Iranian dynasties for their part could have made other choices: those in the Armenian and Anatolian highlands were just as “half-Macedonian” as the Seleukids were “half-Iranian”, and several other cultural styles beyond the Hellenic and Iranian were available to them to adopt.

The rise to political prominence of these local dynasties, and their preference for Iranian, and in some cases “Persianistic”, identities is conventionally explained from the one-dimensional perspective of an East-West dichotomy: as the Seleukids lost their grip on the Iranian plateau, Iranians regained their independence, and a revival of Iranian traditions took place in opposition to the “Hellenization” imposed by the foreign conquerors. Thus, the accepted grand narratives of Iranian history have juxtaposed an allegedly alien culture to an allegedly authentic, indigenous culture that remained pure despite a century of “foreign” occupation. The problem with this interpretation is that it ignores the fact that the first Middle Iranian rulers turn up *in a Seleukid context*. Antiochos I of Kommagene claimed descent from both the Seleukids and the Achaemenids, while the “neo-Achaemenid” *fratarakā* rulers of Pārsa, like the early Parthian kings, identified themselves as vassals under Seleukid suzerainty.⁵ Why was it suddenly so important to identify oneself with an imperial dynasty from the past, too? The Seleukids after all had been perfectly able to continue Near Eastern forms of (universalistic) monarchy and win the support of the Iranian nobility without ever presenting themselves as heirs to the Achaemenids.

FROM SEGREGATION TO ENTANGLEMENT

The model of cultural segregation has underpinned Hellenistic studies since the 1960s. Notably in the age of decolonization, between *c.* 1960–1980, European historians saw the “Hellenization” of the Near East as merely a thin, and short-lived,

2 Strootman (2007b; 2011a; 2011b).

3 Tuplin (2008); Strootman (2013); Plischke this volume.

4 Despite the use of Iranian birth names in the Seleukid family: Mittag (2006), p. 34–37.

5 Already Wiesehöfer (1994); cf. Wiesehöfer (2011); Strootman (2011a); Engels (2013).

veneer; instead they emphasized the survival of indigenous culture,⁶ and, especially in Iran, the successful resistance of native populations against the Greeks and Macedonians.⁷ Since the 1980s, a variant approach emerged that saw the Seleukids as basically “chameleon kings” (and their rivals, the Ptolemies, as “double-faced”) whose monarchy was modified in accordance with local expectations and traditions.⁸ The twin concepts of *continuity* and *influence* (e.g. Greek “influence” on Buddhism, or the “Near Eastern influence” on Greek mythology) however underpin a false notion that culture equals ethnicity and that cultures are bounded and unified. In this specific case, the prevalent continuity paradigm has unwillingly conceptualized the cultures of the Near East as essentially static, and therefore has been unable to explain the complex cultural, political and social processes that took place during the Hellenistic period.⁹ Moreover, new studies of early Seleukid Babylon in particular have recently pointed out that the cuneiform sources cited as evidence for the resilience of “traditional” Babylonian culture in fact reveal vibrant cultural interactions and political change *dressed up as tradition*.¹⁰ It now seems more likely that the political status of Babylon within the empire was *not* the result of a passive Seleukid adaptation of time-honored local expectations under the guidance of indigenous “ritual experts”; it was the product of a complex process of negotiation between a privileged civic elite and representatives of the imperial court.¹¹

In this paper, I will approach Persianism likewise as a dynamic and culturally entangled phenomenon. As a heuristic tool, the concept of continuity is as flawed as what James Cusick has called the billiard ball approach to culture, to which it is related: the conceptualization of cultures and peoples as bounded, coherent entities characterized by a kind of preexisting purity.¹² But people tend to move around a lot and cultures are always in flux due to the constant interaction with other cultures and in response to changing geopolitical circumstances. Empires in particular stimulate migration and intensify intercultural connectivity. Moreover, although cul-

6 One of the first to elucidate this model has been Schlumberger, whose path-breaking studies of Hellenistic art from the 1960s were flawed by the then common conceptualization of cultures as bounded entities. Thus, Schlumberger (1969), p. 217–218, explicitly equates the Hellenistic “Kolonialstaaten” with the early modern European colonial empires and posits a model of cultural segregation that allowed the traditional art schools of the Achaemenid period to survive unchanged (“die Kunst dieser Zeit [bietet] ein Bild der Erstarrung”) until they finally merged with Greek art in the first century BCE, as if awakened from two centuries of slumber by the kiss of Western vitality.

7 Foundational is Eddy (1961); see for discussion Bagnall (1997); Strootman (MS).

8 The term “chameleon kings” was coined by Ma (2003), p. 179.

9 I have dealt with this issue at length in an unpublished paper entitled ‘A Western Empire In The East? Historiographical Approaches to the Seleukid Empire and the Cultural Boundaries of Modern Europe’, a first draft of which was read as a public lecture at the Asia Institute of UCLA and the Center of Persian Studies at UC Irvine; a revised draft from 2012 is available through my homepage at www.academia.edu.

10 In particular the new readings of the famous Antiochos Cylinder from Borsippa proposed by Erickson (2011), Strootman (2013), and Kosmin (2014b); cf. Haubold (2013), p. 135–142; Beaulieu (2014); Stevens (2014); Ristvet (2014).

11 For this point see Strootman (2013).

12 Cusick (1998), p. 131.

tural styles – personal names, language, material culture – *can* be the expressions of a shared ethnic identity, they can as well be the markers of social distinctiveness *in opposition to* the established collective identity.

In what follows, I will not consider the first post-Achaemenid Iranian kingdoms as unconnected, localized phenomena. Instead, I aim to relate them to the wider geopolitical context in which they emerged: the Seleukid Empire. In the reigns of Seleukos II (246–226) and especially Antiochos III (223/2–187) there was an increasing importance of vassal rulers within the empire, as a new imperial set-up emerged that substituted the defective system of direct rule through appointed governors. These Seleukid sub-kings often were of (partial) Iranian descent, as the Seleukids sought to create new allies by negotiating alliances with local, “indigenous” dynasties in opposition to the established Greco-Macedonian imperial elite that had monopolized the regular governorships and other high military offices.¹³ In this paper I argue that the territorial, dynastic foundation of their power induced the rulers of these rising princedoms to create new dynastic identities for their families. This first found expression on coins through the adoption of Achaemenid satrapal imagery, and sometimes the combination of royal and satrapal insignia, which indicated these rulers’ allegiance to the imperial ruler: the Seleukid “Great King” who had awarded them autonomy and royal status.¹⁴ In the western regions, this dynastic Persianism ultimately inspired a renewed interest in the Persian Empire, and the use of claims to Achaemenid descent as an additional source of legitimacy.

My contribution thus has two aims. First, to elucidate the historical and political background of the first emergence of Persianism. Second, to examine how the concept of Persianism can help us understand the profound cultural and political transformations of the “East” that took place in the late Hellenistic period, when the Kushan, Parthian and Roman empires took over the pre-existing Macedonian system of rule through “client kings”. Two research questions will be central to this investigation:

1. While rejecting both the a-historical continuity paradigm as well as the modernist assumption that “traditional” culture is *qualitate qua* a form of indigenous resistance to “foreign” rule, how can we explain the Iranianizing, viz., Persianistic trend of the late Hellenistic period from its historical context?
2. How can we account for the concurrent emergence and similarity of this trend in widespread areas over huge geographical distances? How were these dynasties connected and how did they communicate?

To answer these questions, we will have a closer look at the best known instances of the “Iranian Revival” in the late Hellenistic Near East: the dynasties of Parthia and Persis. Before doing so, I will first briefly discuss what we know about the Seleukid presence on the Iranian Plateau in general.

13 Strootman (2011a). For the “vassalization” of the Seleukid Empire see Engels (2011) and Strootman (2010a); specifically for Antiochos III’s activities as ‘kingmaker’ see Engels (2014a).

14 For the universalistic pretensions of the Seleukids, and their use of the title of Great King (*Basileus Megas*) see Strootman (2014b; 2016), and Plischke in this volume.

RETHINKING SELEUKID IRAN

Though the Seleukid Empire has been one of the major political and cultural forces of the Ancient World, its role and achievement have been rather underexposed and undervalued in the historiography of the Middle East and Iran (in contrast to the Achaemenid Empire). In the preceding paragraph, I have tried to explicate how in my view a set of interrelated heuristic fallacies – material culture *equals* ethnicity; indigenous culture is traditional & authentic; “traditional” culture is an expression of resistance to imperial rule – contributed to the current view of Seleukid-period Iran as a Dark Age under foreign occupation. Due to a lack of “Greek” finds from Iran, the Seleukid imprint on the Iranian Plateau has often been thought of as minimal. This alleged Dark Age ended when from the mid-third century (dispersed) Iranian dynasties gained or regained their independence, as expressed in their assumption of (presumed) autochthonous identities. Other regions, like Pontos, were thought to have been outside the Macedonian Empire from the beginning.

Historical reality in fact was more complicated. We have to deal for instance with the intricate patchwork of inter-dynastic kinship bonds in which the Seleukid House was the recurring element; with the non-territorial foundation of the Seleukid monarchy *vis-à-vis* the territorial basis of the lesser dynasties; and with the universalistic titulature (in particular the title *basileus megas*) used by several Seleukid kings.¹⁵ Besides leaving in place several local rulers as a matter of course, already Alexander had co-opted members of the Persian high nobility – among them Darius’s brother Huxšathres (Oxyathres) and the former Achaemenid grandee Mazday (Mazaios), who became satrap of Babylonia after the Macedonian conquest in 330. These men presumably were allowed to call themselves *sungenēs* (“[blood] relative”) of the king, a honorific title and a form of “fictive kinship” formerly used at the Achaemenid imperial court.¹⁶ With these men, Alexander first of all negotiated access to the existing networks that constituted the Achaemenid Empire, and to prevent this precarious system of personalized patronage relations from collapsing. The high numbers of Iranian troops recruited for Alexander from 330 (c. 3,000 horsemen from Central Asia fought for Alexander at the Jhelum in 326) would not have been possible without the cooperation of Iranian nobles and/or tribal leaders.¹⁷ Written sources moreover suggest that Alexander employed these outsiders as “favorites” to counterbalance the power of the Macedonian nobility.¹⁸ After his return from Central Asia, Alexander felt confident enough to remove the

15 Web of dynastic marriages: Sullivan (1990); Strootman (2011a); D’Agostini (2013). Vassal state system: Engels (2011; 2014a); Strootman (2010a; 2011a); Wenghofer (in press). Universalistic ideology as an instrument of empire: Strootman (2007a, p. 228–247, 305–325, 346–347; 2010a); Bang (2012). Seleukid imperial titulature: Ma (2000), p. 271–276; Strootman (2010a); Engels (2014c); Strootman (2016b).

16 Strootman (2014a), p. 116–117.

17 For the sources Berve (1926) I, p. 103–217; for discussion see *i.a.* Badian (1965); Bosworth (1980); Olbrycht (2007); the agency of Iranian aristocrats in recruiting these troops is emphasized by Olbrycht (2011a). For unit numbers at the Battle of the Jhelum/Hydaspes see Devine (1987).

18 Arr., *Anab.* 7.11.6; Plut., *Alex.* 43.

most powerful among them from high office. This was continued after his death by his Successors. But in less accessible, relatively peripheral areas such as northern Anatolia, Armenia, Iran and Central Asia pre-existing or newly established Iranian aristocracies continued to exist.¹⁹

Even as their position within the framework of imperial rule at first was not as prominent as it would become during the second century of Seleukid rule, the Seleukids must have maintained good relations with the rulers of these Iranian principalities from the beginning. Seleukos Nikator's rapid integration of the Upper Satrapies into his empire (c. 307–305, followed by a campaign into India in c. 305/4), probably benefited from his marriage to Apama, through whom Seleukos, and especially his son Antiochos, likely had access to Sogdian kinship networks. Information about Seleukos' campaigns in Central Asia is limited, but the latter may also be surmised from the fact that in the Spring of 301 Seleukos was able to contribute a staggering 12,000 cavalry (half of the total Seleukid force of c. 23,000) to the coalition forces assembling in Anatolia against Antigonos Monophthalmos;²⁰ at the Battle of Ipsos, Seleukid mounted horsemen successfully harassed the enemy phalanx by using the same tactics that would also bring destruction to Crassus' legions in 53 BCE.²¹ A strong presence of horsemen contributed by Iran and Central Asia thereafter remained characteristic of royal campaigning armies until the mid-2nd century BCE.²²

Iran was of pivotal importance for the Seleukids,²³ most of all, I would argue, as a source of manpower, and also of war horses (of which Media and Sogdia seem to have been the principal suppliers).²⁴ The regular intermarriage of the Seleukid house

- 19 Olbrycht 2013. Persistence of Iranian nobility after the Macedonian conquest: Briant (1985b, 2006); Shayegan (2007). The broad, modern designation "Iranian" is used here for convenience; it covers up the broad variety of dynasties, languages and religions. It is not even certain if during the early Seleukid Period the ruling families of Armenia, Pontos, or Kappadokia were actually Iranophone, and we know next to nothing about the actual persistence of "Iranian" religion in Anatolia and Armenia. What we know, is that from the second century onward, "neo-Persian" dynastic identities developed at the courts of several Seleukid vassal kingdoms, and that in their wake Middle Iranian cults appear in late Hellenistic and early Roman Anatolia. See for the latter development Rojas & Sergueenkova in this volume; also see De Jong, this volume, arguing that religion rather than language was the principal marker of Iranian identity (in modern terms) until Late Antiquity.
- 20 Diod. 20.113.4; Plut., *Demetr.* 28.3 rounds off Seleukos' cavalry force to 10,000, still a very high number. See Olbrycht (2005), p. 232, surmising that when Seleukos appeared in Kappadokia for the Ipsos campaign, "his army was for the most part Iranian".
- 21 Plut., *Demetr.* 29.3–5; cf. Olbrycht (2005), p. 232.
- 22 As many tabletop wargamers and all *Rome: Total War* aficionados know, the use of numerous and varied cavalry regiments is typical of Seleukid armies and gives these armies the 'exotic', imperial flavor that makes them so very popular. For discussion see Bar-Kochva (1976), still the fullest source-based examination of Seleukid military units and army numbers in the era from Antiochos III to Antiochos IV.
- 23 Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993), p. 72–90; Olbrycht (2005); Strootman (2008a; 2011b); Plischke (2014), p. 82–156.
- 24 For the Battle of Magnesia in 190, Antiochos III brought to the Aegean no less than 6,000, presumably Iranian, cataphracts – heavily armored mounted 'knights' on big armored horses – 1,200 "Dahae" horse archers (from Sogdia?), a combined infantry force of "more than" 8,000

with Iranian dynasties in Anatolia and Armenia means that a substantial number of Iranians (generally speaking) must have formed part of the social circles surrounding the imperial family; moreover, as a result of these dynastic marriages, regular lines of communication as well as strong bonds of loyalty likely existed between the imperial center and its local satellites.²⁵ The Seleukid presence on the Iranian highlands lasted for more than 150 years: from Seleukos I's eastern campaign in c. 308/7–303 to the conquests of the Parthian king Mithradates I in the mid-2nd century BCE. This gave them ample time to create an imperial infrastructure and establish a durable *modus vivendi* with local elites. The longevity of Seleukid rule at the same time shows that the Seleukids were indeed successful in doing so.²⁶ The persistence of Seleukid forms of rule and representation under the Arsakids and in the so-called Greco-Baktrian and Indo-Greek kingdoms attests to this, as is shown most conspicuously by the adoption of Seleukid titles and epithets like *basileus megas* and *sōtēr*.

THE ARSAKIDS OF PARTHIA

The end of Seleukid rule in Iran is conventionally dated to the mid-3rd century. Around that time, uprisings of local lords are vaguely reported in the narrative sources, above all Justin (Book 41) and Strabo (Book 11). Modern reconstructions of these events have linked the disappearance of the Seleukids from Iran with the establishment of autonomous “states” in North Iran and Central Asia. The narrative evidence is corroborated by the appearance of coins bearing the names of local rulers. In Baktria, the Seleukid governor Diodotos I appears to have become king. In Parthia, a rebellious governor named Andragoras began striking his beautiful, idiosyncratic gold staters until he was deposed by a certain Arsakes, who according to Justin was leader of the Parni (or Aparni), a nomadic tribe that had migrated into Seleukid Hyrkania, from where they invaded the adjacent satrapy of Parthia (or Parthyene; they are better known as “Parthians”, after their new homeland); in this view, the troubles in the Khorāsān region encouraged the governor of Baktria to assert his independence.²⁷ Following the problematic account of the Roman historian, modern historians consider the alleged breakaway of Parthia as a watershed in Iranian history, terminating Seleukid presence on the Iranian Plateau.²⁸ But when precisely did the breakaway of Iran take place?

Elamite bowmen and “Cyrtii” slingers – presumably hillmen from the southern Middle Zagros/Pārsa – and 2,700 “Oriental” light infantry (who may have come from any land from the Levant to Central Asia); these units, like Antiochos' Macedonian forces, can be contrasted to the masses of local troops from western Asia Minor. The Seleukid battle order at Magnesia is given in detail by Liv. 37.40.1–14, following Polybios; cf. Bar-Kochva (1979 [1976]), p. 163–173; and *id.* (1986).

25 Strootman (2013b), p. 42–43.

26 See now the in-depth treatment of Seleukid institutions in Iranian lands by Plischke (2014), esp. p. 22–172.

27 Just. 41.4; Strabo 11.9; App., *Syr.* 65.

28 E. g. Wolski (1947), p. 32–37; (1956–1957), p. 35–52; (1993), p. 51; Koshelenko & Pilipko (1994), p. 131–132; J. D. Lerner (1999).

This is an old question which has acquired a substantial bibliography. It is therefore remarkable that scholars have not yet been able to establish a date for the establishment of an independent Parthian state – estimates vary from 256 to 226/5 – and the secession of Baktria/Sogdia, nor have been able to create a coherent account of what actually happened.²⁹ I think I can see why. In looking for the establishment of Parthian autonomy, scholars have projected on the rulership of the first Arsakids the model of the sovereign nation state. Such a state must be either autonomous or subjugated. It is for this reason that modern scholarship has understood the Iranian Revival of the early Parthians as *mutatis mutandis* a national revival, and postulated an antithesis of “Iranism” (a term used notably by Wolski to describe Parthian royal idiom) and “Hellenism”.³⁰ Accordingly, the appearance of satrapal insignia of power on early Arsakid coinage has been interpreted as a claim to the Achaemenid inheritance, in opposition to Seleukid rule.

There is reason to revise this view radically. Rethinking the first generations of Seleukid-Parthian relations will not only shed new light on the early history of the Parthians, *viz.*, Arsakids, but on the nature of the later Seleukid Empire as well. Let us first consider the conventional idea that the establishment of Parthian autonomy around 240 brought about the disintegration of Seleukid hegemony in Iran. In *From Samarkhand to Sardis*, Susan Sherwin-White and Amélie Kuhrt pointed out that the occupation of Parthia and Hyrkania by the Parni in northern Iran did not cut off East Iran/Central Asia from the Seleukid central provinces because there also was a major southern route connecting the two regions.³¹ But there is also direct evidence that Central Asia remained in constant interaction with the western Hellenistic world. As late as 140, the Seleukid king Demetrios II was still able to summon troops from Baktria/Sogdia against the Parthians.³² This means that the Seleukid lines of communication through Iran were still operational at that time. It furthermore means that Central Asia was integrated into the imperial network about a 100 years after the alleged “autonomy” of Baktria.³³ Here we should keep in mind that from an Eurasian perspective, “Afghanistan” is not at all the remote, inaccessible region of the 19th-century European imagination. The “land of a thousand cities” rather was the heart of a well-integrated, well-connected *central* region, an economic and cultural crossroads.³⁴ There is moreover contemporaneous evidence in support of the continued existence of a functioning Seleukid imperial network in Iran in the 2nd century: the inscription of the Herakles Kallinikos Monument at Bīṣotūn, dated to Panemos 163 SE (May/June 148) – perhaps less than a year before the Parthian conquest of Media – unequivocally attests a Seleukid “vicery” of the

29 For the general and chronological problems see Brodersen (1986); Plischke (2014), p. 216–218; Strootman (in press).

30 Sometimes even “neo-Iranism”, to suggest a direct allusion to the Achaemenids; see Fowler, this volume, with further references for the concept of Parthian Iranism.

31 Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993), p. 84–90.

32 Just. 36.1.4; cf. Strootman (in press).

33 Here I am in agreement with Richard Wenghofer’s consistent view that Hellenistic Baktria and India remained effectively “Seleukid” until the reign of Eukratides I (c. 170–145); see Wenghofer & Houle (2015) and Wenghofer (forthcoming).

34 Hoo (2014).

Upper Satrapies, that is, the combined provinces of the vast geographical region known today as “Greater Iran”.³⁵

Such evidence should not be ignored because it does not fit in the established view of Parthian and Baktrian autonomy as a clear-cut and irreversible rupture that took place at an uncertain date between roughly 240 and 220. It is true that the principal source for what happened at that time, Justin’s epitome of the *Historiae Philippicae* of Pompeius Trogus, gives the impression that Seleukid hegemony in Iran and Central Asia collapsed when the Parthians and Baktrians simultaneously revolted, while the Seleukid king Seleukos II was preoccupied by fighting his own brother, Antiochos Hierax, in Anatolia:

[The Parthians] could revolt with impunity because of the wrangling of the two royal brothers Seleukos and Antiochos. Who were so eager to wrest the kingdom from each other that they neglected to suppress the rebellion. At this same time Theodotos, governor of the thousand Baktrian cities, also rebelled and had himself declared king. The populations all over the east followed his example and defected from the Macedonians.³⁶

The Baktrian ruler “Theodotos” can be safely identified as Diodotos II, the son of Diodotos I (r. c. 250–240/39). Richard Wenghofer and D. J. Houle have recently argued that the first Diodotos, Diodotos II’s father, had not been a rebel, but on the contrary had been recognized as king by Antiochos II Theos, who had given him one of his daughters in marriage.³⁷ This in turn suggests the granting of a royal title. It was through her that the Seleukid king was able to exercise control over Baktria, and it was Diodotos’ son by her, Antiochos Nikator, who succeeded to the throne in c. 229/8 and ruled for approximately fifteen years.³⁸ Interestingly, Strabo says that it was not Diodotos (II), but Euthydemos who revolted: “When the kings of Syria and Media (*sc.* of the Near east and Iran, *i.e.* the Seleukids) [...] were busily engaged with others, those who had been entrusted with their government (in the East) caused the revolt of Baktriana and of all the country near it, [...] I mean Euthydemos and his followers” (Strabo 11.9.2). With this Euthydemos we are on safer

35 The sculpture shows the victorious Herakles Kallinikos at rest and is dedicated to the god for the saving of “Kleomenes τοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄνω σατραπειῶν”; for discussion see Lushey (1996), and for the inscription L. Robert in *Gnomon* 35.1 (1963), p. 76. The Herakles sculpture and inscription thus seem to refer to warfare taking place on the Iranian Plateau. This in turn suggests that contrary to the conventional view there was not yet a well-established, let alone ‘recognized’ Parthian Empire in the Iranian east prior to the Parthian invasions of Media and Babylonia in the 140s; instead, Seleukids and Arsakids in the early 140s were still fighting over possession of the area, with the Seleukid military organization of Iran apparently still intact. For the resting Herakles as an emblem of victory in the Seleukid east also see Figure 1.

36 Just. 41.4.4–5; transl. Yardley (1994), p. 255–256; cf. Strabo 11.9.2; App., *Syr.* 65.

37 Wenghofer & Houle (2015).

38 This young king’s throne name referred to respectively his Seleukid grandfather, Antiochos II, and the dynasty’s founder, Seleukos I Nikator. If the reconstruction made by Houle and Wenghofer is correct, than Diodotos II, an elder son of Diodotos I and half-brother of Antiochos Nikator, was a rival king who had usurped the diadem in alliance with the Parni (Just 41.4) because who could not boast a Seleukid mother. Antiochos Nikator was identified as a Diodotid king, by Jakobsson (2010), p. 25–28. The date of Antiochos Nikator’s accession (22q/8) corresponds to the year that Seleukos II campaigned in the east (see above).



Fig. 1 Tetradrachm of Euthydemos I of Baktria (Baktra mint, late 3rd century BCE; SNG ANS 136). On the obverse: a diademed head of the king, facing right. The reverse image shows a resting Herakles Kallinikos, sitting on a lion skin draped over a rock, with Greek legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΕΥΘΥΔΗΜΟΥ. © Classical Numismatic Group (www.cngcoins.com).

ground, for he is the governor of Sogdia who according to Polybios invaded Baktria and overturned and exterminated the Diodotid dynasty.³⁹ From the viewpoint of the imperial court, Euthydemos was a rebel. Antiochos III fought a war against him from 208 to 206/5.⁴⁰ Finally a peace was brokered. Euthydemos submitted to Antiochos' overlordship, while Antiochos accepted Euthydemos as the new subking in Central Asia, granting him the royal title and marrying off his daughter to Euthydemos' son Demetrios.⁴¹ Among the Hellenistic dynasties, such a marriage arrangement normally was reciprocated in the next generation, when a bride (and dowry) from the second family would be returned to the bride's own family.⁴² Because no Seleukid king returned to Baktria in person after Antiochos III, the Mediterranean historians that we are dependent on for this period lose interest in the region. Numismatic evidence however shows that Antiochos III's Baktrian son-in-law, Demetrios I, conquered large parts of India; Seleukos' grandson Euthydemos II thereafter ruled this kingdom from c. 185 to 180. The entanglement of the Diodotid and Euthydemid dynasties with the western parts of the empire is expressed by their "Hellenistic"-style coins (Fig. 1).

It is customary to rebuke Justin for giving a disordered and inconsistent account of early Parthian history, messing up the chronology and disregarding the proper order of cause and event. But it is not Justin, it is history itself that is erratic and non-linear. Justin did what most historians tend to do: suggesting order where in fact there is none. By synchronizing the "breakaway" of Parthia and Baktria he was able to link these to Seleukid dissension in the War of the Brothers for dramatic effect.⁴³ To be sure, a revolt in Parthia and Hyrkania probably did take place during the reign of Seleukos II Kallinikos (246–226/5), and presumably Arsakes I did so

39 Polyb. 11.34.1; Plischke (2014), p. 270–279.

40 Polyb. 10.49.1–15.

41 Polyb. 11.39.9–10.

42 Strootman (2007), p. 106–107.

43 In doing so, Justin probably followed Trogus' organization of world history according to the principle of *translatio imperii*, which obliged him to find a particular date for Macedonian

because he was allied with the Baktrian pretender, Diodotos II, who perhaps fought his half-Seleukid half-brother, Antiochos Nikator.⁴⁴ But the revolt was suppressed in 229/8 when Seleukos II marched against the Parthians with the full force of his campaigning army.⁴⁵ Justin however claims that “the Parthians ever since commemorated that day as the beginning of their independence.”⁴⁶ The only way to reconcile these conflicting accounts, is to assume that what took place here is a similar procedure as the one that our best-informed source, Polybios, repeatedly describes for the campaigns of Antiochos III: after re-subjugating an insubordinate provincial ruler, the Seleukid king grants him the title of *basileus*, thus creating a dependent vassal. For the Seleukid king this was a means to (re)integrate the rebellious Parthians into the fabric of imperial hegemony; the vassal ruler for his part could now present his rule and royal title as officially sanctioned by the empire, boosting his legitimacy and giving him a crucial advantage over internal rivals. Often, a daughter of the king was married to the vassal, creating strong kinship ties between the two families (though this may not to have been done in the case of Arsakes). And so, I would argue, the beginning of Arsakid history that Justin refers to was the recognition of Arsakes I as “King” by the Seleukid “Great King” around 229/8.⁴⁷

EARLY ARSAKID COINAGE AND THE INSIGNIA OF ACHAEMENID SATRAPS

This arrangement is reflected in the early Parthian coinage – and it is there that we first see the use of Persianistic idiom by a dynasty of Seleukid sub-kings. From the first Arsakid *basileus*, Arsakes I (r. c. 238–217 or c. 238–211; king from c. 228) to the first years of Mithradates I (= Mīrhdād, r. c. 171–133 or 165/4–133/2),⁴⁸ the Arsakids depicted themselves as autonomous governor-kings under imperial tutelage. They did so by combining the title of *basileus* with the image of the *kyrbasia*, the soft governor’s cap made of felt or leather. A drachm of Arsakes II (= Artabanos I, r. c. 211–191) depicts the king wearing a *kyrbasia* and “Persian” diadem; the reverse shows the so-called Parthian “royal archer”, based on the 3rd-century

world hegemony to end and Parthian dominance to begin; see Van Wickevoort Crommelin (1998), p. 261–263.

44 Wenghofer & Houle (in press).

45 Strabo 11.8.8; Drijvers (1998); Strootman (2008b). J. D. Lerner (1999), p. 33–43, holds that the Parni were victorious and took the Seleukid king prisoner.

46 Just. 41.4.9–10. The Parthian Era more probably was an innovation post-dating the assumption of the title of Great King by Mithradates I (c. 147); double-dated cuneiform and Greek documents from Susa and Dura-Europos later place the beginning of the Parthian Era in the Spring of 247 (Assar 2003, p. 176).

47 For the meaning and use of the title Great King (*basileus megas*) by the Seleukids see Engels (2014c) and Strootman (2016b); also see Plischke, this volume.

48 For the high dating Shayegan (2011), p. 183–184 and 229 with further references; for the revised, low dating Assar (2005a/b). Mīrhdād’s titulature and royal image changed radically as a result of his conquest of Babylonia between 141–138 (see below).



Fig. 2 Silver drachm of Arsakes II of Parthia, perhaps from Rhagai-Arsakeia, c. 210 BCE. Obverse: king's head with diademed *kyrbasia* and earring, facing left. Reverse: a seated "royal archer", holding a bow, with a standing eagle at his feet; the legend reads [A]PΣAK[O]Y, "Of Arsakes", without royal title. © Classical Numismatic Group (www.cngcoins.com).



Fig. 3 Stater of the satrap Tiribazos (from Mallos in Kilikia, c. 390–386 BCE). Obverse: head of Aphrodite to right; reverse: male head to right, wearing satrapal headdress, with Greek legend MAA (*SNG France* 394; *SNG Levante* 150–151). © Classical Numismatic Group (www.cngcoins.com).

Seleukid seated Apollo type (Fig. 2).⁴⁹ The name (or title) "Arsakes" is displayed, in Greek letters, here without the title of "King".⁵⁰ These insignia clearly emulated the coinage of the Anatolian satraps of the later Achaemenid Empire. It is not difficult to see why. From the late 5th century, Achaemenid satraps in Asia Minor such as Tissaphernes of Mysia, Spithradates of Lydia and Pharnabazos of Kilikia, had been simultaneously dynastic rulers with a high degree of autonomy *and* accountable to the (Persian) Great King. The Hekatomnids of Karia, too, had been simultaneously Achaemenid satraps and dynastic rulers. Some of these satraps had their own coins struck by civic mints, with personalized portrait busts on the obverse and a variety of mythical and divine images on the reverse, demonstrating the

49 Erickson & Wright (2011); compare Fig. 1, where the seated Herakles of Euthydemos I seems to be reminiscent of the Seleukid seated Apollo, too.

50 On this imagery also see the contributions Canepa, this volume. The *kyrbasia* is sometimes misleadingly called *bashlyk*, a Turkic word (*başlık* in modern Turkish) for a similar cap worn by Kuman, Kipchak and Tatar warriors of the western steppes in Medieval times.

intricate exchanges of style and iconography in 4th-century Asia Minor (Fig. 3). Among the insignia depicted on these satrapal coins, the *kyrbasia* stands out as the principal symbol of office.

We encounter this type of imagery not only on coins but in the monumental art of western Asia Minor as well. For instance, a slab from the frieze decorating the tomb of Arbinas, king of Xanthos and satrap of Lykia (the so-called Nereid Monument in the British Museum, c. 390–380), shows the ruler enthroned and surrounded by guardsmen while receiving ambassadors from a besieged city; Arbinas is wearing the satrapal *kyrbasia* in combination with symbols of royalty: the footstool and the parasol (Fig. 4).⁵¹

The western satrapal coins clearly prefigure the coins of the later Hellenistic monarchies. It has become an accepted view that the specific Macedonian form of kingship that developed in the later 4th century under Philip, Alexander, and the Diadochs was a derivation of the Persid monarchy of the Achaemenids. This view however has not displaced the older view that Hellenistic Kingship was primarily indebted to “Classical” Greece. There have been thunderous disagreements among the proponents of these respective positions in the recent past. But both points of view must be incorrect. The latter annexes the land of Macedonia with its “traditional” warrior-king, non-urban tribal organization and particular religious customs to one specific region and form of polity (the *polis*), thereby implicitly detaching “Greece” from its Aegean context as if it were a bounded, stand-alone culture. The second anachronistically thinks of the Achaemenid Empire as a bounded and unified nation-state, and fails to take into account the enormous cultural and political diversity within the Achaemenid world in general, and the complex entanglements of polities and societies around the Aegean in particular. What I am hinting at, is that the world of the 4th-century Aegean satrap-kings is the primary historical context in which the 4th-century Hellenistic monarchy developed – *not* in terms of “continuity” or “influence” (which I think are of little value as heuris-



Fig. 4 Arbinas of Lykia enthroned, wearing the *kyrbasia* and holding a (now gone) scepter; note the parasol and footstool. Detail of the audience scene from the upper podium frieze of the Nereid Monument from Xanthos, c. 390–380 BCE (British Museum, London; inv. no. 1848,1020.62). © The Trustees of the British Museum.

51 British Museum, London, Inv. No. Sc. 879 and 880. For the parasol as a symbol of authority see J.A. Lerner (forthcoming). The same fragment also is discussed by Canepa, this volume.



Fig. 5 Reverse of a tetradrachm of Alexander III the Great (r. 336–323 BCE). Zeus seated on a throne with footstool, holding an eagle and a scepter; with Greek legend ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ. As on earlier satrapal coinage, there is no royal title (Tarsos mint; SNG Ashmolean 2891). © Classical Numismatic Group (www.cngcoins.com).

tic concepts),⁵² but because the 4th-century Argead dynasty was *integrated* into to this world of interconnectivity. Entanglement, not influence, is key here. Macedonia after all is a very central region, a crossroads of land routes between Greece, the Balkans, Anatolia and the Black Sea littoral. Macedonia moreover has easy access to the sea. Philip II’s small empire was more akin to Mausollos’ “empire-within-an-empire” than to the Achaemenid world system at large (it was only in his later reign that Alexander began to integrate specific Persid forms of universalism and court ritual into his imperial representation, and he did so only in the Iranian east). For instance, take a look at Figure 4, again: Arbinas’ right hand is raised, probably holding a long scepter, now gone, in a pose characteristic of later Hellenistic royal portraits and images of Zeus on Hellenistic royal coins (Figs. 6 and 7).⁵³

Let us now return to the coinage of the early Arsakids. If their use of cultural idiom that we would now categorize as “Iranian” was derived from the iconography of the western satraps of the former Achaemenid Empire, instead of eastern Iranian models (not for instance, from the “official” Achaemenid daric), this would support the conclusion that the Parthians remained integrated into the Seleukid Empire until the rise of Mithradates I. Thus, the satrapal *kyrbasia* did not suggest a breakaway but rather a status of subordinate dynast. Moreover, the coinage on which the *kyrbasia* is used in this particular way had developed in the same cultural region where also the monarchy of the Seleukids originally came from. The introduction of this Aegean cultural idiom in Iran in other words suggests more “foreign” Seleukid agency than scholars have been inclined to admit. Two further Aegean features on early Arsakid coinage are the *chlamys*, the “traditional” Macedonian-Thessalian warrior-cape, and of course the Greek alphabet and language.⁵⁴ Rather than inter-

52 See Strootman (MS), and (2014a), p. 20–26. Specifically, in this case, that would imply the imposition of modern periodizations and cultural categories upon historical reality.

53 For this pose see now Palagia (2015). See also Kaptan (2013) on the “west Achaemenid koine” (p. 30).

54 On some coins of Arsakes I, the Sellwood type 3 and 4 drachms, the inscription is not Greek but Aramaic; this suggests an “indigenous” audience that was contemporaneous rather than revivalist. The inscription on the Sellwood type 3 drachms reads *krny* (= *kārnny*?), presumably a title indicating a war leader, *i.e.* a “chief” or “duke”; cf. the overview of Arsakes I’s coinage by E. Hopkins at www.parthia.com, with further references; the Aramaic on the Sellwood type 4 drachms has not yet been satisfactorily translated. Fratarakā coins, too, bear Aramaic inscriptions, and in one case the title of *kāren* (see below).

Fig. 6 Zeus (with the beardless features of Alexander) seated on a throne with royal footstool, holding a long skeptron and thunderbolts. Fresco from the House of the Vetii in Pompeii (1st-century BCE copy of a Macedonian original of c. 300 BCE). After Palagia (2015), p. 15.



preting the *kyrbasia* exclusively as an Achaemenid reminiscence we must therefore also explore its possible Seleukid significance.

To sum up: it is generally assumed that the satrapal coinage of the Arsakids expressed these rulers' appropriation of the Achaemenid legacy in opposition to the Seleukids. But references to the Achaemenids are lacking. The context is the transforming Seleukid Empire of the late 3rd and early 2nd century BCE. This is apparent also from the fact that Arsakid rule is initially associated with limited, *territorial* rulership, viz., with the land of Parthia. Like the other "post-satrapal" dynasties (to borrow Canepa's term) – those in Pontos, Kommagene, Kappadokia, Bithynia, Armenia, Atropatene, Adiabene, Charakene, Elymais, and Persis – the Arsakids originated as rulers of a bounded province within the territorial organization of the Seleukid Empire.

Imperial aspirations appear only relatively late in Parthian history, in the later reign of Mithradates I in the 140s, and they are clearly connected to the conquest of the Seleukid core provinces Media and Babylonia by this king. Beginning with the conquest of Media in 147, Arsakid titulature changes from royal to imperial. This meant first of all the adoption of the universalistic title *basileus megas* (Great King) in defiance of



Fig. 7 Tetradrachm of Mithradates I's later reign (Mihrdād). Obverse: bust of bearded king to right, wearing diadem and chlamys. Reverse: beardless Herakles standing to left, holding a skyphos. The Greek legend reads ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ, "Of the Great King Arsakes Philhellēnos" (Seleukeia on the Tigris mint, struck after 140 BCE; Sellwood 13.2). © Classical Numismatic Group (www.cngcoins.com).

the Seleukids (Fig. 7). *Basileus megas* was a contemporaneous Greek-language title used in the 2nd century by several Seleukid emperors as well.⁵⁵ After the capture of Media, and the important Seleukid capital and mint Ekbatana, the *kyrbasia* disappears and is replaced by a standard diadem round the king's head. Later still, Mithradates II (c. 123–88/7) adopted the title *basileus basileōs* (King of Kings); this title had been conspicuously absent in the preceding centuries, and Engels may be right in suggesting that despite its appearance in Greek on coin legends this innovation was a deliberate recreation of the Achaemenid title of King of Kings (OP *xšâyaθiya xšâyaθiyânâm*) and as such a form of deliberate “Persianism”, meant to surpass the several other kings who had usurped the title of Great King at approximately the same time of Mithradates I's usurpation of that title, including Eukratides of Baktria, the rebel Timarchos, and Kamnaskires I of Elymais.⁵⁶

THE RE-INTEGRATION OF IRAN: THE ANABASIS OF ANTIOCHOS III

It is true that Arsakid kings in Parthia-Hyrkania defected from the Seleukids at least twice before the rise of Mithradates I. This fact is often cited as evidence for “Parthia” having attained “national” autonomy. But it is also true that in both cases the rebellion was suppressed and “Parthia” re-integrated into the empire.

In 229/8 Seleukos II re-subjugated Parthia/Hyrkania. It probably was then that Arsakes I received the royal title; 229/8 is moreover the year to which the accession of Seleukos' nephew Antiochos Nikator in Baktria can be dated (see above). The evidence for Seleukos' eastern campaigns is shadowy and indirect, but it is likely that while he was in Parthia, he established direct lines of communication with the Diodotids of Baktria. Seleukos was in Iran during the truce that ended the first round of the war against his brother, Antiochos Hierax (the so-called “War of the Brothers”, c. 241–237/6).⁵⁷ There is far too much hindsight in the assumption that Seleukos marched east only to deal with the threat of the Parni, and that his failure to do so caused the collapse of the Seleukid Empire one century later. It is more likely that Seleukos' eastern campaigns had the broader aim of re-establishing his authority in the Upper satrapies, and possibly also to collect new troops to compen-

55 I have argued this more extensively in Strootman (2016b), cf. earlier e.g. Strootman (2010a), and see Plischke in this volume. Although the Parthian conquest of West Iran and the Mesopotamian lowlands effectively terminated the Seleukid Empire's position as a superpower, this became an irreversible fact only with the defeat and death of Antiochos VII Sidetes in 129.

56 Engels (2014c): “Man darf daher vorsichtig zusammenzufassen, daß die Arsakiden den Großkönigstitel in deutlicher Anlehnung an das vorauszusetzende Protokoll des Seleukidenhofs und die numismatischen Vorbilder der Usurpatoren Timarchos und Eukratides übernahmen, sobald die Eroberung Mesopotamiens machtmäßig endgültig den Niedergang der Seleukiden besiegelt hatte. Der Titel des ‘Königs der Könige’ aber scheint als bewusste, auf die Achaemeniden verweisende Neuerung eingeführt worden zu sein.”

57 Cf. J. D. Lerner (1999), p. 33, for the possibility that Seleukos already went east at the beginning of this truce in c. 236. The most recent discussion of the sources and literature is Plischke (2014), p. 204–220.

sate for his losses in the War of the Brothers. The latter must remain speculation, but we do know for certain that when Seleukos returned from the east in 228/7, he decisively defeated Hierax in Babylonia.⁵⁸

Some twenty years later, Seleukos' son Antiochos III undertook his famous eastern *anabasis*: an extended campaign (211–205) meant to reaffirm Seleukid hegemony in the Upper Satrapies that was also a kind of ritual progress demarcating the edges of empire, viz., the known world.⁵⁹ Antiochos arrived in Parthia in the Spring of 209. He defeated the Parthians in battle, and re-established Seleukid suzerainty by making Arsakes II (r. 211–191), the son of Arsakes I, his vassal.⁶⁰ This second Arsakes (also known as Artabanos) was forced to give up Hyrkania and to forfeit the right to issue coins with the royal title (Fig. 2).⁶¹ His authority limited to Parthia, Arsakes II was now more satrap than king. As we already saw above, Antiochos III then went on to Baktria, where he fought and made peace with Euthydemos I, giving a royal title to him and a daughter to his son, Demetrios (I). Antiochos thereupon proceeded to India, where he made a Mauryan ruler named Sophagasenos (Subhagasena) a tributary vassal, leaving behind a royal official to oversee his loyalty.⁶² The treaty with Sophagasenos is important because it reconnected Seleukid Baktria with the Indian Ocean. He then marched back to the west by the southern route through Arachosia, Drangiana and Karmania, arriving late in 206 in Persis, where he put his troops in winter quarters.⁶³

Despite Polybios' assertion that by 206/5 Antiochos III had "reduced all the satraps of the Upper Satrapies to obedience to his authority,"⁶⁴ it is commonly assumed that Antiochos' military and diplomatic activities in Central Asia had no lasting benefit for the Seleukid Empire. In an important article, Jeffrey Lerner has persuasively argued against this view. According to Lerner, the massive building activities that took place at Ay Khanum during the site's Ceramic Period IV (= Building Phase II) must be associated with Antiochos III's *anabasis*, and Baktria's renewed

58 Just. 41.5.1. Justin's claim that Hierax's invasion of Babylonian forced Seleukos to give up his war against the Parni and accept Arsakes as king, is a trope.

59 Strootman 2011a; 2012. Antiochos' *anabasis* was not an attempt to imitate Alexander, as has been often conjectured; Alexander is entirely absent from Seleukid self-presentation from 305 until the mid-2nd century; chronology suggests that the title "the Great" was given to Alexander by the Romans and their Greek allies in response to Antiochos III's use of the epithet during the Roman-Seleukid War of 191–188. I hope to return to the Roman appropriation of Alexander in a future publication provisionally entitled 'Imitatio Alexandri in the Hellenistic Empires: A Scholarly Myth'; see for now Strootman 2016b, and cf. Lerouge-Cohen, this volume.

60 Polyb. 10.27.12–31.31; App., Syr. 11.1.1; Just. 41.5.7. For discussion of the sources see Plischke (2014), p. 269–270.

61 Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1993), p. 89 and 198.

62 Polyb. 11.34.11–12.

63 Polyb. 11.34.13.

64 Polyb. 11.34.14. We already saw that Antiochos' army in the Battle of Magnesia (189) was largely an Iranian army, indicative of the successful re-integration of Iranian leaders into the fabric of empire; also the unusual successes of Antiochos against the Ptolemies in the Levant and Asia Minor in 202–195 (which resulted in the breakdown of the Ptolemaic Empire as a Mediterranean superpower) may be indicative of Antiochos' vast military resources after to his eastern *anabasis*.

integration into the Seleukid “commonwealth”.⁶⁵ Antiochos passed by Ay Khanum *en route* to India in 206. The major geopolitical consequence of Antiochos’ eastern campaigns, Lerner writes, “was the (re-)establishment of a trading network linking Baktria and India by land to Mesopotamia, Syria and the eastern Mediterranean seaboard and another by sea connecting the Indus and Persian Gulf with Arabia and the port-cities at the estuaries of the Eulaios, Euphrates, Tigris, and ultimately Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris, Susa, and the Mediterranean.”⁶⁶

We are relatively well-informed about Antiochos’ activities around the Persian Gulf, which turned this area into one of the cores of the empire and created a direct connection between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean along the Euphrates. The best known example is the incorporation of Gerrha, a major shipping port on the trade routes between Mesopotamia, Arabia and India.⁶⁷ The networks created by Antiochos III endured after his death. Antiochos IV continued his father’s work by rebuilding the port of Alexandria-on-the-Tigris (later Spasinou Charax, near mod. Jebel Khayabir), which had been damaged by floods.⁶⁸ At the completion of the restored port in 166/5, he renamed the city “Antiocheia”, and appointed as governor (*eparch*) of the northern coast district of Mesene/Charakene an Iranian grandee whose name has been recorded as Hyspaosines son of Sardodonakos.⁶⁹ In nearby Susiana, meanwhile, another non-Hellenic Seleukid ruler, Hyknopses, is attested for 162/1, and between 148–138 king Pittit of Elymais fought for the Seleukids against the Parthians.⁷⁰

THE FRATARAKĀ OF PERSIS

In the introduction to this chapter, the question was posed how separate dynasties that were geographically far removed from each other could adopt comparable, Iranian-looking royal idiom at more or less the same time. This similarity is most striking in the case of the early Arsakids of Parthia and the Fratarakā of Persis. Both used the *kyrbasia* as their main badge of office on their coinage. The accepted explanation, that both picked this up locally, cannot be correct: why the similarities, why the concurrency, and why the simultaneous emphasis on satrapal rank in addition to royal status? We already saw that the most likely model for the Hellenistic-period Parthian coinage came not from Parthia but from western Asia Minor. In previous publications and lectures I have tried to develop a model for understanding the integrative qualities of the mobile royal court in the Seleukid

65 J. D. Lerner (2003–2004), p. 395–397, proposing a revision of the conventional dating of Ceramic Period IV (260–220) to c. 210–170.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 399.

67 Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1993), p. 199–200.

68 Plin., *NH.* 6.31.138. Cohen (2013); Mittag (2006), p. 298–307.

69 Plin., *NH.* 6.31.139. After 138 Hyspaosines struck tetradrachms in Seleukid style with Greek legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΥΣΠΑΟΣΙΝΟΥ, but at that time under the protection of the Arsakids, whom he had supported against Demetrios II.

70 Shayegan (2011), p. 110–120.

Fig. 8 Obverse of a silver tetradrachm of an unidentified Fratarakā client ruler of the Seleukid period, wearing a *kyrbasia* tied with a diadem (British Museum, London; inv. no. 1867,1120.1). © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Empire, further developing the sociological approaches of Kruedener, Duindam and others. Basically, there are two ways in which the mobile court in the Seleukid Empire (and previously in the Achaemenid Empire as well) created connectivity. First, representatives of local elites traveled to the court when troops were assembled for military campaigns and for the celebration of specific ritual events. These great events of the court are most of all the various *rites de passage* of the dynasty, such as weddings, birth celebrations, deaths and inaugurations. Second, the court itself constantly moved *towards* local elites and cities, often taking into account local religious calendars in order to be able to attend major festivals, especially those with a regional status.⁷¹ Ritualized feasting and the use of local and regional cults as a “neutral” Middle Ground were the main social events facilitating the interactions between local elites and the imperial court. If representatives of the Arsakid dynasty met members of Persid elites, it was likely at the court of the Seleukid king, or his son/co-ruler, or principal queen.

Information also spread when the court visited provinces and cities. Antiochos III was in Persis in 206/5, the first western country he visited after his eastern *anabasis*. In his 1994 study on Seleukid Persis, Wiesehöfer showed that with few possible exceptions the first autonomous rulers of the area were clients rulers under Seleukid suzerainty.⁷² Like the early Parthians, these so-called Fratarakā expressed this status by the wearing of a diademed *kyrbasia* (Fig. 8). Their modern name derives from the returning coin legend *fratarakā ī bayan*, “governor (by the grace) of the gods” – a title used in Achaemenid times for a governor of lesser rank than a satrap.⁷³

71 For the instrumentality of (mobile) imperial courts in creating inter-regional cohesion see Strootman 2007; 2011a; and cf. 2014a, p. 31–38, for references to recent literature on royal courts as a major socio-political force in world history; specifically on local/regional cults and sanctuaries as contact zones for the interaction of imperial and local elites see Strootman 2013a; 2016d. For the mobility of the Seleukid court see now also Kosmin 2014a.

72 Wiesehöfer (1994), p. 41–45; cf. Wiesehöfer (2011), p. 107–121; Engels (2013).

73 For the meaning of the title see Naster (1968); Wiesehöfer (1991). Against the older view that the “Persian Revival” of the Fratarakā expressed resistance to the Seleukid Empire: Wiesehöfer (2011), cf. Wiesehöfer (2007b), and Engels (2013), p. 44–45, characterizing the alleged anti-Greek victory coinage of Vādfradād I as “one of the best examples of Greek-Persian cultural fusion”, demonstrating to the audience how the combination of allegiance to the Seleukids and respect for local cults (perhaps too rashly labeled “Zoroastrian religion”) contribute to internal autonomy and external military success.

Though not universally accepted,⁷⁴ the most likely reconstruction of the Fratarakā rulers' chronology is that the first independent, indigenous dynast of Persis/Pārsa appeared after the suppression of the revolt of Molon in 220, when Antiochos used the momentum created by his victory to rearrange the government of western Iran and southern Mesopotamia. A rare commemorative drachm of the ruler Wahbarz shows the ruler on the obverse with the common *kyrbasia*, but on its reverse has an Aramaic legend identifying him as *kāren*, “lord” (*sc.* “war leader”),⁷⁵ with an image of a king in Achaemenid-period costume subduing a kneeling foe who is clad in armor that we would now identify as Greco-Macedonian.⁷⁶ This scene may well be connected with the war against Molon and Alexandros, but the defeated soldier may also be a roving mercenary or bandit.⁷⁷ The title *kāren*, used sporadically in Parthia too (see above), was either a traditional title still in use, or a deliberately archaizing word re-introduced as the Iranian equivalent of the Greek title *stratēgos*, which in Seleukid usage indicated a general in the imperial army or a military governor with authority over a geographically bounded province.

Be that as it may, it is likely that when Antiochos III stayed in Persis and the Persian Gulf region in 205, he either reaffirmed the ruling dynast, or gave a local lord full autonomy for the first time. Opinions vary as regards the name of the ruler of Persis (they are only known to us from their coins) at this time, Baydād, Ardaxšīr and Vahbarz being the prime candidates. The similarities between the images on the obverse sides of Arsakid and Fratarakā tetradrachms is indicative of the agency of the imperial court. But the reverses diverge. The early Fratarakā rulers depict the Achaemenid Kabeh-e Zartošt shrine from Naqš-e Rostam, in some cases with a winged “*fravarti*” depicted above it. The adoption of religious and political idiom derived from local *lieux de mémoire*, and the probable re-appropriation of existing monumental space, in particular sacred space by later generations is a common phenomenon in the Ancient World. Ideas about origin however are constantly modified and updated with varying degrees of historical accuracy. This means that the adoption on Fratarakā coinage of elements of Achaemenid-period iconography as seen on sculpture is not essentially different from the later Sasanian equation of Persepolis with the palace of Jamšid, the ideal king and culture hero who ruled the world during the mythical Golden Age at the beginning of time.⁷⁸ For the Fratarakā,

74 See e. g. Engels (2013).

75 Xen., *Hell.* 1.4.3–4 records this title (from OP **kārāna-*) as Gr. *κάρωνος*, saying that it means “lord” (*κύριος*); in the *Anabasis* (1.1.2 and 9.7), he uses as its equivalent *στρατηγός*.

76 Following Shayegan’s reading *Wahbarz wānād/wāned ī kāren* = “Wahbarz was/may be victorious, (he) who (is) the commander [the *karanos*]” (Shayegan 2011, p. 170, with n. 533; for the accompanying images see figs. 4 and 5 on p. 171; Klose & Mūseler 2008, p. 27, figs. 17 and 18).

77 Another possible interpretation, preferred *i. a.* by Shayegan (2011), p. 169–172, is that the soldier represents a military settler killed during a Persid revolt against the Seleukids at the end of Antiochos III’s reign; so also Klose & Mūseler 2008, p. 27: “Persien in Gestalt eines Mannes in der Tracht der ehemaligen achaimenidischen Großkönige besiegt [...] den griechischen Erbfeind” (cited from Engels 2013, p. 38, who is rightly cautious about the defeated enemy’s ethnicity).

78 See Daryaeae, this volume. Persepolis later was known as Taqt-e Jamšid, lit. “Jamšid’s Throne”:

this was first of all the adoption of a *local* identity. They linked themselves as a matter of course to the impressive Achaemenid monuments that happened to be in their country (most of all the tombs and temple at Naqš-e Rostam).⁷⁹ But while the reverse images expressed a specific local identity, the ruler bust with the diademed *kyrbasia* on the obverse clearly was a transcultural image connecting these rulers to a wider imperial commonwealth of regional rulers. Thus, the dynastic identity of the Fratarakā was local (Persid) and global/imperial (Iranian) at the same time.

The Fratarakā presumably became increasingly independent, while retaining a basic sense of loyalty to the Seleukid house. Troops from Persis had already fought for the Seleukids against the Ptolemies at Raphia in 217; they still fought for the Seleukids in 140/139, this time against the Parthians.⁸⁰ The iconography on the Fratarakā coinage changes after the Parthian expansion had expelled the Seleukids from Babylonia, and the Fratarakā were forced to accept Parthian overlordship.⁸¹

In sum, the *kyrbasia* and the title *fratarakā* expressed a subordinate status as governor, but with a higher degree of autonomy, and higher status, than previously enjoyed by the Macedonian *stratēgoi*, who did not strike their own coins. This coinage is thus in accordance with the shifts in power relations that took place in the Seleukid “High Empire” (Antiochos III–Antiochos IV): from direct rule through appointed officeholders to indirect rule through “client rulers”.

POLITICAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN THE SELEUKID EMPIRE

Co-opting aristocratic houses of Iranian origin was not a new occurrence. After the death of Seleukos I, his successor Antiochos I (r. 281–261) had encouraged the institutionalization of satellite kingdoms in Pontos and Kappadokia, who fought on the Seleukid side in the Anatolian wars of the 3rd to early 2nd century BCE. Perhaps being of real Persian descent, these dynasties – the Ariarathids and Mithradatids – were the first to amalgamate “Classical” cultural memory and local traditions into an ideology that traced their ancestry back to the “Seven”, the by then mythical founders of Achaemenid “Persia” who had lived more than two hundred years before.⁸² As we have seen, Seleukos II had been a “kingmaker”, too. But under Antiochos III this process intensified and became the very foundation of a fundamental rearrangement of imperial power networks.

The Seleukid dynasty was well-acquainted with resistance and uprisings from the beginning. As in most dynastic empires, rebellions broke out at every new ac-

a reference to the fabled flying throne, known *i. a.* from the *Šāh-nāma* (I, p. 44, vv. 48–51), on which the primordial king sat when he established the Festival of Nowruz.

79 For the appropriation and re-definition of Achaemenid monumental/sacred space by Iranian rulers in this period I refer to the recent studies of by Matthew Canepa (e.g. Canepa 2010b; 2014; 2015).

80 Polyb. 5.80.3–13; Just. 36.1.4.

81 Alam (1986), p. 162–164; cf. Wiesehöfer (1994), p. 135–136.

82 Polyb. 5.43.1–2; Diod. 31.19.1; Jos. *BJ* 1.228–229. For discussion see Lerouge-Cohen, this volume; cf. Bosworth & Wheatley (1998).

cession to the throne. The accession of Antiochos III had been particularly troubled. He had succeeded his brother, Seleukos III Soter (“Keraunos”), who was assassinated in 223 or 222, and had left no adult male heir to succeed him. Antiochos therefore had not been able to create a solid power-base as *co-basileus* during his father’s reign. The greatest threat to Antiochos and his dynasty was the so-called Revolt of Molon, a large-scale rebellion by a coalition of Macedonian governors in western Iran who overran Babylonia and destroyed two royal expeditionary armies. The leaders were Molon, satrap of Media and perhaps viceroy of the Upper Satrapies, and his brother, Alexandros, the governor of Persis.⁸³ A vicious power struggle between rival factions of royal *philoï* meanwhile paralyzed Antiochos’ court. This is the “paradox of power”: to exert power, rulers have to delegate power and thereby encourage the emergence of independent elites defending their privileges and acting on behalf of their own clientele.

The Revolt of Molon was finally crushed in *c.* 220. Molon was captured and executed, while his brother Alexandros took his own life. This victory gave Antiochos the prestige and resources needed to remove the clique of established *philoï* from court and replace them by his own friends.⁸⁴ These experiences in his early reign must have convinced Antiochos and his supporters that drastic measures were needed to revive the empire. In the provinces, unruly Greco-Macedonian governors were replaced by non-Macedonian princes and kings; the now rapidly expanding web of dynastic marriages resulted in a shift from ritualized friendship (*philia* and *xenia*) to kinship as the principal instrument to bind local rulers to the imperial family. These regional dynasties exercised considerable autonomy but because of their kinship often were more loyal to the Seleukids than the appointed *stratēgoi* had been. This policy of Antiochos coincided with the increasing prevalence at court of “favorites”: powerful outsiders who screened off the king from the established court/army nobility.⁸⁵ The families that now rose to power, in opposition to the established Greco-Macedonian elite, were encouraged to develop a new iconography of power, and felt confident enough to express their new political and social prominence by developing a new form of cultural identity. This shift in the social make-up of the imperial elite is perhaps reflected by the fact that one of the sons of Antiochos III was named “Mithridates” after his maternal grandfather, Mithradates II of Pontos.⁸⁶

The semi-autonomous satraps of the late Achaemenid Empire provided a model for these new arrangements, or at least the iconographic idiom to express simultaneously the status of governor-king and Iranian cultural identity. These previous satraps, too, had developed identities that were “glocal”, to use that awful but useful term: their identities had been simultaneously “Persian” *and* Karian, Lykian, Lydian, Greek, *et cetera*. In reviving this cultural style, Seleukid satrapal iconography made good use of the double significance of the diadem. Before the Hellenistic

83 Polyb. 5.40.7 and 54.5; the course of the revolt can be followed in some detail in Polyb. 5.40–54.

84 Strootman (2011a), p. 72–74.

85 Strootman (2016c).

86 SEG (1987), no. 859, cf. Liv. 33.19.9; for discussion and references (and the possibility that this Mithradates was the later king Antiochos IV Epiphanes) see Mittag (2009), p. 34–37.

period, the Persian diadem had expressed aristocratic status, a token of nearness to the Great King. It was not an exclusive symbol of royalty.⁸⁷ The diadem bound round the *kyrbasia* of Seleukid satraps likely implied “favor”, too, expressing that the high office of the portrayed ruler was authorized by the empire *and* that this ruler was able to represent the interests of local communities under his protection at the “supranational”, imperial level.⁸⁸

CONCLUSION: IMPERIAL PERSIANISM AND THE SELEUKID COURT

The dynastic identities created by the late and post-Seleukid Iranian rulers were a “bricolage” of contemporaneous Iranian and Seleukid elements. The Ariarathids of Kappadokia, Mithradatids of Pontos, and Orontids of Kommagene, reinforced legitimate claims to Seleukid ancestry with genealogies tracing back their roost to the Achaemenids, or Persian noble families. On Nemrut Dağı, the reimagined “Persian” iconography served to claim legitimacy for Antiochos I as ruler in the East by capitalizing on the prestige of the Achaemenids, in addition to his prestige as the descendent and heir of the vanished Seleukid dynasty.⁸⁹ Here, “real memory” and partially constructed “cultural memory” merged.⁹⁰

These Persianistic trends among the western dynasties – discussed in this volume by Canepa and Jacobs – were preceded in the east by rulers who developed new expressions of Iranian identity in interaction with the Seleukid court. The Seleukid dynasty initially had relied on a Macedonian “conquest clan”, and a secondary elite of Greeks from the Aegean *poleis*, to whom they delegated the control of provinces and gave away landed estates. But these land-holding aristocrats in due time became difficult to control and could even turn against the dynasty, as happened notoriously in the early reign of Antiochos III. Antiochos’ reaction, after he had overcome these problems by brute force, was to accelerate an already ongoing process whereby the original system of direct rule through appointed, but increasingly unruly, military governors of Greek and Macedonian descent was replaced by indirect rule through local vassal kings, who were often bound to the dynasty through marital bonds. Many of these new grandees in Armenia and Iran were of Iranian descent. Thus, Iranian aristocracies reemerged to bypass Macedonians as the provincial imperial elites in Iranian lands. The emergence and pronouncement of Iranian identities by these elites was a result of this.

87 Jacobs (1996), 275–279.

88 For the concept of “favor” in premodern and early modern monarchies see Strootman (2016c), with references to older literature.

89 Versluys (2016a); Strootman (2015a); also see Kropp (2013), showing how the post-Seleukid dynasts in the western part of the former empire selectively engaged aspects of the Seleukid legacy in combination with local traditions and external (Roman and Ptolemaic) influences.

90 For the concept of “cultural memory” – a partially constructed, top-downwardly imposed view of the past to serve the political aims of the present – see A. Assmann (1999) and J. Assmann (1992).

Why did these dynasties choose to emphasize and develop particularly *Iranian* dynastic identities? The answer may be simply because of their local roots *and* because they did so in opposition to an established Greco-Macedonian elite, that was now falling into disfavor. The striking similarities can only be accounted for by some process of peer interaction and in some cases through the kinship ties that emanated from their integration into the empire. The neo-satrapal Iranian style, despite its various local forms, first of all was a “globalized” style.

But how were these dynasties connected? The only possible explanation is: via the social networks converging at the court. The Seleukid imperial court resembled an army camp more often than not. Representatives of the Iranian nobility met at the traveling court for major military campaigns and for the celebration of the “grand events” of the dynasty. We are now beginning to better understand what happened, in cultural terms, in Iranian lands during the Hellenistic period. In addition, it would be fruitful to also rethink the role of the mobile court in the integration of local elites into the “global” empire and in creating transcultural exchanges.

RIVAL IMAGES OF IRANIAN KINGSHIP AND PERSIAN IDENTITY IN POST-ACHAEMENID WESTERN ASIA

Matthew Canepa

This chapter explores the development of royal identities in the post-Achaemenid, post-Seleukid Iranian world. It concentrates on the role that royal images, rituals and built environment played in claiming the legacy of the Achaemenids and articulating new visions of royal power that engaged both Iranian and Macedonian cultures of kingship. Evidence from this period does not survive in great abundance, yet what endures is ample enough to document the rise and eventual preeminence of Parthian court culture in the Iranian world.¹ The Arsakid dynasty was dominant in Western Asia for the greatest duration of any Iranian dynasty (247 BCE – ca. 224/8 CE in Iran; 52–428 CE in Armenia). From their start as provincial strongmen the Arsakids eventually took their place as the dominant Iranian dynasty and leading Western Asian imperial power. The Arsakids oversaw the final eclipse of many of Western Asia's most enduring traditions, such as the Babylonian temples and cuneiform literary culture, and produced a new culture of Iranian kingship that challenged and eventually subsumed that of the Seleukids.

Despite the Arsakids eventual ascendancy, kingdoms ruled by Iranian dynasties in Anatolia, the Caucasus and northern Iran presented different responses to the Persian and Macedonian royal legacies. But for a different outcome of a few battles against the Seleukids or the Romans, many of these 'alternative visions' of post-Achaemenid Iranian kingship could have become dominant, rivaling or even displacing those of the Arsakids. Between Antiochos III's defeat at Magnesia (189 BCE) and Rome and Parthia's final absorption of Anatolia and Upper Mesopotamia in the first century CE, sovereigns of this wider Western Iranian world presented powerful alternative visions of a new post-Achaemenid Iranian kingship.

Alexander's march through Anatolia to the core of the Achaemenid Empire left many Persian satraps in place and some regions, such as Kappadokia, Pontos and Armenia, he bypassed entirely. Despite certain Successors' episodic attempts to assert power and remove them, these dynasts or their descendants took advantage of the fluid situation following Alexander's death to re-establish themselves in power or claim new territories. The most important of these post-satrapal dynasties in the post-Achaemenid west were the Orontid dynasty of Armenia and Sophene (ca. 4th century – ca. 2nd century BCE), whose purported descendants later ruled the kingdom of Kommagene until 73 CE, the later Artaxiad Dynasty of Armenia (188–12 BCE), and the Mithradatid dynasty of Pontos (ca. 4th century – 47 BCE).² Although

1 Sinisi (2014 [2015]).

2 As an entry into the literature: Toumanoff (1963), p. 277–354; Facella (2006), p. 95 ff.; Marciak, (2012), p. 295–338; Bosworth and Wheatley (1998), p. 155–164; Michels (2009), p. 14–19.

their official genealogies were often embellished or, in places, fabricated, some of these families could even legitimately claim Achaemenid blood, if not direct descent from the dynasty's kings. The Artaxiads and the Mithradatids both built extensive though ephemeral empires during the final dissolution of the Seleukid Empire. While never attaining the imperial reach of Artaxiad Armenia or Mithradatid Pontos, the Ariarathid dynasty of Kappadokia also emerged as a regional player in the new post-Seleukid, Iranian world.

The kingdoms of these post-satrapal dynasties were a heterogeneous mixture of peoples, political entities and economies. In this their organization and composition bore a close resemblance to the Achaemenid or Seleukid satrapies whence they emerged. Much like an Achaemenid satrapy, the early Orontid and Mithradatid kingdoms consisted of estates owned by the king, and the nobility, and richly endowed temples, with the majority of their population living in villages.³ Greek culture and civic institutions did not hold sway over their inland populations in the same way it did their court and coastal cities, yet within the courts of the Mithradatids, Ariarathids and Artaxiads, Greek high culture increasingly served as the idiom of the kings' artistic, scientific, and diplomatic expressions even as they foregrounded and reimagined their connections to a Persian royal legacy.

The Seleukid Empire influenced all of these kingdoms, either by conquest or intermarriage. And much like the Seleukids themselves, most dynasties eventually became 'half-Macedonian' and 'half-Iranian' in family background as well as royal culture. While the Arsakids and the Perso-Macedonian dynasts were deeply influenced by Hellenistic visual, ritual and architectural forms, the half-remembered traditions of the Persian Empire played an equally important role as a common field in which to conceptualize royal power and contest legitimacy. In the course of the dissolution of the Seleukid Empire, these dynasties sought to re-invigorate and foreground a variety of Persian royal practices and claims even as they recombined them with Macedonian forms. These newly prominent Persian traditions articulated rival claims of power, legitimacy and independence, first to rival the Seleukids and then to oppose the advance of Rome. Indeed the creative conflict, collaboration and exchange that arose from the interchange among the Arsakids, Perso-Macedonian dynasties and the Hellenistic and Roman west was the crucible that forged a new 'Middle Iranian' kingship.⁴

PERSIANISM, HELLENISM AND A NEW IRANIAN KINGSHIP

Soon after his death, Alexander's successors vied with each other for mastery of his legacy and control of the whole of his empire. Along with the customs of the Macedonian homeland, the experience of the Successors in Alexander's mobile court and their common aspirations to claim Alexander's legacy served as a uniting force. These common experiences and influences served as departure points as the

3 Mitchels (2005), p. 59; Tirats'yan (2003), p. 127–138; Michels, (2013), p. 283–307.

4 Canepa (2015a), p. 65–117; Canepa (2014), p. 1–27.

Successors created their own divine narratives, images, and topographies of power in the course of consolidating their kingdoms.⁵ In contrast, the political culture of those provincial dynasts who aspired to take up the mantle of Persian kingship did not enjoy such a recent or coherent descent from a similarly single point of origin.

The new expressions of ‘Persian’ kingship do not always represent a continuous survival of the traditions of the central Achaemenid court. Instead, the Seleukids mediated many important aspects of so-called Persian royal culture to these dynasties and still more were even invented outright. Satrapal dynasties such as the Orontids and Ariarathids, and newly established local strongmen like the Arsakids, relied on family lore, provincial memories and possibly outright fabrication of traditions. These gave form to the rituals, images and spaces of what we might provisionally characterize as western, ‘neo-Persian’ kingship. This is not to say that the royal traditions of Macedonian charismatic kingship were more authentic than the ‘Persianism’ of the former satrapal dynasties. Indeed, as exemplified by the Ptolemies and Seleukids themselves, many Macedonian rulers of this era were quite promiscuous in selecting and recombining multiple different traditions.⁶ Rather, the point of contrast I am making is that Macedonian charismatic kingship emerged from the breakup of Alexander’s empire as a dominant political and military force instead of beginning life, as neo-Persian kingship did, as a fractured, alternative politico-cultural counter-narrative. These neo-Persian rituals, architectural expressions and images took on a new prominence with the dissolution of the Seleukid Empire. The ascendancy of the Arsakids in the east and Mithradates VI and Tigranes II in the west, brought the claims and expressions of a reborn Persian kingship into renewed prominence and power.

The development of Hellenistic ‘Persianism’ as a royal culture presents another important contrast with Macedonian charismatic kingship. The phenomenon of post-Achaemenid ‘Persian’ kingship did not enjoy the same relationship to a widespread, coherent and prestigious cultural and linguistic idiom parallel to the status of Greek culture and *koinē* under the Macedonians. After Alexander, Greek art, urbanism, architecture, science and the language became primary means of cultural communication to engage with a wider cosmopolitan world.⁷ In contrast, Persian culture no longer offered a linguistic or cultural idiom that facilitated ambitious individuals’ or groups’ entry into, and movement across, a wider series of overlapping cultural, intellectual, political and economic spheres in the same way that Greek did.

Persian culture did not enjoy textually based traditions of literary, philosophical or scientific endeavor that were accessible to any ambitious, educated individual like Greek culture. Although, after the fall of the Achaemenids, the magi peddled ritual and esoteric knowledge throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Western Asia, Persian culture and nascent Zoroastrianism did not offer themselves as attractive and accessible rival cosmopolitan intellectual traditions with a reach equal to

5 On the development of the phenomenon of Hellenistic kingship, see Strootman (2014).

6 See Erickson and Wright (2011; Strootman (2013).

7 Mairs (2014); Canepa (2015b), p. 19–23.

Greek culture.⁸ There was no such thing as a ‘standard’ Persian dialect, literature, or writing system in Western Asia after the fall of the Achaemenids. It is possible that the dialects of Western Middle Iranian spoken in communities around the former Persian Empire were mutually intelligible, yet Greek and imperial Aramaic remained the only truly widespread means of official communication and record keeping, and the only languages with an abundance of evidence.⁹ While western post-satrapal dynasties and the Arsakids shared an appreciation of Greek theater, no evidence exists that the Anatolian, Armenian and Parthian courts yet shared a common appreciation of Parthian or Middle Persian poetry as arguably arose later among the courts of the Parthian Empire, including Arsakid Armenia.¹⁰ Though Tigranes II the Great no doubt knew Parthian from his time at the Arsakid court, it is worth considering whether sovereigns such as Mithradates VI of Pontos and Tigranes II would have even found it convenient to communicate to each other in anything other than Greek, despite their multilingualism and common claims to the Persian heritage.

The survivals of Persian culture in the homeland of the Achaemenids and in the empire’s former provinces were now one subordinate tradition among many, though not without a certain power and prestige. But while Persian aristocratic culture still imprinted the elites of the lands of the former Achaemenid Empire, we are speaking here of the traditions of a forming ruling class, not an urban, cosmopolitan lifestyle that linked them into the dominant social and cultural networks of power. Persian aristocratic culture certainly prevailed in more parts of the world than Egyptian or Babylonian culture and retained more recent imperial connotations. Because of this it was useful for expressing new alternative aristocratic and, eventually, imperial claims in a way that the others were not. For this reason, ‘Persianism’ is a stimulating interpretive tool for understanding this phenomenon, but ultimately, perhaps, an awkward and often ill-fitting label if the reader expects that the term describes a situation that is a close analogue of Hellenism. If one is looking for a more encompassing hermeneutical term, “Iranism” perhaps is more accurate (especially in the Arsakid and Sasanian empires), since many of the new images and practices of Middle Iranian kingship arose not just from Persian traditions, that is, the language and culture of Achaemenid Pārsa, but rather from eastern Iranian traditions.¹¹ ‘Persianism’ is a useful critical term in that it focuses specifically on the use and transformation of the Achaemenid royal legacy. It certainly obtains as the dominant term for Anatolia, Armenia and western Iran, although it would be at least a generation after the fall of the Achaemenids before ambitious dynasts would directly and loudly claim filiation with the Achaemenids. As the Arsakids consolidated their empire and the post-satrapal dynasts began building theirs, Persian claims – even inaccurate and poorly understood ones – soon began to carry equal or greater weight as claims to Alexander’s legacy.¹²

8 Lincoln (2012b).

9 Rougemont (2013); Haruti (2013).

10 Traina (2010), p. 95–103.

11 Canepa (2013a), p. 69–94.

12 Engels (2014), p. 333–362.

IMAGINING AND REPRESENTING POST-ACHAEMENID IRANIAN KINGSHIP

The royal images of the post-satrapal dynasts as witnessed in coinage and sculpture were a locus of great contestation and innovation. Most western dynasties selectively adapted the sculptural styles, insignia, costume and divine iconographies of the Macedonian dynasts under whom they served and with whom they intermarried. Some did this partially, others fully. Many kings even choose to represent themselves exclusively with a Greco-Macedonian royal iconography, as was the case in the early coinage of the Mithradatids and the majority of that of the Ariarathids. Even if they self-consciously engaged archaic Achaemenid forms, such as was the case with the early Arsakids and Frataraka, certain elements, such as the diadem, numismatic conventions and sculptural styles, still clearly grow from – and directly respond to – the wider visual culture of post-Alexandrine Macedonian charismatic kingship.

Royal costume provides an excellent example of the type of “Persianism” dealt with in this volume. Many features of the post-Achaemenid dynasts’ royal costumes purportedly originating from or mimicking Persian royal dress bear little or no resemblance to their supposed precursors. When directly compared with Achaemenid examples, it is clear that many such features changed substantially, even to the point of being unrecognizable.¹³ Just as intriguing are those moments when the post-satrapal, Perso-Macedonian sovereigns attempted to recreate Achaemenid royal traditions or fabricate an ancient origin for contemporary ones. This is very likely the scenario that gives rise to the *kidaris* of the Artaxiads, adopted by Antiochos of Kommagene, or the same sovereign’s Persian royal robes, which he understood, or at least deliberately portrayed to be, descendent from ancient traditions. Others, like the so-called Parthian ‘tiara’ and later royal costume are more clearly substantially new creations, intended to be innovative new symbols for new claims.

The earliest royal portraits of the Arsakids, Frataraka, Orontids, and Ariarathids display a royal costume that was intended to deliberately contrast with the dominant Greco-Macedonian royal image and portray royal power in Iranian terms. It is

Fig. 1 Silver tetradrachm of Bayād, the Fratarakid ruler of Pārs. Obverse: portrait of Bayād wearing the *kyrbasia*. Reverse: Bayād revering a crenulated tower. Ca. 3rd century BCE. © The Trustees of the British Museum, inv. no. 1872,1202.2



13 For example, searches for Xenophon’s so-called ‘upright tiara’ (Xen. *Anab.* 2.5.23) in the Persian material or the post-Alexandrine style of diadem in the Achaemenid visual evidence.



Fig. 2 Persian governor holding court. Detail of the upper podium frieze of the Nereid Monument, tomb of the Lykian ruler Arbinas. Ancient Xanthos, Lykia. Ca. 390–380 BCE. © The Trustees of the British Museum, inv. no. 1848,1020.62.



Fig. 3 Silver stater of the Persian satrap Tarkamuwa (Datames) minted at Tarsos. Ca. 378–372 BCE. Obverse: portrait of ruler wearing *korymbos* and *kandys* seated on *diphros* holding bow. © The Trustees of the British Museum, inv. no. 1888,1208.6.

intriguing, however, that none of these rulers represented themselves overtly as an Achaemenid king, even those, like the Frataraka, who ruled the Persian homeland as Seleukid vassals.¹⁴ An early Fratarakid coin issue is exceptional in that it portrays a figure on the obverse slaying a Macedonian soldier whose costume, beard and headgear evoke the image of the Achaemenid king.¹⁵ Yet, no dynast appeared in exactly the same costume and with the same sculptural styles as the Achaemenid king. All portraits of the Frataraka themselves portray the ruler differently, in a royal costume that bears the closest resemblance to Achaemenid satrapal regalia (Fig. 1). Formally speaking, the clothing and headgear on these numismatic representations most closely match portrayals of Iranian clothing on satrapal coins and in sculpture, for example, the Lycian Nereid tomb or the Alexander Sarcophagus (Figs. 2 and 3).¹⁶ This costume consisted of relatively close-fitting trousers, a long shirt, and the *kandys*, a long jacket worn normally over the shoulders. The headgear

14 Wieshöfer (1994).

15 Even in this instance the composition clearly grows from Hellenistic precedents. Klose and Müseler (2008), cat. nos. 2/16a–b, p. 36 and Farbtafel 6. For an overview, see Rezakhani (2008).

16 E.g. coins of the satraps Pharnabazos (British Museum, CM 1875–0701–24), Tissaphernes (British Museum CM 1947–0706–4), and Tarkumuwa (British Museum CM 1888–1206–6), or coins from Lycia: Xherei, British Museum, CM 1877–0508), Artumpara (British Museum, CM 1845–0705) and Ddänävälä (British Museum, CM 1899–0401–86); Curtis and Tallis (2005), figs. 331, 332 and 376–78. Sinisi (2014 [2015]), p. 11–13.

Fig. 4 Silver drachm of Arsakes I, founder of the Arsakid dynasty. Obverse: portrait of Arsakes wearing a *kyrbasia*. Reverse: Arsakes I wearing *kyrbasia* and *kandys* seated on *diphros* holding bow. Image after Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 5 Bronze of Xerxes of Sophene, former subject of Antiochos III and founder of an independent kingdom of Sophene. Obverse: Xerxes wearing the *kyrbasia* with cheek flaps folded up and wrapped with diadem. ca. 220 BCE. Image after Wikimedia Commons.



consists of a soft cap with long neck- and earflaps, which is in the style of the satrapal *kyrbasia* (**kurpāsa*).¹⁷

While the Frataraka were among those who adhered most faithfully to this ‘satrapal’ style of clothing, this general style of Iranian aristocratic clothing was the departure point for new, increasingly experimental images of Iranian royal power for these new dynasties.¹⁸ Some of the early numismatic portraits of these dynasts adhere more closely than others to the Achaemenid forms. Arsakes I portrayed himself as a beardless male wearing a style of clothing that is very similar to the Achaemenid representations¹⁹ (Fig. 4). The main line of Orontids in Armenia did not leave a record of their royal image in the period after Alexander. While not continuous, scattered coin series attributed to the Orontids of Sophene attest to a process of experimentation before engaging the larger post-Achaemenid idiom. The portrait of Samos I portrays a clean-shaven king wearing the satrapal *kyrbasia* with a more accentuated point, a style of headgear that the earliest royal portraits of the independent Ariarathids also show.²⁰ The portrait type of Xerxes of Sophene (ca. 220 BCE), which is paralleled in the coinage of another Seleukid vassal, Ab-

17 Some have tried to identify the headgear as the ‘upright tiara’ (*tiara orthē*) that classical sources understood marked the Achaemenid king as Great King; while Soviet scholarship and those following it called it by the anachronistic term Turkic term *bashlyk*. Peck (1993); Curtis, (1998), p. 62; Olbrycht (2013), p. 63–74; Olbrycht (1997), p. 29, plates I–IV. On this topic, see comments of Sinisi (2014 [2015]), 11.

18 Dayet (1949), p. 9–26.

19 Sellwood (1980), types 1–4.

20 These are the only accessible catalogs currently available, although there is not complete consensus on dates and attributions. Nercessian (1995), type 1; cf. Bedoukian (1995), pl. 1 no. 1; B. Simonetta (1977), pl. 1, nos. 3–9; A. Simonetta, (2007), coins of Ariarathes II, pl. 1, nos. 1–5 and successors.



Fig. 6 Monumental rock relief portraying Samos I, king of Commagene, carved by Antiochos of Comagene ca. mid-1st century BCE. Ancient Arsameia-on-the-Euphrates (Gerger Kalesi, Turkey). Photograph by Matthew Canepa.

dissares ruler of the nearby kingdom of Adiabene (ca. 210 BCE) represent an engagement with the new images of Iranian kingship.²¹ (Fig. 5) In these portraits the king is bearded and wears a diademed *kyrbasia* with the neck and cheek flaps drawn up, with two large and one small points protruding from the top from the knotted material. While the exact style of tying the *kyrbasia* differs, this style of ruler representation relates to preceding and contemporary portraits on the coins of the Frataraka of Pārsa and, just as significantly, Arsakes I of Parthia. This is a style of headgear that Antiochos of

Kommagene portrayed his grandfather wearing in his rock relief at Gerger, though coming to a sharper, upright point (Fig. 6). Later, a king named Arsames minted coins with an idiosyncratic flat topped, ‘fez’-like headdress, which if it were intended to be a *kidaris*, bears little visual relation to that of Tigranes II and Antiochos of Kommagene.²² Rather than a ‘nomadic tradition’ or an atavistic regional survival, these early experiments built a wider Iranian idiom of formulating power independent of the Macedonian tradition.

The one new visual element added to all these costumes was the Macedonian-style diadem tied around the *kyrbasia*. When Arsakes consolidated power the Macedonian version of the diadem was the indispensable and undisputed symbol of kingship throughout Western and Southern Asia. With the diadem Arsakes clearly engaged the contemporary Hellenistic visual context of royal power and it confirms that it is not merely an archaic, fossilized image. Again, while we hear of the diadem as being included among the Achaemenid kings’ insignia, the Persian king was never portrayed wearing anything like the Hellenistic diadem. The Bisotun relief portrays Darius wearing what has been described as a mural crown, which is paralleled in representations in seals and even an actual object held at the Badisches

21 Abdissares was not a ruler of Sophene as Bedoukian and others extrapolated from the coin portrait. Callataÿ (1996), p. 135–145.

22 Nercessian (1995), cat. 6–9.

Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe.²³ It is possible this was what Classical Greek authors were referring to, even if it is very different from the diadem of Alexander and his successors. Certain coin portraits of western satraps portray an obverse portrait with a band tied in a bow on their forehead, but without a tie or Greek-style diadem streamers in the back.²⁴ Rather than a direct continuation of an Achaemenid tradition, Alexander's diadem introduced a new insignia along with his new royal image, which all ambitious rulers be they Greco-Macedonian or Iranian, from the Balkans to South Asia, eventually emulated and adopted along with the royal title to claim royal status. It remained the superlative royal symbol in Iran, Mesopotamia and northern India for centuries longer than it endured as such in the Mediterranean.

The early reverse images on the coinage of the Mithradatids foregrounded Greek-style divine iconographies.²⁵ The Orontids and Ariarathids did so as well even if, unlike the Mithradatids, their obverse portraits were not always entirely Greco-Macedonian in iconography. Others, such as the Frataraka and early Arsakids engaged images from the lost Achaemenid Empire. The Frataraka foregrounded images of crenulated towers, which seem to translate into Greek modes of representation a motif that was widespread in seals whose impressions are preserved in the Persepolis tablets. This was a very local image that engaged the traditions and, perhaps, the surviving sacred landscape of Achaemenid Pārsa. Arsakes I too chose an image that had precedents in the visual culture of power of the Persian Empire, but which was not so tightly bound to the local context of a provincial landscape. On the reverses of his coins and those of his immediate successors, Arsakes himself appears seated on a portable stool (*diphros*), whose legs recall Achaemenid furniture design (Fig. 4). This figure holds a bow and wears the leather jacket over his shoulders, the *kandys*, much like the satrapal issues. While the motif of a royal or satrapal archer was widespread in the Achaemenid world – and a likely source – Arsakes did not replicate these well-known images exactly. Arsakes appears seated in profile while the earlier satrapal coins portray the figure in three quarters view from above. And while the figure might have called to mind a range of historic or legendary archers for Iranian viewers, the primary and most immediate political point of reference is a contemporary iconographical tradition: the standard Seleukid reverse type of the seated Apollo, the Seleukid divine archer.²⁶ Arsakes literally takes the place of Apollo, something that becomes more overt when he exchanges the stool

23 Hansen, Wiczorek and Tellenbach (2009), inv. no. 77/28, cat. no. 84.

24 See note 13 above.

25 Callataÿ (2009), p. 59–90.

26 While there is scholarly consensus that the figure is Arsakes himself, in the last century Seltman identified it as a clothed Apollo, while Vladimir Lukonin looked for Avestan archers and suggested that the Parthian archer should be identified with Āraš, and other Russian and Soviet scholarship sought the meaning of the figure's gesture in Herodotos' Skythikos Logos, assuming unproblematically continuous Iranian nomadic heritage. Still more, the figure does not necessarily depend on any supposed deep-seated Arsakid 'nomadic heritage,' something that has now been largely rejected. Seltman (1955); Lukonin (1983), p. 686; Tafazzoli (1986); Meyer (2013), p. 26–28; Hauser (2005). On the multivalency of such an image, see Erickson (2011) and Erickson and Wright (2011). Grenet (2006) correctly offers similar cautions against attempts to fix the figure's identity as Mithra.

for the *omphalos*. The image of the seated archer is present from the beginning of the Parthian coinage tradition, which is a period of innovation, to the end, where it becomes almost a fossilized numismatic convention akin to the nearly unreadable coin legends. Arsakes thus created a new independent image of royal power that used certain archaic Achaemenid forms to directly challenge the Seleukids.

RIVAL ARSAKID AND SELEUKID IMAGES OF IRANIAN KINGSHIP

The Arsakid royal image changed as the scope of their power and ambitions grew and as the empire grew. The early Arsakid kings were very successful in presenting multiple faces of the king to appeal to different audiences and powerbases.²⁷ After continuing the types and legends of his predecessors in his early coinage, Mithradates I's coin types change markedly after the conquest of Ekbatana and Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris and subsequent direct engagement with the former Seleukid mints (Fig. 7).²⁸ Mithradates I portrayed himself bareheaded, and bearded with a Hellenistic diadem and the reverses display Greek gods such as Zeus or Herakles. Mithradates I's new image was the first individualized Arsakid numismatic portrait since Arsakes I, whose successors had continued his coin types, including Mithradates I in his early coinage. Instead of the Iranian costume that Arsakes wore, the portraits of Mithradates I after the conquest of Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris allude to a Greek style of dress. The obverse bust portraits, which now face right according to the Seleukid convention, show a Greek *chlamys*-like cloak clasped at the left shoulder. But in this he departs from Seleukid coins, which simply portray the ruler with a bare neck. While scholarship has focused on Mithradates I's new bareheaded portrait, his lower denomination currency shows both faces of the Parthian king. Obols minted at Ekbatana portray the king's new, bareheaded, and diademed portrait on the obverse while the reverse portrays a figure wearing a diademed *kyrbasia*.²⁹ However, the beard suggests that this is a portrait of the reigning monarch, not the dynastic founder.

The Arsakids perpetuated images that had a long history and introduced a new prominence to others. The reverses of Mithradates I's coins directly engage with Seleukid and Greco-Bactrian divine iconography and many of these were likely intended to be aggressive appropriations and overt challenges. It is not always clear whether these gods were intended to portray a Greek god, an Iranian god, or a divine symbol that could speak to both constituencies, though in most cases both are

27 The majority of our primary source evidence for Arsakid ruler representation comes from coins. Recent introductions to and syntheses of Parthian numismatics: Sinisi (2012a); Sinisi (2012b), p. 7–9; Keller (2010); Important syntheses, catalogs and references: Vardanyan (2001); Le Rider (1998); Callatay (1994); Alram (1986); Sellwood (1980); Le Rider (1965); Parthian numismatics is still fraught with several controversies regarding chronology and attribution. While scholarly debate has not fully resolved all issues, as reflected in the *Sylloge Nummorum Parthicorum* project, scholarship has not accepted the revised chronologies argued for by G.F. Assar (2004; 2005, 2006a–b; 2008; 2011); see Sinisi, *Vologases I–Pacorus II*, 11fn2.

28 Sinisi (2014 [2015]), 13.

29 Sellwood (1980), types 12.4–5, 39.

Fig. 7 Silver drachm of Mithradates I minted at Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris. Obverse: portrait of diademed and bearded king. Reverse: Zeus enthroned with eagle and scepter. © The Trustees of the British Museum, inv. no. 1850,0412.40.



possible.³⁰ In a clearly competitive statement, Mithradates I introduced a new reverse type on drachms where the dynastic founder, Arsakes I, exchanges his throne for Apollo's place on the Delphic omphalos.³¹ These types appear at mints across the empire before his conquest of Seleukeia-Tigris, indicating that the king already had such ambitions for challenging and encompassing the divine imagery of the sovereigns of Hellenistic Asia. The Apollonian and Delphic significance of the omphalos was irrelevant to the image's primary message. Rather the type neatly and powerfully proclaimed that the Arsakid dynasty had replaced the Seleukids as the legitimate masters of Iran. Mithradates I's successor, Phraates II, further drew from Seleukid ruler representation and portrayed himself as a youthful prince with a new beard, deftly manipulating Seleukid divine iconographies on his reverses.

Mithradates I's title *philhellēnos* has often been interpreted as an effort to accommodate the important Greco-Macedonian economic and demographic force in his new Mesopotamian lands, though I would characterize the process as one of cooptation rather than pure accommodation.³² These coins were not local messages, but rather, seen by the Seleukids whom they just ejected, it communicated a political challenge more than any message of accommodation. Within the empire, it projected a new, more encompassing image of kingship within the larger idiom of Macedonian charismatic kingship. The goal of this new image was not to camouflage a barbarian ruler but to project a convincing and unifying image of pan-Iranian royal power, which subsumed both Seleukid and earlier Arsakid traditions, to populations that already understood unified Hellenic-Iranian sovereignty to be legitimate.

The Arsakids purposefully selected and integrated aspects of Macedonian kingship and Hellenistic culture into their developing court culture, bending them to their purposes and blending them with Iranian traditions. The club and lion of Herakles, bow and quiver, and Seleukid anchor that decorated the metopes in Parthian Nisa's Red House securely attest to the fact this was part of a larger program of royal expression that extended well beyond numismatics.³³ While none of the early Parthian images and slogans were absolutely new, in the way the court creatively recombined them, the Arsacids introduced a new and powerful vision of Iranian kingship to contend with that of the Seleucids.³⁴

30 Shenkar (2014), e.g. Tyche 118–119, Herakles 159–163; cf. Sinisi (2008); Invernizzi, (2005).

31 Vardanyan (2001), p. 25–132, esp. p. 99. Sinisi (2014 [2015]), p. 12.

32 Dąbrowa (1998).

33 Canepa (2015).

34 Vardanyan (2001), p. 106–107.



Fig. 8 Silver drachm of Demetrius II Nikator minted in Syria. Obverse: portrait of diademed and bearded king. Reverse: Zeus enthroned with victory and scepter. © The Trustees of the British Museum, inv. no. RPK,p184A.5.DemII.

Substantial textual as well as archaeological evidence illustrates that the Greek language, literature and art, lay at the heart of the life of the Parthian, Mithradatid and Artaxiad courts, as Crassus' cameo in the wedding performance of the Bacchae for Orodes II most famously attests.³⁵ Yet while they successfully accommodated the Greek populations politically, the Parthians did not attempt to assimilate themselves to Greek culture- to become "Hellenized." In fact, the opposite process could be said to have taken place. Just as they transformed the royal image, the Parthians transformed the idioms of Greek art architecture and literature in the process of using them. Greek culture, or more specifically, Western Asian Hellenism, was not a foreign commodity, rather it continued its role as the dominant aristocratic common culture of the Iranian world, however at this point, it was an idiom of power that the Iranian elites themselves not only participated in but actively shaped and promoted alongside new, developing Iranian images. Remember at this point, Seleukid kingship had for decades been the dominant royal idiom in Iran and, by the second century, the Seleukids themselves were just as Iranian as they were Macedonian. In the late second century the Seleukids, for their part, were busy consolidating their Iranian claims and ancestry to respond to the new geopolitical realities. Mithradates I's early competitor, Antiochos IV (175–164 BCE), was originally named 'Mithradates' to accentuate the Seleukids' newly acquired Pontic lineage and claims.³⁶

At this point we see a reverse in the influence. Demetrios II (145–125) was captured in battle in 139 and sent to Mithradates I where he joined the Parthian court and married the king's daughter Rhodogune before being set free by Phraates II in 129.³⁷ Much like other hostages in this period, the Arsakids' "catch and release" policy was not intended to install a faithful client, but rather sow chaos among rivals.³⁸ This was indeed the overall effect of Demetrios II's release and the king certainly pursued his own aims. Yet, the king's portrait type changes markedly and points to a major innovation and shift in strategies of legitimation, one that suggests Demetrios II was now attuned to the Arsakid royal image and its potential power in the eastern lands he hoped to contest. After ten years in the Parthian court, and having married into the Arsakid family, the numismatic portraits of his second reign

35 Plut., *Cras.* 33.1–4.

36 Mittag (2006), p. 34–37.

37 Shayegan (2011), p. 140–50; Dąbrowa (1999), p. 9–17.

38 I owe this observation to Jake Nabel, "The Seleucids Imprisoned: Roman-Parthian Hostage Exchange and its Hellenistic Precedents," (Paper presented at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research, San Diego, CA).

(129–125) portray Demetrios with a long flowing beard.³⁹ (Fig. 8) This image of the bearded Seleukid king has normally been interpreted as simply an eccentric evocation of, or attempt at assimilation with, Poseidon, Dionysos or (as portrayed on his reverse) Zeus.⁴⁰ However, if one shifts the frame of reference from the distant Mediterranean to the true geographical and cultural context, that of Mesopotamia, Iran, and Syria, the more immediate significance of the portrait comes into focus. It deliberately appropriates the ‘classic’ Iranian royal image of his father-in-law and the preeminent Iranian Great King, Mithradates I. Mithradates I anticipated Demetrios II’s use of the enthroned Zeus and any assimilation between the bearded sovereign and god was first established by the Arsakid king. The first coin portraits of Demetrios II’s second reign portray a distinctly ‘Parthian’ style of hairdressing, or at least representation, where the hair is pressed down over the crown of his head. This is softened into a more Hellenic tousle in later dies.⁴¹ It is perhaps not just a coincidence that Demetrios II’s titles on his coinage includes *theopatēr*, which has been associated with intimations of ruler cult or divine dynastic descent, are consonant with Arsakid expressions.⁴² Demetrios II created an image that not only expressed power in the established language of Hellenism but also the newly-emerging and potent ‘Persianism’ (or perhaps, in this context, better ‘Iranism’) of the Arsakids, which was intended primarily for the eastern lands under contention. Not only are previous Seleukid “campaign beards,” such as that of Seleukos II, typologically different, in the eyes Western Asian viewers, its meaning was now inescapably intertwined with and informed by Parthian visual culture.⁴³ The image of the Parthian king introduced a new powerful, contemporary referent to the bearded ruler that it did not have a century before. Without the Parthian influence, the image of the bearded sovereign would not be possible for this age: it is a rival image that engages the repertoire of a new Iranian kingship.

Under Artabanos I (127–124 BCE) the official Arsakid royal image changes again as the coinage begins to offer a contemporary view of the king. In the obverse portrait the king begins to appear in rich royal costume.⁴⁴ This royal costume deeply influenced Parthian elites, and elites in eastern Roman cities such as Palmyra. The next great innovation in Arsakid ruler representation takes place under Mithradates II (123–88 BCE) with a further expansion of royal imagery drawn from the Iranian world.⁴⁵ The king began to portray himself in a new, distinctive style of royal headgear, to which scholarship conventionally refers as the ‘Parthian tiara,’ Arsakes returns to his throne on the obverse, and the title *philhellēnos* disappears. Bejeweled with many astral or theriomorphic symbols, the tiara consisted of a high rounded hat

39 Houghton and Lorber (2008), v2.1: p. 415 and v2.2: pl. 39, nos. 2155–2156.2a; pl. 86. The Arsakid king now takes over the role of ‘kingmaker’, becoming the new Great King (Strootman 2011a).

40 E. g. Mittag (2002); Günther (2011).

41 Houghton and Lorber (2008), v1: p. 415 and v2: pl. 39, nos. 2155–2156.2a.

42 Gariboldi (2004), p. 375 and n. 40.

43 This contrast is noted by Lorber and Iossif (2009). See also Wright (2013).

44 Curtis (1998), p. 62.

45 Sinisi (2014 [2015]), 14–15.



Fig. 9 Silver tetradrachm of Tigranes II (the Great) of Armenia minted at Antioch-on-the-Orontes. Obverse: portrait of king wearing the Armenian *kidaris* with diadem across brow.

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Fig. 10 Rare silver drachm of Ariarathes VI of Cappadocia. Obverse: portrait of king wearing tiara (a Cappadocian *kidaris*?) with diadem around peak. Ca. 130-112/0 BCE. Reverse: Athena seated left bestowing a diadem or wreath. Image after CNG coins

with ear- and neck-flaps similar to the satrapal headgear, but appears to be of rigid material.⁴⁶ On the side of his tiara Mithradates II displayed a star surrounded by crescent moons. The star was one of the most common symbols, though a bull's horn or a flower also appear. Mithradates II and his successors integrated the diadem with the tiara, around whose lower edge it was tied. In other coin or statue portraits, Parthian sovereigns at times portrayed themselves only wearing the diadem.

This supreme symbol of Arsakid kingship did not grow entirely or directly from Achaemenid or Seleukid traditions, and still less from nomadic ones. Rather, it was a deliberately new innovation intended to subsume and supersede all of them. Initially Mithradates II emitted this image only on his drachms minted on the Iranian Plateau, not in Seleukeia-Tigris, whose mint retained the, now traditional, bare-headed 'philhellenic' portrait on its tetradrachms. This suggests that Mithradates II developed this new image primarily to reach his Iranian powerbase while favoring the philhellenic portrait for Mesopotamia. By the first century BCE, the image of the king with short hair, long beard, wearing the tiara, and jeweled Parthian riding suit appeared on drachms and tetradrachms across the empire.⁴⁷ It becomes one of the standard images of Arsakid ruler representation reappearing several times throughout the dynasty. While the shape of the tiara remains generally the same, later kings altered its ornament and integrated personalized decorative elements.⁴⁸

46 Olbrycht (1997).

47 Curtis (1998), p. 62; Sellwood (1980), p. 31.

48 Gall (1970), p. 299–300.

RIVAL VISIONS OF IRANIAN KINGSHIP IN ARMENIA AND KAPPADOKIA

As he forged his empire, Tigranes II created a new style of headgear (Fig. 9). It is sometimes referred to by scholarship as the ‘Armenian tiara,’ but Antiochos of Kom-magene calls it “the *kidaris*” in his inscriptions. No coins exist of Artaxias I nor any other Artaxiads conclusively until Tigranes II, whose imperial coinage dwarfs the output of all other Artaxiad sovereigns.⁴⁹ Rather than a product of continual evolution, this was a new image of kingship that Tigranes II promoted to distinguish him from any other rulers of post-Seleukid Western Asia.⁵⁰ The Armenian *kidaris* as portrayed in the coins of Tigranes II and successors differs from his Armenian predecessors. The tiara retained some elements from the satrapal *kyrbasia*, namely the ear- and neck-flaps. Representations on coins and sculpture indicate that its upper section was fashioned out of some sort of rigid material. Differing from Sames I’s and Arsames I’s conical headgear as well as the Parthian tiara, which was ovoid, Tigranes II’s new Armenian tiara appeared as a receding trapezoid from the side and slightly triangular from the front. Two rectangular panels on the left and right joined two long rectangular strips on the front and back. Later three-dimensional sculptural representations portray circular shapes, perhaps pearls or simply circular appliqué, lining the front and back strips. Its top was flat and decorated with a crest of five triangular points each topped with some sort of finial, often pearl-shaped. Pearls or jewels accentuated and decorated the seams that joined the side panels and the sections that constituted the five triangles on the pointed crest. On some issues, pearls edged the lower border and the side- and ear-flaps.⁵¹ According to literary descriptions and the visual evidence, the royal diadem was a separate object, which the king wore around the tiara, passing along its lower edge and running slightly below the front border to rest on the king’s forehead.⁵² In later sculptural representations, the diadems could be decorated with stars or thunderbolts.

Responding to the traditions of the Parthian tiara and contrasting with previous Armenian royal headgear, the new Armenian tiara carried symbolic figural and ornamental decoration on the two side panels. On the vast majority of Tigranes II’s coins, the tiara’s central panel carries representations of an eight-pointed star flanked on either side by eagles standing with their backs to the star, and heads turned over their wings towards it. In addition to a small number of minor variations, such as changes in the number of rays on the star, the tiara on certain coins, mainly from the Damascus mints, contain a comet with a tail curving upwards to the right instead of the eagles and star.⁵³ It is no coincidence that this new symbol of kingship emerges as Armenia establishes itself as an empire. As a new imperial image it rivaled the

49 Bedoukian (1978); Bedoukian (1995), p. 4–12; Nercessian (1995), p. 54–57.

50 The tiara/*kidaris* appears only in Tigranes II’s coinage. All the previous examples cited by Nercessian were spurious. Nercessian (1985), p. 2–12.

51 Catalog of variations: Nercessian (2006), p. 117–119.

52 Memnon 38.4. Cassius Dio 36.1–3.

53 In contrast to Bedoukian and Nercessian, it makes more sense to interpret as comets those they describe as a defective single eagle/star device given the very rough nature of the coins. The

established traditions of the Arsakids, at least momentarily, as did Tigranes II's Armenian empire itself. This royal headgear made a big impact on both Western Asia and Anatolia and was adopted by Antiochos I of Kommagene after the fall of Tigranes II and appears in the victory coinage of Rome.

The royal portrait of the Ariarathids of Kappadokia follows a similar pattern for those kings who minted coins. The early coins of the independent kings portray the ruler with a satrapal *kyrbasia*, with cheek flaps drawn across his chin and, significantly, no diadem.⁵⁴ In most portraits, the peak of the *kyrbasia* lies to the right of the king's head as would be expected in satrapal regalia, though in a few the top comes to a peak. Ariarathes III then adopts an 'upright tiara' (or better, an 'upright *kyrbasia*') which corresponds quite closely to the style of those worn in Sophene and Kommagene. Just as significantly, Ariarathes III begins issuing silver coinage that engages Hellenistic types and on these he is the first of the Kappadokian kings to proclaim himself king (*basileus*).⁵⁵

Most Kappadokian kings preferred to portray themselves bareheaded and diademed in a manner indistinguishable from most other Hellenistic kings. The reign of Ariarathes VI represents an important shift, which hints at the growing prestige of the new Iranian royal image even among those kings who had portrayed themselves as successors of Alexander. Ariarathes VI minted silver coinage with obverse portraits that portray him as a Hellenistic king: bareheaded, clean shaven, and wearing the diadem. In a rare series of drachms Ariarathes VI introduces a new, elaborate type of tiara, which, for the first time in Kappadokian coinage, was combined with the diadem (Fig. 10).⁵⁶ The upright peak of the tiara, appears to be constructed out of some sort of rigid material instead of fabric. In some examples, it covers only the back three-fourths of the top of the ruler's head, leaving the front of the scalp and bangs exposed. A band (without diadem streamers) runs around the ruler's head across the temples with hair spilling over the top. The actual royal diadem was tied midway around the peak of the tiara.

Ariarathes VI's reign is noteworthy for the fact that he introduced an important new royal image speaking to his Iranian cultural constituency at the same time as he started to engage the dominant, Hellenistic image of kingship. Quite significantly, Ariarathes VI used both the standard Hellenistic portrait type *and* the new Iranian type in his silver coinage. This suggests that the king found it expedient to promote both cultural backgrounds in the numismatic medium intended for the army, court, and foreign circulation. The fact that the image of the king in the tiara appears in prestige tetradrachms indicates that this was likely intended primarily for the elites and kings of Armenia, Kommagene, Pontos, and, perhaps, Parthia.⁵⁷ Indeed, this dual strategy of engaging both Iranian and Hellenistic visual and ritual forms becomes even more important in the next generation of Anatolian and Armenian rul-

'eagle' is in the same location as the tail of the comets in the standard comet issues. P.Z. Be-doukian (1978), nos. 10–15, 109–119, 121–122; Nercessian (2006), p. 80–84, pls. 76–78.

54 A. Simonetta (2007), pls. 1–2, coins of Ariarathes II and Ariaramnes. Sinisi (2014 [2015]), fig. 3.

55 Simonetta (2007), pls. 2–3, Ariarathes III.

56 Simonetta (2007), pl. 10.

57 Michels (2013), p. 232.

ers, with Mithradates VI, Tigranes II and Antiochos of Kommagene each producing their own variations on this theme.

The weight of the evidence indicates that these Anatolian and Armenian dynasts each concocted new types of headgear to embody what they understood to be an ancient Persian royal symbol just as they re-enlivened or reimagined the ancient rituals of their Persian ancestors. To judge from Antiochos of Kommagene's inscriptions, the Orontid, Artaxiad and Ariarathid 'tiaras' signified a preeminent royal status. Antiochos calls it 'the *kidaris*,' and this term occurs among certain Classical Greek authors who describe Achaemenid regalia and in Hellenistic Anatolia. However, no Achaemenid representation portrays anything remotely similar to the Hellenistic *kidaris*, though scholars often mistakenly refer to representations of the king's circlet crown as represented on Darics as the *kidaris*. The only type of headgear that presents itself as a candidate for the Achaemenid *kidaris* are those cylindrical hats worn by the king of kings in the stereotyped representations on the gateways and orthostats of Persepolis and on the royal tombs. Yet even if it was not a direct continuation, the late Achaemenid tradition clearly inspired Kappadokian and Armenian *kidareis* and these rulers consciously related their creations to it. Thus, rather than a static antiquarian revival, they were a dynamic and evolving symbol of kingship with vital contemporary significance in addition to perceived roots within an ancient tradition.

BUILDING AND ENACTING ROYAL IDENTITY IN PONTOS AND ARMENIA

Let us turn to the problem of continuity in, and in most cases, reinvention of palatial traditions and ritual practices.⁵⁸ Ritual practice and ritual and the natural and built environment were central in forming and maintaining post-Achaemenid Persian royal identity. This process is characterized by a dynamic interaction among local topographical and cultic significances and new global idioms of Hellenistic and Iranian kingship that the rulers of these regions contested. These dynasties engaged the pre-existing topography of their newly-won or newly-formed kingdoms, appropriating sites that had deep histories of occupation and cults that bore the marks of an ancient Anatolian or Caucasian origin as well as other more recent ones that displayed certain Persian elements.

Many of the local cults understood to be 'Persian' were not necessarily Persian in origin and several prominent examples were recent creations intended expressly to connect the local dynasty to its 'Persian' roots. The Achaemenids, for their part, built and performed their most prominent rituals in open-air sanctuaries, which consisted of either enclosed precincts on a plain or terraces on hillside or mountaintop.⁵⁹ These form the most abundant and clearest archaeological evidence of unquestionably Achaemenid cult sites. We have a great deal of evidence of Achae-

58 This is explored in greater detail in Canepa (forthcoming, b).

59 Canepa (2013b), p. 324–339.

menid ritual activity in the Persepolis Fortification tablets including daily sacrifices at the kings' tombs and, especially, the *šip* ritual, which was a massive feast. The *šip* was often celebrated at sites with a paradise. Pasargadae, for example, was the site of both a paradise and a sacred precinct. The sanctuary was located in a large open plain set apart from the palatial district. It was surrounded by low mud walls with two limestone plinths, one intended to accommodate a royal officiant or his representative and the other, set about nine meters away, a fire holder.⁶⁰

Mithradates VI of Pontos deftly engaged ritual to claim the 'Persian' traditions he was purporting to champion. While several regional sites associated with Persian religion, such as Zela, might have originated during the Achaemenid period, Mithradates VI's mountaintop cult of Zeus Stratios had a more distinctly royal flavor.⁶¹ At the sanctuary on Mount Yasıçal representatives of all the districts of Pontos would assemble for open-air sacrifices that reinterpreted a renewed, royal Persian religion (Fig. 11).⁶² To judge from the Roman iteration of the site, it appears that the sanctuary hosted recurring sacrifices that were intended to cement together royal and regional identities and (at least demonstrate) loyalties.

While its basic ritual profile was similar, Mithradates VI orchestrated a one-off event that reenacted this Achaemenid royal ritual on a truly colossal scale. To celebrate his victory over Murena, Mithradates VI stage-managed an open-air sacrifice and banquet that culminated in a massive pyre.⁶³ Given site lines, the sacrifice could have theoretically taken place at the sanctuary of Zeus Stratios near Amaseia but its other candidate site, on a high place near his sea-side capital Sinope, is equally plausible for a performance that was both "visible at a distance of 180 kilometers out to sea" and clearly intended to be 'visible' in all senses well beyond the borders of his kingdom. It was an extraordinarily lavish spectacle whose magnitude ensured it was just as intimidating as it was awe-inspiring and was designed to make a deep impression on the imaginations of both allies and enemies. He was evidently successful as a detailed description of it and, just as significantly, a concise explanation of its origin and significance appears in Appian's histories. Appian includes several details and a specific ascription to a royal Persian origin, likely reflects Mithradates VI's official propaganda, not a Roman antiquarian gloss.⁶⁴ According to Appian, Mithradates VI conducted the sacrifice "according to the fashion of his country," which could have indeed been true. But despite obvious gulfs in time and space, he states that Mithradates VI performed the sacrifice, "as at the sacrifices of the Persian kings at Pasargadae." Even if the Pontic kings had performed similar sacrifices on a smaller scale, given its scale this iteration deliberately recreated the Achaemenid *šip* sacrifices. Mithradates VI orchestrated the sacrifice to express and, just as importantly, enliven his connection to the same Persian heritage that the Artaxiads and Arsakids were contesting. This new 'old' tradition of a monumental, open-air mountaintop sanctuary finds echoes in the open-air *hierothēsis* of

60 Stronach (1978), p. 138.

61 Strabo 15.3.13–20. Canepa (2013b), p. 343–344.

62 French (1996).

63 App., *Mithr.* 66.83. Canepa (2013b), p. 345.

64 Also see Lerouge-Cohen, this volume.

Fig. 11 The mountaintop, open-air sanctuary Zeus Stratios in Pontos with remains of central altar, support buildings and circular precinct wall (rebuilt in the Roman period). Yassaçal, Turkey. Imagery © 2015 DigitalGlobe/Google earth.



Nemrut Dağı in the Orontid kingdom of Kommagene.⁶⁵ Antiochos of Kommagene established what he understood to be Persian cult in his open-air cult sites across his kingdom. While presented as his ancient ‘fortunate roots,’ this and other cults appropriated a new Middle Iranian idiom of Dynastic cult and deployed it in the context of late Hellenistic power politics.

The Orontids and early Artaxiads of Armenia built at strategically selected sites to create a new independent royal identity. After the fall of the Achaemenids they deliberately excluded sites like Erebuni and Altuntepe that had been associated with Persian satrapal rule, choosing to build at sites that were unoccupied since the Urartian period.⁶⁶ Armavir, the new Orontid royal palace rose on the foundations of the Urartian palace. Similarly, Artaxias founded Artašat at a site that did not have a history of occupation in the Achaemenid era, but did bear the remains of an Urartian fortress. One of the most evocative bodies of evidence on this selective and creative recombination of early traditions are Artaxias’ boundary stones that he set up to delineate land holdings in the region around Lake Sevan.⁶⁷ The convention of boundary stones was rooted in an ancient Urartian tradition, yet Artaxias integrated several Persian royal traditions into the stones’ inscriptions. Whereas the Urartian stela were rounded on top, the Artaxiad stela integrate crenellations reminiscent of Achaemenid architecture. Similarly, while the Urartian stele are inscribed in cuneiform, Artaxias inscribed his stele with Achaemenid Imperial Aramaic, which was used for letter writing and record-keeping in the Achaemenid Empire.

A similar pattern is discernable in the breakaway Orontid kingdom of Sophene. Here the kings favored sites with pre-Achaemenid histories of occupation but no Persian satrapal remains, while foregrounding their Persian royal heritage in their naming conventions. Samos I, (from Old Iranian, *Sāma*) the Orontid ruler who established Sophene as a separate Orontid kingdom dependent on the Seleukid Empire, founded the city of Samosata sometime before 245 BCE on the site of

65 See Jacobs in this volume.

66 Khatchadourian (2008), p. 401–422.

67 Khatchadourian (2007).

Hittite Kummuh. While the site was Hittite, the excavators recovered a structure with well-finished limestone orthostats revetting its earth-fill wall, possibly evoking Achaemenid architecture.⁶⁸ Later, Arsames (Aršāma), one of Antiochos I of Kommagene's purported ancestors, founded the city of Arsamosata (Aršamašat). These sites all show a gap between the Assyrian and early Orontid levels with no significant Persian remains. In what becomes a characteristically Orontid tradition, the naming convention "the Happiness of ..." in their royal foundations continues or at least echoes a highly charged term in Achaemenid royal ideology. This is prominent in the phrase 'Happiness for Mankind' (šiyāti ... martiyahyā), which is part of the preamble of the many Achaemenid royal inscriptions and attested in the individual name of a paradise plantation found in two of the Persepolis Treasury tablets: Višpašiyātiš, "All-Happiness."⁶⁹

The post-satrapal families of Anatolia and Armenia cultivated the Persian institution of the paradise, which was an integral part of the Achaemenid royal economy and ideology.⁷⁰ Paradises were a feature of the Achaemenid Empire's satrapal residences, from which the cultural tradition, if not the actual installations, can be traced in Anatolia and Armenia. The Achaemenid paradise was a protected space that encouraged agricultural, animal or human productivity through plantations, workshops, stockyards and storehouses. Cultivated land planted with crops or trees appears the most often in the sources, though a paradise could also contain storehouses for grain and produce, seedling nurseries, depots for firewood or brick workshops. Although they were the exception rather than the rule in the Achaemenid era, palatial estates with gardens and even hunting facilities were the type that retained connotations of a specifically Persian identity and lifestyle.

The paradises of the main line of the post-satrapal dynasties of Anatolia and Armenia present the closest approximations to the original Persian paradises. According to Movses Khorenats'i, the last Orontid king, Eruand (Orontes IV) moved the royal residence westwards because the Araxes River had changed course. This settlement does not appear in any Classical source and only the Armenian historical tradition retains any memory of it. While Movses Khorenats'i's account of pre-Christian Armenia often includes more fable than history, his description of the Eruand's foundations is corroborated by archaeological evidence.⁷¹ His new foundation consisted of a fortified, mountaintop royal residence Eruandašat ('Joy of Orontes,' < Old Persian *Arvanta-šiyāti), a forested hunting preserve, and a paradise plantation known as Eruandakert ('Founded by Orontes' < Old Persian *Arvanta-karta) with gardens, vineyards and, it appears, a villa.⁷² Movses Khorenats'i lists and names each element separately, but it is clear that they functioned as an

68 Özgüç (1996), p. 213–216; Özgüç (1987), p. 297–304; Özgüç (1986), p. 221–227.

69 On the original Achaemenid significances of this and related terms, see Lincoln (2012a), p. 68–69.

70 These continuities and changes are explored in greater detail in Canepa (forthcoming a & b); an entry to the vast bibliography and scattered evidence is provided by Tuplin (1996) and Lincoln (2012a), p. 3–19.

71 Movses Khorenats'i, 2.39–42.

72 Ter-Martirosov (2008), p. 3–19.

interdependent whole. Eruand's new 'city' did not resemble a self-contained and functionally divided Hellenistic city. Rather, it was organized on the plan of a Persian royal or satrapal residence, such as Pasargadae or Daskyleion. While many ancient Western Asian and Macedonian monarchs had enjoyed estates and hunting parks, at this point in history and among the Iranian cultural sphere, this specific type of estate was associated with the Iranian aristocratic lifestyle. When deployed by kings such as the Mithradatids and Orontids, and especially when named in the manner of an Achaemenid paradise, they are a "Persianism" that claims direct filiation with Persian kingship.

Tigranes II the Great founded, or re-founded, a number of eponymous settlements called Tigranakert both in the original core of his kingdom and his newly-won empire. Appian relates that Tigranes II established what appears to be the constituent elements of a royal paradise estate on the outskirts of his primary Tigranakert.⁷³ In addition to a forested hunting enclosure, the nearby region included a palace, horticultural enclosures and fishponds.⁷⁴ Descriptions of Mithradates VI's royal estates present a similar picture.⁷⁵ In addition to productive economic assets, such as mines and watermills, Mithradates VI's palace at Kabeira hosted animal parks and hunting grounds.⁷⁶

Given the paucity of the evidence on Arsakid palaces, it is not clear whether gardens played an important role in them in the same manner as the Palace of Pasargadae. However, it is certain the Arsakids developed crown agricultural land and the records from Nisa evince a system of extractive and redistribution very reminiscent of Achaemenid paradise-plantations. Hunting was central to Arsakid courtly life and we have hints that other kings within the Parthian cultural sphere maintained hunting enclosures.⁷⁷ The paradise was integral to the "Persian" royal image of the post-satrapal kings and very likely played a role within a shared aristocratic common culture in their dealings with the Parthians. The hunt would have been complementary to their shared love of Greek theatrical performances and Greek literature.⁷⁸ The position of a royal palace complete with a hunting enclosure on the outskirts of the city becomes a familiar Iranian institution in important Sasanian cities and it persisted as a means by the Sasanian king and his client kings claimed and negotiated Iranian royal identity, even if, they might be Christian, like the later Arsakid kings of Armenia.

73 That is, the site located in Arzan/Golamasya (Siirt Province, Turkey). While there has been later speculation, this is the site that has corroborating archaeological evidence and makes the most sense with what is known about the ancient geography. Sinclair (1994); Sinclair (1996); Avdoyan (2006).

74 App. *Mithr.* 84.

75 Mithradatid estates are attested at Kabeira, on Lake Stephane and Laodikeia. Strabo 12.3.30 and 38.

76 Strabo 12.3.30.

77 Philostratus, 1.37.

78 Plutarch, *Life of Crassus*, 33.1–5. Traina (2010).

CONCLUSION

Under the Achaemenids, Persian identity and cultural practices served as a source of legitimacy and inclusion in a larger court society. However, things changed markedly after their fall. Like the various Pahlavi writing systems that emerged from Achaemenid Imperial Aramaic, Persian culture was fractured, multifarious and without direct continuities from the practices of the former imperial center.⁷⁹ Persian royal identity and culture, especially in the peripheries of the former empire, was something that often had to be reassembled, retooled or reinvented. It is telling that the variations of proto-Zoroastrianism that grew during this period varied greatly according to local tradition, with the traditions of Pārsa only later becoming dominant over others through the force of Sasanian imperial will.

An engagement with the memory of Achaemenid religion and court culture (or a later reinvented version of them) was central to the royal identity of Mithradates VI, Tigranes II, and the Arsakids. Yet, the ‘Persianisms’ (emphasis on the plural) that flourished among the post-satrapal dynasts of Anatolia and Armenia were court and aristocratic cultures first and foremost. They did not serve as a force of direct imperial compulsion or assimilation, but rather a source of symbolic capital with which elites could refashion their identities and align themselves with multiple cultural poles, often in a fluid and eclectic way. Even if post-Achaemenid “Persianism” did not awaken or create a similar urban cosmopolitanism, it shared with Hellenism its capacity to provide an open, encompassing space where aristocrats could think of and display themselves as elite, even royal. In the end a truly Persian court culture did not take its place as a separate and cohesive royal tradition until the Sasanians. With the rise of the Sasanians the prestige of Persian culture again began to rival and displace that of Hellenistic culture in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

79 Haruta (2013).

PERSIANISM IN THE KINGDOM OF PONTIC KAPPADOKIA THE GENEALOGICAL CLAIMS OF THE MITHRIDATIDS

Charlotte Lerouge-Cohen

The kingdom of Pontic Kappadokia – which was not known as ‘Pontus’ until Eupator’s time¹– was founded in the beginning of the third century BCE by Mithridates Ktistes. Mithridates was born into the Persian family that, according to Greek sources, ‘ruled’ the Greek city of Kios in Propontis under the Achaemenids. The last of the “masters of Kios”, who had maintained the city’s rule under the Diadochi, was assassinated by Antigonos I Monophtalmus in 301 BCE; his nephew Mithridates (later known as Ktistēs)² subsequently fled to Pontic Kappadokia, where he founded a “kingdom of which he declared himself King (*basileus*)” in 281 or 280 BCE.³

The new dynasty, usually referred to by historians as the ‘Mithridatids’, rapidly integrated into the Hellenistic monarchies through intermarriage with the Seleukid house: Mithridates II (266–220) married Laodike, Seleukos II’s sister⁴, and presented his daughter Laodice to Antiochos Hierax – she finally became Achaios’s wife⁵. Her daughter, also called Laodike, married Antiochos III in 222 BCE.

THE MITHRIDATIC DYNASTY AND REFERENCES TO THE “SEVEN”

Polybius, describes the wedding, informs us of the Mithridatids’ genealogical claims:

(Antiochos) was joined by Diognetos, the admiral from Kappadokia Pontica, bringing Laodice, the daughter of Mithradates, a virgin, the affianced bride of the King. Mithradates claimed to be a descendant of one of those seven Persians who had killed the Magus, and he had preserved in his family the government on the Pontus originally granted to them by Darius.

- 1 On this name see Reinach (1988) p. 161.
- 2 The surname ‘Ktistes’ can only be found only in textual sources: see, e.g., Strabo 12, 3, 41; Lucian, *Makrobioi* 13. It is unknown whether Mithridates adopted it officially or not.
- 3 For this date, see Reinach (1888). The tale of the Mithradatids’ origins, very largely hypothetical, is a reconstitution obtained mainly through the combination of several source texts (Diodorus Siculus 20, 111, 4; Strabo 12, 3, 41; Plutarch, *Demetrius* 4; Lucian, *Makrobioi* 13). It has been established by Ed. Meyer (1879) and admitted by all the scholars; later it was shown that Ktistes was the nephew, and not the son, of Mithridates of Kios (see Olshausen (1978). However, it raises many questions; one can wonder, for instance, which kind of ‘rule’ the Mithridatids family could exercise on Kios – we have no other example of a Persian family ‘ruling’ a Greek city in Achaemenid times. Briant (1996) p. 1051–1052 is quite skeptical about this ‘domination’, which seems to be an anachronic projection.
- 4 Porphyry FGrH260F. 32 = Eusebios, *Chron.* I, p. 251 Schoene; see also Justin 38, 5, 3.
- 5 See Polyb. 5, 74, 5 and 8, 22. See also the commentary by McGing (1986), p. 21–23.

ὁ δὲ Μιθριδάτης εὐχετο μὲν ἀπόγονος τῶν ἑπτὰ Περσῶν ἑνὸς τῶν ἐπανελομένων τὸν μάγον, διατετηρήκει δὲ τὴν δυναστείαν ἀπὸ πρῶτων τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς αὐτοῖς διαδοθεῖσαν ὑπὸ Δαρείου παρὰ τὸν Εὐξείνιον πόντον.⁶

This text shows that the Kings of Pontic Kappadokia claimed to be descendants of one of the seven noble Persians that assassinated the usurper Smerdis in 522 at the instigation of Darius, and thus enabled him to take royal power (this well-documented episode is described by Greek sources, beginning with Herodotos, as well as by Darius' engraved inscription at Behistun).⁷

Not only the Mithridatids placed the Seven at the root of their family tree: two other Hellenistic dynasties that claimed Persian descent, namely, the Ariarathids of Kappadokia and the Orontids of Armenia, did likewise.⁸

Even though some scholars accept the idea that all these dynasties actually descended from one of the Seven, these genealogical assertions cannot be proven and are generally considered as false⁹. Even if one of these Hellenistic rulers was linked to one of the Seven, it is very doubtful that this link would still be remembered three centuries after the murder of Smerdis.

This tendency to link themselves to the Seven should probably not be understood as the remnant of an Achaemenid custom: nothing indicates that it became customary in the Achaemenid world to distinguish dignitaries by recalling their descent from one of the seven conspirators.¹⁰ The idea that Darius had given a

6 Polybius 5, 43, 1–2. I chose to translate the word *dunasteia* as ‘government’ instead of ‘kingdom’, which appears in the LCL: *dunasteia* is a more neutral term.

7 Greek and Latin sources: Aesch., Persians vv. 774–777; Hdt. 3.30.61–88; Ktesias F 13, 11–18; Justin 1.9.0. A transcription and German translation of the Behistun inscription of Darius by Weissbach (1931), p. 9–74, can be consulted at achemenet.com; the English translation by King and Thompson (1907) is available at livius.org; two recent French translations are those of Lecoq (1997); Vallat (2011). The paragraphs concerning Smerdis' assassination are paragraphs 10–14 and 68–69.

8 For the Ariarathids see Diodorus Siculus 31, 19, 1–2 (Walton edition) (= Photius, *Library* 382a sqq): the Kings of Kappadokia say that their ancestor was Anaphas, ‘one of the Seven Persians who assassinated the Magian’ (τῶν ἑπτὰ Περσῶν τὸν μάγον ἐπανελομένων ἑνὸς), ‘to whom (...), because of his valour, the government of Kappadokia was granted, with the understanding that no tribute would be paid to the Persians’ (ὃ φασὶ δι’ ἀνδρείαν συγχωρηθῆναι τὴν Καππαδοκίας δυναστείαν, ὥστε μὴ τελεῖν φόρους Πέρσαις); for the Orontids, see Strabo 11, 14, 15: ‘The Persians and the Macedonians, who after that time held Syria and Media, were in possession of Armenia; the last (who reigned over it) was Orontes, the descendant of Hydarnes, one of the seven Persians’ (... καταίχον τὴν Ἀρμενίαν Πέρσαι καὶ Μακεδόνες, μετὰ ταῦτα οἱ τὴν Συρίαν ἔχοντες καὶ τὴν Μηδίαν· τελευταῖος δ’ ὑπῆρξεν Ὀρόντης ἀπόγονος Ὑδάρνου, τῶν ἑπτὰ Περσῶν ἑνὸς). I here adapt the Italian translation provided by R. Nicolai and G. Traina in their edition of l. 11 of Strabo (Nicolai and Traina 2000), because the translations put forward by H.L. Jones in the LCL (1928) and by F. Lasserre in the CUF (1975) are not convincing from a historical point of view.

9 Reinach (1890) p. 3 accepted these assertions; McGing (1986) and Ballesteros-Pastor (1996) do not deny them but consider it impossible to prove them; Bosworth and Wheatley (1998) tried to justify them, but their demonstration is unconvincing, in my opinion; it seems to have convinced Ballesteros-Pastor (2012) (see p. 367), who is less skeptical than Ballesteros-Pastor (1996).

10 On this point, see Lerouge-Cohen (2013).

dunasteia on the shore of the Pontus to the Mithridatids' ancestor in order to thank him for his help should not be accepted by historians: of course, it is well known that Darius felt gratitude towards his (six) accomplices, as mentioned on the Behistun inscription¹¹; moreover, Herodotus tells us that Darius granted them some privileges not because of their courage, but because they recognized him as King: the Seven had the right to enter the Royal Palace without an 'introducer', and the King was obliged to choose his wives from among their families¹². However, it is not mentioned here that a *dunasteia* was given to them. One cannot imagine, in any case, that the Achaemenid King would present a *dunasteia* to one of his friends: as P. Briant has shown, when the King gave estates or even cities, they were above all fiscal presents, and did not necessarily imply a political domination¹³. The story told by the Mithridatids (and the Ariarathids) about Darius and their ancestors must be considered as invention¹⁴.

It is evident why they would forge such a tale. Firstly, it legitimized their dynasty's power in Pontic Kappadokia: namely, it showed that the kingdom was not a recent creation (while in fact it was) but that it had already existed in Achaemenid times, and that the Mithridatids were its legitimate rulers because they had received it from Darius. In addition, the link with the Seven, gave prestige to the dynasty: we know from Darius and Herodotus that the Seven all came from very high-born families of the Achaemenid kingdom.

This leads to the following question: When the Mithridatids (and the Ariarathids) presented themselves as descendants of one of the Seven, did they try to please a Persian 'audience'? Many scholars insist on the fact that old Persian families from the Pontic kingdom (as well as Ariarathid Kappadokia) that had been installed in Anatolia by the Achaemenids remained very powerful in the kingdoms that emerged after the fall of the Persians and the Macedonian conquest. Did their dynastic genealogical claims target these Persian aristocratic families, whose support the Kings needed and whose 'Iranian' pride they tried to exalt¹⁵? In the eyes of the Persian nobles, however, this genealogical discourse would counter-balance the real and deep Hellenization of the Kings, who spoke Greek, struck coinage

11 See the Behistun inscription par. 69 : Darius invites his successors to keep protecting the Seven and their descendants.

12 Hdt 3, 84.

13 Briant (1985a).

14 See Meyer (1879) p. 31–38 ; McGing (1986) p. 13. For an analysis of this reference to the Seven by the Mithridatids and Ariarathids, see Panitschek (1987–1988); Lerouge-Cohen (2014) (they should be understood in a Hellenistic context).

15 See McGing (1996) p. 10: genealogical claims of the Mithridatic dynasty show 'how important the Iranian element was in Pontic society'.

copying Hellenistic models¹⁶, and practiced euergetism in the main Greek religious centers¹⁷.

This interpretation is problematic. Historians have indeed often emphasized the power of the Persian families in the kingdom of Pontic Kappadokia, but this is not confirmed by the sources: in fact, the genealogical claims of the reigning dynasties represent one of the most important proofs of this alleged power. The Kings seem to have met no opposition to their Hellenizing policies from these families, and there is no proof that it would have been necessary for them to give ‘pledges of Persianism’ to render them docile. The sources do not reveal any tension between the Persian element of Pontic Kappadokia’s population and the sovereigns that ruled it.

Moreover, there is no indication that the Seven were even remembered in the Iranian world: the Arsakids never referred to them, and neither did the Sasanids that succeeded them.

In contrast, the story of the Seven was famous throughout the Greek world, and had very positive connotations: Greek sources describe the murder that they accomplished as a noble and courageous act¹⁸. The tale of a group of people killing an usurper was popular because it could easily evoke tyrannicide, and recalled Greek (and Roman) ideals of freedom¹⁹. Notably, Polybius also calls to mind the origins of Mithridates II at the time of his daughter’s wedding to Antiochos III, and those origins clearly gave prestige to the bride²⁰. If it was prestigious for a Seleukid to marry a descendant of one of the Seven, we can deduce that the references to these historical figures were not confined to an Iranian audience.

- 16 For the coinage of the Kings of Kappadokia, see Simonetta (2007): from the reign of Ariarathes III (230?–220), the royal coins show the portrait of the King on the obverse, and Athena carrying a Victory in her hand on the reverse. On the few coins struck in the Pontus by the predecessors of Mithridates Eupator, see Callataÿ (2009): these coins have specific characteristics (for example, the ‘realistic’ approach to the portraits as opposed to the idealization of the Greek ones, and the presence on the reverse of the crescent moon and star, which do not belong to Greek iconography) but they are nonetheless closely related to the conventional Hellenistic iconography and have Greek lettering.
- 17 For a summary on the Hellenization of the Kings of Pontus, Kappadokia (and Armenia), see Bernard (1985), here p. 74–85. On the euergetism of the Kings of Pontus and Kappadokia, see the Delian decrees in honor of Pharnakes (*ID* 1497bis (160/159 BCE) and of Mithridates V Euergetes (*ID* 1557–1558). In Kappadokia, Ariarathes V (163–130 BCE) was granted Athenian citizenship (*JG* II2 3781) and was honored, shortly before 130, as was his wife Nysa, in a decree issued by the Athenian Dionysiac Technites (*JG* II2 1330); see also Le Guen (2001) p. 67–74.
- 18 See e.g., Aesch., *Persians* v. 774–777; Plato, *Laws*, 695c and *Ep.* VII, 332b; Justin 1, 10, 1. Plato, in particular, strongly idealizes Darius because of the way he took the royal power, and of the kind of relationships he established with his ancient accomplices. P. Briant underlines the legendary dimension acquired by the Seven in the Hellenic world, as early as in the Classical period: see Briant (1996) p. 140–149.
- 19 In *Hdt* 3, 67, Smerdis, seeking the people’s support in order to reinforce his power, presents features similar to a Greek tyrant: see Lerouge-Cohen (2014).
- 20 See Gabelko (2009) p. 52–53: the marriages between the Seleukids and the other dynasties of Anatolia were researched by the Seleukids for their political aspect and by the ‘minor’ dynasties for the prestige they bestowed on them; supposedly, however, these marriages were all the more valuable for the Seleukids if the bride was high-born.

Subsequently, I hypothesize that reference to the Seven in the kingdom of Pontic Kappadokia should be understood in a Hellenistic context instead of an Iranian one. The Mithridatids (like the Ariarathids) had probably learnt the story of the Seven from Greek sources; their connections to these glorious characters put them in a favorable light in the Hellenistic world – but not in an allegedly ‘Persian’ or ‘Iranian’ context.

This late use and recreation of the Iranian past seem to present a clear example of Persianism.

THE DOUBLE GENEALOGY OF MITHRIDATES EUPATOR: REFERENCES TO THE ACHAEMENIDS²¹

The Mithridatids’ genealogical claims underwent a major change during the reign of Mithridates Eupator (111–63 B. C.). Eupator apparently made no mention of the Seven: instead, he boasted about his descent from Cyrus and Darius on one side, and from Alexander and Seleukos on the other. We know this from the famous speech attributed to him by Pompeius Trogus in his *Historiae Philippicae*, and from an indirect speech transmitted by Justin²². As he addresses his troops on the eve of his first war against Rome, Eupator first justifies his decision to wage war by explaining that the Romans attacked him first, and then gives proof that the latter are far from invincible. He then clarifies why the Romans are acting so unjustly towards him: they loathe and envy Kings, since their own first Kings were of low birth (38.6.7–8). Mithridates subsequently brags about his own noble origins, as opposed to those of the Roman Kings.

Suppose, he continued, that he was compared with the Romans in terms of breeding. He was superior to that motley rabble of refugees since he could trace his line back on his father’s side to Cyrus and Darius, the founders of the Persian empire, and on his mother’s side to Alexander the Great and Seleukos Nikator, founders of the Macedonian empire.

*Se autem, seu nobilitate illis comparetur, clariorem illa conluvie convenarum esse, qui paternos majores suos a Cyro Darioque, conditoribus Persici regni, maternos a magno Alexandro ac Nicatore Seleuco, conditoribus imperii Macedonici, referat.*²³

- 21 For this part of the paper see also Lerouge-Cohen (forthcoming), where I express similar views.
- 22 Justin 38.3.10. Trogus disapproved of the insertion of direct speech in historical works and it is therefore usually accepted that Justin accurately reproduced this speech from Trogus’ original text, cf. e.g., Jal (1987), p. 196. R. Develin in Develin & Yardley (1994), p. 5, however, questioned the assumption that Justin was faithful to Trogus’ version; according to Ballesteros Pastor (2013), the speech was invented entirely by Justin and did not originally feature in Trogus’ narrative.
- 23 Justin 38.7.1. Some doubts have been raised about the authenticity of the speech. Even if it was re-written by Trogus, it is undeniable that the contents must be at least partially faithful to the historical reality. For further discussion on the authenticity of the speech, see, e.g., McGing (1986), 154–162, most notably 160–162; Ballesteros Pastor (1996), 391; Ballesteros Pastor (2006); the speech is fully analyzed in Ballesteros Pastor (2013). On the traces of revision after the event, see Yardley (2003): 21–23. Trogus seems to have been greatly influenced by Livy, and Mithridates’ speech in particular contains many Livian reminiscences; see also 89–90 for

Mithridates is not the first Hellenistic King to link himself to the Achaemenids: Diodorus tells us that the Ariarathids of Kappadokia had already done so from the time of the reign of Ariarathes V (163–130 BCE), claiming that the founder of their dynasty, Anaphas, was of the Seven and a cousin of Cyrus on his mother's side²⁴. Mithridates, however, is the first King to underline his dual origins in all accounts. His double genealogy is partially based on historic fact: Eupator was indeed a descendant of the Seleukid dynasty through political inter-dynastic marriages²⁵, but naturally not of Alexander the Great, as Seleukos was not related to Alexander by blood. His Achaemenid connections can neither be proved nor disproved: Mithridates was of Persian origin and his family was possibly linked to the Achaemenid line,²⁶ but the precise nature of this connection, if it even existed, was long forgotten in Mithridates' time. Another King, Antiochos I Theos of Kommagene (c. 69–40 BCE), whose reign began before Mithridates' death, would in turn claim both Achaemenid (through his father) and Macedonian (through his mother) ancestry²⁷ a few decades later.

Ciceronian reminiscences. Ballesteros Pastor (2006): 581–596, here p. 595, notes the occurrence in the speech of geographic terms, such as 'Bithynia and Pontus', or 'Lesser Armenia', which are associated with Roman expressions coined at the time of Augustus.

- 24 Diod. Sic. 31, 19, 1. Nothing prevents us from surmising that the predecessors of Mithridates VI, following in the footsteps of their neighbors and rivals of Kappadokia, had already attempted to link their dynasty to that of the Achaemenids, even though no sources exist that provide any further knowledge. Panitschek (1987–1988) emphasizes the rivalry between the two kingdoms.
- 25 His mother Laodike was allegedly the daughter of Antiochos IV; but this cannot be ascertained with certainty, as it has been deduced from her (dynastic) name only (Ballesteros Pastor (1996), p. 31). Moreover, the dynasty had been intermarrying with the Seleukid house for a long time, as we have already seen: Mithridates II (266–220) had married the sister of Seleukos II, Antiochos III had married Laodike of Pontus, and Pharnakes I (200–169 BCE) had married Nysa, the daughter of Laodike and Antiochos III. Mithridates could therefore legitimately claim to be a Seleukid descendant.
- 26 Reinach (1890), p. 3–4 does not entirely exclude this tradition. It is rejected more often than included: see for instance Meyer (1879) p. 32; McGing (1986) p. 10; Panitschek (1987–1988) p. 73–95; Ballesteros Pastor (1996), p. 24 and p. 290. Regarding the Seven (see n. 8), the different hypotheses described by A. B. Bosworth and P. V. Wheatley that aim to justify the reality of this claim (see Bosworth and Wheatley (1998)) are not convincing enough to end the debate. Very recently, L. Ballesteros Pastor went back on his previous statements and tried to prove that the Mithridates line descended from Achaemenid origins: see Ballesteros Pastor (2012). He reminds us that Pharnabazos, the satrap of Hellespontine Phrygia in the early 4th century, married Apama, daughter of King Artaxerxes II, and also claims that the ancestors of Mithridates Ctistes belonged to the same line as Pharnabazos. Nevertheless, filiation between Pharnabazos and the Mithridatids does not appear probable. McGing (1986) p. 15 does not include Pharnabazos among Ctistes' ancestors.
- 27 On each of the two monumental terraces of the sanctuary of the Nemrud Dagh, which was consecrated to Antiochos' cult, a series of stelae displayed the King's ancestors; on both terraces, the ancestors are divided into two series: those of the maternal side and those of the paternal side; each ancestor was identified by a relief and an inscription. 'King of Kings Darius the Great, son of Hystaspes' (βασιλέα βασιλέων μέγαν Δαρείον τὸν Ὑστάσπ[ου]) features as the first ancestor on the paternal side; 'Alexander the Great, son of Philip' (μέγ[αν Ἀλέ]ξανδρον τὸν ἐκ [βασιλέ-]ως Φιλίππου) is the first of the maternal ancestors. For the

While the idea that the Pontic dynasty descended from one of the Seven did not disappear from Greek sources²⁸, Mithridates' Achaemenid claim was widely accepted: according to Appian, Mithridates was a descendant of Darius to the sixteenth degree²⁹; Ampelius, the preceptor of Macrinus, presented Darius as the ancestor of Artabazes, "the founder of the kingdom of Mithridates"³⁰. Mithridates, King of Bosphoros and descendant of Mithridates Eupator through his grand-daughter Dynamis, still maintained that he was the "heir of the great Achemenes" (*prole magni Achaemenis*) during the reign of Claudius.³¹ In contrast, the sources never mention the 'Macedonian' claim – except in the speech transmitted by Justin.

Eupator's claims to Achaemenid ancestry may be associated with the fact that he chose to depict Pegasus, Perseus' winged horse, on the obverse of the coinage of the first part of his reign³²: Perseus was reputed to be the heroic founder of the Persian race³³. This clearly underlines the assumption that Mithridates intended to link himself closely to the Persian world (albeit not precisely, in the case of Pegasus, to the Achaemenids)³⁴.

Once again, as was the case with the "Seven" claim, the question is whether this choice should be understood, on Eupator's part, as a pledge to his kingdom's Persian aristocracy, as is often assumed in scholarly literature: by introducing him-

text and translation of the Nemrud Dagh inscriptions, see K. Dörner in Sanders (1996), vol. 1, chapter 5, p. 254–355; specifically for the ancestors' inscription p. 323; see also Facella (2006), p. 87 and 270. On Nemrud Dagh and Kommagene, see Facella (2006); Wagner (2012); and most recently Brijder (2014); on the 'ancestors' galleries' see in particular Jacobs (2012) and Messerschmidt (2012); also Strootman (in press).

28 Panitschek (1987–1988) underlines the non-unified aspect of the Mithridatid dynasty's genealogical traditions. See also Ballesteros Pastor (2013) p. 275–277.

29 App., *Mith.*, 540.

30 Ampelius 30, 5: 'It is from (Darius) that Artabazus descends, he who was, according to Sallustius Crispus, the founder of the kingdom of Mithridates'. (*Darius [...], a quo Artabanes originem ducit, quem conditorem regni Mithridatis fuisse confirmat Sallustius Crispus*). On Artabazus see Ballesteros-Pastor (2012).

31 See Tac., *Ann.*, 12, 18, 4. With these words, Mithridates aims at convincing Eunones, King of the Aorsi, to receive him in his kingdom after a military defeat.

32 See Callataÿ (1997), p. 8–27 and pl. 1–15: Pegasus appears on the reverse of the tetradrachms minted between 96 and 85 BCE in the 'realist' style. Pegasus is strongly reminiscent of the Greek hero Perseus (see e. g., McGing (1986) p. 97), who appears on many coins issued by the Pontic cities; these coins faithfully reflect royal propaganda and show how important this hero was for the King (*ibidem*, p. 94–95).

33 See Callataÿ (1997) p. 63–86, with figs. 32–38 on p. 76.

34 One could add the fact that a famous inscription found in the city of Nymphaion shows that Mithridates had taken the Achaemenid title of 'King of Kings' in 102/101 (see Vinogradov 1990); and also that he installed 'satraps', again an Achaemenid reminiscence, in the conquered Greek world (see Appian *Mithridatic Wars* 3, 21; 5, 35; 7, 46). However, only one is still here in the frame of "genealogical claims". Moreover, these Achaemenid references are questionable: 'King of Kings' may evoke the Parthian Kings, who adopted the title from the reign of Mithridates II (123–188), instead of the Achaemenids (the Persian King is never called 'King of Kings' in classical Greek sources; the title does not appear in Greek and Roman sources before the 1st century B.C.). The Seleukids made use of the 'satraps' even after the reign of Antiochos III, who is supposed to have replaced satraps with *strategoï*: see Capdetrey (2007) p. 283.

self as a descendant of both the Achaemenids and Alexander, the King would try to court his two main ‘audiences’, the Persians on the one side, and the Greeks on the other side³⁵. The Persian aristocracy would have been proud to have an heir of Cyrus as King, whereas Greeks in the kingdom and beyond would identify with a man connected to the memory of Alexander and the Seleukids. These two separate threads of propaganda would lead to the same result: the desire to take the power in Asia Minor back from Rome. This interpretation of a dualistic speech contains several flaws.

Firstly, it postulates not only that the kingdom’s population was made up exclusively of Persians and Greeks, which ignores the specific Anatolian population that constituted the majority of the demography, but also that the Greeks and Persians would have developed in completely distinct directions, thus entailing the elaboration of two different genealogical traditions, which is not plausible. Is it truly plausible to think that at the heart of a kingdom in the first century BCE where a strong familiarity with Greek culture was essential if one wished to serve the King – and thereby belong to the elite – the Persians remained so viscerally attached to their Persian past that they required a specific discourse to differentiate themselves from the discourse that the ‘Greeks’ recognized themselves in?

Moreover, Eupator does not establish any links between the proclamation of his Achaemenid origins and a Persian sense of solidarity in his speech. He never encourages the Persians *as Persians* to unite around him to chase the Romans out of Asia. The existence of a ‘Persian feeling’ in the Pontic kingdom that was directed against Greek cultural hegemony is highly doubtful. If, however, such a sentiment could be acknowledged, nothing in Mithridates’ speech indicates that the King made use of it, by proclaiming himself a descendant of Cyrus and Darius, in reference to the war he was about to wage on Rome.

The presence of Pegasus on his coinage is indeed a sign of the royal desire to recall the Persian origins of his dynasty, but it is also proof of his knowledge of Greek sources: only Greeks, or at least those who knew Greek culture, could understand this reference to Perseus as the founder of the Persian race, as it was told by Herodotus³⁶ and does not appear in Persian sources. Notably, Perseus was

35 See, e. g., McGing (1986) p. 10; *ibidem* p. 107, where he distinguishes between the Greek subjects and the ‘eastern subjects and prospective eastern subjects’ whom the King addressed when emphasizing his Achaemenid lineage. Panitschek (1987–1988), p. 95, states that the Mithridatids’ Persian claims not directed to the Greeks but toward the ‘Kleinasiaten und Iranier Anatoliens’. Both P. Panitschek and B. McGing, conclude that the target audience of the ‘Achaemenid’ part of Mithridates’ propaganda included Persians and Anatolians, in short, all those that were not Greek, and that this created a problem of definition: why would the Anatolians be open to Persian themes, and if they were, why should the Greeks not be equally receptive? We can also cite Reinach (1890), p. 299–300: Mithridate ‘sut jouer de l’ Olympe et de l’ Avesta, des souvenirs d’ Alexandre et des reliques de Darius, du despotisme et de la démagogie, de la barbarie et de la civilisation, comme autant d’ instruments de règne, autant de moyens de séduire et d’ entraîner les hommes ... ’ See also *ibidem* p. 35–37.

36 According to Herodotus (7, 150–152), certain accounts say that Xerxes would have sent ambassadors to the Argians to demonstrate they had a common ancestor with the Persians, since the latter descended from Perses, the son of Perseus and Andromeda; it would therefore be

also an extremely popular figure in the Hellenistic era in the Greek cities of Asia that referred to him as their founder, most famously Tarsus³⁷, which was a way for them to emphasize their Hellenism, namely, by proving their link to the ancient Greek city of Argos³⁸. The same is true for the dynasty of Philip and Alexander of Macedonia, who were called the Argeads. For this reason, the reference to Perseus is rather ambiguous.

As far as the specific Achaemenid connections in Hellenistic times are concerned, it is clear that being an heir to the ancient Persian Kings bestowed a royal prestige that was not confined to an Iranian context. Diodorus Siculus, for instance, described the ties uniting Cyrus to the Ariarathides at length, thereby showing that, for him, those ties augmented the glory of Ariarathes V, a King whom he valued very much³⁹. Similarly, Josephus reveals that Princess Glaphyra of Kappadokia, who had married one of Herod's sons between the years 15–17 CE, never ceased to brag about her royal origins in front of her in-laws, recalling her descent from Temenos on one side and from Darius on the other – an attitude that made her hated by the other women at the court.⁴⁰ In a Jewish kingdom, this claim would certainly not be meant to entice the Persian population.

Notably, the Persian Kings that appear in the genealogy during the Hellenistic era are Cyrus and Darius I, who both were positively portrayed in the Greek tradition, as opposed to their successors, Kambyses and Xerxes⁴¹. More generally, Herodotus as well as the IVth century *Persika* testify that the Greek writers from the Classical era had real interest in the Persian Kings: the Greeks had real knowledge of the Achaemenids and did not systematically deny them, as might be assumed⁴². In contrast, the Achaemenids, like the Seven, seem to have been entirely forgotten in the Arsacid and Sassanid kingdoms⁴³.

natural for them to ally themselves with the Persians. Either Herodotus replicates a purely Greek tradition, or Xerxes was sufficiently aware of Greek mythology to use this account to diplomatic ends. In either case, the link between Perseus and the Persians does not originate from Persian culture.

37 See Robert (1977), here p. 96–132.

38 For the ambiguous quality of the reference to Perseus and for a list of the cities claiming a link to this hero, see Briant (1985b), here p. 185–187.

39 Diodorus Siculus 31, 19, 1–2 ; 31, 19, 7–8: Ariarathes 'received a Greek education' (παιδείας τε Ἑλληνικῆς μετασχεῖν) and made Kappadokia 'unknown to the Greeks', 'a place of sojourn to men of culture' (τοῖς πεπαιδευμένοις ἐμβιωτήριον).

40 Jos., *Bell.* 1, 228–229: Glaphyra boasted about her origins and mocked the other women in the palace that had been chosen not for their birth, but for their beauty.

41 For Cyrus see, of course, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*; Cyrus and Darius are presented as examples of good Persian Kings: see Plato, *Laws* 694a–695e; Darius: Plato, *Ep.* 7, 332 b. After these Kings, the Achaemenids degenerated: on this topic see Briant (1989).

42 About the *Persika*, see recently Lenfant (2014).

43 A certain number of historians base themselves on a passage from the Byzantine historian George Syncellus (ed. Niebuhr, Bonn, 1829, 539, 14) stating that the first Arsacids, Arsaces and Tiridates, 'descended from the Persian Artaxerxes' in order to bolster the idea that the Parthians tried to pass themselves off as the descendants of the Achaemenids. See e.g., Tarn (1923); Neusner (1963), here p. 43; see also Wiesehöfer (2001) p. 133. However, this source is so late and the history of the Arsacids has been so much transformed over time (see for example the

The King's claim to a Persian identity (through Pegasus/Perseus) is therefore transmitted through a common Hellenistic cultural background; the selective claim to Achaemenid ancestry seems likewise related to the cultural Greek world: once again, Eupator's genealogical claims very clearly give evidence of Persianism.

THE DOUBLE GENEALOGY OF MITHRIDATES EUPATOR: THE MACEDONIAN KINGS

What does the reference to Alexander and Seleukos tell us? This question is of course less important in a paper devoted to Persianism than the previous question was. However, it is important to underline one particular point.

Various sources, apart from this genealogical claim, show Mithridates' intention to attach himself to the figure of Alexander.⁴⁴ It is commonly assumed that these references to Alexander had a strong anti-Roman signification:⁴⁵ according to Claudia Bohm, to recall Alexander's name – which was not a new attitude among the later Hellenistic rulers at all⁴⁶ – began to sound dangerous to Roman ears after Eupator⁴⁷. Admittedly, the King does not use the trope of the conqueror in a 'nationalist' Greek sense in his speech to his troops. He does not use the name of Alexander to appeal to the unification of the Greeks and the necessary protection of the latter, nor does he try to encourage them by calling to mind the exploits of his glorious predecessor – in fact, further on in the speech, Alexander's qualities are even presented as inferior to those of the Pontic King.⁴⁸ The mention of Alexander remains unique and does not diverge towards an exposition of a particular policy aimed at the Greeks. This does not mean that another, more loaded use of the Macedonian conqueror trope was not available to support Mithridates' actions; it quite simply does not appear in this particular speech.

Just as searching the speech for any appeal to a Persian sentiment would be in vain, the reference to Alexander and Seleukos is not mixed with political philhellenism directed against the Romans. Mithridates does not establish any link be-

historical summary written about them by Ammianus Marcellinus (23, 6, 1–9), who established no distinction whatsoever between Parthians and Persians) that it seems imprudent to use it as a reliable source: see Lerouge (2007) p. 191 note 48.

44 See all the attestations in Bohm (1989) p. 153–187.

45 See Bohm (1989) p. 115: 'eine antirömische Komponente gewann das Alexanderbild erst in späterer Zeit, als Mithridates VI. Eupator die Alexanderangleichung programmatisch in seinem Machtkampf gegen Roms Herrschaft im Osten einband'.

46 First, King Pyrrhus comes to mind; Bohm (1989) analyzes the cases of Alexander of Megalopolis, of Seleukid pretenders to the throne, like Alexander Balas, Diodotos Tryphon and Alexander Zabinas, and of Ptolemaic Kings like Ptolemy X and Ptolemy XI.

47 In the age of Augustus, Greeks with strong anti-Roman sentiments referred to the name of Alexander and spread the idea that, if the Macedonian King had met the Roman armies, he would have defeated them: see Liv. 9, 17–19 and 9, 18, 6, in particular.

48 Just. 38.7.2: Mithridates is the only one that conquered Kappadokia, Paphlagonia, Pontus or Bithynia: 'none of these peoples had even been reached by the famous Alexander, who subdued the whole of Asia, nor by anyone who succeeded or preceded him'.

tween his origins and the self-ordained mission he might have followed among the Greeks. In fact, by presenting himself as a descendant of the Achaemenids, on the one hand, and of Alexander and Seleukos, on the other, Mithridates seems to aim most of all to add prestige to his dynasty not simply in front of two different audiences, but before the eyes of the entire population of the Hellenistic world. His first aim is to humiliate the Romans, who had low origins. Obviously, he mentions his Achaemenid lineage for the same reason: the fact that he descended from *two* royal families and not just from one was important in order to debase the Romans. Moreover, the two lineages that Mithridates attributed to himself were complementary. The King focused the glory that each of them provided on his unique person and thus profited from two different sources of prestige and political charisma.

The simultaneous reference to the Achaemenids and the Seleukids in Mithridates' speech probably had a second use. It provided the King a source of legitimacy for the domination of the whole of Asia, whereas the presence of Romans in Asia Minor could only be explained by their greed (Justin 18.6.8). According to Hellenistic ideas, it was a legitimate claim for a King to take territories that one of his ancestors had conquered by force as his own property.⁴⁹ The fact that he was a descendant of both the Achaemenids and Alexander and Seleukos, who had all been empire-builders, doubly justified Mithridates' claim to Asia.

CONCLUSION

The Mithridatic dynasty, as well as the Ariarathids of Kappadokia, established a link with the Persian past early in their history: they claimed to be descendent from one of the Seven that killed the usurper. Later, Eupator abandoned the reference to the Seven, choosing instead to emphasize his Achaemenid ancestors, namely, Cyrus and Darius. He added a Macedonian heritage (Alexander and Seleukos) to this glorious ancestry, thus forging a double genealogy for himself. These Pontic references to the Seven and the Achaemenids should be understood, in my opinion, as examples of Persianism. The Kings selected Persian events and individuals (the Seven, Cyrus and Darius) that were well-known across the Greek world and enjoyed a very good reputation: the Persian past was probably known from Greek sources. Their Persian identity was not transmitted from a remote past through the centuries, but was consciously recreated in Hellenistic times instead. The claim to Persian or Achaemenid roots was not targeted to an Iranian audience: it was a deliberate way to gain prestige and legitimacy, which could be combined with Macedonian claims, in a world that was not 'Greek' or 'Iranian', but simply 'Hellenistic'.

49 On this topic, see especially Ma (2000): Antiochos III based his policy of the re-conquest of Asia Minor on the idea that he was recapturing an inheritance that was his right. On Antiochos III, see also Polyb. 18, 51, 3–6. Another reference is the analysis of Fowler (2005), p. 126.

TRADITION ODER FIKTION?
DIE „PERSISCHEN“ ELEMENTE IN DEN AUSSTATTUNGS-
PROGRAMMEN ANTIOCHOS' I. VON KOMMAGENE

Bruno Jacobs

„ALTE KUNDE“ UND „EHRWÜRDIGER BRAUCH“

Frömmigkeit betrachtete Antiochos I., wie er selbst ziemlich am Anfang der großen Inschrift auf dem Nemrud Dağı festhält, als seinen „sichersten Besitz“ (κτῆσιν βεβαιοτάτην) und seine „süßeste Freude“ (ἀπόλαυσιν ἡδίστην) (N 11–14).¹ Ganz im Einklang mit diesem Bekenntnis handeln seine Inschriften, von den frühesten angefangen, von der Anlage von Heiligtümern, von ihrer Ausstattung mit Bildwerken und finanziellen Mitteln, von den Anlässen für Feste, die in ihnen zu feiern waren, und von deren Durchführung. Die Frömmigkeit habe er, sagt Antiochos, auch seinen Nachkommen vorgelebt (N 212–223), und vielleicht nicht von ungefähr betont die letzte Vertreterin des kommagenischen Geschlechts, die wir kennen, Julia Balbilla, in einem Gedicht, das sie auf einem der Memnonskolosse in Ägypten hinterlassen hat, ihre eigene Frömmigkeit und die ihrer Vorfahren, darunter Antiochos IV.²

Die Götter, die der König namentlich unter all jenen hervorhebt, denen sein religiöser Eifer gilt, sind in der Frühzeit seiner Regierung Apollon Epekoos und Artemis Diktynna (SO 6f.; vorauszusetzen auch für BEE).³ Schon bald aber werden diese ersetzt durch Zeus-Oromasdes, Apollon-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, Artagnes-Herakles-Ares und eine weibliche Gottheit, zunächst Hera Teleia, später die Landesgöttin, die Allnährende Kommagene.⁴ Die Benennung dieses Quartetts von Göttern steht in Zusammenhang mit einer himmlischen Konstellation, die am 7.7.62 v. Chr. zu beobachten war.⁵ Damals standen die Planeten Jupiter, Merkur und Mars sowie der Mond im Sternbild Leo, ein Vorgang, den man am Hofe des kommagenischen Königs offenbar als bedeutungsvolles Zeichen verstand. Zwar galt

- 1 Waldmann (1973), 63, 71; vgl. BEc 6–8: Crowther & Facella (2003), 46f., 49. Auflösungen der Kürzel für die kommagenischen Inschriften finden sich bei Brijder (2014), 646f.
- 2 Bernand & Bernand (1960), 87; Bowie (1990), 63; Rosenmeyer (2008), 342.
- 3 SO: Wagner & Petzl (1976), 208–210, 213–215; BEE: Crowther & Facella (2003), 57–61. Zur umstrittenen Datierung dieser Stelen siehe unten 237, mit Anm. 45f.
- 4 Zur relativen Chronologie des Auftretens der weiblichen Gottheiten siehe Jacobs (1998), 44f.
- 5 Zu den astronomischen Hintergründen und den Datierungsproblemen siehe Heilen (2005). Der von M. Crijs neuerlich vorgebrachte Vorschlag, das Löwenhoroskop auf den 14. Juli 109 v. Chr. zu beziehen, welcher zugleich als Krönungstag Mithradates' I. und als Geburtstag Antiochos' I. gegolten habe (Crijs 2014), verkennt – neben allen anderen Schwierigkeiten – den engen Konnex zwischen der stellaren Konstellation und dem inhaltlichen Wandel in den Ausstattungsprogrammen innerhalb(!) der Regierungszeit des Antiochos I.

die fromme Aufmerksamkeit des Herrschers grundsätzlich allen Göttern (N 24–27), aber fortan standen die genannten vier Überirdischen im Zentrum und waren dadurch privilegiert, dass sie in seinen Inschriften namentlich genannt wurden (N 54–56, A 249–252; G 182–184, Sx 20–21, Sy 23–25).

Zeitlich nicht von diesem Auswahlvorgang zu trennen ist die Verbindung der griechischen mit iranischen Götternamen, wobei die Tatsache, dass die älteren Inschriften nur griechische Götternamen aufweisen, belegt, dass die iranische Komponente sekundär hinzutrat.

In diesen Synkretismus ist die eigene Abstammung eingewoben. Θεός, *Gott*, nannte sich Antiochos I. bereits von Anfang an, aber nun folgt in seinen Inschriften seinem eigenen Namen nicht mehr nur der seines Vaters, um ihn als Thronfolger zu legitimieren, sondern der doppelte Verweis auf seinen Vater und seine Mutter und damit auf eine väterliche und eine mütterliche Vorfahrenreihe, welche erstere ihn mit dem persischen Achämenidenhaus verband, während er sich über letztere auf Alexander den Großen und die Seleukiden zurückführen konnte. In dieser Weise griechische und persische Wurzeln in sich vereinend, reihte sich Antiochos gleichberechtigt und gleichartig unter die Götter ein. Dies demonstrieren die Statuengruppen auf Ost- und Westterrasse des Nemrud Dağı, in denen Antiochos neben den privilegierten Göttern jeweils links außen selbst zu finden ist.

Wenn Antiochos in der Inschrift auf dem Nemrud Dağı formuliert, „alte Kunde von Persern und Griechen – Glück bringende Wurzel meines Geschlechts“ (παλαιὸς λόγος Περσῶν τε καὶ Ἑλλήνων – ἐμοῦ γένους εὐτυχεστάτη ῥίζα) und „ehrwürdiger Brauch“ (ἀρχαῖος νόμος) seien für die Herstellung der Götterbilder und die Durchführung der Feierlichkeiten bestimmend gewesen (N 27–34), so parallelisiert er Tradition und eigene Abkunft. Damit will Antiochos offenbar suggerieren, dass das, was er zu Ehren der Götter tat, durch eine bis in seine Zeit hinein authentische Tradition verbürgt sei.⁶

In Wirklichkeit waren die Traditionsstränge aus der Seleukiden- und der Achämenidenzeit von ganz unterschiedlicher Qualität. Noch der Vater von Antiochos' Mutter, Antiochos VIII. Grypos, war regierender Monarch gewesen, und als man der Herrschaft der letzten Seleukiden ein Ende machte, saß Antiochos I. selbst bereits auf dem kommagenischen Thron. Die Achämeniden dagegen waren damals schon mehr als zweieinhalb Jahrhunderte von der politischen Bühne abgetreten.

Diese Distanz zur Achämenidenzeit wirft nun verschiedene Fragen auf. Eine von ihnen zielt darauf, was mit dem Wort „Perser“ überhaupt gemeint ist. Der Begriff erweist sich als ambivalent. Die angesprochene Parallelisierung von Überlieferung und eigener Abkunft lässt unter „Perser“ die Achämeniden verstehen. Wenn es aber um das Aussehen der Götterbilder und die Durchführung der Feierlichkeiten geht, ist die Bezugnahme auf die „Perser“ ein Verweis auf die vergangene Epoche. Was aber haben Antiochos und seine Zeitgenossen über diese Epoche gewusst? Welche Quellen standen ihnen zur Verfügung, und wie ging man mit Wissenslücken um?

6 Siehe in diesem Kontext die methodologischen Ausführungen in Versluys (2014a und b) und Versluys (2016a).

EIN METHODISCHER ZUGANG

Um dies zu untersuchen, ist die Thematik, die Antiochos in den Ausstattungsprogrammen seiner Heiligtümer in den Mittelpunkt rückt, wenig geeignet. Dies liegt zum einen daran, dass wir zwar einiges über die Anlässe der in den Heiligtümern zelebrierten Feiern und über ihre Durchführung erfahren, doch wenig zu den religiösen Inhalten.⁷ So hat M.J. Versluys der Behauptung E. Schwertheims, wir seien über die Epoche des Antiochos ausnehmend gut informiert, anschaulich entgegengehalten, wie beschränkt unsere Informationen in Wirklichkeit sind.⁸ Zum anderen sind auch unsere Kenntnisse über die Religion der Achämenidenzeit begrenzt. Eine ausufernde Zahl wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen zu diesem Thema hat bis heute nicht einmal Einigkeit darüber herbeiführen können, ob die Achämeniden und eventuell weitere Teile der Bevölkerung ihres Reiches Anhänger der zoroastrischen Lehre waren oder nicht.⁹

Nun kann man bei der Beschäftigung mit den *Iranica* in den Ausstattungsprogrammen des Antiochos feststellen, dass von den iranischen Namen der drei männlichen Götter, Oromasdes, Mithras und Artagnes, in den Zeugnissen zur achämenidenzeitlichen Religion, sehen wir von der avestischen Tradition ab, nur zwei nachzuweisen sind; so sind Oromasdes und Mithras in der Form Auramazdā resp. Mit/tra in Achämenideninschriften genannt. Artagnes dagegen findet in diesen Texten keine Entsprechung, und der Name des Gottes begegnet ebenso wenig in den *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* oder als Bestandteil theophorer Eigennamen aus dem Westen des Reiches. Wie also ist die Nennung des Artagnes in den komagenischen Inschriften zu erklären? Konnte man zur Zeit Antiochos' I. noch aus einem Wissen schöpfen, das uns die Quellen nicht bewahrt haben?

Eine ähnliche Frage stellt sich im Hinblick auf den Kult der Vorfahren, den Antiochos gepflegt hat. Erst in jüngerer Zeit hat unser Wissen über einen Ahnenkult achämenidischer Zeit schärfere Konturen gewonnen.¹⁰ War dieser zur Zeit des Antiochos noch bekannt, oder steht die Ahnenverehrung des Antiochos in seleukidischer oder in einer lokalen Tradition? Die Tatsache, dass Antiochos seine Vorfahren auf Reliefs darstellen ließ (Abb. 1a–b), mag andeuten, dass hier inhaltliche Aspekte zum Ausdruck kommen sollten, die sich mit dem herkömmlichen Kult verstorbener hellenistischer Herrscher nicht deckten.¹¹

7 Dies hat in der Vergangenheit Raum für äußerst spekulative Interpretationen gegeben: (Waldmann (1991); vgl. die Rez. Jacobs in *Bonner Jahrbücher* 192 (1992), p. 618–622; Waldmann (1994); Petroff (1998).

8 Schwertheim (2005), 77: „ausnehmend gute Quellensituation“; Versluys (2014b); zur inhaltlichen Beschränktheit der Inschriften von Antiochos I. siehe Jacobs (2014a), 511 f.

9 Einige jüngere Publikationen seien hier stellvertretend für viele andere angeführt: Kellens (2002); Kuhrt (2007b); De Jong (2010); Knäpper (2011); Jacobs (im Druck). Besonders hingewiesen sei auf Henkelman (2008), der viele Aspekte achämenidenzeitlicher Religionsausübung auf der Grundlage von Primärquellen behandelt. Die von aktuellen Diskussionen völlig unberührte Abhandlung von Koch (2011) sei dagegen ausdrücklich nicht empfohlen.

10 Henkelman (2003a); Waerzeggers (2014); Rollinger (2011); Jacobs (im Druck).

11 Jacobs (2002), 86; vgl. Messerschmidt (2011), 298–304, der auf die Bedeutung hethitischer Traditionen hinweist. Allerdings kann er für seinen Alternativvorschlag, die Ahnenverehrung



Abb. 1a (links) Ahnenrelief mit Darstellung Xerxes' I. von der Westterrasse des Heiligtums auf dem Nemrud Dağı (Zustand im späten 19. Jh.; Humann and Puchstein 1890, Taf. XXXVIa)

Abb. 1b (rechts) Ahnenrelief mit Darstellung Xerxes' I. von der Westterrasse des Heiligtums auf dem Nemrud Dağı (Zustand im späten 20. Jh.; Zeichnung Martina Reichelt)

Angesichts dieser Quellenlage steht aber jedweder Versuch, die „alte Kunde“ und Antiochos' Wissen um „ehrwürdigen Brauch“ zu analysieren, vor großen methodischen Problemen. Es gibt jedoch innerhalb der Ausstattungsprogramme ein Element, an dem sich die Qualität des *παλαιὸς λόγος* und die Authentizität des *ἀρχαῖος νόμος* überprüfen lassen, und dies ist die Bekleidung der Achämenidenherrscher in den Ahnenreihen auf dem Nemrud Dağı.

Auf den ersten fünf Stelen der väterlichen Ahnenreihen auf Ost- und Westterrasse der Anlage sind Dareios I., Xerxes I., Artaxerxes I., Dareios II., und Artaxerxes II. abgebildet.¹² Letzterer gab seine Tochter Rhodogune dem armenischen Satrapen Orontes in die Ehe und begründete damit für alle Nachkommen dieses Paares die Möglichkeit, sich auf das Achämenidenhaus zu berufen.

aus späthethitischem Brauch abzuleiten, die Bindeglieder, die die Tradition vermittelten, ebenso wenig vorweisen.

12 Zum aktuellen Erhaltungszustand der Stelen siehe Brijder (2014), 326 Fig. 206, 1–5; 368–371 Fig. 225, 1–5.

Die persischen Könige schließen sich durch ihre Bekleidung zusammen. Sie sind angetan mit Schuhen, Mantel und Hose.¹³ Auf dem Kopf tragen sie eine Tiara mit Diadem, um den Hals einen Torques. Der Mantel ist vor der Brust durch zwei verknottete Schnüre geschlossen, die von prachtvollen Fibeln ausgehen. Seine Säume sind ringsum mit einer Schmuckborte und Pelzbesatz versehen. Alle Herrscher haben einen langen Bart auf Kinn und Wangen; davon abgesetzt erscheint ein gezwirbelter Oberlippenbart (Abb. 1a–b).

Mäntel, Hosen und Tiaren lassen erkennen, daß die persischen Könige die Reitertracht tragen. Deren Grundbestandteile sind Hose (Anaxyrides), Ärmelbluse (Sarapis) und Mütze (Tiara). Der Mantel (Kandys) kann, abhängig von der Witterung, hinzutreten.¹⁴

Die Authentizität der Herrschertracht auf den Ahnenreliefs des Nemrud Dağı läßt sich nun nicht durch einen Vergleich mit Darstellungen persischer Könige in achämenidischer Kunst überprüfen, da diese dort nicht in der Reitertracht, sondern stets in der Hoftracht dargestellt sind, einem Gewand, das vermutlich den Namen ‚Kypassis‘ trug. Mit ihr wurden ungeschnürte Schuhe und ein Reif mit Zinnen oder eine Art Krone, der sogenannte Persepoliszylinder, kombiniert.¹⁵

Anders verhält sich dies im Westen des Reiches. Hier begegnet der persische König sowohl im Kypassis-Gewand¹⁶ als auch im Reiterkostüm. Das bekannteste Beispiel für die letztgenannte Tracht bietet das Alexandermosaik, auf dem Dario III. in Sarapis, Kandys und Tiara zu erkennen ist (Abb. 2).¹⁷ Auf der Perservase in Neapel¹⁸ sind als Kleidung des dargestellten Herrschers eine Tiara, unter einem leichten Überwurf der Sarapis, ferner ein Kandys, den der König über die Beine gelegt hat, und Schuhe sichtbar. Eine Hose ist nicht erkennbar, stattdessen der Saum eines weiteren Gewandes. Die Unstimmigkeit der Bekleidung bedingt, dass

13 Dörner & Young (1996), 257, glaubten, unter dem Mantel noch oberhalb des Knöchels „a thin, long undergarment“ zu erkennen. Goell (Editor’s note *ibid.*) identifizierte dasselbe als „the long tightfitting, Persian trousers, tucked into the round-topped boots“.

14 Jacobs (1994b), 140–150.

15 Jacobs (1994b), 125–139. So erscheint beispielweise Dareios I. auf dem Bisütün-Relief (Luschey 1968, Taf. 28. 33), auf den Schatzhausreliefs aus Persepolis (E. F. Schmidt 1953, Pl. 121, 123; Walser 1980, Taf. 40 f.), an seinem Grab in Naqš-i Rostam (E. F. Schmidt 1970, Pl. 22) und in seiner Statue aus Susa (Stronach 1974, Pl. XXI–XXIX).

16 Ein Stempelsiegel mit Audienzszene, von dem in Daskyleion mehrere Abdrücke gefunden wurden, zeigt zweifellos den Großkönig (Kaptan 1996, 259–271 Fig. 1, 4–7); dasselbe dürfte für einige Gemmen des sog. „Court Style“ gelten (Boardman 1970, 826, 829, 849 etc.). Ob der laufende Bogenschütze auf Dareiken und Sigloi und Darstellungen auf verschiedenen Metallgefäßen gleichfalls den König meint oder eher eine Gestalt, die das Königtum symbolisiert, den sog. „Königlichen Helden“, ist umstritten (Münzen: Corfù 2010, Abb. 1–2b; einen Überblick über die in der Vergangenheit vorgeschlagenen Deutungen gibt Corfù *ibid.* 199; Metallgefäße: Moorey 1988, 233–235, 243 f. Pl. Ia, II–III; Özgen & Öztürk 1996, 87 f. Nr. 33–34). Die Kronenträger auf einem Holzbalken aus Tatarlı (Summerer 2007a, Fig. I–III, IX, XVI) sind nur mit großem Vorbehalt auf einen persischen Herrscher zu beziehen (Calmeyer (1992, 14: Dareios I.; ablehnend Jacobs 2014b, 358).

17 Winter (1909), Taf. 1; Andrae (1977), Taf. 2. 10.

18 Neapel, Mus. Naz. 3253, Inv.-Nr. 81947, aus Canosa; Trendall (1982), 495 Taf. 176,1; M. Schmidt (1960), Taf. 4. 7a.



Abb. 2 Neapel, Mus. Naz.: Dareios III. auf dem Alexandermosaik (Photo Jacobs)

man sie als Theaterkostüm verstanden hat. Ähnliches gilt für die Polydamas-Basis aus Olympia: Eine Tiara macht deutlich, dass die Kleidung des persischen Königs auch hier die Reitertracht meint, doch scheint es sich ansonsten weitgehend um ein Phantasiekostüm zu handeln.¹⁹

Da Darstellungen, die den König aus der Sicht westlicher Beobachter zeigen, ihn gern mit der Reitertracht in Verbindung bringen, ist anzunehmen, dass er sich, insbesondere im Feld, aber auch zu offiziellen Anlässen, so präsentierte. Dies bestätigen die klassischen Schriftquellen, die diese Tracht häufig beschreiben, von der persischen Hoftracht aber wenig wissen.²⁰ Auch Beamte und Würdenträger, wie sie in Persepolis durchaus in der persischen Hoftracht erscheinen, begegnen außerhalb der Residenzen fast grundsätzlich in der Hosentracht. Es seien als Beispiele nur der Satrap von Lydien Autophradates auf dem Payawa-Sarkophag,²¹ verschiedene Personen auf den Reliefs aus Phrygien am Hellespont,²² Kämpfer und Jagdteilnehmer auf dem Alexandersarkophag²³ oder der Passagier in der Prozession an der Südwand des Grabes II von Karaburun²⁴ genannt.²⁵

19 Olympia, Mus.: Treu (1897), Taf. LV 3; von Salis (1956), Abb. 19 Mitte.

20 Die einschlägigen Quellen sind von verschiedenen Autoren zusammengestellt worden: Ritter (1965), 6–18; Nagel (1972–1975), 356–361; Jacobs (1994b), 136, 141–143.

21 Demargne (1974), Pl. XXX; 42, 2; 43, 1.

22 Nollé (1992), S 1 Taf. 2a, S 3 Taf. 6, S 5 Taf. 7b, S 7 Taf. 9–10 a, S 8 Taf. 11, F IV Taf. 14 b, F V Taf. 15 a–b.

23 Von Graeve (1970), Taf. 26–27, 32–33, 36–44.

24 Mellink (1973), Pl. 45 Fig. 7, Pl. 46 Fig. 9.

25 Eine Ausnahme bildet das Gemälde an der Stirnwand desselben Grabes, wo der Grabherr aus-

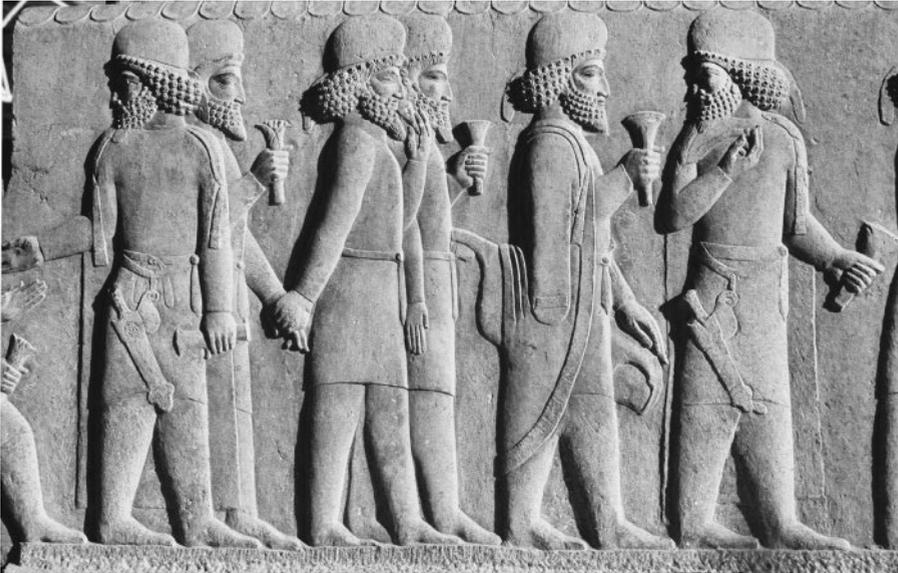


Abb. 3 Relief mit Würdenträgern in Persepolis, Tripylon, Ostflügel der Nordtreppe (Photo Jacobs)

Nun verrät die schriftliche Überlieferung, dass sich die Reitertracht des Herrschers von der seiner Untertanen in zwei Punkten unterschied. So war ihm zum einen ein weißer Mittelstreifen als Schmuck des Sarapis vorbehalten, zum anderen stand ihm allein die aufrechte Tiara (τιάρρα ὀρθή) zu.²⁶ Ersterer ist auf dem Alexandermosaik zu sehen (Abb. 2), hinsichtlich der Darstellung der Letzteren gehen die Meinungen jedoch auseinander. So wollte man auf dem Alexandermosaik auch die Tiara orthē erkennen, doch ist die Kopfbedeckung nicht in einer Form dargestellt, die man aufrecht nennen möchte.²⁷ Die Tiara auf der Dareios-Vase in Neapel entspräche dieser Vorstellung dagegen durchaus, doch hat man ihr angesichts des Darstellungskontextes den Zeugniswert abgesprochen. Sie evoziert so, wie sie dargestellt ist, den von Aristophanes (*Aves* 486f.) angestellten Vergleich mit einem Hahnenkamm,²⁸ und so stellt sich die Frage, ob die Darstellung belegt, wie treffend die Anspielung des Komödiendichters ist, oder ob seine Parodie womöglich die Wiedergabe der Tiara im vorliegenden Fall beeinflusst hat. Letztlich scheint die erste Alternative aber die plausiblere zu sein, und man sollte annehmen, dass uns die Darstellung auf

nahmsweise im Kypassis zu sehen ist: Jacobs (1987), 29–32. Eine gute Abbildung findet sich jetzt bei Özgen & Öztürk (1996), Fig. 89. Hier sind in aller Deutlichkeit die Scheinärmel dieses Gewandes zu erkennen.

26 Weißer Mittelstreifen am Sarapis: Ath. XII 525d; Tiara orthē: Xen., *Cyr.* 8.3, 13; Arr., *Anab.* 3.25, 3. Weitere Zeugnisse bei Jacobs (1994b), 136 f.

27 Siehe die Diskussion bei Pfrommer (1998), 56–59, der, Goldman (1993) folgend, die einstige Existenz der Tiara orthē grundsätzlich bestreitet, und die Kritik daran bei Jacobs in *AMI* 32 (2000), 414.

28 Vgl. Ritter (1965), 9f.

der Dareiosvase am ehesten eine Vorstellung von jener Herrscherinsignie zu geben vermag.

Sieht man von diesen beiden Besonderheiten ab, war die Kleidung der Herrscher der ihrer Zeitgenossen also durchaus ähnlich. Deshalb erscheint es zulässig, die Bekleidung der persischen Könige in der Ahnengalerie mit der von Beamten sowohl auf Reliefs in Persepolis als auch auf Darstellungen aus dem Westen des Reichs zu vergleichen.

Die persischen Könige auf dem Nemrud Dağı tragen lange Mäntel, unter denen noch die Hosen und Schuhe zu erkennen sind. Da die Mäntel geschlossen getragen werden, bleiben die Ärmelblusen, die man voraussetzen darf, unsichtbar. Die Art, wie der Kandys auf jenen Reliefs getragen wird, weicht allerdings von Darstellungen des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. deutlich ab (Abb. 1a–b). Sowohl Beamte in Persepolis (Abb. 3) als auch der Wageninsasse im Grab Karaburun II, Personen auf verschiedenen Friesplatten aus Daskyleion, Autophradates auf dem Payawa-Sarkophag und Darius III. auf dem Alexandermosaik (Abb. 2)²⁹ tragen den Kandys offen über den Schultern. Mit zwei Riemen kann der Mantel am Hals festgebunden werden, wie im Falle Dareios' III. gut zu erkennen ist. Bisweilen sicherte man den über die Schulter genommenen Mantel aber auch, indem man einen der Riemen mit der Hand hielt, so einige Beamte in Persepolis und der Grabherr auf der Südwand des Grabes in Karaburun II.³⁰ Niemals stecken die Träger die Arme durch die Ärmel, und dies scheint der von Pollux³¹ beschriebenen Trageweise zu entsprechen; vermutlich waren jene Ärmel Scheinärmel, die am Ende zugenäht waren.³² Dies suggeriert insbesondere die oft angedeutete Abrundung der Ärmelenden.³³

Die Trageweise der Mäntel in der Ahnengalerie weicht also von der achämenidenzeitlichen ab. Die großen Fibeln, die, meist geschmückt mit Adlern mit gespreizten Flügeln, die Mäntel der Könige halten (Abb. 1a), sind auf den Denkmälern der Achämenidenzeit überhaupt nicht zu finden. Tatsächlich scheint die Art, wie die persischen Könige auf den Ahnenreliefs ihre Mäntel tragen, eher Gegenstücke in der zeitgenössischen Mode zu finden. Statuen und Reliefs zeigen Jacken und Mäntel verschiedenster Art in konventioneller Trageweise mit durch die Ärmel gesteckten Armen, wobei sich die Kanten mal stärker, mal weniger stark, mal gar nicht überschneiden, wie beim modernen Jackett.³⁴ Eine unmittelbare Parallele zu den Darstellungen vom Nemrud Dağı ist, was Länge und Schnitt der Mäntel angeht, auf jenen Denkmälern zwar nicht auszumachen, doch dürfte dies daran liegen,

29 Siehe Anm. 21 und 24; ferner Nollé (1992), F III. IV. VI Taf. 14 a. b; 15 c.

30 Nylander in Mellink (1974), 356 f. Pl. 68 Fig. 14–15; Jacobs (1987), 49 Taf. 5, 2–3; gute Abbildung bei Bingöl (1997), Taf. 8,1.

31 Pollux VII 58: ἤν [δὲ καὶ] χειριδωτὸς χιτῶν, κατὰ τοὺς ὤμους ἐναπτόμενος.

32 E. F. Schmidt (1953), 84; vgl. Gervers-Molnár (1973), 5–8; Knauer (1985), 607 f. Das Verbergen der Hände in Anwesenheit des Königs, das von Graeve (1970), 96 Anm. 99, mit den geschlossenen Kandysärmeln in Verbindung bringt, bezieht sich vermutlich auf ein anderes Kleidungsstück.

33 E. F. Schmidt (1953), Pl. 51 f., 57 f.; Walser (1980), 60–63, 66. Dies ist allerdings auf dem Alexandersarkophag sicher nicht dargestellt; hier sind deutlich Ärmelöffnungen zu erkennen: von Graeve (1970), Taf. 26–27, 32–33, 36–44 und pass.

34 Jacobs (2014c), 83–86, Abb. 3, 6–8, 10–11.

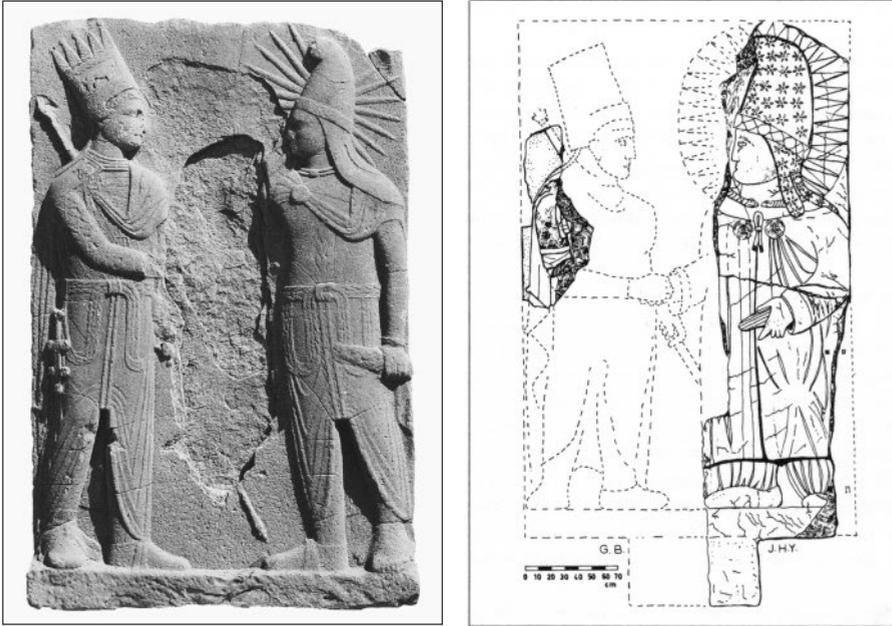


Abb. 4 (links) Mithras-Dexiosis von der Westterrasse des Heiligtums auf dem Nemrud Dağı (Wagner 2000, Abb. 38)

Abb. 5 (rechts) Mithras-Dexiosis von Sockelanlage 2 in Arsameia am Nymphaios (Dörner 1981, 199 Abb. 52)

dass es sich um eine lokale Trachtvariante handelt. Ein Vergleich der Darstellungen des Mithras und des Antiochos I. auf den Dexiosis-Reliefs vom Nemrud Dağı mag dies belegen (Abb. 4).³⁵ Normalerweise trägt Mithras den Mantel nämlich offen über den Schultern, so dass er mit dem ganzen Gewicht vor der großen Schließe rechts über der Brust gehalten wird. Da Gott und König dieselbe Kleidung tragen, ist anzunehmen, dass beide nach zeitgenössischer Mode gekleidet sind. Auf dem großen, nur teilweise erhaltenen Handreichungsrelief von Sockelanlage II in Arsameia am Nymphaios dürfte dies nicht anders sein. Hier trägt Mithras den Mantel jedoch geschlossen und sieht damit fast genauso aus wie die achämenidischen Ahnen (Abb. 5).³⁶ Dass das offene oder geschlossene Tragen des Mantels mehr ist als eine inhaltlich wenig bedeutende Variante, ist eher nicht zu unterstellen³⁷. Vielmehr

35 Wagner (2012), Abb. 65; Brijder (2014), Fig. 50.

36 Dörner & Goell (1963), Taf. 52 B–C; Wagner (2012), Abb. 141.

37 In Anbetracht der Tatsache, dass die Götter in den großen Sitzgruppen auf dem Nemrud Dağı auf der Ostterrasse die Mäntel offen, auf der Westterrasse geschlossen tragen, ist zwar nicht auszuschließen, dass hier eine uns unbekanntere inhaltliche Komponente eine Rolle spielte, mag diese auch ganz trivial sein – man könnte z. B. die östliche Terrasse mit dem Sonnenaufgang und Wärme, die Westterrasse mit dem Sonnenuntergang und Kälte assoziiert und die Götter entsprechend bekleidet haben. Sicher kann man den festgestellten Unterschied mit einer Interpretation leicht überfrachten.

erweist sich der geschlossene Mantel der persischen Herrscher als ein ikonographischer Kunstgriff, der sie als Gruppe erkennbar machte und von den Vorfahren auf den folgenden Reliefs unterschied, obwohl beide Gruppen *de facto* identisch gekleidet sind.³⁸

Dass sich die Darstellung der Kleidung der Achämeniden eher an aktueller Mode orientierte, bestätigen die Fibeln, die die Mäntel der persischen Könige schließen. Solchen Schmuck tragen nämlich auch Antiochos selbst, die Götter und jüngere Mitglieder der väterlichen Ahnenreihe (Abb. 1a, 4); dies macht deutlich, dass wir es mit einem zeitgenössischen Accessoire zu tun haben.

Auch Schuhe und Hosen der Achämenidenherrscher lassen sich ohne weiteres mit der Bekleidung der Götter und anderer Personen in demselben Ausstattungsprogramm vergleichen. Nur die Kopfbedeckungen und die Bartracht finden dort keine Parallele.

Die Tiaren zeigen wie Schuhe und Hosen ein Sternenmuster.³⁹ Dabei könnte der Gedanke eine Rolle gespielt haben, daß ein Himmelszeichen die höchste Instanz persönlicher Legitimation sei. Dies betrachtete Antiochos für die eigene Person als gegeben, wie das sogenannte Löwenhoroskop belegt. Trifft diese Annahme zu, vermittelt die Verzierung der genannten Kleidungsstücke eine aktuelle Botschaft und ist nicht als Abbild einer Realität der Achämenidenzeit zu verstehen.

Dies gilt erst recht für die Kombination der Tiara mit dem Diadem. Zwar trugen, wie Schriftquellen belegen, auch die Achämenidenherrscher bisweilen ein Diadem, dies allerdings als Zeichen der Titularverwandtschaft mit privilegierten Personen im Reich⁴⁰. Auf den Ahnenreliefs vom Nemrud Dağı erklärt es sich jedoch aus der Bedeutung, die es im Hellenismus als Herrschaftsinsignie gewonnen hat, wie die Tatsache belegt, dass auch die Statuen der männlichen Götter Diademe tragen. Hier sollen sie deren Macht zum Ausdruck bringen, sind also als Herrschaftsinsignien zu verstehen.⁴¹ Kombiniert mit der Tiara findet sich das Diadem als Herrschaftszeichen beispielsweise auch bei den parthischen Königen und Antiochos-Zeitgenossen Orodes I. (81/80–76/75 v. Chr.) und Phraates III. (ca. 71/70–58/57 v. Chr.)⁴² und ebenso bei Tigranes dem Großen von Armenien, auf den sich Antiochos bekanntlich ideologisch bezog;⁴³ an ihnen mag sich der König orientiert haben.

Was schließlich die Bartracht angeht, scheint man gleichfalls zeitgenössischer Mode gefolgt zu sein. Modell standen abermals die östlichen Nachbarn, die Parther: Phraates III. trägt auf Münzen einen Vollbart und einen gepflegten Oberlippenbart, der dem der achämenidischen Vorfahren auf dem Nemrud Dağı durchaus

38 Jacobs (2002), 80 f.

39 Rostovtzeff (1919), 88–93, bes. 92 f., spricht von Sonnensymbolen, doch angesichts der Ähnlichkeit der achtstrahligen Zeichen auf den Mützen der persischen Könige mit den Sternen auf dem sog. Löwenhoroskop sind wohl auch jene als Sterne zu verstehen; vgl. Ustinova (1999), 270 f.

40 Xen., Cyr. 8.3.13; Jacobs (1996), 275–279.

41 So schon Ritter (1965), 16.

42 Sellwood (1983), Pl. 3, 3–6; 4, 7.

43 Foss (1986), Pl. 5–7.

vergleichbar ist. Die Länge von deren Bärten entspricht jedoch nicht der von Herrscherdarstellungen achämenidischer Zeit.⁴⁴

Dass der Begriff „persisch“, so wie Antiochos ihn benutzte, nicht zwingend mit konkretem Wissen über die Achämenidenzeit verbunden war, zeigt sich auch an anderer Stelle. So äußert Antiochos über die Kleidung, die für die Priester, die im Heiligtum Dienst tun sollten, vorgesehen war, sie sei von „persischer Art“ (N 71–72: *ιερείς ἐπιλέξας σὸν προπούσας ἐσθῆσι Περσικῶι γένει κατέστησα*). Was man darunter zu verstehen hat, lässt sich vielleicht folgendermaßen erschließen. Bei Herakles zeigt sich ein auffälliger Gegensatz zwischen seiner Nacktheit auf den Dexiosis-Reliefs, die zweifellos griechischer Ikonographie folgt, und der Bekleidung seiner Sitzstatue mit Hose, Ärmelbluse und Mantel. Hier liegt die Vermutung nahe, dass die Statue nach Antiochos' Verständnis „persisch“ bekleidet war. Gestützt wird diese Annahme durch den Wandel bei der Darstellung des Apollon. Auf den frühen Stelen von Sofraz Köy und Seleukia a. E. / Zeugma ist der Gott, hier noch Apollon Epekoos genannt, nackt.⁴⁵ Später, wenn er mit Mithras in einer Gestalt vereinigt ist, trägt er gleichfalls meist die Reitertracht.⁴⁶ Es liegt also nahe, dass Antiochos die Reitertracht – zumindest ihrer Herkunft nach – als „persisch“ bezeichnet hätte.

Aus dem oben Gesagten sollte man allerdings nicht schließen, dass Antiochos und seine Zeitgenossen ganz ohne Wissen um die Achämenidenzeit waren. So stellten sie die Achämenidenherrscher immerhin bärtig dar, während die kommagenischen Herrscher bartlos auftraten. Und die Form, die man der Tiara der persischen Könige in der Ahnengalerie gab, sollte vermutlich eine Vorstellung von der Tiara orthē vermitteln. Dies liegt nahe, da sie unter den herrscherlichen Kopfbedeckungen der Epoche nicht ohne weiteres eine Parallele findet. Die Vorfahren des Antiochos trugen spitze Mützen,⁴⁷ Antiochos I. selbst bekanntlich die armenische Ti-

44 Vgl. Luschey (1968), Taf. 28, 33; Walser (1980), Taf. 40 f.; E. F. Schmidt (1970), Pl. 22. Dass man sich bemüht habe, „durch Reliefprofil und Bartschnitt achämenidische Stilelemente zu zitieren“, wie Metzler (2000), 53, nahelegt, trifft gewiss nicht zu, da sich die achämenidischen und die kommagenischen Darstellungen persischer Könige in keiner Weise ähnlich sind.

45 Sofraz Köy: Wagner & Petzl (1976), Taf. VIIIa; Brijder (2014), Fig. 89; Seleukia a. E. / Zeugma: Crowther & Facella (2003), Taf. 3; Brijder (2014), Fig. 95. Die Frühdatierung von Inschrift und Relief der Stele von Sofraz Köy, die seinerzeit von J. Wagner in Wagner & Petzl (1976), 208–211, überzeugend begründet wurde und die die Datierung der Inschrift BEe auf der Stele aus Seleukia a. E. / Zeugma und des sicher zu dieser gehörigen Reliefs auf der Vorderseite nach sich zieht, ist von Ch. Crowther und M. Facella bestritten worden (Crowther & Facella 2003, 62–65). Gegen die Argumentation der Autoren hat der Verf. seinerzeit Argumente vorgebracht, die die Frühdatierung stützen (Jacobs in Jacobs & Rollinger 2005, 141–144, 150–152). Siehe nun die Replik von Crowther, die allerdings die für die Diskussion entscheidenden Argumente des Verf. hinsichtlich der Abfolge der Anbringung von Inschriften und Reliefierung nicht korrekt wiedergibt (Crowther 2013, 216 Anm. 76).

46 Dass der Gott auf der Stele von Samosata noch unbekleidet ist, während ihn die Inschrift bereits Apoll[on-Mithras-Helios-Her]mes nennt, zeigt nur, dass diese Stele unmittelbar nach jenen durch das stellare Ereignis vom 7.7.62 v. Chr. initiierten Veränderungen entstand. Der Text der Inschrift trägt diesen schon Rechnung, den Entwurf des Reliefs hat man dagegen nicht mehr wesentlich verändert (Jacobs 1998, 42 f.).

47 Relief von Arsameia am Euphrat: Waldmann (1991), Taf. 3, 1; Brijder (2014a), Fig. 294a–b;

ara.⁴⁸ Einen Eindruck von Art und Umfang des zeitgenössischen Wissens über die achämenidische Epoche vermitteln uns nun am ehesten antike Schriftquellen.

Dabei mag man an Xenophon und alle jene Autoren denken, die noch für jüngere Autoren wie Arrian und Plutarch greifbar waren, wenn sie beispielsweise über die Tiara orthē schrieben (Xen., *Cyr.* VIII 3, 13; Arr., *Anab.* III 25, 3 etc.). Dass diese Annahme durchaus realistisch ist, mag das Beispiel Strabons zeigen. Er lebte von ca. 63 v. bis 19. n. Chr., war also ein wenig jüngerer Zeitgenosse Antiochos' I. Er stammte aus Amaseia, war demnach Kappadokier und hatte somit einen dem des Antiochos vergleichbaren kulturhistorischen Hintergrund. Er weiß folgendes zu berichten: „Denn die bis heute sogenannte persische Tracht, die Begeisterung fürs Bogenschießen und Reiten und die Hochachtung für die Könige, ihre Aufmachung und die Göttern angemessene Verehrung von Seiten der Untertanen gelangten von den Medern an die Perser. Dass das wahr ist, wird besonders an der Kleidung deutlich, denn Tiara, Kitaris, Pilos, Ärmelblusen und Anaxyrides (τιάρα γάρ τις καὶ κίταρις καὶ πῖλος καὶ χειριδωτοὶ χιτῶνες⁴⁹ καὶ ἀναξυρίδες) sind in den kalten Gegenden gen Norden, wie es die medischen sind, notwendig, in den südlichen aber keineswegs“ (Strab. XI 13, 9 [C 526]).

In dieser Aufzählung von „persischen“ Kleidungsstücken findet sich der Begriff Kitaris. Mit eben diesem Namen bezeichnete nun Antiochos seine eigene königliche Kopfbedeckung (SO 6). Der Begriff ist jedoch offensichtlich älter und, wie sich zeigen lässt, in der Achämenidenzeit gleichfalls Begriff für die königliche Kopfbedeckung gewesen (Arr., *Anab.* VI 29, 3; Plut., *Mor.* 340 C; Plut., *Art.* 26, 2; 28, 1; Plut., *Them.* 27, 7), also synonym mit der Bezeichnung Tiara orthē.⁵⁰ Es zeigt sich, dass sich die Form im Laufe der Jahrhunderte ganz wesentlich verändert hat, die Bezeichnung aber dieselbe geblieben ist.⁵¹

Diese Feststellung lässt sich verallgemeinern: Die Kleidermode hat sich seit der Achämenidenzeit kontinuierlich entwickelt und verändert. Dabei blieben die Einzelelemente, Hose, Ärmelbluse, Mantel und Tiara, erhalten, veränderten sich jedoch jeweils nach Schnitt, Länge, Trageweise etc.; trotz der Veränderungen blieben die Begriffe weiterhin an ihnen haften.

Aus dieser Feststellung folgt, dass von Fall zu Fall danach zu fragen ist, inwiefern eine unveränderte Begrifflichkeit inzwischen stark veränderte Gegebenheiten beschrieb. Diese Diskrepanz dürfte denen, die jene Begriffe verwendeten, kaum je klar gewesen sein, insbesondere dann nicht, wenn sie glaubten, in alter Tradition zu stehen. Im Gegenteil verleitete die Begrifflichkeit dazu zu glauben, die Mode der Vergangenheit sei im wesentlichen identisch gewesen mit der eigenen. Aus dieser

Münzen von Samos II. und Mithradates I. Kallinikos: Dillen (2014), 537–540 Nr. 2.1; 3.1, 2, 5.

48 Dillen (2014), 541 f. Nr. 4.1–2; 5.1.

49 χειριδωτοὶ χιτῶνες ist gewöhnlich am ehesten auf die Ärmelbluse zu beziehen, auch wenn Pollux VII 58 damit offenbar den Mantel meint (s. o. Anm. 31).

50 Zur Identität von Tiara orthē und Kitaris in der Achämenidenzeit siehe Ritter (1965), 8–12, 170–172; Jacobs (1991a), 137–139; Jacobs (1994b), 136.

51 Gleichgültig wie die Tiara orthē wirklich ausgesehen hat, mit der federgeschmückten Mütze des Antiochos hatte sie gewiss wenig Ähnlichkeit.

Perspektive aber erschien es völlig unproblematisch, das Bild eines persischen Herrschers der Vergangenheit nach der Gegenwart zu gestalten, also ihn beispielsweise in Kleidung zu hüllen, die man als „persisch“ betrachtete. Als Muster kamen Selbstdarstellungen der Nachbarn, insbesondere der parthischen Könige, mit denen man schließlich gut bekannt war,⁵² in Betracht.

DIE „PERSISCHEN“ NAMEN DER GÖTTER AUF DEM NEMRUD DAĞI

Im Falle der Kleidung zeigt sich, dass die „alte Kunde“, die Antiochos I. zur Verfügung stand, weitgehend dem entsprochen haben dürfte, was wir der erhaltenen antiken Überlieferung entnehmen können. So wendete Antiochos I. den Begriff „persisch“ anscheinend auf die Reitertracht seiner Zeit ebenso an, wie ihn Strabon – letztlich Herodots Bericht folgend, dass die Perser diese Tracht von den Medern übernommen hätten (Hdt. I 135) – auf die Reitertracht der Perser der Achämenidenzeit anwendete. Die Tatsache, dass sich die so bezeichnete Kleidung im Laufe der Jahrhunderte in Aussehen und Trageweise verändert hatte, wurde dabei ausgeblendet. Somit ist der Umgang mit der Bekleidung ein gutes Beispiel dafür, wie Vergangenheit als Ausgangspunkt einer Tradition, in der man zu stehen glaubte oder in die man sich zu stellen wünschte, konstruiert wurde. Im Ergebnis deckte sich die Vergangenheit weitgehend mit der Gegenwart; in jenen Einzelfällen, in denen die Gegenwart keine Orientierung bot, etwa bei der Tiara orthē, ließ man der Phantasie Raum.⁵³

Nun bietet Strabon auch im Bereich der Religion ein Beispiel, wie man die Vergangenheit nach der Gegenwart konstruierte. Er teilt an einer Stelle mit, die Perser verehrten die Sonne, die sie Mithras nannten (Strab. XV 3, 13). Indem er den Sonnengott und Mithras gleichsetzt, referiert er für die Achämenidenzeit dieselbe Auffassung, die die Gestalt des Apollon-Mithras-Helios-Hermes im Pantheon des Antiochos prägt. Dass der Sonnengott in Mithras aufging, scheint allerdings Ergebnis einer Entwicklung zu sein, die sich erst im Laufe der Achämenidenzeit anbahnte⁵⁴. Im Werk des Curtius Rufus, das aus dem 1. Jh. n. Chr. stammt, findet sich die Nachricht, dass Dareios III. Sol, Mithras und das Heilige Feuer anrief (Curt. IV 13, 12). Hier sind der Sonnengott und Mithras also offenbar eigenständige göttliche Instanzen. Somit hat sich bei Strabon und Curtius Rufus das Verständnis zweier verschiedener historischer Epochen niedergeschlagen, wobei Strabon gewiß die jüngere, zu seiner Zeit bestimmende Auffassung referiert, diese aber ebenso – wenn auch mit weniger Recht – für die Auffassung der Achämenidenzeit hält wie sein jüngerer Kollege.

Bei der Übertragung dieser Erkenntnis auf andere Fälle stellt sich allerdings zunächst die Frage, wo innerhalb der Ausstattungsprogramme der Heiligtümer An-

52 Eine Tochter Antiochos' I. war mit dem Partherkönig Orodes II. verheiratet (Cass. Dio XLIX 23, 4; Sullivan 1977, 766).

53 Dass die Beschreibung des Aischylos bei der Formgebung eine Rolle spielte (Aesch., Pers. 661 f.), kann man allenfalls vermuten (Ritter 1965, 9 Anm. 3).

54 Jacobs (1991b), 54–58.

tiochos' I. überhaupt derartige Konstruktionen von Vergangenheit vorliegen. So ist nicht ohne Weiteres zu entscheiden, ob Antiochos I. für die Darstellung seiner Vorfahren deshalb Reliefstelen wählte, weil er auch hier eine nach seinem Dafürhalten „persische“ Komponente ins Spiel bringen wollte.⁵⁵

Im Falle der Benennung der männlichen Götter auf dem Nemrud Dağı mit persischen Namenskomponenten, liegt jedoch mit einiger Gewissheit eine Konstruktion achämenidischer Vergangenheit vor. Die griechischen Namen der Mitglieder des privilegierten Götterkollegiums waren durch die Sternenkonstellation des 7. Juli 62 v. Chr. vorgegeben. Diese war hauptsächlich deshalb so bemerkenswert und folgenreich gewesen, weil an ihr Jupiter, Merkur und Mars beteiligt waren, die sich als Gestirne von Zeus, Apollon und Herakles deuten ließen, der wichtigsten Götter der hellenistischen Monarchien. Zeus soll schon von Theopompos, Hermippos und Eudoxos mit Oromasdes gleichgesetzt worden sein (Diog. Laert. I 8). Apollon ließ sich auf Grund seines solaren Aspekts mit Helios verbinden, dessen Identifizierung mit Mithras, wie oben gezeigt, gerade Strabon bezeugt. Diese Gleichsetzung beruht auf zeitgenössischer Auffassung, doch ist Mithras in der Form *Mitra-* resp. *Mitra-* in den Achämenideninschriften immerhin belegt. Ebenso wie den Namen Mithras hat Antiochos jedoch auch Artagnes dem zeitgenössischen Umfeld entnommen, wo *Vῆρέθραγνα-* / Artagnes allenthalben mit Herakles gleichgesetzt wurde.⁵⁶ In diesem Falle aber wird ein „persischer“ Gott eingeführt, der für die Achämeniden und im Westen ihres Reiches keine Bedeutung hatte.

So lässt sich festhalten: Ein wesentliches inhaltliches Element des Ausstattungsprogramms des Heiligtums auf dem Nemrud Dağı war für Antiochos I. die Einreihung der eigenen Person in das durch ein stellares Ereignis in seiner Zusammensetzung festgelegte Kollegium aus einer weiblichen und drei männlichen Gottheiten. So wie Antiochos die eigene Deszendenz auf das Seleukiden- und das Achämenidenhaus zurückführte, wurde auch für die männlichen Götter des Quartetts eine griechisch-persische Identität konstruiert. Zumindest die Gleichsetzung des Herakles mit *Vῆρέθραγνα-*/Artagnes wäre jedoch in der Achämenidenzeit nicht möglich gewesen, da der Gott hier keine Rolle spielte. Um im Rahmen des Konstrukts griechisch-persischer Identität, die das Ausstattungsprogramm bietet, die Balance zu wahren, wurde der zeitgenössische Artagnes in die achämenidische Vergangenheit zurückprojiziert. Das Prestige, das Antiochos I. aus der Harmonisierung mutmaßlicher griechischer und persischer Traditionen in den Augen der Heiligtumsbesucher gewinnen sollte, resultierte daraus, dass er für sich und sein Reich das (politische und kulturelle) Erbe der beiden mächtigsten Monarchien der vergangenen 500 Jahre reklamieren konnte.

55 Vgl. die Ausführungen zum Ahnenkult in Jacobs (im Druck).

56 Das bekannteste Exemplar ist der Herakles aus Seleukeia in Baghdad (Invernizzi 1985, 423–425, no. 231, Abb. auf S. 340 f., 424).

MEMORIES OF PERSIAN RULE: CONSTRUCTING HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY IN HASMONEAN JUDEA

Benedikt Eckhardt

In memory of Jörg-Dieter Gauger (1947–2015)

INTRODUCTION: A FORMATIVE DARK AGE

In the history of Israel, the two centuries of Persian domination (538–332 BCE) are generally perceived as an important, formative period. Following the deportation of Israelites to Babylonia through Nebuchadnezzar and the destruction of the First Temple (586 BCE), the period of Persian rule saw the repopulation of Jerusalem and Judah, the rebuilding of the temple, the rise of a new priestly aristocracy that replaced the Davidic monarchy, and the formation of a religious community out of diverse social groups, bound by the laws of God which gained a new, canonized form in the late sixth century BCE. According to this view, the basic elements that characterized Jewish identity before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE were developed in the Persian Period. Together with the fact that very little is known about conflicts with Persian administrators (quite in contrast to the Hellenistic Period), this usually leads to a rather positive view of the time between Cyrus and Darius III.

The basis for this historical interpretation is the biblical tradition itself.¹ Deutero-Isaiah famously labels Cyrus “his [God’s] anointed (*mašīah*)” (45,1) – either as a polemical hint at the abolition of the Davidic dynasty, or in an attempt to show that Cyrus was in fact the legitimate heir of David’s throne, chosen by God.² The books of Ezra and Nehemiah, together with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, provide the basic sources for writing a history of the early post-exilic period. In addition, numerous hypotheses by biblical scholars surrounding the redaction of the prophets, the historical works and even the Pentateuch argue for wide-ranging textual work carried out in the Persian Period, taking the main clues from the ideological disputes and political parties mentioned in (or reconstructed from) Ezra-Nehemiah.³

None of these texts is, however, securely dated to the Persian Period. This is of special relevance because extra-biblical evidence for the history of Israel in this period is very meagre indeed. Post-biblical authors writing in the Hellenistic and

1 An overview of the data and scholarly approaches is provided by Grabbe (2004).

2 The latter option is defended by Fried (2002).

3 E. g. the supposed conflicts between Aaronites and Zadokites about the high priesthood, which presumably led to the creation of new traditions, the manipulation of genealogies and the like; cf. among others Schaper (2000).

Roman Periods had no clear understanding of the length of the Persian Period, because they could not date Nebuchadnezzar's conquest.⁴ The results are curious at times, as when the main rabbinic chronological work, the *Seder Olam*, reduces the Persian Period to 34 years.⁵ In addition, these authors had very little information that went beyond the biblical reports. The basis for reconstructing Persian Period traditions is thus the primary assumption that this was the period when "Judaism" was created through a reworking (and perhaps even canonization) of traditions, an idea which is in turn based almost completely on an early date for Ezra-Nehemiah. One does not need to adhere to the 'Copenhagen School' of Biblical Minimalism, which tends to date the whole Hebrew Bible to the Hellenistic Period, to see a problem of circularity here.

Historians may be tempted to leave these problems to Old Testament scholars, and it is undoubtedly true that the details of redaction criticism require skills, methods and (as we have seen) preliminary assumptions that are not part of historical training. I will argue here that historical studies of the Hellenistic Near East can nevertheless profit from an engagement with the debates mentioned above. The historical memory of the Persian Period may in fact be a good example for a revision of "national" histories in a post-Seleucid power vacuum, when new dynasties needed legitimation apart from what Seleucid traditions could offer. In this period, Persianism was especially prone to political use. In the case of Judea, the dynasty in question is the Hasmoneans. I will therefore discuss several historical constructs of Persia and its rulers found in biblical texts and attempt to relate them to the interests of Hasmonean ideologies of rule. But as a first step, the legitimacy of this approach will be supported by introducing the general importance of historiography for Hasmonean propaganda.

POLITICAL MEMORY AND THE "RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION" OF 168 BCE

At the core of Hasmonean dynastic legitimacy lies a carefully constructed political memory of an event that took place in Jerusalem, in 168 BCE. According to this memory, Antiochos IV, the Seleucid king who had permitted the city's transformation into a Greek "Antiochia" only seven years earlier, now not only plundered the temple, but directed a series of measures against the Jewish cult, and against Jewish identity as such. The cult of Yahwe was replaced with a cult of Zeus Olympios; Jews had to participate in Dionysiac processions and celebrate the king's birthday; observing the Sabbath was forbidden, as was circumcision; Jews were even forced to eat food that was forbidden by their own laws.⁶ The first book of Maccabees, the "official" Hasmonean version of the story published half a century later (around

4 This would have given a somewhat inaccurate, but fixed starting point due to Jeremiah's prophecy that the Babylonian exile would last 70 years (Jer. 25,8–14); adapted in 2 Chr. 36,21–23 (70 years until the rebuilding of the temple).

5 Cf. on this and other miscalculations Wise (2003), p. 63–64.

6 1 Macc. 1,41–61; 2 Macc. 6,2–7.

110 BCE), reports the heroic resistance of the Hasmonean family against what appears to be a full-scale religious persecution. Eventually, the Hasmoneans not only manage to restore the temple cult, but use the Seleucid throne war for their own aims, to build an independent Jewish state under the leadership of Hasmonean high priests.

It becomes clear even from a cursory reading of 1 Macc. that the creation of political memory was a conscious strategy employed by a dynasty that had no hereditary right to rule Judea. Hasmonean successes were commemorated in newly created annual festivals, the most prominent of which, Hanukkah, is still celebrated today.⁷ Rival claims were rendered illegitimate, as in the story of Joseph and Azarja, two military commanders who wanted to act heroically in a battle against Seleucid forces without Hasmonean participation, but perished, for “they were not of the seed of those men to whom was given salvation to Israel by their hand” (5,62).⁸ But the most important historical construction that has been preserved is found at the very beginning of 1 Macc., where the origins of the persecution are reported. The text contains two lines of argument that lead to the suppression of Jewish laws. The first is concerned with internal developments: Many Israelites intended to “make a covenant with the nations around us, because from the time we separated ourselves from them many evils have found us”. They therefore ask the king to be allowed “to follow the statutes of the nations”; they build a gymnasium and even “fashioned foreskins for themselves” (1,11–15). The persecution is thus preceded by apostasy. The second argument appears almost unrelated to the first one and concerns the motivations of Antiochos himself. The king “wrote to all his kingdom for all to be as one people and for each to abandon his own precepts” (1,41). This seems to lead away from a perspective focused on Israel, but a connection to the first argument is created in the narrative through the reaction of the apostates in Israel: Predictably, they are happy to follow the king’s orders and abandon Jewish law.

So two preconditions for the persecution are given, and both are clearly manipulations of history, designed to foster specific interests of Hasmonean propaganda. The apostates’ wish to leave the covenant with God in order to conclude a covenant with the nations is a caricature of the intentions of those people who wanted to transform Jerusalem into an “Antiochia”, known from 2 Macc. to have been members of the priestly elite (and hence of the former aristocracy that had been replaced by the Hasmoneans).⁹ And Antiochos’ attempt at religious unification of the Seleucid Empire not only runs counter to everything we know about the attitudes of Hellenistic rulers towards religion,¹⁰ but has also left no traces in other regions, not even in the immediate neighborhood of Judea. As the supposed intentions of Antiochos thus belong to the realm of fiction, it is likely that his actions were not designed to be a religious persecution at all. Rather, in a critical situation after the day of Ele-

7 Hanukkah: 1 Macc. 4,36–59; 2 Macc. 10,1–8; Nicanor’s day: 1 Macc. 7,48–49; 2 Macc. 15,36; day of the conquest of the Seleucid garrison in Jerusalem: 1 Macc. 13,52.

8 Translations of 1 Macc. follow G. T. Zervos.

9 2 Macc. 4,7–21. Cf. on the process Ameling (2003); Kennell (2005).

10 Cf., for the Seleucid Empire, Sartre (2006).

usis, Antiochos reacted against an insurrection in Jerusalem.¹¹ It is likely that apart from military action, he also withdrew the city's right to use its own *patrioi nomoi*, and that the Seleucid administrators of the region introduced some rituals that were known to promote loyalty elsewhere. This was certainly problematic from a Jewish point of view, and we need not doubt all the details given by the books of the Maccabees in that respect. But the memory of Antiochos as a persecutor of religion is the result of conscious plotting, based not least on Oriental traditions about the sacrilegious predecessors of righteous kings.¹²

Historical memory was thus crucial for the development of Hasmonean ideology, which combined the heroic connotations of resistance against religious persecution with an internal discourse on Jewish identity, directed against the former ruling class and its possible remnants. It is worth asking how this interest in the uses of historiography affected the reconstruction of earlier Israelite history, namely the pre-Hellenistic Period. That the image of a Seleucid religious oppression also had an impact on the evaluation of earlier periods should be expected, and 1 Macc., while generally concerned with current events, does in fact offer a glimpse. The Hasmonean narrative of persecution and resistance begins with Alexander, who "defeated Darius, king of the Persians and Medes, and became king in his place" (1,1). This proves to be a turning point in history. Alexander became "exalted and his heart was uplifted" (1,3). His successors "multiplied evils on the earth" (1,9), until a particularly "sinful root" arose out of them, Antiochos IV Epiphanes (1,10). In this short overview of early Hellenistic history, only three persons are mentioned by name. Alexander's deeds are a precondition for the rise of Antiochos, whose character will soon be revealed by his actions against Israel. They are the villains in this story. Darius III is situated on a different level. The end of his rule marks the beginning of a rapid decline, and one wonders what would have happened if Darius had been more successful. No further information about his reign is given, but the arrangement of events would certainly allow for an idealization of the Persian Period. This opens the way for a new investigation into the historical traditions that actually contain such idealizations.

PERSIAN KINGS AS GUARANTORS OF JEWISH TRADITION

The most important contribution of Persian kings to Jewish history according to biblical historiography was clearly the permission to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, to fortify and repopulate the city, and to turn the Torah into the normative

11 This is what 2 Macc. 5,11 actually says, albeit with the remark that Antiochos *falsely* believed that Jerusalem wanted to break away from his rule. What was happening, however, must have been clear enough in the king's eyes: Antiochos himself had appointed Menelaus high priest instead of Jason, but now, just after Antiochos' humiliation in Egypt, Jason had attacked Jerusalem and caused Menelaus to seek refuge in the Seleucid garrison. A number of recent treatments are based on this reconstruction; cf. Eckhardt (2013), p. 47–59; Honigman (2014b); Sartre (2014).

12 For the strategies of plotting, cf. Weitzman (2004); Honigman (2014b).

legislation for the province Yehud. These acts, reported in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, do not seem to have been very important in Jewish historiography immediately preceding Hasmonean rule. Ben Sira praises Serubbabel and Joshua for having rebuilt the temple and Nehemiah for having rebuilt Jerusalem, but does not mention Persian involvement (49,11–13). And in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion against Antiochos, the “Animal Apocalypse” (1 Enoch 85–90) is far from praising anyone at all. After the “sheep” (the Israelites) have been led into the Babylonian exile, two (or three, according to other manuscripts) of them come back and rebuild the house of God (89,72). No Persian kings are mentioned, and the Second Temple as such is devalued by the comment that the bread on the lord’s table is impure (89,73). This may be a polemical statement against the current priestly class;¹³ in any case, this radical rejection is worlds apart from the story told in Ezra-Nehemiah about how the post-exilic community received its shape and identity.

That story is of special interest for the question how Persian rulers were remembered in later periods, not least because so many of them are involved. Cyrus is moved by the god who “has given me all the kingdoms of the earth” to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem and to restore to Sheshbazar the cultic instruments that Nebuchadnezzar had stolen (Ezra 1). Joshua and Serubbabel begin the building project, but “the enemies of Juda and Benjamin”, people brought to Samaria by Asarhaddon of Assur, hinder them, first through intimidation in the time of Cyrus, then through complaints sent first to Xerxes, then to Artaxerxes (4,1–16). Artaxerxes lets himself be convinced that the Judeans are a threat to his reign, and work on the temple is stopped (4,17–24). But in the second year of Darius, the original decree of Cyrus is found and Darius gives permission to finally build the temple; it is completed in the sixth year of Darius (6,1–12). The narrative then shifts to Ezra, who has been given permission by Artaxerxes to go to Jerusalem, repopulate the city with those who follow him, and introduce the law of God (7,11–26). Ezra then issues a series of reforms, including the dissolution of intermarriages (10,10–44). The book of Nehemiah reports how Nehemiah, again in the time of one Artaxerxes, receives permission by the king to rebuild the city and its wall (2–4). The rest of the book is concerned mainly with the inner-Judean construction of identity, including a sworn commitment by the people to preserve the laws of God (10,29–40) and an expulsion of foreigners (13,1–3).

There is a broad consensus in scholarship that Ezra-Nehemiah combines several different but partly parallel traditions. But while the date of this compilation has traditionally been placed somewhere in the fifth or fourth century BCE, a number of more recent contributions have argued that the final redaction is rather a product of the Hasmonean Period.¹⁴ As such, this idea would not run counter to the traditional

13 Reese (1999), p. 37.

14 Böhler (1997); Wright (2007); Böhler (2010); Carr (2011), p. 168–69. 2 Macc. 2,13–14 may actually give a hint: Concluding a legend about Nehemiah that is not part of the biblical tradition, the letter to the Alexandrians states that “the same things are reported in the records and in the memoirs of Neemias”; Nehemiah is also said to have collected books and letters. Judas Maccabeus supposedly followed his example and “collected all the books that have been lost on account of the war”. This claim suggests that Hasmonean Jerusalem is now the place where

approach that uses Ezra-Nehemiah as a roughly contemporary and largely accurate source for the first century after the exile, because the incorporation of Persian Period traditions (like the “Nehemiah memoir”) may still be assumed. However, there are indications that the Hasmonean reworking of the material went well beyond the mere “redaction” of pre-existing material. Archaeological insights have recently fueled the debate, particularly the claim that Nehemiah’s wall, the building of which is reported as a central achievement in Nehemiah 3, is archaeologically unattested and should be explained as a literary reflection of the city’s fortification in Hasmonean times.¹⁵ This remains a controversial issue,¹⁶ but similar arguments have been made for the lists of returnees in both Ezra and Nehemiah, which mention several places that were uninhabited in the Persian Period, but fit the reality of the Hasmonean Period well.¹⁷ The old question of the relationship between Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s works, usually solved by chronological models that either place Nehemiah before Ezra or *vice versa*, is another case in point, because the two protagonists do not seem to be of equal status in Israelite historical memory. Thus, while Nehemiah is mentioned in Ben Sira’s praise of the fathers and in the opening letter of 2 Macc. (2,13–14), Ezra is not attested outside of “his” book before the Roman Period.¹⁸ A plausible scenario argues for two originally separate legends about founder figures that were combined only in the Hasmonean Period.¹⁹ It is therefore quite possible that the book of Ezra (including the royal documents), and maybe even Ezra himself, were not just subject to redaction, but created in that period.²⁰

This would certainly diminish the value of the compilation as a historical source for the early years of Persian rule. That value, however, should not be overestimated anyway. The Achaemenid chronology seems seriously flawed: While it is generally acknowledged that “the sixth year of Darius” is 515 BCE and that Darius I is meant, the book of Ezra seems to confuse him with Darius II when it assumes that Xerxes I and Artaxerxes I reigned between Cyrus and Darius (4,6–24); still, when Ezra is sent by Artaxerxes (458 BCE according to the traditional dating,

authentic traditions may be found; the consequence is clear (2,15): “So if you have need of them (i. e. the books), send people to get them for you”.

15 Finkelstein (2008).

16 Lipschits (2011), p. 170–72 points to traces of settlement in the city of David, judged to be insufficient by Finkelstein. Ussishkin (2012), p. 118–20 argues that a number of toponyms in Neh. 3 could not have been remembered in the Hasmonean Period – but his references to other biblical passages where the same designations occur somewhat undermine this argument.

17 Finkelstein (2011), p. 60–68.

18 Sir. 49,13 mentions Nehemiah. Cf. Marttila (2012), p. 192–206 for a discussion of the many explanations for the omission of Ezra. On the relationship between Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s legislation, cf. the overview by Fitzpatrick-MacKinley (2015), p. 255–65, who notes that Nehemiah does not seem to know Ezra’s laws, but does not decide whether Ezra came after Nehemiah or whether he was a fictive character invented at a later period.

19 Davies (1995), p. 157–60.

20 One possible objection might be the impact this re-dating would have on the origins of the Pentateuch. Thus, some scholars have argued that the book of Leviticus was written after Ezra-Nehemiah (giving a legal form to its demands for ritual purity), but always under the condition that at least the core of Ezra-Nehemiah was written in the Persian Period. But cf. Harrington (2013), who shows that priority should be accorded to Leviticus.

assuming that Artaxerxes I is meant), the temple has already been rebuilt.²¹ While this may be explained by a simple lack of historical knowledge (evident also in the chronology of Persian rulers in the book of Daniel), other elements seem to point to a more purposeful falsification. Thus, the numerous attempts by Old Testament scholars to explain the royal letters in the book of Ezra in the light of Achaemenid religious policy, especially with reference to the Cyrus cylinder, ultimately remain unconvincing. An “Achaemenid religious policy” simply did not exist.²² This raises the question when it was invented by Judean authors. Theoretically, this could have happened at any time in the late Persian or Hellenistic Period. But as several arguments point to a Hasmonean date for the book of Ezra in the final version, the possibility of a specifically Hasmonean interest in this reconstruction of Achaemenid policy is worth considering. The opening passage of 1 Macc. has been taken above to imply that the horrible events of 168 would never have happened under a Persian king. The royal letters in the book of Ezra show the historiographical effects of this claim.²³ At the same time, any reader would have seen the connection to the very different politics of Antiochos, who appears as the antitype of the benevolent Persian rulers. Such a strategy would fit the tendency of some post-Seleucid Near Eastern dynasties to “skip” the Seleucids in their dynastic propaganda and to idealize the Persian past instead.²⁴ Also like the Hasmoneans, such dynasties could rediscover (or invent) native traditions, while at the same time acting as Hellenistic monarchs.²⁵ The difference is that the Hasmoneans did not claim to act as the true successors to the Achaemenids, but limited this idealization to historiography.

One may ask why a Hasmonean redactor would be at all interested in a positive representation of foreign rule, Achaemenid or other. However, the role of the Persian kings and its implications for the image of Antiochos are certainly not the main points of the story told in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The whole complex of identity politics, of rebuilding a Jewish community by rigorously eliminating every element that is impure or foreign, is much more important – and obviously compatible with the rhetoric of 1 Macc. If a Hasmonean program is reflected in this narrative about the Persian Period, the problem of identity stands at its core.²⁶ It is

21 Cf. on the chronological problems Edelman (2005), p. 154–59. 204–6. She rightly notes that the problems vanish if 4,6–24 are regarded as a later addition by a redactor (living in the Seleucid Period, in her view) who did not know the chronology of Achaemenid rulers anymore.

22 Kuhrt (2007b); cf. Gruen (2007), p. 56–59.

23 Their authenticity has been discussed in too many contributions to give an overview here. See the balanced discussion by Grabbe (2006), who also notes differences between English-language scholarship (generally in favor of authenticity) and German-language works (more willing to argue for forgeries). Grabbe’s own solution is that while none of the documents is authentic, most or even all of them may contain some authentic elements.

24 Cf., on Persis, Kommagene and Pontos, Eckhardt (2015).

25 On Hellenization and invented traditions in the Hasmonean Period, cf. the well-balanced treatment by Rajak (1996).

26 This does not mean that the focus on marriage laws, purity and foreign influence may not have belonged to an older tradition attached to Nehemiah. Historical reconstructions usually argue that the rigorous concepts described in the books (and especially in Neh.) were an attempt to give coherence and identity to post-exilic Judean society (cf. Olyan [2004]); it was only in the Hasmonean Period, also following a catastrophe, when such radical constructions of ritual and

nevertheless interesting to note that the Persian Period was chosen as the setting of this debate, and that Persian royal decrees are presented as the precondition for the emergence of a pious, Torah-observant people. The Hasmonean version of Judean history not only implies a positive view on Achaemenid kings as opposed to a Seleucid religious oppressor. Historical traditions and a new taste for Persian history combined to form a narrative setting that showed Hasmonean claims to be in accord with the traditional Judaism of an idealized, pre-Seleucid past. The redaction of Ezra-Nehemiah uses Persianism as a vehicle for promulgating (and giving historical support to) current ideological demands.²⁷

The implicit contrast with Antiochos IV may also have led to the emergence of yet another political memory. In Josephus, we encounter a very positive depiction of his father, Antiochos III. The image of a king who openly demonstrated his “friendship” (φιλία) with the Jews is based primarily on three royal letters, two of which concern Jerusalem and the temple. One of them, the *programma* for the temple, is of doubtful authenticity. Supposedly published “in all his kingdom”, the royal decree informs Antiochos’ subjects that no foreigner is to enter the temple in Jerusalem, and that several animals (including leopards, but not pigs!) are not to be brought into the city.²⁸ The arguments in favor of a Jewish forgery have been countered, but not contradicted by attempts to connect the purity rules with contemporary traditions.²⁹ The other document, a letter of the king to the high priest and governor of the region, Ptolemy son of Thraseas, seems to be authentic.³⁰ It contains several privileges for Jerusalem as a reward for the city’s cooperation in the Fifth Syrian War. Together with the letter to Zeuxis concerning the establishment of Jew-

ethnic identity were revived (cf. Hayes [2002], p. 45–91; Eckhardt [2013], p. 325–28). The possibility cannot be excluded, however, that the perceived gap between discourses of identity in Ezra-Nehemiah and in the Hasmonean Period was not a gap at all, because Ezra-Nehemiah actually reflects the Hasmonean debates.

- 27 This may also throw some light on Neh. 9, a prayer by the people that ends (9,36–37) on a rather negative note: “Here we are, slaves to this day – slaves in the land that you gave to our ancestors to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts. Its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins; they have power also over our bodies and over our livestock at their pleasure, and we are in great distress” (transl. NRSV). Oeming (2006), p. 578–82 argues that this contradicts the positive representation of Persian monarchs, and proposes a new, more positive translation according to which the Judeans are “(your) [i.e. God’s] servants (*‘abādīm*)”, placed by God under Persian rulers who “reign over our bodies and over our livestock with benevolent care (*mōšlim*)”. I suggest that once an early date for Ezra-Nehemiah (“ca. 450 BCE” according to Oeming) is abandoned, the contradiction becomes less relevant. From a Hasmonean perspective, Persian kings excelled in their God-given role as guarantors of Jewish laws, but independence from foreign rule would still be the better option.
- 28 Fl. Ios. *ant. Iud.* 12,145–46.
- 29 For forgery, see Gauger (1990). Authenticity is often assumed without argument; for a detailed discussion, cf. Gera (2014), p. 26–39. The problem with such arguments is that closeness to Jewish tradition only points to Jewish authorship again. According to Gera (p. 36–37), a Jewish forger would have mentioned pigs – but would pigs not rather have been mentioned precisely in a royal decree that could *not* presuppose general familiarity with the most basic principles of Jewish law?
- 30 Fl. Ios. *ant. Iud.* 12,138–44. Doubts have been raised concerning the part on the temple (140–43), cf. Gauger (2000), p. 195–204; and my comments in Eckhardt (2013), p. 41–42.

ish military colonies in Lydia and Phrygia,³¹ these documents form a dossier, designed to prove how benevolent Antiochos III had shown himself towards the Jews. The origins of this dossier, which includes a mix of authentic material and later compositions, are unclear, but it is unlikely that Josephus found the letters in three separate sources and compiled it himself. It has been argued that the compilation was made in the first century BCE in the context of a co-evolution of legends about benevolent monarchs, including the Achaemenids, with Rome as the addressee.³² It is indeed plausible to connect the positive image of Antiochos III with the traditions surrounding the construction of the Second Temple and the Persian authorization of the Torah. The date of the traditions is less clear, as is the role of Rome – Antiochos III would not be an obvious model to choose if winning Roman support was the intention. The author(s) of the dossier may simply have intended to extend the history of ideal foreign rulers beyond the limits of the Persian Period, a direction not envisaged by the historical overview in 1 Macc. 1.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND ANTIOCHOS IV

It is worth asking how this new evaluation of the Persian Period affected the historical image of Neobabylonian rule, not least because some overlaps between Hasmonean and Seleucid political memory seem to be detectable. It has been noted recently that Nebuchadnezzar's role in the biblical books changes considerably in the course of time. The earlier and more influential traditions tend to see him in a positive light, as a repentant sinner and an instrument of God's will. The negative image of the king as Jerusalem's destroyer is a late development.³³ Depending on *how* late this change is to be dated, it might have to do with the politics of memory triggered by the Seleucid "persecution". If the historiography of the Hasmonean Period was interested in the Persian kings as a model of religious tolerance, contrasting with the extremely negative image of Antiochos IV, this must have raised questions about the evaluation of pre-Persian history, and specifically the role of Nebuchadnezzar. The analogy between the king who destroyed the First Temple and caused the Babylonian exile (precisely the measures to be reversed by the benevolent Achaemenids) and the Seleucid persecutor of Jewish religion (who broke with the Achaemenid policy that his father supposedly continued) must have been obvious.

The claim that by the time of the Maccabean revolt, "Nebuchadnezzar had become a cipher term for any enemy king who attacked Jerusalem",³⁴ and was hence identified with Antiochos IV, is not easy to prove. In the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar's call for religious unification – the obligation for all peoples of the empire

31 Fl. Ios. *ant. Iud.* 12,148–53. This is another debated text. Gauger (1977), p. 3–151 has argued, convincingly in my view, that a number of elements are impossible in a Seleucid royal letter, but his skepticism has not found many adherents.

32 Gauger (2007).

33 Stökl (2013).

34 Stökl (2013), p. 269.

to worship a golden image erected by the king (3,1–6) – certainly resembles the attempt of Antiochos in 1 Macc. 1,41 to make “one people” out of all the peoples of his empire. Given the chronology, the direction of influence would have to be from Daniel (redacted in the early years of the revolt) to 1 Macc. This would mean that later Hasmonean propaganda presented Antiochos IV as a new Nebuchadnezzar on the basis of traditions that were established in the days of the revolt at the latest. But one might also argue that the narrative in Daniel is already designed to foster that equation. Several scholars have suggested that the story of the “mad king” in Daniel 4 originally referred to Nabonidus and was only secondarily applied to Nebuchadnezzar, in a redaction process that took place in the time of Antiochos IV. Nebuchadnezzar would simply have been the more fitting model for Antiochos.³⁵ Similar transpositions might be at the core of the report about the horrible death of Antiochos IV (2 Macc. 9), which contains elements of the affliction of Nabonidus/Nebuchadnezzar.³⁶

These interpretations, while plausible, must obviously remain speculative.³⁷ The book of Judith, presumably written around 100 BCE,³⁸ is more helpful, because it explicitly makes Nebuchadnezzar the protagonist of an attempt to do away with Israelite religion. It is in his name that Holophernes “had been appointed to root out all the gods of the land, that every nation and every tongue should serve Nabuchodonosor and him alone and that their every tribe should invoke him as a god” (3,8).³⁹ The program of religious unification is familiar from the book of Daniel in its focus on the ruler as god, but it also mirrors the supposed policy of Antiochos according to 1 Macc. 1. As in 1 Macc. 1,42, all other subjects express their willingness to give up their ancestral traditions; “of all the inhabitants of the West”, only the Israelites prepare for war (5,4). That Nebuchadnezzar might be standing for someone else is suggested by his presentation as king of the Assyrians – “a designation that any Jewish audience would instantly recognize as absurd”.⁴⁰ Given the date and thematic scope of the narrative, Antiochos IV is a likely candidate; “Assyrian” might in fact have been chosen for its resemblance to “Syrian”, as both terms were used interchangeably by some authors before the Roman Period.⁴¹ The solution of the conflict (Holophernes being deceived and beheaded by a woman) is very different from the glorification of war that was at the core of Hasmonean le-

35 Cf. recently Davis Bledsoe (2012); Nelson (2012), p. 121–44.

36 Mendels (1981a), with reference to the “Prayer of Nabonidus” from Qumran (4QPrNab), which shows strong similarities with Dan 4.

37 Especially as 2 Macc. 9 might also be explained solely in the light of Greek traditions on the death of tyrants; cf. Africa (1982). Things get even more complicated if the chapter is regarded as a later addition that is itself based on reports about the death of Herod the Great, as Gauger (2002) argues, but there is no compelling reason to do so.

38 This is yet another book once thought to belong to the Persian Period. Cf. the overview in Schürer (1986), p. 216–19. The idea that parts of the book do indeed stem from the Persian Era is cautiously accepted by Carr (2011), p. 157, who nevertheless dates the book as it is now to the Hasmonean Period.

39 Translations follow C. Boyd-Taylor.

40 Gruen (2006), p. 423.

41 Note the comment by Hdt. 7,63; on the terminological differentiation, cf. Andrade (2014).

gitimacy, and there are other hints that the book of Judith offers a critical comment on some elements of Hasmonean propaganda.⁴² It is nevertheless interesting that in a camouflaged critique set in a surreal chronological framework, Nebuchadnezzar was the obvious person to take over the role of Antiochos IV.

All this is especially interesting because such claims can be related to the imperial representation of the Seleucid dynasty itself. Seleucid kings would not have been discontent to be compared with Nebuchadnezzar – quite the opposite. Not only did Megasthenes praise Nebuchadnezzar for having surpassed Herakles.⁴³ Babylonian evidence shows that even later Seleucids, namely Antiochos III and IV, used Nebuchadnezzar as a model for their own imperial ambitions.⁴⁴ The Seleucids did not style themselves as heirs of the Achaemenids, perhaps because this would not have been the most convincing claim to legitimacy in a world that had been created through a campaign against the Persian enemy.⁴⁵ Instead, they postulated a continuation of earlier, pre-Persian traditions – traditions that had at times to be invented in the first place (or at least manipulated), but were apparently convincing enough at least for Babylonian scribes.⁴⁶ In that sense, the Hasmonean interpretation of history appears as an exact mirror image of Seleucid claims. A negative evaluation of Persian rule had led the Seleucids to turn to Neo-Babylonian traditions. The positive re-evaluation of the Persian Period in Hasmonean Judea was a response to the intolerable actions of Antiochos IV; as a side-effect, Neo-Babylonian rule was reinterpreted (negatively) and put on a par with Seleucid rule. The outcome was the same; the difference is that the Seleucids promoted this equation in order to appear as heroic conquerors, while a newly emerging Jewish tradition saw both Nebuchadnezzar and Antiochos as godless oppressors.

ESTHER AND RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN THE EMPIRE OF AHASVEROS

The most elaborate biblical imagining of the Persian court is found in the book of Esther. Set in Susa at the court of Ahasveros (Artaxerxes in the Greek version), the story contains an assemblage of several stereotypes known from Greek literature.⁴⁷ The royal banquets, the eunuchs, the court hierarchy are all familiar from Classical and Hellenistic sources – not to forget the main driving force of the story, the *proskynesis*. Like the upright Macedonians before Alexander, Mordechai refuses to bow before Haman, albeit for a different reason: He does not doubt the hierarchical

42 Cf. Eckhardt (2009).

43 FGrH 715 F1.

44 Cf. the evidence adduced by Haubold (2013), p. 130–32; Kosmin (2014b), p. 188–92.

45 Cf. Tuplin (2008). With regard to Babylonia, Strootman (2013a), p. 73 notes that “Seleucid propaganda erased the Achaemenids from Babylonian history”.

46 The creative aspect of the Seleucid appropriation of traditions has been stressed repeatedly in recent discussions of the Borsippa Cylinder; cf. Erickson (2011); Strootman (2013a); Kosmin (2014b).

47 Cf. Macchi (2007); Mathys (2010), p. 243–65.

status of Haman, whose elevated position at court had been determined by the king himself, but rather makes known (to those asking) that he is a Jew – presumably meaning that he has religious reasons not to bow before Haman.⁴⁸ This is the reason for Haman’s attempt to destroy not only Mordechai, but his whole people, which he presents to the king as disobedient to his laws (3,8). The king follows Haman’s suggestion to issue an edict of persecution, but is ultimately convinced by Esther not only to get rid of Haman, but even to give Mordechai a free hand to formulate yet another persecution decree that allows the Jews to kill their enemies (8,1–14).

Like the other books of the Hebrew Bible that mention Persia and Persians, the book of Esther was traditionally dated to the Persian or very early Hellenistic Period. While this date is still maintained by several scholars,⁴⁹ a number of recent contributions have convincingly detached the book from the time of its narrative, and argue for a firmly Hellenistic date. The new basic question now seems to be if a date around 200 BCE suffices, or if the book should be dated as late as the Hasmonean Period.⁵⁰ The many resonances with the Maccabean crisis seem to support the latter suggestion – especially the notion of a religious persecution, based on a test of faith similar to those reported in the books of the Maccabees, with similar consequences for the definition of Jewish identity, as well as the counter attack by Jews, which leads others to fear them and even to “pretend to be Jews” (8,17). Problems nevertheless arise: Not only is it likely that parts of the story are older than the final redaction, but it is far from clear which text should form the basis of discussion. Apart from the Hebrew version in the MT, several others are known which contain additional material.⁵¹ The most important alternative text is the significantly longer Greek version of Esther preserved in the Septuagint, dated to the year 78/77 BCE according to the colophon (11,1), which notes that the book was translated in Jerusalem and sent to Alexandria at that time.⁵² So in the late Hasmonean Period, there evidently was an interest in a certain version of the story, perhaps one that incorporated specific elements of Hasmonean representations of rule.⁵³ The implications for Hebrew Esther are less clear, as Esther LXX is not a mere translation; the observation can therefore be construed both as supporting or obstructing a late

48 Achenbach (2013), p. 98–99 notes that Mordechai’s reasons are of a religious nature. His further point that Greek literature associates the rite solely with kings is not entirely accurate (Hdt. 1,134 allows for various hierarchical constellations), but it seems clear that the supposed worship of Persian kings through *proskynesis* stands in the background (on this misconception by Greeks, cf. Rollinger [2011], p. 23–37). It would otherwise remain unclear why being Jewish would prevent someone from bowing before a superior; the narrative in Est. 3,1–6 does not suggest any religious connotation of the act.

49 Burns (2006), p. 4–10; Schellekens (2009).

50 Pre-Hasmonean: Ego (2010). Hasmonean: Ilan (1999), p. 133–35 (early first century BCE); Achenbach (2013) (time of John Hyrcanus I, i. e. 135–104 BCE); Trehuedic (2014).

51 Cf. Trehuedic (2014), p. 134–35 with references to the complicated debate.

52 This was established by Bickerman (1944); the historicity of the colophon’s claim has been doubted by Cavalier (2003), but the reasons are not decisive. Bickerman also argued for a date around 100 BCE for Hebrew Esther.

53 Ilan (1999), p. 133–35 argues for a connection with Alexandra Salome (who came to power in 76), and tends to regard Hebrew Esther as basically contemporary with the Greek version. For more concrete “Hasmonean” adaptations, see below.

date. A tentative solution may nevertheless be proposed, one that takes as its point of departure the assumption – shared by most scholars – that Esther LXX is indeed later (but not necessarily much later) than the MT version.

The Hasmoneans had an interest in the feast that would become Purim, as is shown by 2 Macc.: Nikanor's day, a new festival celebrating the victory of Judas Maccabaeus and his forces over the Seleucid general on 13th Adar, is presented as immediately preceding "Mordechai's day" (15,36). The new festival is thus an addition to an already existing one. This seems to suggest that Purim was already celebrated on 14th Adar, and that it was already connected to a story about Mordechai. Esther was either not part of that story or not important enough to give her name to the feast; that it was not called Purim seems to suggest that the present form of Esther (containing a rather crude explanation for precisely this name) was indeed not known or authoritative at that time.⁵⁴ As Mordechai's conflict with Haman is the central motivation for the persecution of Jews, it may be argued that "Mordechai's day" was already a celebration of successful resistance against an oppression of Jews in the Persian Empire. This would also explain why the Hasmoneans chose to associate the celebration of their own victory with that festival.

This would imply that a tradition about an (attempted) persecution of Jews in the Persian Empire pre-dated the Maccabean crisis, although it is likely, as noted above, that specific elements mentioned in the narrative were included only after Antiochos IV had supposedly set a precedent. Redacted at a rather early stage of Hasmonean rule, the text does not engage with the positive image of Persian religious tolerance developed in the Ezra-Nehemiah tradition, but it also does not explicitly run counter to it, as the king himself is not a persecutor, but little more than an object of Haman's manipulations.⁵⁵ The text may have had a double function: To supplement traditions about "Mordechai's day"/Purim with a version of history that reflected important elements of Hasmonean ideology, but also to show that the only place where the safety of Jews could be guaranteed (by the Hasmoneans, that is) was Judea.⁵⁶ After all, not many Diaspora communities in Egypt or Babylonia could hope to be saved by a queen who turned out to be Jewish.

The Greek version sent to Alexandria in 78/77 includes several additional elements that resonate with Hasmonean ideology.⁵⁷ On the one hand, responsibility

54 Contrast Burns (2006), p. 13–14. On the Hasmonean appropriation of Purim cf. Eckhardt (2013), p. 108–10; Trehuedic (2014), p. 152–54. The problem of naming the feast remains; the idea that "Mordechai's day" was the Egyptian designation, entertained by Trehuedic, has to cope with Est. LXX 11,1, where it is called "Phourai".

55 Gruen (2007), p. 68–69 notes the unfavorable implications: Ahasverus is an instrument first of Haman's, then of Mordechai's plans for persecution, and thus appears rather incompetent.

56 This latter aspect is rightly noted by Trehuedic (2014), p. 151–52. It militates against the common assumption that as a "Diasporanovelle", Esther was written in the Diaspora, but that inference is not well founded. On the Hasmonean attitude towards the Diaspora, cf. Eckhardt (2013), p. 80–85.

57 The origin of the additions and their possible relations to Maccabean events has been discussed several times. Cf. Gardner (1984); Kottsieper (1998), p. 117–25. Both authors discuss the (possible) separate origins of the respective additions; I am interested here in the final text as it was sent to Egypt.

for the persecution is even more detached from the Persian king, perhaps in light of the positive image that had developed out of the condemnation of Antiochos IV. The *proskynesis* affair is no longer the main reason for the persecution; instead, Haman's desire to harm Mordechai and his people is already indicated in a new introduction to the book (addition A), the reason being his sympathy for the two eunuchs whose conspiracy against the king was prevented by Mordechai. Haman himself, called an Agagite in the Hebrew version, now becomes a Macedonian. As the *proskynesis* is now a mere pretext for a Macedonian persecutor to satisfy his pre-conceived hatred, the Persian king as well as Persian rituals are much less problematic than they might appear in the Hebrew version. The persecution itself is now ordered by an elaborate royal decree (which gives due credit to Haman as the instigator of the plan), following the trend set in 2 Macc. 2 and Ezra-Nehemiah to argue on the basis of royal letters (addition B). Similarly, the revocation is expressed in yet another decree that includes some othering of Haman, the Macedonian who is ἀλλότριος τοῦ τῶν Περσῶν αἵματος (addition E). Finally, more specific trends of Hasmonean ideology can be perceived: Esther's prayer (addition C) includes a reference to Jewish sins that have given rise to the persecution, namely the lack of exclusive adherence to Judaism – the very same impression is created by 1 Macc. 1, where apostasy precedes persecution.⁵⁸ And when the inhabitants of the empire are faced with the Jews striking back on the basis of royal authority, they now not only “pretend to be Jews”, but explicitly circumcise themselves (8,17), reflecting the importance of circumcision in Hasmonean ideology after 113/12 BCE when Idumeans and Itureans were incorporated into the Judean *ethnos* by means of circumcision.⁵⁹

It seems clear that the main biblical reconstruction of Persian imperial administration has been heavily influenced by the changing needs of Hasmonean historiography. Unlike the traditions about the rebuilding of the temple, the focus is not on Persian kings and their policy. Rather, the Persian court itself, or more precisely a specific image of its organization that seems indebted to the reception of Greek literature, served as a platform that enabled Hasmonean authors to make several points about Jewish identity, the right of resistance, and the Diaspora. The creative potential offered by the socio-cultural construction of “Persia” thus becomes evident in the book of Esther; we may legitimately speak in this case of a “Persianized” version of Hasmonean ideology.

58 Trehuedic (2014), p. 138 contrasts the passage with the (supposedly Hasmonean) idea of a unified people presented in the Hebrew version. It seems to me that the Greek version is closer to Hasmonean propaganda here; the existence of apostates who threaten the covenant with God is central to the historiography of 1 Macc.

59 Justly noted by Kottsieper (1998), p. 122. For full discussion in context, cf. Eckhardt (2013), p. 314–25.

CONCLUSION

When the Seleucid Empire disintegrated, new dynasties emerged; a process that is not likely to have been uncontroversial within the respective populations. In the regions formerly under Persian control, a positive image of Achaemenid rule could serve as an anchor in the new rulers' struggle for legitimacy. It could serve as a historical reassurance that what was about to come was not really new but rather the continuation of age-old traditions just temporarily interrupted by Seleucid rule. The image of Persia created in this context must regularly have been an idealized one, more often based on attractive and useful fiction than on true historical memories. Due to the lack of literary sources (e. g. the histories produced by Greek writers at the Pontic court), this aspect of Near Eastern dynastic representation is only rarely visible, but a historiographic reevaluation of the respective Persian Periods must have formed the necessary backdrop to the constructed genealogies of Mithradates VI, or the "Persian" rituals of the Frataraka and Antiochos I of Kommagene.

Judea also had a Persian past, but biblical regulations set obvious limits to its idealization. The Hasmonians could not claim genealogical relations to the Achaemenid kings. They also could not continue, revive or invent "Persian" religious traditions, as did the rulers of Persis, Pontos and Kommagene. They could not present themselves in a Persian garb on coins; the only reference to the Persian Period on the petty bronzes struck since Hyrcanus I is the revival of Palaeo-Hebrew, used (alongside figural representations) on the Yehud coins.⁶⁰ What the Hasmonians could do was writing the history of the Persian Period, or rather of selected aspects of it that were of particular relevance to their own ideology. The re-dedication of the temple, the re-authorization of the Torah, the sharp distinction between true Israelites and apostates, and even the defense against persecution, including the counter-attack – all these central themes were not "new", but had their precedents in Israelite history, in a glorious age under Persian rule, before the Seleucid catastrophe. The Hasmonians thus participated in the post-Seleucid "Achaemenid revival", but had to find more subtle solutions than other dynasts elsewhere. Their reformulation of current ideological concerns in terms of a long-lost and largely imaginary past stands out as an example of politically motivated Persianism.

A POST-SCRIPT BY HEROD THE GREAT

Hasmonean kingship ended, for a first time, in 63 BCE when Pompey conquered Jerusalem and installed Hyrcanus II as a vassal ruler without the royal title.⁶¹ It ended for a second time in 37, when Antigonos Mattathias, who had been installed as king and high priest by the Parthians in 40, was beheaded on the orders of Marc Antony.⁶² The new king, Herod son of Antipater, had a Hasmonean wife and may initially have attempted to profit from this connection, until he had her killed in

60 On the development of Judean coinage, cf. Meshorer (2001).

61 Fl. Ios. *bell. Iud.* 1,141–58; *ant. Iud.* 14,54–79.

62 Fl. Ios. *bell. Iud.* 1,357; *ant. Iud.* 14,489–91.

29.⁶³ Herod could not derive his authority from the Heroic resistance against religious oppression that had been the founding myth of the Hasmonean dynasty. In some corners, he even seems to have been regarded as an oppressor himself.⁶⁴ Former constructions of dynastic legitimacy, including the historiographic side effects studied in this paper, thus became obsolete and had to be replaced by others.

Perhaps the most elaborate expression of a new ideology can be found in a speech reported by Josephus, supposedly held by Herod in ca. 21, when he announced his plan to enlarge the Jerusalem temple. It is especially remarkable for its historical overview, which deserves to be quoted in full:

I think I have, by the will of God, brought the Jewish nation to such a state of prosperity as it has never known before. ... But that the enterprise which I now propose to undertake is the most pious and beautiful one of our time I will now make clear. For this was the temple which our fathers built to the Most Great God after their return from Babylon, but it lacks sixty cubits in height, the amount by which the First Temple, built by Solomon, exceeded it. And yet no one should condemn our fathers for neglecting their pious duty, for it was not their fault that this temple is smaller. Rather it was Cyrus and Darius, the sons of Hystaspes, who prescribed these dimensions for building, and since our fathers were subject to them and their descendants and after them to the Macedonians, they had no opportunity to restore this first archetype of piety to its former size. But since, by the will of God, I am now ruler and there continues to be a long period of peace and an abundance of wealth and great revenues, and – what is of most importance – the Romans, who are, so to speak, the masters of the world, have become friends through my loyalty,⁶⁵ I will try to remedy the oversight caused by the necessity and subjection of that earlier time, and by this act of piety make full return to God for the gift of this kingdom.⁶⁶

Whether or not this is authentic Herodian propaganda,⁶⁷ the historical point is clear enough. The positive memory of Persian religious policy, actively propagated by the Hasmoneans and canonized in Ezra-Nehemiah, has given way to a very different interpretation. No distinction is made between Persian and Macedonian rule; post-exilic history as a whole is a history of subjection (δουλεία), one that does not allow for Jewish law to be effectively applied. Even the Achaemenid permission to rebuild the temple is reduced to yet another imperialistic intrusion into Jewish life: By prescribing measures that supposedly do not fit the biblical regulations,⁶⁸ the

63 For the argument that Herod posed as a Hasmonean in his early years, cf. Marshak (2015), p. 110–36.

64 Cf. Eckhardt (2008).

65 τὸ δὲ μέγιστον φίλοι καὶ δι' εὐνοίας οἱ πάντων ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν κρατοῦντες Ῥωμαῖοι. Marcus translates “are (my) loyal friends”, which sounds a bit more arrogant than one would expect. I take διὰ as instrumental and εὐνοία as a personal quality of Herod that was the basis for establishing a relationship of *amicitia* with the Romans. The meaning it thus the same as in Agrippa’s response to the Ionian Jews (*ant. Iud.* 16,60).

66 Fl. Ios. *ant. Iud.* 15, 383–387. Translation by Marcus in LCL (but see preceding note).

67 The speech may have been included in the work of Nicolaus of Damascus, which might mean that this is how Herod wanted himself to be seen, but we cannot be as certain about this as Lindner (2002) and others claim.

68 Darius allowed for rebuilding the “house of God” with 60 cubits both in height and in width according to Ezra 6,3. According to 1 Kg. 6,2, Solomon’s “house of God” was 60 cubits long, 20 cubits wide and 30 cubits high; it was preceded by a porch the height of which is not mentioned. It is given as 120 cubits in 2 Chr. 3,4 (which does not mention the height of the “house

Persian rulers have made appropriate worship impossible. In a way, this argument is in close agreement with a pre-Hasmonean view on the matter, as expressed in the *Animal Apocalypse*. Unsurprisingly, the Hasmoneans are not even part of Herod's historiography; their achievements have been eradicated from history together with those of the Achaemenid kings. Subjection only ends with Herod, and ultimately with Rome. Only Rome, and Herod as the mediator of its benevolent power, can guarantee the right of Jews to live in freedom and use their own laws. This may react to a very different interpretation according to which close contacts to Rome necessarily led to an abandonment of Jewish laws.⁶⁹ Be that as it may, the point that in Judea, the historical memory of the Persian Period was closely tied to current representations of rule could hardly have found a better expression than in Herod's temple speech.

of God" itself). Herod's measures thus take the height of the porch to be the normative height of the temple itself, an interpretation that is at least debatable.

⁶⁹ Cf. Fl. Ios. *ant. Iud.* 15, 328, 330.

PART III
ROMAN AND SASANIAN PERSPECTIVES

PERSIA ON THEIR MINDS:
ACHAEMENID MEMORY HORIZONS IN
ROMAN ANATOLIA¹

Valeria Sergueenkova & Felipe Rojas

We begin with an apparent paradox: even as Augustus and his successors presented Parthia as the cultural heir of the Achaemenid Persians, and Rome as that of the Greeks, communities and individuals in Roman Anatolia proudly celebrated their connections to Persia.² Ambassadors from cities in the province of Asia invoked the decisions of Persian kings when asking for privileges from the Roman senate; at home and in Rome some of those cities boastfully displayed documents alleged to be Persian; many people throughout Roman Anatolia associated local landmarks with Persian divinities and rulers; religious officials conducted Persian rituals in spectacular public ceremonies; and, at least one community annually commemorated a great Persian military victory – all of this under Roman eyes. Do these gestures attest to stubborn cultural tenacity and ancestral traditions maintained in obliviousness or defiance of Roman imperial policy and rhetoric?

This paper examines various uses of the Persian past in Roman Anatolia by attending to their immediate historical context; in the terminology of the editors of this volume, we study Anatolian “Persianism”.³ We are not interested in the light the phenomena under discussion may throw on the history of Zoroastrian ritual or Achaemenid imperial administration, nor are we greatly concerned with whether the people who invoked (and even celebrated) Persia in Roman Anatolia were related by blood to settlers from Iran. Surely some of them were the descendants of men and women who had arrived in the region under the Achaemenids or Seleukids, but the public invocation of Persian “ideas and associations” in Anatolia was a cultural choice, not the automatic result of genetics. For this reason, we concentrate on what an individual or a community’s choice meant to their contemporaries in Rome, and, especially so, in Anatolia, where cities incessantly vied for regional influence and the political privileges granted by Rome by making grand claims about their place

- 1 We thank Susan Alcock, Angelos Chaniotis, Duncan MacRae, Christian Marek, and Christopher Ratté for their comments on early drafts of this paper.
- 2 On the negative portrayal of the Persians in Roman propaganda, see Spawforth 1994; 2006: 20–22; 2012: 103–141; Spawforth (1994: 247) briefly notes the paradox that is our starting point. On the equation of the Parthians and the Persians in Augustan art, see Rose 2005; for literary reflections, see Hardie 2007 (on the Augustan period) and Ash 1999: 120 and n. 26 (on the portrayal of the Parthians as Persians in Tacitus). On the (limited) importance of the Achaemenids in Parthian and Sasanian royal ideology, see Wiesehöfer 1986 and Fowler 2005.
- 3 See the Introduction to the present volume, where the term is defined as: “the ideas and associations revolving around Persia and appropriated in specific contexts for specific (socio-cultural or political) reasons.”

in local and universal antiquity.⁴ The drive to become part of pan-Hellenic narratives (for example, by associating local landmarks and monuments with Homeric heroes) is a familiar and well understood phenomenon; however, many Anatolians looked East rather than West when imagining their past. Among those who looked East, some looked specifically to Persia. The insistence of some Anatolians on focusing on Persian memory horizons is at the heart of this investigation.⁵

Within the field of classics, penetrating studies have examined the fashioning of localized identities in different regions of the Mediterranean.⁶ We aim to expand and refine this discussion in three specific ways. First, by concentrating on people invoking Persian precedents or otherwise claiming religious and cultural allegiance to Persia at a time when Rome ruled in Anatolia (i. e. during the first few centuries CE). Although eminently relevant to the discussion of local identities, the material adduced below has so far been examined mostly in an attempt to identify genuine Iranian elements in the Western provinces of the Persian empire, rather than to ask how this evidence illuminates contemporary phenomena in Roman Anatolia.⁷ Second, we elucidate specific strategies of history-making by asking how arguments about local antiquity were made – and not just, or even primarily, in historical texts. By ‘history-making’ we mean the writing of historiography, but as well as a variety of other cultural practices that substantiate narratives and ideas about the past, such as the erection of monuments, the celebration of festivals, and the repeated association of landmarks, for example, with specific forefathers or heroes.⁸ Third, we call attention to the great variety of participants involved in the effort to define and celebrate Persian identities in the region. Some of these people we would call historians, but others had interests and stakes in local antiquity that were less academic. The latter include civic ambassadors, religious officials, and local experts in regional traditions and material remains. Although scholars have often noted an explosion of interest in the local past under the Roman empire, they have tended to focus on the role and perspectives of élite figures, especially liter-

4 For a lucid treatment, see C. P. Jones 1999, especially 50–122; cf. C. P. Jones 2010 on the use of the past by individuals; and the rest of the essays in Whitmarsh 2010.

5 By “memory horizon” we mean the specific event(s) or personage(s) from the past that an individual or a community brings into focus when remembering the past. Compare Lefebvre 1991: 22 on the multiple “horizons of meaning” inherent in monuments and landscapes, quoted by Alcock 2002:29–30 with further bibliography.

6 Notable discussions listed in Whitmarsh 2010: 3, nn. 8–9. Other relevant contributions organized by geographic focus roughly from West to East include Woolf 1998 on Roman Gaul, Dench 1995 on the Apennines from antiquity to the modern period, Andrade 2013 on Roman Syria, Jones 1999; 2004; and 2010 primarily on Roman Greece and Anatolia, and Mitchell 1993; 2002; 2007; and 2010 on Roman Anatolia. All of these studies intersect in different ways with the vast scholarship on the “invention of tradition” and “imagined communities” produced in the wake of Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983 and Anderson 2006 [1983].

7 See, for example, Robert 1976; 1978; Raditsa 1983; and Mitchell 2002: 50–59; 2007 (noting regional differences). By contrast, Briant 1985 emphasizes ruptures over continuities within Iranian communities in Anatolia.

8 For such an expansive notion of ‘history’ as including practices of “physical referencing of the past” see Hodder 2006: 141–68 (quote on 149).

ary authors, such as those associated with the so-called Second Sophistic.⁹ These intellectuals described and explained local identities – or to borrow Tim Whitmarsh’s terms, “mediated” them for a “translocal” audience.¹⁰ Thus, in addition to considering the opinions of Pausanias and Strabo, we also study the perspectives of local “mediators” and audiences, for whom those identities were imagined, constructed, and performed.

In what follows we examine three strategies of redeployment and re-activation of the Persian past in Roman Anatolia: manipulating and re-inscribing Persian documents, staging re-enactments of Persian practices (and, in at least one case, of a historical event involving a Persian military victory), and, finally, associating local landmarks with Persian gods, kings, and even places. These three strategies often worked together; we treat them separately to highlight differences in contexts and audiences. The people of Anatolia did not have to look back or up to Persia when imagining their own history – and yet, some chose to do so, and often at the expense of other available memory horizons. Why?

DOCUMENTS

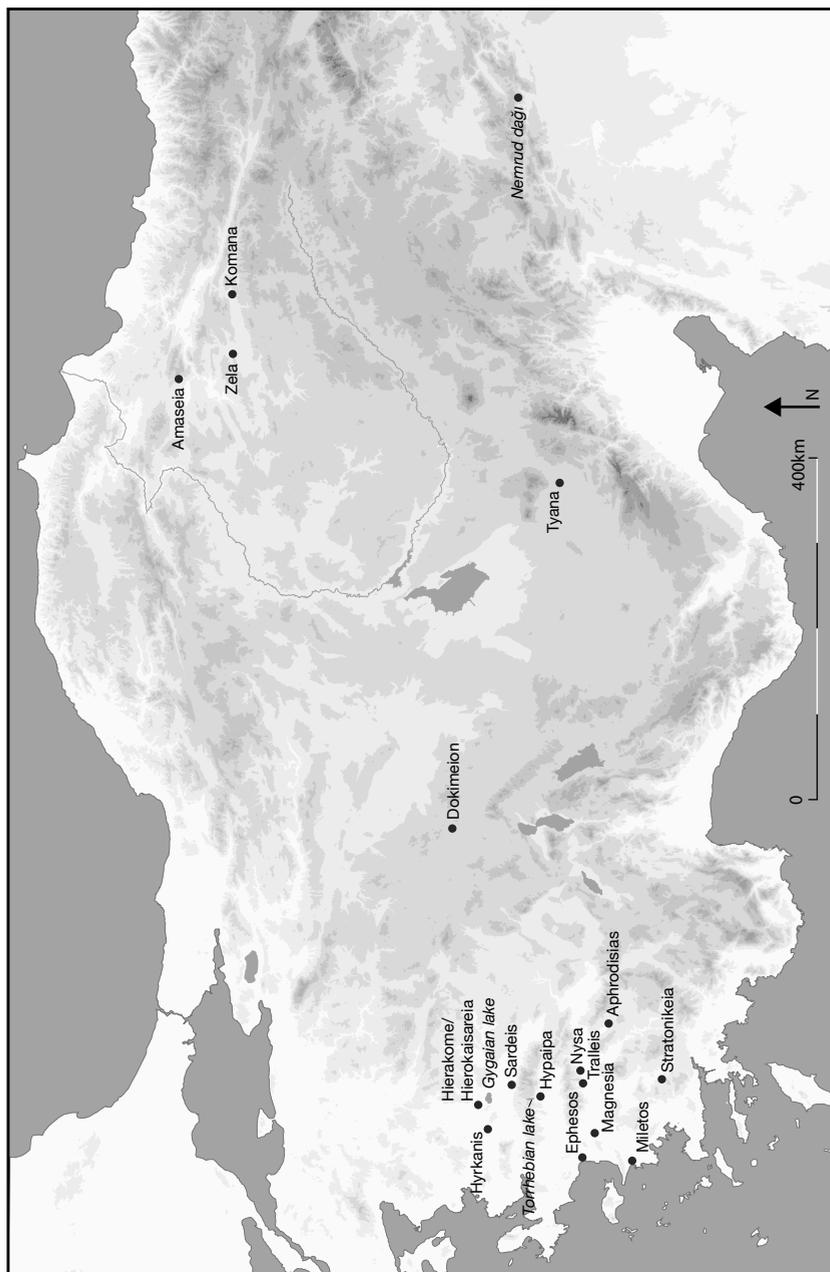
One common way of invoking the Persian past in Roman Anatolia was the appeal to Achaemenid royal decisions and the public display of documents alleged to be Persian. A well-known passage in Tacitus’ *Annals* (3.60–63) records that, in 22 CE, several cities from the province of Asia sent “charters and envoys” (*iura atque legatos*) to Rome to plead before the emperor Tiberius and the senate for the confirmation of the privilege of asylum (inviolability) for their temples.¹¹ According to Tacitus, the legates’ arguments were based on “ancient myth and the favors of the various cities to the Roman people” (*vetustis superstitionibus aut meritis in populum Romanum fidebant*, 3.60.2). However, three of the fourteen applications chose a starkly different strategy and referred specifically to Achaemenid precedent: Ephesos mentioned the Persian kings in a long list of illustrious benefactors that started with the Olympian gods and ended with the Romans themselves (3.61); Hierokaisareia in Lydia spoke of its temple of Persian Artemis consecrated by king Cyrus the Great (3.62.3); and Miletos recalled an unspecified grant of privilege

- 9 On Greek-speaking intellectuals like Pausanias and Plutarch as “mediators” of local identity see Whitmarsh 2010, p. 11–16; the term is based on the notion of mediation in Ma 2008, p. 378 (“local identity at the moment it is perceived is also mediated”), quoted by Whitmarsh on p. 11.
- 10 Our work resonates with that of scholars specializing in different regions and periods who have studied the interaction of local and trans-local narratives about antiquity. Three recent examples from the Eastern Mediterranean are Anderson 2015, Hamilakis 2014, and Bahrani, Çelik, and Eldem 2011.
- 11 On *iura* as “documents detailing rights” see Rigsby’s comments 1996: 585 on the cases presented by Stratonikeia and Aphrodisias, although elsewhere he translates *iura* as “laws” 1996: 582; see also Woodman and Martin 1996 *ad loc.*: “The metonymy (‘<evidence of> rights’ *vel sim.*) is considerably bolder than e. g. Plin. *NH* 36.118 [*terrarum victor et totius domitor orbis, qui gentes, regna diribet, iura exteris mittit*]; cf. *TLL* s. v. *ius* 7.2.683.9–10.

by the Persian king Dareios (3.63.3).¹² (See map.) The choice of these communities seems striking if we consider that, on that same occasion, other cities' envoys boasted of their loyalty to the Romans during their wars against the Parthians.¹³

Persian precedents were also invoked in the later empire. In the early 2nd c. CE, in Magnesia on the Maiandros, a letter of king Dareios to one Gadatas affirming the venerability of a local cult of Apollo was either re-carved or fabricated *ex novo* (possibly to coincide with a visit by the emperor Hadrian).¹⁴ Similar inscriptions carved at about the same time which allege Achaemenid pedigree are known also from elsewhere in Western Anatolia. In Tralleis, for example, a local decree of asylum for the temple of Dionysos, dated by the regnal year of Artaxerxes (apparently Artaxerxes III, so to the mid 4th century BCE), was (re-)inscribed on a boundary stone in the 1st or 2nd c. CE.¹⁵ In Sardeis, an inscription that is dated epigraphically to the early 2nd c. CE commemorated the dedication of a statue of Zeus by Droaphernes, hyparch of Lydia "in the 39th year of the reign of Artaxerxes".¹⁶ Nearly half a millennium separates the alleged moment of issuance of the orders from that of their re-inscription. For this reason, some of these documents have been suspected of being forgeries.¹⁷ For our purposes, however, the issue of authenticity is less important than the cultural choice of publicly invoking Persia. The texts from Magnesia, Tralleis and Sardeis as well as the arguments cited by the ambassadors of Ephesos, Hierokaisareia and Miletos in 22 CE, are positive evidence for the prestige of Achaemenid royal decisions and documents in the cities of Roman Asia and – at least to a certain point – in Rome itself.

- 12 On the history of asylum in Hierokaisareia, Ephesos, and Miletos see Rigsby 1996: 438–441, 385–393, and 172–178 respectively; cf. Lane Fox 2006: 154–156. On the Persian Artemis or Artemis-Anaitis see Debord 1986; Boyce and Grenet 1975–1991 v. 3; most recently Brosius 1998, criticized by Briant 2001b: 178–9.
- 13 Aphrodisias and Stratonikeia (3.62.2); compare also the claim of loyalty in the face of attacks by Antiochus and Mithridates put forward by Magnesia (3.62.1), probably that on the Maiandros; on the identification of the city see Woodman and Martin 1996: 438–439.
- 14 *I.Magnesia* 115; on the occasion see Lane Fox 2006: 156–157 who offers the most recent defense of the document's authenticity; for a more cautious defense see Tuplin 2009: 166–168. Against the authenticity of the letter see most recently Briant 2003c (with exhaustive earlier bibliography); cf. Gauger 2000: 205–12.
- 15 *I.Tralleis* 3; cf. Rigsby 1996: 416–7. Thonemann 2009: 390–393 detects telltale signs of authenticity.
- 16 *I.Sardeis* 22. The seminal studies are Robert 1975 and Briant 1998; recently, Mitchell 2007: 157–159 and Harland 2014: 203–214.
- 17 On the Gadatas letter from Magnesia see n. 14, above. C.P. Jones 2004: 19 mentions doubts about both the Magnesia and Sardeis inscriptions, but the authenticity of the Droaphernes dedication from Sardeis is not generally doubted despite lack of agreement about the chronological layers within the inscription; see n. 16, above. Note also the phrase εἴπερ ἀληθ[ίως τὰ] γράφέντα λαβόντες παρὰ τε τ[ῶν βασιλέων] καὶ τῶν ἐμῶν προγόνων, "[provided that] ... you have actually received written statements from the [kings] and from my ancestors" (text and tr. Rigsby 1996: 440), in a document confirming the *asylum* privileges of a temple of the Persian goddess, probably from Hierokaisareia, either by a Roman emperor (so Rigsby who thinks Claudius) or by a late Hellenistic king (possibly Attalos III according to Welles 1934: 273–6).



Map by J. Wallrodt. Roman Anatolia-sites mentioned in this article.

As Robin Lane Fox (2006: 152–154) has noted, the documents mentioned above must have been conspicuously inscribed in public settings, perhaps as parts of archives recording the pedigree of the privileges of specific communities. The Magnesia block that contained the letter to Gadatas apparently formed the corner of a “document wall”.¹⁸ The Droaphernes dedication, as Pierre Briant demonstrated, is immediately followed by a much later text containing someone’s instructions to religious personnel entering the *adyton* (or innermost part of a temple).¹⁹ Finally, the Tralleis boundary stone contains two texts, separated by a lacuna; the text following the decree citing the Persian king’s regnal year date was presumably a Roman-period “update” specifying that the stone on which it was carved marked the asylum boundary of the temple.²⁰

It is easy to imagine why ancient texts were recovered or crafted anew by Anatolians eager to substantiate claims with potential impact on the present. First of all, such texts had the virtue of historical specificity. Formal characteristics such as unconventional dating formulas or foreign languages and scripts – regardless of whether they were fully understood, or perhaps precisely because they were not – could bolster a community’s or an individual’s claim to an illustrious past. One should also imagine a performative dimension to the re-activation of these texts. It is likely that in the course of the arguments made by the Anatolian ambassadors before the Roman senate actual documents were shown as material evidence supporting their historical claims. These acts of show-and-tell could have been minor spectacles: people reading old decrees in Greek or, conceivably, waving documents in Aramaic (the official language of Achaemenid administration) to a largely indifferent audience.²¹ Regardless of what was shown at Rome, there is no doubt that there were experts, curators of documents and antiquities in Anatolia. Some of these people we even know by name. Lane Fox (2006:156) calls one of them a “documentary hero”: in the year 1 BCE, Artemidoros of Nysa (near Tralleis) recovered texts confirming the privileges of the local Plutonium and presented them to the Roman provincial governor who, in turn, approved their addition to the *grammateion* (which was either a papyrus archive or a document wall).²²

Texts could be used as proof of precedent, but the question remains: why would anyone invoke specifically the Persian past as a source of authority when Rome por-

18 An adjacent side of the same block contains another inscription (almost illegible, but referring to oracular activity), Lane Fox 2006: 152–3.

19 Briant 1998; cf. Hermann 1996: 329–35. Lane Fox 2006: 153 assumes that this block was part of a shrine of Zeus, and thus of another “document wall,” but other scholars, including the excavators, thought it was a statue base; the findspot was near the temple of Artemis in the “Hypocaust building.” Either way, the setting was monumental; we have not seen the block.

20 So Lane Fox 2006: 153–4 (quote on 154); Lane Fox (153, n. 16) mentions Meyer’s recognition of two texts dismissing the first one as “*pia fraus*” (1899: 498).

21 For a similar use of an ancestral document see the reading of a decree alleged to be Etruscan affirming the kingship between Etruscans and Lydians; this document was produced in Rome by envoys of Sardeis asking for the privilege of building a temple to the imperial cult in 26 CE (Tac. *Ann.* 4.55).

22 See Rigsby 1996: 405.

trayed itself as the cultural and moral antithesis of the Parthians?²³ The most obvious reason is that the Anatolian cities expected the Roman senate to respect ancestral custom or right not because it was specifically Persian, but because it was established and venerable as an act of an earlier imperial administration.²⁴ In other words, the main political advantage of the Achaemenid documents was their royal antiquity and their legal and administrative nature, not their “Persianness”.²⁵ Both Roman officials and the inhabitants of Anatolia understood that imperial power was legitimate power, and that empires recognized the former authority of their predecessors. A city’s claim acquired historical verifiability by virtue of its details, but it was ultimately the document’s ancient pedigree and force as legal precedent that made it authoritative.

To this fairly obvious suggestion we would add two more, which we will discuss in greater detail in the following two sections. First, when communities in Roman Anatolia chose to remember Persia, they did not do so at the expense of other episodes in their history. Tralleis, Sardeis, and the other cities of Asia had alternative memory horizons available to them, and they sometimes looked back upon several of them simultaneously. For example, in Tacitus’ summary of the Ephesian case for *asylum*, reference to Persian favor was embedded in a long list of claims to antiquity that seamlessly connected Greek myth to the Roman present. The Achaemenid past was but one moment in a deep and multi-layered local history. Often what the Anatolian cities emphasized was the depth of local traditions rather than any single specific episode in their history. When it came to debates about legal rights, the intended effect of the invocation of Persian precedent was simply to add material demonstrating deep historical continuity.²⁶

Second and most important, the audiences and contexts for these historical arguments are crucial to assessing their resonance and meaning. It is possible that a key target of public inscriptions recording ordinances attributed to Persian kings could be a visiting Roman dignitary with well-known antiquarian tendencies such as the emperor Hadrian. Conversely, even when similar claims were made in Rome, the ambassadors’ interlocutors may have been neighboring Anatolian cities with

23 “Was it awkward to adduce Persian authority in the Roman era?” (Tuplin 2009: 167 on the 2nd c. re-inscription of Darius’ letter to Gadatas). Cf. the reservations about the usefulness of appealing to a document recording a grant by Mithridates VI when arguing in front of the Roman authorities for the preservation of the privileges of the Nysa Plutonium (Rigsby 1996: 402–403; see Rigsby 1988: 149–53 for the full case for the Pontic king’s authorship of the letter in question).

24 For the importance of precedent in such cases, especially for the Roman emperors, see Rigsby 1988: 151–2 with nn. 110 and 111 and 1996: 403 and 441.

25 Cf. Woodman and Martin 1996: 444 on why the Sardinian ambassadors might have omitted the obviously relevant, but recent, confirmation of asylum by Julius Caesar (known epigraphically since the 1980’s) in favor of mentioning an alleged gift of asylum by Alexander the Great (Tac. *Ann.* 3.63.3).

26 Briant 2003c: 138–9 who suggests that the function of the Gadatas letter was to increase the prestige of Apollo’s sanctuary by emphasizing the deep continuity of its privileged position; cf. Lane Fox 2006: 154–7. Another possibility, at least in the case of Miletos: “even the Persians showed respect”: cf. Rigsby 1996: 403 on the usefulness of a letter by Mithridates VI.

their own (rival) versions of antiquity. In spite of Roman imperial propaganda, arguments such as the ones Tacitus recorded were often tools in competitions for regional influence and authority within Anatolia. Frequently the audiences for these claims were Anatolian elite individuals and communities who were aware of the potential of texts to confirm history. In fact, as Tacitus indicates, the consuls and senate in Rome realized that the principal concern of the Asian ambassadors was remote and local: the senators, tired by the endless recondite details about local history and put off by the aggressive rivalry between the cities (*copia fessi patres et quia studiis certabatur*), finally issued a warning against pursuing secular interests under the pretense of religion (*neu specie religionis in ambitionem delaberentur*).²⁷

RE-ENACTMENTS

We can only speculate about the performative capacities of the Anatolian ambassadors who invoked Achaemenid precedents in the Roman senate. There were, however, theatrical ways of celebrating connections to Persia that had little or nothing to do with texts. Some people in Roman Anatolia behaved in manners that contemporary observers recognized as distinctly “Persian”. The evidence is scanty and disparate, but it allows us to explore relatively overlooked strategies of commemoration whereby communities and individuals engaged in embodied practices of remembrance:²⁸ some people dressed up as Persians, others engaged in Persian religious rituals and civic activities, others yet held an annual carnival commemorating a Persian military victory. Although these practices lacked the historical specificity of text, they had other advantages – they were often vivid and intimate, captivating observers and yet simultaneously excluding them from participating fully. Moreover, while (Achaemenid) texts were largely the domain of elite individuals and communities, these strategies were available to a wider set of people.

Our first case is recorded in the writings of the second century CE traveler and historian Pausanias, who observed the strange and spectacular rituals of Iranian priests in his native Lydia:

καὶ ἄλλο ἐν Λυδίᾳ θεασάμενος οἶδα διάφορον μὲν θαῦμα ἢ κατὰ τὸν ἵππον τὸν Φόρμιδος, μάγων μέντοι σοφίας οὐδὲ αὐτὸ ἀπληλαγμένον. ἔστι γὰρ Λυδοῖς <Ἀρτέμιδος> ἐπίκλησιν Περσικῆς²⁹ ἱερὰ ἔν τε Ἰεροκαισαρεία καλουμένη πόλει καὶ ἐν Ὑπαίτοις,

- 27 Tac. *Ann.* 3.63.4; cf. Woodman and Martin 1996: 430; Rigsby 1996: 583–585; Spawforth 2001: 387. On the role of the privilege of asylum in fostering sedition see Bowersock 1986: 304–308.
- 28 While textual documents correspond to what the sociologist Paul Connerton (1989: 72) has labeled “inscribed memories,” re-enactments are an example of “incorporating practices,” which rely on the body to “keep the past also in an entirely effective form.”; further on incorporated practices as “effecting” as well as “depicting” memories, thus highlighting their connection with inscribing practices, see Connerton’s discussion at 72–104.
- 29 mss.: Περσικοῖς and Περσικῆς; K. Buresch 1898: 66, n. *** suggested that the text should be emended to ἔστι γὰρ Λυδοῖς Ἀρτέμιδος ἐπίκλησιν Περσικῆς. W.H.S. Jones 1926, Rocha-Pereira 1973–1981, 2.72 and Casevitz 1999 print Περσικοῖς without commenting. Mad-doli 1995 prints Περσικῆς and construes with ἱερὰ. Although the emendation by Buresch is ignored by editors of Pausanias’ text, scholars interested in this passage generally accept it; see

ἐν ἑκατέρῳ δὲ τῶν ἱερῶν οἰκῆμά τε καὶ ἐν τῷ οἰκῆματί ἐστιν ἐπὶ βωμοῦ τέφρα· χροῖα δὲ οὐ κατὰ τέφραν ἐστὶν αὐτῇ τὴν ἄλλην. ἐσελθὼν δὲ ἐς τὸ οἰκῆμα ἀνὴρ μάγος καὶ ξύλα ἐπιφορήσας αὐὰ ἐπὶ τὸν βωμὸν πρῶτα μὲν τιάραν ἐπέθετο ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ, δεύτερα δὲ ἐπίκλῃσιν ὅτου δὴ θεῶν ἐπάδει βάρβαρα καὶ σὺδαμῶς συνετὰ Ἑλλήσιν· ἐπάδει δὲ ἐπιλεγόμενος ἐκ βιβλίου· ἄνευ τε δὴ πυρὸς ἀνάγκη πάσα ἀφθῆναι τὰ ξύλα καὶ περιφανῆ φλόγα ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐκλάμψαι. (5.27.5–6)

There is another marvel I know of, having seen it in Lydia; it is different from the horse of Phormis, but it also has something of the art of the *magoi*. The Lydians have sanctuaries of Artemis, surnamed Persian, in the city named Hievokaisaveia and at Hypaipa. In each sanctuary is a chamber, and in the chamber are ashes upon an altar. But the color of these ashes is not the usual color of ashes. Entering the chamber a *magos* piles dry wood upon the altar; he first places a tiara upon his head and then sings to some god or other an invocation in a foreign tongue unintelligible to Greeks, reciting the invocation from a book. So it is without fire that the wood must catch, and bright flames dart from it. (tr. W. H. S. Jones, modified)

Achaemenid historians and historians of Zoroastrianism have paid close attention to this remarkable passage.³⁰ Pausanias described the event as a θαύμα or “thing-to-see”.³¹ Much remains unclear: Who were the priests in Hypaipa?³² What texts and script were they reading?³³ How did the wood catch on fire? What color was the ash? The audience is hard to define, but it probably included others, like Pausanias, with antiquarian sensibilities and perhaps a taste for the exotic. Key to it all is the theatrical nature of the proceedings. What Pausanias saw and described is almost certainly an actual religious ritual with roots in Iran; and yet, it is also an act staged in front of spectators – perhaps even for their sake. In other words, a deliberate performance of “Persianness”. Pierre Briant has even argued that the ritual was essentially a hoax, a tourist attraction.³⁴ According to Briant, the fire-ritual in Hypaipa was like the better-known case of flogging of young men at the altar of Artemis Orthia in Sparta or, we would add, the tourist attractions in Roman Memphis or Phrygian Hierapolis: material – or rather, corporeal – proof that the local past had been a certain way.³⁵

detailed discussion in Nollé 2012: 152–4 and nn. 72–3. We have modified Jones’ translation accordingly.

30 Boyce and Grenet 1975–1991 v. 3: 235–8 and de Jong 1997: 347–8, 364–5 but note caveats about limits on usefulness of Roman-period Greek evidence.

31 Cf. Spawforth 2001: 390. What Pausanias means by θαύμα is “a thing that one has to see to believe,” such as the magical effect on horses of a statue in Olympia which he is discussing when he thinks of the Lydian *magoi*.

32 Hermann (2002) edited a 2nd c. CE inscription from Hypaipa that mentions *magoi*.

33 Commentators often point out that the Avestan writing system in which Zoroastrian scriptures are preserved was not invented until several centuries later; cf. also Bas. Caes. *Ep.* 258.4.

34 Briant 1985b: 179–80 speaks of Roman “tourisme ethnologique” (180) Mitchell 2007: 160 acknowledges this point but ultimately emphasizes Iranian continuity and resistance to Rome.

35 A similar fire ritual was also referred to on the coins of Hypaipa (Fig. 110 in Altunluk 2013) and possibly those of Hierakome/Hierokaisareia: (*SNG Copenhagen* (Lydia) 1947, no. 172; see Imhoof-Blumer 1897: 10–11 suggesting 1st c. BCE date; cf. Bilde 2003: 174–5. In addition, both cities used the image of the Persian goddess and of her temple on their coins. On the tourist attractions of Egypt for Roman visitors see the evidence collected in Adams 2007; on the Hierapolitan Plutonium note the testimonies of Strabo (13.4.14) and Dio Cassius (68.27) as well as the archaeological evidence in D’Andria 2013; cf. also Debord’s suggestion (1982: 97) that Strabo’s account (12.3.36) of the sacred prostitutes at Komana Pontica suggests that the

Whether the spectacle was authentic or not is, again, beside the point. These people were performing and activating (or re-activating) intimate connections with a Persia of old, even as they were firmly in the grip of the Roman empire.

A similar analysis holds true of Strabo's description (15.3.15) of the fire rituals of the *pyraithoi*, Cappadocian *magoi* who performed ceremonies in honor of Persian gods, including Anaitis. Like Pausanias, Strabo too emphasizes autopsy as well as the strange and spectacular nature of the ceremony. The Pontic native witnesses the performance of the *pyraithoi* as both a local and an outsider: he claims to have personally observed the proceedings, he calls the places where the ritual take place *ἀξιόλογοι* or "worthy of description" and – despite the fact that an ancestor of Strabo's had once been a chief fire-priest in Komana³⁶ – he looks at the *pyraithoi* largely as a curiosity.³⁷ Pausanias and Strabo are what Tim Whitmarsh calls "mediators" of local identity. They are knowledgeable and intrigued by local flavor. Their very presence as witnesses to such spectacles of "Persianness" confirms the locals' willingness to act out their cultural allegiances, but they write for a "translocal" audience.

Our third and final example of embodied performance is much harder to elucidate. Strabo records that in the early days of Achaemenid expansion into Anatolia, perhaps under the leadership of Kyros the Great, the Persians had won a surprise victory against the Saka people in a little town in the southern Black Sea region called Zela.³⁸ (The Saka were a central Asian tribe sometimes identified by the Greeks with the Scythians.) According to Strabo, an annual festival was held in Zela commemorating this victory. This is how the geographer describes the ceremony:

ὅπου δ' ἂν ἦ τῆς θεοῦ ταύτης ἱερόν, ἐνταῦθα νομίζεται καὶ ἡ τῶν Σακαίων ἐορτὴ βακχεία τις μεθ' ἡμέραν καὶ νύκτωρ, διεσκευασμένων σκυθιστί, πινόντων ἅμα καὶ πληκτιζομένων πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἅμα τε καὶ τὰς συμπινοῦσας γυναῖκας. (11.8.5)

... and wherever there is a temple of this goddess [Anaitis], there the festival of the Sacaea, a kind of Bacchic festival, is the custom, at which men, dressed in the Scythian fashion, pass day and night drinking and playing wantonly with one another, and also with the women who drink with them.³⁹ (tr. H. L. Jones)

institution had "une signification que l'on pourrait presque qualifier d' "économique" ou de "touristique"." On the importance of drama and exoticism in religious ritual in the context of competition between cults see Chaniotis 2002.

36 Dorylaos son of Philetairos, a maternal ancestor, was appointed priest by his friend, Mithridates VI Eupator, see Dueck 2000: 5.

37 The *pyraithia* are the closed venues (Strabo glosses the term as *σηροί*, "enclosures", whether outdoor or indoor is unclear) for the fire-rituals that the *magoi* perform; on the entire passage see de Jong 1997: 144–56, esp. 147–9 on the *σηροί* as "eye-catching".

38 Strabo 11.8.4–5. On the basis of Strabo's remark about the alternative versions concerning the expulsion of the Saka at 11.8.5 and in light of his favorable remarks about writers of *Parthica* at 11.6.4, Laserre (1975: 85, n. 3) asserts that Strabo's information about the Sakaia at Zela comes from Apollodoros of Artemita (*BNJ* 779) and Ktesias. This seems unlikely: Apollodoros in Strabo appears as an authority on the geography and history of Parthia, Hyrkania and Baktria, and there is no reason to think that the Pontos native would have consulted a historian from Babylonia on Zelian local history. There is also no evidence that Ktesias mentioned Zela, though he mentioned the Sakaia (see n. 40, below); cf. Nicolai 2001: 120.

39 Strabo's remark that the festival is celebrated "wherever a temple of this goddess [Anaitis] exists" leads Nollé (2012) to suggest that it was celebrated at Hypaipa as well. However, his

In Strabo's opinion, the Zelitans acted like the vanquished Saka allegedly in order to celebrate a Persian military victory of old.⁴⁰ They dressed up "in Scythian fashion" (διεσκευασμένων σκυθιστί), perhaps wearing exotic trousers and pointy hats, and they partied with their own drunken women. What was the point of the Zelitans' carnival more than half a millennium after the Saka's defeat? Why dress up à la Saka in the reign of Augustus?⁴¹ What sort of ethnic and political allegiances did those people profess as they danced in costume? And who was their audience? We can only speculate about specifics. Regardless of the festivals ultimate source, its meaning among Strabo's contemporaries is what matters to us.⁴² One could argue that the Zelitans were a "genuinely" Persian community who were stubbornly proud of the Persian victory and their Achaemenid heritage. After all, Pontus had been in the cultural sphere of Persia far longer than Lydia. So, although effectively Roman subjects, the Zelitans obstinately held on to ancestral traditions and annually celebrated an actual Persian feast commemorating Kyros's triumph. One could also argue that the Romans, for their part, did not care about bizarre rituals in far-flung Pontus and that they simply looked on disinterested or baffled.⁴³ All of this is possible, from the ethnic connection to the Romans' indifference or bewilderment. Even so, the carnival at Zela probably had a similar function to that of the re-inscription or fabrication of Achaemenid documents, or to that of the fire-priests' spectacular performances.⁴⁴ It may have been a way for the people of Zela to connect themselves publicly to a prestigious past, one that had currency, relevance, and impact on a regional, and indeed, Mediterranean scale. The Zelitans could demonstrate, as they partied, that their native town was part of wider world history; they could re-

only evidence from Hypaipa is the single attestation of the personal name Sakaïos in the Augustan period.

- 40 Ancient authors other than Strabo indicate that the Sakaia was originally a Babylonian substitute-king ritual rather than a 'Persian national day.' See Athen. 14, 44 p. 639 C (= Ktesias *FGrH* 688 F 4 = Berossos *FGrH* 680 F 2); cf. Dio Chrys. 4.66–68. See most recently Huber 2005, esp. 364–8 on Zela and Jacobs 2013: 124–125.
- 41 The motif of victorious Persians in tiaras fighting Scythians in pointy hats is familiar from Achaemenid Western Asia Minor where, however, its meaning is far from clear. The battle scene from the Tatarlı tomb near Kelainai as well as on a famous Klazomenian sarcophagus have been linked to Achaemenid representations of Persian-Scythian combat on seals. This has led some to see in the motif a central marker of Persian identity and hence these two Anatolian examples as declarations of Persian ethnic affiliation or "mentality"; strongest statement by Nollé 2012: 145–6; more cautiously, Summerer 2007a (esp. 24–7); 2007b: 135–6; 2008: 283–4; on "mentality" see Draycott 2010: 12; Tuplin 2010b emphasizes the multi-culturalism of the Tatarlı tomb.
- 42 Briant 2002a: 726 doubts the Achaemenid connection described by Strabo and highlights the festival's Babylonian origin; see, however, Olshausen 1990: 1871, n. 28. Compare Beard's skepticism (2007: 287–330) on the importance of the origin of the Roman triumph for recovering its meaning in the late republic or under the empire, and Feeney 1998: 118: "The hunt for the origin removes the ritual from the cultural context which makes it possible for it to be significant."
- 43 Or would Roman visitors have been reminded of the historical reenactment spectacles pitting costumed Persians and Greeks against one another that Roman emperors from Augustus onwards organized? On such mock sea-battles see Coleman 1993; cf. Spawforth 1994: 238–40.
- 44 Perrot 1872: 378 assumes continuity between the ancient Sakaia and a modern annual festival but he offers no concrete evidence.

member, in their drunken revelry, that Zela had been a cultural capital and regional center under the Pontic kings – a position which, to judge from the archaeological and numismatic record, Zela had all but lost in the Roman period.⁴⁵ The audience, in this case, seems to have been almost exclusively local.

Pausanias and Strabo saw events that were the incorporated counterpart of the documents studied above: these cases of embodied “Persianism” were the result of a deliberate choice of Anatolian communities to perform their Persian identity in front of others, including Roman officials. Those Anatolians who conspicuously acted Persian were at least partly motivated by the same interest as the ambassadors who invoked and possibly exhibited Achaemenid-era documents. Local antiquity, even if Persian, had clout and value in Rome and at home. Again, as in the case of the documents, authenticity in performance is not our primary concern. There had been, of course, Persians in Kappadokia and Pontos, as well as much further west, in Lydia.⁴⁶ Pontos and Kappadokia, moreover, had been under a different sort of Persian spell than Lydia. The Lydian capital, Sardeis had been a regional capital under the Achaemenids, but in the Hellenistic period, Persian influence had rapidly waned. By contrast, in Hellenistic and Roman Pontos and Kappadokia, local rulers repeatedly and spectacularly sought to legitimize their power by asserting their intimate ties to the Persians. They pointedly and deliberately promoted rituals and language that were modeled on Achaemenid precedents.⁴⁷ And yet, as Brian McGing has shown, the Achaemenid persona cultivated by someone like Mithridates VI Eupator was employed as part of a complex self-representation that also included Greek and Anatolian elements, reflecting the diversity of the people over whom he ruled as well as the multiple sources of political legitimacy he was in-

45 Strabo’s description of the festival at Zela recalls a curious story transmitted by Cornelius Nepos (14.1–3) about Datames, satrap of Kilikia and Kappadokia under Artaxerxes II. In his early career, Datames captured a Paphlagonian king named Thuys and led him on a leash to King Artaxerxes. On that occasion, both Datames and Thuys wore costumes: the prisoner was made to dress in the fancy garb reserved for satraps and Datames donned a humble Paphlagonian shepherd’s outfit. Pierre Briant interpreted this elaborate show as a form of what he calls the “staging” of empire, that is, “a court spectacle, in which the subjugated people lined up before the king and court”. Briant 2002a: 198–199; quote on 199. Perhaps the celebration of the Sakaia in Zela was also a way to “stage empire”, but in that case an empire that by the Roman period had been lost for centuries. But why the inversion of roles? Is it possible that the distinctive transvestite element in both cases might have to do with the self-recognition of a dual blood line; Datames’ and the Zelitans’ were both Scythian (or Saka) and Persian. At any rate, it seems that the carnival in Zela was a way of commemorating the Persian past by a community aware of its deep and varied ancestry.

46 In fact, even as late as the fourth century CE, people in Hypaipa still had Persian names. In 325 CE, for example, the town sent a bishop named Mithras to the council of Nikaia, see Gelzer, Hilgenfeld, and Cuntz 1995: 225

47 Mitchell 2002: 56–9 emphasizes the Pontic kings’ interest in playing up their (genuine) Per-
sianness and finds no evidence for Hellenizing tendencies; McGing 2014 argues against Mitchell’s insistence on the purely Achaemenid identity of the Mithridatic kings and highlights their promotion of conspicuously Hellenic practices concluding that a complex identity model encompassing Persian, native Anatolian and Greek elements fits the evidence better.

terested in invoking publicly.⁴⁸ A similar reading can be made of the activities of Antiochos I of Kommagene, including his famous mausoleum at Nemrud Dağı.⁴⁹ Thus, although one can argue that the Pontic and Kappadokian kings were in fact somehow connected to the Achaemenids, their Persianism was nonetheless one part of a multi-layered identity that was often enacted in spectacular performances. This layering is analogous to the multiple claims to antiquity of the Anatolian ambassadors pleading before the Roman senate.

LANDSCAPES

A third manner of commemoration involved people in Roman Anatolia identifying traces of ancestral Persian presence in local landscapes. Diverse landmarks in the region including prehistoric habitation mounds, Bronze and Iron Age rock-cut reliefs and inscriptions,⁵⁰ and, in fact, entire natural features were sometimes interpreted as evidence of the antiquity of Persian activity in the region. Those landmarks bore the unmistakable sign of “Persianness” in the eyes of some Roman-period observers and they were invoked sometimes by local communities to substantiate their claims of ancestry and authority. Here we present several case-studies involving lakes and mountains.

Since the Achaemenid period two lakes in Lydia had been associated with the Persian goddess Artemis Anaitis: the Gygaian Lake north of Sardeis, and a small mountain lake called Torrhebia in the vicinity of Hypaipa. Both had been meaningful to local populations before the Persian conquest and had been imagined to be the literal progenitors of local heroes.⁵¹ In Hypaipa, for example, the lake in question had originally been thought by locals to be genetically connected to an obscure indigenous hero called Torrhebos, forefather of the inhabitants of the region. It is practically certain that the siting of the Persian temple by lake Torrhebia involved a deliberate Achaemenid attempt to appropriate a site that was already sacred before the Persian conquest of Lydia in the sixth century BCE.⁵² And yet, memories of both the Persian and the pre-Persian past survived well into the Roman period. The bronze coinage of Hypaipa demonstrates that several memory horizons were available to its citizens in the first and second centuries CE: while many of the city’s coins celebrate the cult and temple of Artemis Anaitis, there are also other coins that

48 See McGing 2009: 205–6 on Mithridates Eupator’s emphasis on the Persian element in his identity as validation of his power among his subjects and his philhellenism as a way of positioning himself as the savior of the Asian Greeks; cf. also the rest of the essays in Højte 2009.

49 On which see most recently see Brijder 2014.

50 On Achaemenid-period observers claiming that a Luwian rock-relief and inscription were evidence of ancestral Persian occupation see Sergueenkova and Rojas (forthcoming). More generally on Greek and Roman interaction with such monuments see Rojas and Sergueenkova 2014.

51 On the cultural biographies of Lydian lakes see Rojas (forthcoming). On the Gygaian Lake and lake Torrhebia as ancestors see *Iliad* 2.864–6 and Nikolaos of Damaskos *FGrH* 90 F15, respectively.

52 Further details and references in Rojas (forthcoming); further on the importance of the lake see Nollé 2012: 155–66.



Fig. 1 British Museum. Bronze coin of Hypaipa (Lydia) minted under Septimius Severus, reverse; Roman general or emperor and Torrhebos (cf. Nollé 2012) holding statue of Artemis Anaitis. (BMC Lydia 113.29).

insist on commemorating the local hero Torrhebos. In fact, a few coins show the goddess and the indigenous hero together (fig. 1).⁵³ In the sixth century BCE, as the Achaemenids established control in Anatolia, their co-option of already meaningful landmarks in the territory must have been a contentious affair with the new-comer Anaitis being forcefully inserted into ancestral religious landscapes. But in the Roman period, the “Persianness” of the lake goddess seems to have been understood as a natural extension of the lake’s ancestral numen. Hypaipa’s Persian past as embodied in local landscapes and practices obviously mattered in the Roman present, but not at the expense of the local Anatolian one. In fact, the Persian traditions continued to have vitality in the Roman period partly because they had been grafted onto even older indigenous ones that remained relevant in their own right.

A similar phenomenon involved the great lake north of Sardeis on the Hermos River plain known to Homer as “Gygaian” (Γυγαίη, *Iliad* 2.864–6, 20.390–3). This name is almost certainly derived from an Anatolian term meaning “grandfather”⁵⁴ and was surely connected by people in antiquity to the name of the Lydian king Gyges, whose great funerary earthen mound still stands on a bluff overlooking the lake’s waters. But “Grandfather Lake” may have also brought to mind other royal ancestors, the memory of whom was intimately associated with that lacustrine landscape, dotted as it was with funerary monuments and Bronze Age ruins (including the famous tumuli of Lydian kings and the great citadel of Kaymakçı).⁵⁵ Even so, since at least the Achaemenid conquest of the region, an alternative appellation is also attested in both inscriptions and literary sources: Κολόη.⁵⁶ The name “Koloe”

53 Nollé 2012: 149–50 has speculated that bronze coins from the reigns of Septimius Severus and Caracalla commemorate an actual imperial visit to Hypaipa in 187: the coins show a Roman general worshipping the Tyche of the city holding a statue of the Persian Anaitis.

54 Cognates in Anatolian languages include Hittite (*huhha-*) and Luwian (*huha-*), both from Indo-European **h₂éuh₂o-*; this etymology was first suggested by Sturtevant 1925:163. For other cognates in Anatolian languages and further discussion, see Adiego 2007: 334–335 and Adiego 1993: 40–41.

55 Christopher Roosevelt and Christina Luke are currently excavating this citadel; See also Roosevelt 2010 for an overview of the archaeology around the Gygaian Lake, and Luke and Roosevelt (2015) for the lake shore (especially the necropolis of Bin Tepe) as a layered landscape of memory.

56 Strabo 13.4.5–7. Achaemenid-period Lydian inscriptions mention an Artemis “of Koloe”, see Gusmani 1964 and 1982: s. v. *kulumsi-*. That Koloe might have been an indigenous name pre-dating the Persians is suggested by a cluster of loose evidence, including the appearance of the sequence Κολο- in toponyms from Western Asia Minor (such as Κολοφών and Κολοσσαί).

may have been indigenous to the region, but it became the preferred epithet for the Persian Goddess associated with the lake under Achaemenid rule. In the Roman period, lake Koloe was so closely connected to the local incarnation of Artemis Anaitis, that Pliny could call the lake simply “Anaitic Lake”.⁵⁷ In Roman Lydia, some people may have preferred to emphasize Gygaia over Koloe and Torrhebos over Anaitis, but such preferences did not involve a total disjunction. Ultimately, the inhabitants of Anatolia could look upon simultaneous memory horizons without contradiction. In fact, the simultaneous celebration of multiple traditions (and specifically of Persian and Anatolian ones) could serve to highlight the distinctiveness of a specific place in the intense inter-city rivalries of the time.⁵⁸

The blending of local pasts was not always seamless.⁵⁹ Our third example takes us back to Zela, a richly layered landscape where several monumental acts of erasure and reinscription were carried out by imperial and local agents over the centuries. Strabo records that when the Persians won a surprise victory against the Saka there (presumably in the sixth century BCE), they proceeded to transform the physical fabric of the town and co-opted the material traces of the local past in order to promote their new political and religious regime:

ἐν δὲ τῷ πεδίῳ πέτρων τινὰ προσχώματι συμπληρώσαντες εἰς βουνοειδὲς σχῆμα ἐπέθηκαν τείχος καὶ τὸ τῆς Ἀναίτιδος καὶ τῶν συμβῶμων θεῶν ἱερὸν ἰδρύσαντο, Ὡμανοῦ καὶ Ἀναδάτου Περσικῶν δαιμόνων, ἀπέδειξαν τε πανήγυριν κατ’ ἔτος ἱεράν, τὰ Σάκαια, ἣν μέγχι νῦν ἐπιτελοῦσιν οἱ τὰ Ζήλα ἔχοντες. (11.8.4)

... filling up a certain rocky outcropping on the plain with earth and shaping it like a hill they built a wall on top and they founded the temple of Anaitis and the gods who share her altar – Omanus and Anadatus, Persian deities – and they established an annual festival, the Sakaia, which even now those who live in Zela celebrate.

More obscure, but perhaps also relevant is the importance of reeds in the mythical and religious life of the lake: the poet Nonnos (Dion. 11.369–481; 12.98–101) mentions the tradition of a hero Kalamos, son of the Maiandros river, who Chuvin (1991: 135, n. 53) speculates was an indigenous Anatolian character associated with lake Koloe. Strabo (13.4.5) records the spectacle of marvelous “dancing reeds” in the lake; to which C. P. Jones (unpublished) adds decisive later evidence. It is possible that the name Koloe is derived from a word meaning “hollow,” like a reed.

57 Plin. *NH* 5.157. The identification of Artemis of Koloe with Artemis Anaitis is treated with caution by scholars, but in our view, Pliny’s testimony and the parallel with the Torrhebian lake make it certain. The popularity of Artemis-Anaitis in Roman Lydia is well documented, see Debord 1986; Boyce and Gernet 1975–1991 v. 3: 203–205; most recently Brosius 1998 (criticized by Briant 2001b: 178–9). For evidence for the worship of Artemis Anaitis at Sardeis see Buckler and Robinson 1925: no. 95, Diakonoff 1979, and the much-cited testimony of Berossos (*BNJ* 680 F 11); nevertheless, Sekunda 1985: 17 and Boyce and Gernet (1975–1991 v. 3: 203–209) think references to Anaitis in Sardeis refer to the Hypaipa temple; Dusinberre 2003: 115–6 speculates that all Artemises were conflated at Sardeis; this seems unlikely given the evidence that Dusinberre herself cites including inscriptions that mention both Artemis of Ephesos and Artemis of Koloe. More recently, Dusinberre 2013: 226–30, interprets the various Artemises attested at Sardeis as “different aspects of the goddess”.

58 On the concept of the “usable past” see Brown and Hamilakis 2003.

59 Cf. Mac Sweeney 2015: 1–10.

That “certain rocky outcropping” covered up by the Persians may have been a natural stony mound.⁶⁰ Elsewhere Strabo mentions that Zela was built upon a “mound of Semiramis.”⁶¹ It is quite possible that there were remains of human habitation dating back to the Bronze Age which bolstered the tradition that Semiramis had built the whole mound.⁶² The so-called ‘theater mound’ at Aphrodisias, another prehistoric tell associated in antiquity with Semiramis, provides a comparandum; the mound at Aphrodisias is packed with anthropogenic remains.⁶³ At Zela too, traces of pre-Classical occupation may have included ceramics and other forms of human detritus.⁶⁴ At any rate, the coins of Zela seem to furnish evidence of ancient awareness of this dense cultural layering: several coins from the reign of Caracalla depict specific monumental structures in a rocky landscape.⁶⁵ Although attention to local topography is not unusual in the coins of Roman Asia Minor, especially in the case of sacred mountains,⁶⁶ we suggest that some of these coins are celebrating the actual layering of cultural interventions in Zela: in at least two issues (figs. 2 and 3), monumental buildings (in one case a tetrastyle temple, in another a gate) are shown resting on massive foundations. On both coins, the Zelitans have paid as much attention to the buildings as to their substructures: the coins, we think, evince ancient pride in the varied strata in Zela.

- 60 Note the description of Zela’s location and the hilly landscape around it by the author of the roughly contemporary *Bellum Alexandrinum*: *Zela est oppidum in Ponto positum, ipsum ut in plano loco satis munitum: tumulus enim naturalis, velut manu factus, excelsiore undique fastigio sustinet murum. circumpositi sunt huic oppido magni multique intercisi vallibus colles.* (72.1–2) “Zela is a town in Pontus; the site itself is well protected although it is on level ground: for a natural mound (which looks as if it were artificial), higher than everything around it, supports the fortifications. Many hills surround this town and there are valleys between them.”
- 61 ἡ δὲ Ζηλίτις ἔχει πόλιν Ζήλα ἐπὶ χώματι Σεμράμιδος τετειχισμένην, ἔχουσαν τὸ ἱερόν τῆς Ἀναΐτιδος, ἣνπερ καὶ οἱ Ἀρμένιοι σέβονται. αἱ μὲν οὖν ἱεροποιῶσι μετὰ μείζονος ἀγιστείας ἐνταῦθα συντελοῦνται, καὶ τοὺς ὄρκους περὶ τῶν μεγίστων ἐνταῦθα Ποντικοὶ πάντες ποιοῦνται. “As for Zelitis, it has a city Zela, fortified on a mound of Semiramis, with the temple of Anaitis, who is also revered by the Armenians. Now the sacred rites performed here are characterised by greater sanctity; and it is here that all the people of Pontus make their oaths concerning their matters of greatest importance.” (Str. 12.3.37; tr. H.L. Jones)
- 62 Cf. Debord 1982: 164. Zela has been connected to Durmitta/Durchamid known from Hittite and Assyrian texts but the identification has not been demonstrated; see Cornelius 1973: 18 (who cites only Strabo as evidence) with the criticism by Otten in *Gnomon* 47 (1975), p. 517–519, esp. 518 specifically on this point. Regardless, Strabo’s testimony about an ancient mound and a pre-Persian sacred landscape deserves to be taken seriously. Note that Tyana in Kappadokia which, according to Strabo (12.2.7) is also built on a mound (χώμα) of Semiramis, was a Bronze Age city (Hittite Tuwanuwa), whose remains would have no doubt been observed by later inhabitants.
- 63 On the excavations of the mound, see Joukowsky 1986; on the possible association of the mound with Semiramis, see Yıldırım 2004. On memory horizons in Aphrodisias, see Chaniotis and Rojas (forthcoming).
- 64 McGing 2014: 25 with n. 33 assumes that Zela was a new Achaemenid foundation (arguing against Saprykin 1989: 125–7—and contradicting Strabo); further on Zela see Boffo 1985: 31–3 and Olshausen 1990: 1870–1.
- 65 Dalaison et al. 2009: nos. 104–107; cf. Price and Trell 1977: nos. 304 (with relevant discussion on pp. 175) and 514.
- 66 Many relevant coins with minimal commentary collected in Baydur 1994.

Fig. 2 Bernisches Historisches Museum. Bronze coin of Zela (Pontus) minted under Caracalla, reverse; tetra-style temple on a mound of giant boulders; city year date (=206/207 CE). (Dalaisson et al. Nr. 107.)



Fig. 3 Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France. Coin of Zela (Pontus) minted under Caracalla, reverse; monumental gate on a mound of giant boulders. (Dalaisson et al. Nr. 106.)



The Persian construction of a temple of Anaitis on the mound at Zela constituted the successful re-inscription of a landscape already charged with historical and religious significance for locals. According to Strabo, even in his own time the people of all of Pontus came there to swear their most solemn oaths.⁶⁷ Precisely because the place remained meaningful, political and military monuments with competing meanings continued to be imposed on Zela. Strabo does not mention – though he must have known, since he was a native of nearby Amaseia – that centuries after the Persian transformation of the rocky mound, two conspicuous landscape monuments appeared on the plain by it. These victory monuments engaged in open competition with previous interventions as well as with each other. First, Mithridates VI set up a trophy celebrating his crushing defeat of the Romans in 67 BCE.⁶⁸ And twenty years later Julius Caesar erected another giant trophy after avenging the Romans by defeating Mithridates' son Pharnakes. Dio Cassius reports that Caesar, wishing not to be outdone, built his own monument specifically to “overshadow” the earlier one. His account is worth quoting for the light it throws on the interaction between past and present:⁶⁹

τρόπαιον, ἐπειδήπερ ὁ Μιθριδάτης ἀπὸ τοῦ Τριαρίου ἐνταῦθά που ἐγγέροκει, ἀντανέστησε· καθελὲν μὲν γὰρ τὸ τοῦ βαρβάρου οὐκ ἐτόλμησεν ὡς καὶ τοῖς ἐμπολεμίοις θεοῖς ἱερωμένον, τῇ δὲ δὴ τοῦ ἰδίου παραστάσει καὶ ἐκεῖνο συννεσκάισε καὶ τρόπον τινὰ καὶ κατέστρεψε. (Dio 42.48.1–2)

[Julius Caesar] set up a victory monument opposite where Mithridates had raised his own trophy after his victory over Triarius. For Caesar did not dare raze the barbarian trophy since it had been dedicated to the gods of war, but with the erection of his own monument he overshadowed the one Mithridates had built and, in a way, even obliterated it.

67 See n. 61, above.

68 *Bell. Alex.* 72.2–3.

69 Cf. Picard 1957: 207–8.

And yet, even in Strabo's time, more than half a millennium after the pre-Achaemenid landscape had been buried, the memory of multiple imperial occupations persisted in Zela. Some people knew that the mound had been there before Caesar and the Romans, before Mithridates and his fellow Pontic kings, and even before the Persians themselves. Those people associated the mound with Semiramis.

Finally, although in this section we concentrated on landscapes themselves, and touched upon their names only in passing, like onomastics, toponyms in Roman Anatolia attested the presence of Persians in the region, even if it is not always easy to determine to what extent the origin of place names had cultural significance for local inhabitants.⁷⁰ In Roman Lydia, for example, there were the famous battlefield known as the 'plain of Cyrus' and the Hyrkanian plain in the Hermos valley. Both sites, according to Strabo, had been "named so by the Persians" and presumably settled with Iranian colonists in the Achaemenid period.⁷¹ In the case of Hyrkanis on the Hyrkanian plain, an Achaemenid settlement had been expanded or re-settled, perhaps in the Seleukid period, for the double ethnic "Hyrkanian Macedonian" is attested epigraphically starting in the Hellenistic period, as well as on coins and in literature under the Romans.⁷² The Persian toponyms were the result of a re-inscription of the landscape. Surely those places had had other names before the arrival of the Achaemenids, even if we do not always know whether anyone in Roman Anatolia remembered them. This happened obviously in the case of new settlements, like Hiera Kome (which became Hierokaisareia) or Dareiou Kome, but also in previously meaningful territories, landscapes in which the Persians or their sympathizers attempted to overwrite previous cultural associations. A remarkable case involves Dokimeion in Phrygia, apparently a Macedonian settlement, later the site of the imperial quarry that was the famous source of the much-sought colorful Phrygian marble.⁷³ The coins of this town regularly depict a mountain labeled ΠΕΡΣΙΣ ("Persia"), often accompanied by the double ethnic ΔΟΚΙΜΕΩΝ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΩΝ ("of the Macedonians at Dokimeion"). Although we do not know the history of the settlement (for example, was this a Macedonian re-foundation?), the legend on the coins juxtaposing a Persian toponym with a "Macedonian" ethnic suggests parallels with the double ethnic at Hyrkanis, where a Hellenistic-period re-foundation of an Achaemenid settlement is assumed. This possibility is made more likely by the reading of the legend on at least one issue on which Louis Robert showed, the mountain is labeled Ἀνγδισσηον "Angdisseon"; Robert interpreted this to mean "sanctuaire d'Agdistis, Ἀνγδισσεῖον".⁷⁴ As is known primarily from

70 Of course, toponyms can be stubbornly conservative without being meaningful to everyone: the continuity of ancient names in modern Turkish towns (e. g. Geyre, Silifke, Nif, derived from ancient Karia, Seleukeia, and Nymphaion respectively) does not imply that the contemporary inhabitants of those towns are familiar with their etymologies or with local ancient history.

71 Str. 13.4.13; cf. 13.4.5; on Iranian settlements in Lydia see Sekunda 1985.

72 On Macedonian military colonies on the Hyrkanian plain during the Hellenistic period see Cohen 1995: 195–6, 208, 209–12 (collecting the evidence for the double ethnic in Hyrkanis; cf. Sekunda 1985: 20), 215; on cities founded in the Hellenistic period celebrating their Macedonian ancestry in the Roman period, see Spawforth 2006.

73 On Dokimeion see Cohen 1995: 295–9.

74 For the legend Persis see *SNG* von Aulock 3554 (more examples in Cohen 1995: 298, n. 6); for

literary evidence, Angdistis (the more common spelling) was a sacred mountain identified with the parent of Attis in indigenous myth and known more widely as the mother goddess Kybele, and Dokimeion's coins occasionally show Mt. Persis with Kybele.⁷⁵ Though we cannot be certain about the history of the toponyms of the mountain at Dokimeion, it is likely that "Persis" had at some point replaced the indigenous toponym designating an ancestral Anatolian sacred mountain, because someone – one would guess Persian settlers in the Achaemenid period – had chosen to associate it with the homeland of the Persians.⁷⁶ That name had clearly prevailed (as the coin legends suggest as well as the official designations of at least two *officinae*, or licensed workshops, at the imperial quarry⁷⁷), though the older name and the traditions connected to it had not been forgotten. When it came to celebrating Persia in the landscape, the trite image of the palimpsest would seem apposite except that in a palimpsest only the most recent writing is conspicuous, with previous inscriptions receding in the background; by contrast, in Roman Anatolia, the synchronic multiplicity of pasts in the landscape was itself a virtue.

CONCLUSIONS

We began by asking why the people of Roman Anatolia chose to claim connections to Achaemenid Persia when Rome's greatest foe, the Parthian empire, was equated with Persia in Roman imperial propaganda. Our answer, in a nutshell, is that "Rome" and "Persia" – or rather, the Hellenism widely adopted throughout the Eastern provinces and favored by the Romans themselves, and the "Persianism" practiced by some Anatolian communities – were not antithetical concepts. The globalizing effect of Roman imperial power tolerated and even promoted localist reactions as Tim Whitmarsh (2010) has shown. In this context, a Persianizing local identity was as good as any. In fact, in the incessant intercity rivalries of the region, a Persian memory horizon had some advantages over its alternatives: it could be highly conspicuous and contrastive as evidenced in the spectacular rituals witnessed by Pausanias. Ash that was not the color of ash, self-combusting wood, invocations from a sacred book, a priest with bizarre headgear chanting in an unintelligible tongue – those religious proceedings may have had roots in ancient Iran, but, in Roman Anatolia, they served primarily to affirm the distinctiveness and antiquity of local Anatolian communities. Similarly, the legend PERSIKE on the coins of Hierakome/Hierokaisareia advertised the distinctive ancestry of the local cult of Anaitis with no hostile intent against Roman imperial authorities. In

the legend Ἀνγδισσῆρον see *SWG* von Aulock IV (Nachträge) 8355 and for its elucidation, see Robert 1980: 221–56, with figures 10–14.

75 On the Near-Eastern myth of the hermaphrodite Attis and his mountain-parent see Burkert 1979.

76 This suggestion about the origin of the toponym and the possible historical context for it has not been made so far, but Graillot 1912: 360, n. 2 suggested tentatively that the name Persis "dénote peut-être une influence Persique".

77 *officinae iuxta Persidem and contra Pers(-)*; see Hirt 2010: 298–299; Fant 1989: 38–9.

fact, the “Persian goddess” herself, as celebrated in a number of cities in the Roman East, was a divinity to be respected by all, even imperial officials. Depending on their interlocutors, individuals and communities in Roman Anatolia could choose to remember events with local or trans-local relevance.

The Roman and Achaemenid empires did not stand in opposition. Rather, they were successive manifestations of imperial power. Anatolian aristocrats and Roman officials both recognized the legitimacy of the former and the current authority of the latter. The notion that empires succeeded one another inexorably – from Assyrians to Medes and Persians, and from them to Macedonians and Romans – was a commonplace of Classical historiography.⁷⁸ It was also a physical reality in Anatolia unlike in mainland Greece and Italy. Anatolian landscapes, such as the ones we have examined, bore the obvious traces of past empires and many people in the region – not simply the Ephesian ambassadors with whom we started – would have understood the importance of this layering. That very layering was a source of pride and multiple claims about the importance of the local past were often made simultaneously. One of the horizons in question happened to be Persian and so some communities chose to keep Persia on their minds. Their choice, however, did not necessitate a repudiation of other pasts, much less an act of defiance against the Roman present. In fact, from a Roman administrative perspective, local pride in Achaemenid royal precedent had a validating effect: it confirmed the legitimacy of Roman imperial power in a line that went from Semiramis to Cyrus and Alexander to Augustus.

78 Wiesehöfer 2003.

PERSAE IN SPELAEIS SOLEM COLUNT:
MITHRA(S) BETWEEN PERSIA AND ROME¹

Richard Gordon

The earliest literary allusion to what is now often referred to in modern western-European languages as Mithraism/mithriacisme/Mithriacismus/mitraismo/mitraísmo occurs in the final distich of the first book of P. Papinius Statius' *Thebais*, a Late-Flavian epic poem that can fairly be described as the plot of *Seven against Thebes* inflated to occupy 9742 hexameter lines.² The allusion to Mithras forms the climax of a compound address to Apollo by Adrastus, the king of Argos, declined through an assorted list of mythological associations and ending with three exotic names: the 'Achaemenid Titan' (i. e. Ahura Mazdā, chief deity of the Achaemenid Persians), Egyptian Osiris – and Mithras. The one and a half lines in question run: *seu Persaei sub rupibus antri / indignata sequi torquentem cornua Mithram*, '(or would you prefer to be invoked as [the Sun who]) twists resisting horns beneath the rocks of a Persian cave – Mithras! –?' (*Theb.* 1, 720 f.). Not only is there an implied *auxesis*, proceeding from the lesser to the more important, but the two syllables of the god's name, sundered by the aspirate t, are artificially postponed to form the emphatic final spondee of the book: *Mīth-rām*.³

But what is the reader to make of it? Of Mithras, a Persian god, Statius' audience might recall something, if only from Curtius Rufus' account of the preparations before the battle of Arbela/Gaugamela in 331 BC,⁴ and, perhaps more likely, given the massive staging of the event, from reports or hearsay of the visit of Tiri-

1 The Latin tag is from 'Lactantius Placidus', *Comm. in Stat., Theb.* 1, 719–20, p. 881.1982 Sweeney. In what follows, I use the style Miθra to refer to the Iranian deity, Mithras for the Graeco-Roman. The term 'Mithraism' (with the inverted commas) is used to denote the usual representation of the Roman cult as a unified quasi-religion. On the other hand, in view of the topic of the volume, I do not place inverted commas round Persianism. I am grateful to the editors for their useful comments on an earlier draft. References to Vermaseren's *Corpus* (Vermaseren 1956–60) are written V.+number.

2 Statius is generally reckoned to have died shortly before Domitian (†AD 96). The composition of the *Thebais* took twelve years (*Theb.* 12, 811), i. e. from c. AD 80–92. The first book was probably largely complete by the mid-80s, but we cannot date specific passages, let alone individual lines. It remains the case that this passage must be prior to all datable epigraphic and archaeological evidence for the cult in Italy and the western Mediterranean.

3 The device may even have been inspired by Lucan's allusion to the reception of Osiris, cited in n. 9 below. Just as with Lucan there, Statius ends line 718 here with the three syllables of *Osi-rim*, enjambed with the qualifier / *frugiferum* in the following line.

4 Curtius Rufus, *Hist. Alex.* 4.13.12: *Ipse* (Darius) *cum ducibus propinquisque agmina in armis stantium circumibat, Solem et Mithrem sacrumque et aeternum invocans ignem* ... Curtius is thought to have begun his account of Alexander late in the reign of Nero, and to have finished it early in the reign of Vespasian. Note that his source distinguished between Hvar Khšaēta (the *yazata* of the Sun) and Miθra, while associating them closely together, as is still done in the

dates I of Armenia to Rome in AD 66, when he is said to have done obeisance before Nero, “as before Mithras”.⁵ Otherwise, though, the allusion is deliberately obscure: horns? What horns? Whose horns?⁶ Has this something to do with Tiridates’ guest-appearance at the games held in his honour at Puteoli, prior to his *adventus* at Rome, when he shot dead two bulls, *mirabile dictu*, with a single arrow?⁷ And why a cave, if this Mithras is really a sun-god like Apollo? Statius is here parading his knowledge of obscure religious lore, from the antique oriental past – the Achaemenids had ceased to exist with Alexander’s conquest⁸ – and the outer fringes of the Roman world: Osiris may have become at least vaguely familiar at Rome during the first century AD thanks to the celebration there of the *inventio Osiridis*, but only the best-informed will have known that he was also the Underworld Sun.⁹ Of Statius’ three deities, Ahura Mazdā, Osiris and Mithras, only Mithras, the most obscure of all, is given a qualifying description, which yet turns out to provide no readily intelligible information.

The modern scholar can nevertheless glean two, perhaps even three, inferences from Statius’ hints.¹⁰ First, that one of the major themes of what we know as ‘the Roman cult of Mithras’, namely the dynamic opposition between light and darkness, frequent target of Christian indignation, is already present, in the 80s AD. Second, that Statius’ knowledge derives not, as has been mindlessly repeated by generations of scholars, from having himself actually seen a ‘standard relief’ (in which Mithras wrenches the head back *without touching the horns*), but from a text, even a poetic text, devoted to Mithras’ exploit in subduing a bull.¹¹ The phrase *Persaei sub rupibus antri* may even hint at a text, as I suggested nearly forty years

Zoroastrian practice of reciting the *niyayeš* to the Sun, immediately followed by the prayer to Miθra (Boyce 1996, p. 271).

- 5 Dio Cass 53.5.2 (Tiridates speaking): ἦλθον ... προσκυνήσων σε (i.e. Nero) ὡς καὶ τὸν Μίθραν... See also Suetonius, *Nero* 13 and Pliny, *HN* 30.16, though neither mentions this detail. Tacitus, despite his lengthy account of Corbulo and Tiridates in Armenia (*Ann.* 15.24–31) omits the latter’s journey to Rome entirely.
- 6 It has occurred to me that a contemporary might at once have associated *cornua* with cattle, but, especially in poetry, we find the word used in connection with many other horned and antlered animals.
- 7 Dio Cass. 53.3.1. I return below to the topos of Persian archery.
- 8 The great procession staged by Darius III shortly before the battle of Issus (333 BC) included a chariot, drawn by white horses, sacred to Ahura Mazdā, whom Curtius Rufus naturally calls Iuppiter (3.3.11). It is followed by a large and splendid horse, who is sacred to the Sun (*Sol*). On dualism, see below.
- 9 The first clear reference is Lucan, *BC* 8.831–33: *in templa Romana recepimus ... et quem tu plangens hominem testaris, Osirim*. It is sometimes wrongly supposed that Tibullus 1.7.43 f. alludes to the festival, but the passage refers in fact only to a private image (so rightly Takács 1995, p. 79). So far as is known, there was no Osirian iconography in the Iseum Campense.
- 10 I here pass over the fact that Statius may himself to allude to these lines in describing Theseus’ struggle with the Minotaur (12.668–71, where we find *antri ... torquentem ... cornua* together in the space of 17 words). Oddly enough, the iconography of Theseus and the Bull of Marathon (in some cases visually linked to the Minotaur-episode) often shows Theseus *grasping the bull’s horn* (cf. Schefold and Jung 1988, p. 251–253 with figs. 300c, 301, 302; Gantz 1993, p. 256). If Statius was aware of this, there would be yet another link between the passages.
- 11 With his usual acuity, Turcan (2000), p. 127–134 sees the problem, but still prefers to imagine

ago, that purported to have been written by, or copied from, a Magian writer and is thus to be associated with one or other strand of the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha.¹² Third, that this hypothetical text envisaged Mithras as a hero who has, like Hermes or Heracles, stolen the bull that he subdues inside a cave, and is thus properly called a ‘bull-thief’ (βουκλόπος).¹³

FROM PERSIAN TO ‘PERSIAN’

These are plausible inferences. What is certain is that this text, the very earliest surviving allusion to the central feature of the Roman cult of Mithras, the subjugation of a bull by main force (i. e. a hunt followed by its sacrificial death), locates the mythical event in Persia, and is thus also our earliest attestation of Persianism in this context.

Now until the dismantling of the ‘strong Iranian hypothesis’ in the 1970s, no one felt they needed the notion of Persianism in relation to the Roman cult of Mithras. It was generally taken for granted that, when the anti-Christian Celsus invoked ‘Persian mysteries’ (Περσικὰ μυστήρια), or Porphyry ‘the mysteries of Mithras’ (τὰ τοῦ Μίθρα μυστήρια) in the context of the Persian magi, they were reporting historical facts.¹⁴ Although these and all similar texts had been known since the Renaissance,¹⁵ the ‘strong Iranian hypothesis’ is irrevocably associated with the two-volume work of Franz Cumont (1868–1947), *Textes et monuments ...*, which was published in fascicules from 1894–99 and led no less a figure than Theodor Mommsen to think of its author (whom he knew from Cumont’s residence in Berlin in 1889) as “le professeur en chaire de feu Mithras”.¹⁶ Although fundamentally in agreement with the explicit claims for direct continuity between the Iranian cult of Mithra and the Roman by Friedrich Windischmann, who had published an

that Statius, and his readers, are familiar with the type of relief that later became standard. Others adduce sacrifices by cattle-rustlers in the Caucasus ...

12 Gordon (1977–78), p. 161–164 = Gordon (1996), no. VII (same pagination),

13 The motif of a theft occurs three times in the literary tradition, but never in the epigraphy: Porphyry, *De antro* 18: ... καὶ βουκλόπος θεὸς ὁ τὴν γένεσιν λεληθότως ἰάκούων† (the last word is corrupt; the sense is usually understood as “colui ... che segretamente promuove la generazione”: Simonini 1986, p. 63 line 10; Turcan 1982, p. 207, suggested reading ἀπάγων, “brings away” rather than, say, ἀνακινῶν, “arouses / stirs to life”); Commodianus, *Inst.* 1.13: *insuper et furem adhuc depingitis esse ...*; Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 5.2: *virum vero abactorem bovum colentes ... sicut propheta eius tradidit nobis dicens: μύστα βοοκλοπίης*, again with Turcan (1982), p. 207.

14 Celsus ap. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.22; Porphyry, *De abstin.* 4.16.2.

15 A useful brief account of work on Mithras prior to Cumont is provided by N. Belayche in her section of the introduction to Belayche & Mastrocinque (2013), p. xxiii–xxxi, which is more objective than Cumont’s own account in Cumont (1894–99), 1: p. xxi–xxviii.

16 Cumont (1894–99). Mommsen’s letter dated 3 Aug, 1898 has been published by Bonnet (1997), p. 349. The introduction to this volume contains by far the best brief account of Cumont’s career (p. 1–67). The Cumont archive in the Academia Belgica contains a draft of a juvenile essay ‘L’introduction du culte de Mithra en Occident’ with some marginal corrections/annotations by Mommsen: see Bonanno 2013.

important essay on the 10th Yašt (to Miθra) in 1857,¹⁷ Cumont took to heart James Darmesteter's arguments about the late date (ninth century AD) of the redaction of the Zoroastrian holy books.¹⁸ The discrepancies between the religion revealed by the 'Zoroastrian books', heavily influenced by Sasanid and post-Sasanid 'orthodoxy', and Roman Mithraism could be accounted for on the hypothesis that the latter is the descendant of an earlier, non-Zoroastrian but Zurvanite, phase of Iranian religion, as it were in Roman guise. True, it must have absorbed astrological influences in Babylonia, and been influenced by Hellenistic Greek culture, but essentially the Roman cult of Mithras was Iranian and its colporteurs were the μαγουσαῖοι, the Greek-speaking *magoi* of Asia Minor attested in Christian sources such as Basil of Caesarea.¹⁹

This representation of the Roman cult of Mithras served two purposes. Immediately, it helped compensate for the very poor information provided by Greek and Latin literary sources by legitimating the identification of Mithraic deities with Iranian ones, so that 'Jupiter' became Ahura Mazda / OP Auramazda / Ἰουρομάσδης, the Lion-headed God became Zurvan, the Iranian deity or mythic principle associated with 'boundless time' (*zruvan* – *akarana*), 'Oceanus' became Ἀράμ Napāt, the shadowy lord of the mythical waters.²⁰ Scarcely less important, however, was that it constructed 'Mithraism' as an oriental religion, alongside the cults of Mater Magna, Isis and Serapis, and various Syrian deities including Jupiter Dolichenus, all of which had, or at any rate were then believed to have, *bona fide* roots in the eastern Mediterranean. This scenario formed the basis of Cumont's claims in what became his most famous and enduringly influential book, *Les religions orientales* (first edition, 1906), which picked its way through the competing arguments in France after 1870 over the 'end of paganism' and the 'rise of Christianity'.²¹ From

17 "So sehen wir also, dass den späten und mannigfach verfälschten Nachrichten über die Mithras-mysterien gar viel Aechtes zu Grunde liegt, und dass Ideen und Cultus dieses Gottes über ein Jahrtausend sich im Ganzen wohl erhalten haben, wenn auch im Einzelnen Modifikationen und Beimischungen fremdartiger Dinge stattfanden" (Windischmann 1857, p. 72).

18 Cumont 1894–99, 1: p. 3 f.

19 E. g. Basil, *Ep.* 258.4 (32.952c Migne); Epiphanius, *Expos. fid.* 12 (42.804c Migne); Suda s.v γοητεία: μαγεία δὲ ἀπὸ μαγουσαίων ἦτοι Περσῶν (= Bidez & Cumont 1938, 2: 20 text B9 d, note 2). The lemma μαγουσαῖοι in the *Patristic Greek Lexicon* reads: "mage, member of a Persian sect widespread in eastern provinces, holding esoteric doctrines, practising vegetarianism, worshipping heavenly bodies, and accused of incestuous marriages".

20 Resp. Cumont (1894–99), 1: p. 157 "Avec le règne d'Ahura-Mazda commence la lutte contre les esprits du mal"; p. 78 "Il n'a qu'une seule divinité perse dont il (the Lionheaded God) puisse être le représentant, savoir Zervan Akarana ..."; Oceanus: p. 142 ("sans doute"). *Deus Arimanius* did not need to be translated, since the Latin name is simply a transliteration of the Greek Ἀρειμάνιος, equated with Hades already by Aristotle (frg. 6 Rose = Diog. Laert., *VP Prolog.* 8) (see further below). The process of translation was by no means straightforward, however. For example, Cumont seems also to have considered that the by-scene in which 'Saturnus' hands over sovereignty to 'Jupiter' represented the Zurvanite myth according to which Zurvan ruled before Ohrmazd, so at this point he calls 'Saturnus' 'Zervan-Kronos' (p. 156). The difficulty is papered over by means of a masterly "d'autre part ...".

21 In what follows, I briefly summarise the excellent account of Bonnet & van Haepere (2006), p. xxiii–xxix.

Ernest Renan, Cumont took up the idea that the ‘oriental religions’ constituted an unified historical entity, marked by three features: the celebration of spectacular rituals, mystic servitude of a divinity and (what later became most important of all) initiation into mysteries. Unwilling to decide between the arguments of Victor Duruy (and the traditional German analysis of *Dekadenz*), who believed that the ‘oriental religions’ destroyed the traditional Apollinism of pagan religion, and those of Jean Réville and Gaston Boissier, who thought they helped revive a dying paganism, Cumont argued both: the ‘oriental religions’ effected a creative destruction, replacing an inert Roman religious tradition (the entire Greek world mysteriously disappeared in this account) with religious experiences that were simultaneously emotional and moral. Obligated by the inherited discussion to include astrology and magic into his model, neither of which fitted his scheme at all, Cumont invented a purified ‘astral religion’ and shifted magic into theurgy, of which at least Iamblichus had offered an intellectual defence.

In this narrative, the cult of Mithras had four significant rôles.²² First, and perhaps most important, it was explicitly described in Neoplatonist and Christian sources as a mystery-cult,²³ which helped slide over the total absence of evidence for mysteries in the Syrian cults, whose solar character loomed so large in Cumont’s imagination, and their virtual absence from the cults of Mater Magna and Isis until the second century AD. It was this absence that prompted Cumont to add an appendix on the mysteries of Dionysus, ‘demi-orientales’, to the fourth edition of *Religions orientales* in 1929. Second, and related to this, Neoplatonist sources seemed to establish that the Roman cult offered a promise of post-mortem salvation based on the soul’s journey through the cosmic spheres, again something otherwise only to be found – and then not explicitly – in the context of the ‘oriental religions’ in a work of fiction, Book XI of Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*.²⁴ Third, given the overwhelmingly negative attitude of Classical sources to ‘oriental’ religiosity, its supposed Iranian dualism seemed to guarantee Mithraism a markedly ethical profile, for which at least one passage by the emperor Julian seemed to provide textual support.²⁵ Fourth, evidence for it was almost entirely confined to the western Roman Empire, which helped smooth over the studied vagueness of the temporal and geographical frame that Cumont’s story envisaged.

The plausibility of Cumont’s Mithras was thus symbiotic with the concept of Oriental Religions, just as the latter depended significantly upon claims asserted in *Textes et monuments*. It would take me too far afield here to trace the decline of both

22 In all the editions of *Les religions orientales*, ‘La Perse’ formed the fourth and last chapter devoted to areas (Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria ...), followed by astrology and magic (chap. 7).

23 For some Neoplatonist examples, see n. 14; Christian: Justin, *1Apol.* 66.4; *Dial. Tryph.* 70.1 and 78.6; Origen, *Contra Cels.* 6.22 (introductory remarks, not from Celsus himself); Socrates, *HE* 3.2 (τελεταί).

24 The texts usually cited are Porphyry, *De antro* 18; 25; *De abstin.* 4.16.2 and 4; Origen, *Contra Cels.* 6.22.

25 (Hermes speaking) οὐ δ’αὐτοῦ ἐντολῶν ἔχου, “Keep his commandments ...”: Julian, *Symp.* 38, p. 336c. The passage was included as genuinely Mithraic by Cumont (1894–99), 1: p. 19, and still by Scarpi (2002), p. 406 f. Text G3, but rightly omitted by Sanzi (2003).

narratives;²⁶ I will only mention that Cumont's expeditions to Pontus and Lesser Armenia in 1900 and to Syria in 1907 were undertaken at least partly in the hope of finding early evidence in the eastern provinces for the cult of Mithras, hopes that remained unfulfilled.²⁷ The Mithraeum at Dura-Europos, discovered when Cumont was 66, turned out to have been founded under Roman influence.²⁸ All this had little real impact on his model however: over the years, new evidence, such as the Phaethon relief at Dieburg, did cause him to change some of his interpretations, but essentially his views remained fixed.²⁹ Serious misgivings about his Mithras-narrative appeared in print only after Cumont's death in 1947. The first important suggestion was Martin Nilsson's conclusion in 1950, after reviewing Cumont's 1939 dossier of Mithras in Anatolia, that the Roman cult must have been invented, "eine einmalige Schöpfung", by an unknown (Hellenistic) religious genius.³⁰ The Swedish Iranist Stig Wikander pointed out the following year that the areas of Iranian penetration of Anatolia showed no sign of a special cult of Miθra which might have led to Roman Mithraism, that there was nothing in the western cult to recall Iranian fire-temples, that there was no marked dualism in the West (even though Plutarch knew of it in Iran), and that the western Mithraists practised inhumation, contrary to Iranian usage.³¹

The strong Iranian theory continued to enjoy vocal support at least until the late 1970s, largely thanks to the influence of the Dutch archaeologist and historian of religion Maarten J. Vermaseren (1918–1986), who saw himself as Cumont's spiritual heir and who organised his new *Corpus* on the assumption of an Iranian origin.³² Other important proponents of a strong theory were Geo Widengren in

- 26 On 'oriental religions' see MacMullen (1981); more temperately, Bianchi and Vermaseren (1982), Van Andringa and Van Haepere (2009), Witschel (2012) and my review of Bonnet et al (2009) in Gordon (2014). An excellent, detailed account of the directions taken by scholarship on 'Mithraism' between 1900 and 1980 has been written by R. L. Beck (1984).
- 27 Cf. Bonnet (1997), p. 17. The scholarly results of these journeys were published as Cumont (1906) and (1917). Cumont's excavations at Dura-Europos (1922–23), discovered by chance by the American Egyptologist J. H. Breasted at the end of the Great War, were prompted by more general considerations. A few years later, Cumont drew up a final, rather meagre list of inscriptions and coins relating to Miθra/Mithras in Anatolia: Cumont (1939).
- 28 Cumont's essay intended for the Final Report, which in the event was never published, appeared in an English transl. by David Francis as Cumont (1975).
- 29 Cumont (1931). The Dieburg relief (V.1247) was discovered in 1926. In 1933 we find Cumont arguing that Tiridates of Armenia initiated Nero into the Mithraic Mysteries in AD 66 (on the strength of Pliny's expression *magicis etiam cenis eum initiaverat*: *HN* 30.17): Cumont (1933).
- 30 Nilsson (1950), p. 648 = (1961), p. 675 f. In his introduction to ed.¹, Nilsson mentions that the volume was begun by Otto Weinreich (†1935), and that A. D. Nock had declined to continue it. Since Nock had written both on Mithras and the Greek reception of Zoroaster, it is possible that he influenced Nilsson here.
- 31 Wikander (1951), p. 15–19. He was especially scathing about one of Cumont's favourite theses, that Mithras and Anahita formed a couple in Asia Minor. Dualism in Iran: Plutarch, *De Iside* 46 f., 369d–370c, mainly relying on Theopompus, cf. the thorough discussion by De Jong 1997, 161–204. Wikander's conclusion, that western 'Mithraism' could not have been directly descended from Iranian religion, was at once attacked by Alföldi (1952).
- 32 Heir: Vermaseren (1956–60), I: p. vii: "(Cumont) showed a lively interest in the present study, supplied much material and often gave advice ...". It is thus odd that only two letters from the

Sweden and Ugo Bianchi in Italy, both of whom traced central features of Roman Mithraism back to Iran.³³ An elaborate Zoroastrian reading of the Roman cult in terms of the tension between the principles *mēnōg* and *getīg* appeared in 1968.³⁴ Both the Mithraic conferences of the early 1970s, in Manchester and Teheran, organised by John Hinnells, a former student of the London Iranist Mary Boyce, were predicated on the assumption of significant continuity;³⁵ and the presentation that made the greatest impact at Teheran, Stanley Insler's reading of the bull-killing relief as a star-map, assumed that it referred to the heliacal setting of Taurus and so the Iranian spring festival of *Now rūz*.³⁶ Just as both those conferences were funded by Iranian money, so reports of the discovery of mithraea in modern Iran surface on the Internet even today.³⁷ Moreover, some of Cumont's claims about the similarity of Mithraic and Early Christian beliefs and practices, themselves partly based on Apologetic representations, taken at face value, now re-appear on the Internet in Islam(ic)ist propaganda to the effect that Christianity derived its main ideas from an Iranian religion.

However that may be, three irresistible influences have now turned 'Mithraism' into a Roman cult purporting to derive from Iran and thus open to 'Persianist' analysis. The first is the fall-out from Insler's reading of the bull-killing relief as a star-map, which immediately caught the imagination of those – surprisingly many – inclined to neo-Renaissance allegorism. So much so, that the Roman cult is now often routinely presented as an essentially astrological project.³⁸ Apart from Insler, all these competing allegorisations assumed a Graeco-Roman cosmography, not an Iranian one. Indeed the most spectacular of these theories, by David Ulansey, proposed that the secret supposedly harboured by the cult concerned the precession of the equinoxes, itself allegedly discovered by the Greek astronomer Hipparchus.³⁹

youthful Vermaseren are extant in the Cumont archive in the Academia Belgica, one of them written just a month before Cumont's death (Bonnet 1997, p. 464–466). Vermaseren was a pupil of the Classical Archaeologist F.J. de Waele of Nijmegen, who encouraged him in his Mithraic studies.

- 33 Widengren (1966) and (1980); Bianchi (1979a) and (1984). The late G. Gnoli claimed as late as 2009 still to believe in Cumont's strong Iranian theory, as does the Chicago historian of astronomy, M. Swerdlow. The Harvard Iranist James Russell has suggested that an hypothetical Iranian Miθra-cult may have developed in Armenia, contested as it was between the indigenous dynasty and Rome: Russell (1987) and (1994). Ehling (2001) has recently re-stated the possible importance of the suggestive Mithras-motifs in the coinage of Trapezus. For want of space, I here ignore numerous other 'soft' Iranian hypotheses.
- 34 Campbell (1968).
- 35 See Hinnells (1975) and Duchesne-Guillemin (1978). Hinnells organised another panel at the IAHR conference in Rome in 1990, whose proceedings appeared in Hinnells (1994).
- 36 Insler (1978), followed by Jacobs (1999). R.L. Beck had already sketched an analogous interpretation of the tauroctony-scene as a star-map in 1973, thus reviving a range of nineteenth-century conjectures, esp. by K. B. Stark (Beck 2004b, p. 236 n.4).
- 37 Cf. Klenner (2012), p. 123 f.
- 38 A critical account of these readings will be found in Beck 2004b. Beck however continues to believe in a version of the star-map: Beck (2004c) and (2006).
- 39 Ulansey (1989), with the self-indulgently hostile, but essentially correct, review by Swerdlow (1991).

The second arises from Reinhold Merkelbach's development of Nilsson's 'unknown religious genius' hypothesis: the Roman cult was invented as a religion of loyalty by someone in the imperial service at Rome, who was also fairly knowledgeable about Iranian religion.⁴⁰ Although the first edition of Manfred Clauss' introduction to the cult was primarily directed against Merkelbach's fantastical theories, he did agree that Mithraism began life in Rome and Ostia; since 1990 this hypothesis too has become a general belief, despite the fact that there is very little direct evidence in its favour (for example, the newest evidence suggests that no excavated mithraeum at Ostia can be dated earlier than the joint reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, and it only really gets going there in the Severan period; no mithraeum known at Rome can be dated before the Severan period).⁴¹ Finally, thanks to increasing numbers of discoveries in north-western Europe, the study of Roman Mithras, especially in Germany, has become a specialism of Roman provincial archaeologists, who understandably emphasise the Roman and also the regional and local contexts of the practice.⁴²

HOW MANY PERSIANISMS DO WE NEED?

Against this background in intellectual history, which, complicated though it may appear, I have drastically simplified, it has become plausible to look more critically at Graeco-Roman understandings of what might be implied by the idea of 'Mithras in his Persian cave' (*Persaei sub rupibus antri ... Mithram*). In other words, to look at the Roman cult of Mithras not from the omniscient narrator's point of view, regularly adopted by historians, but as an issue in the history of reception. Oddly enough, something of this kind has been undertaken, not directly in relation to Mithras, but to Persian religion more generally. As long ago as 1920, Carl Clemen published not just a virtually exhaustive collection of Greek and Latin texts on Persian religion but also a lengthy commentary on them, in which he argued that these reports were surprisingly accurate, even to details, and could thus be used to supplement the famous 'black hole' in Zoroastrian studies, the almost complete lack of material between the Old Avesta (the ancient memorized tradition) and the Zoroastrian books in Pahlavi.⁴³ Albert de Jong has quite recently up-dated and confirmed Clemen's arguments.⁴⁴

40 Merkelbach (1984) with the review by Beck (1987).

41 See my review of Clauss: Gordon (1994). Ostia: the relatively late date of the Ostian mithraea was already pointed out by Meiggs (1973), 374. The Cautes found in the Mitreo del 'Palazzo Imperiale', with an inscription dated AD 162 (CIL XIV 58), must have come from an earlier, otherwise unknown, mithraeum (Becatti 1954, p. 55 = V.254). The implications of recent archaeological work have been ably summarised by White (2012). Apart from V.593, which is a Trajanic monument, and perhaps V.598, which may be Hadrianic, there is no surviving material from the City of Rome that must be dated before the mid-Antonine period. This of course does not mean that none existed, only that very little datable to before c.150 has so far been found.

42 A good sketch of these developments in Beck (2004a).

43 Clemen 1920a and 1920b.

44 De Jong (1997).

Neither Clemen nor de Jong were however interested in reception as I understand it here, but in sifting Greek and Latin texts for what they can tell us about an otherwise lost religious tradition. The reception we are concerned with in this volume is better termed ‘appropriation’, that is the process of selection and instrumentalisation by one agent, whether individual, family, group, city or people, of others’ traditions, a process which always involves (creative) distortions, filtering of materials through indigenous grids, and re-valorisation of meanings, contexts and associations current in the source-culture.⁴⁵ As the other contributions to this volume demonstrate so clearly, ‘reception’ is always motivated by a more or less specific programme of need (however defined), always involves re-contextualisation; what is picked up or taken is always, as it were, fitted out with quotation-marks. My immediate model in this section of the book, on Roman (and Sasanian) perspectives, is the Graeco-Roman reception of selected elements of extremely late Pharaonic religious culture, developed around the myth of Isis and Osiris, which eventually became ‘the cult of Isis and Serapis etc.’⁴⁶ This model is itself potentially misleading, however, inasmuch as the process of appropriation in this case began already in Egypt in the institutional context of direct contacts between Egyptian ritual experts and Hellenistic Greeks, mediated by bi-lingual members of the emergent Ptolemaic élite. Despite Cumont’s *μαγουσαῖοι*, we cannot, for lack of evidence, make out any such process in the case of Roman ‘Mithraism’, a black hole that provides the perfect nesting-place for the ‘Mithraism is a purely Roman cult’ thesis.

Taking ‘appropriation’ as our key-word, I would suggest we need at least five different conceptions of Persianist enterprise. The first I have already introduced, namely the stage(s) we can infer from Statius’ vision of Mithras subduing a bull in a Persian cave, reporting a narrative itself based, I would argue, on an already sophisticated religious institution.⁴⁷ Let us call this hypothetical Persianism 01 (which leaves room for further hypothetical Persianisms -01, -02, -03 ...). We then require at least:

02: The reproduction of this ‘Persian Mithras’ in the practice of the cult roughly up to the end of the Severan period. By ‘practice of the cult’ I mean, in effect, as represented by archaeological and epigraphic evidence, since there is no relevant discursive internal documentation. This notion of ‘the practice’ is itself a crude simplification, because there are in fact innumerable local variations, which for present purposes need to be ignored.

03: The classification of ‘Mithraism’ as a sub-category of Magian wisdom, itself just one component of the Middle and Neoplatonist appropriation of the Persians as one of the ‘wise nations’.

04: Mithras in the late-antique encyclopaedic tradition.

05: *Μάγοι* at Dura-Europos; Manichaeism at Hawarte?

45 On appropriation in this sense (sometimes termed ‘re-appropriation’ in the US), see de Certeau (1990), p. 57–68; esp. on the role of narratives here, p. 170–191.

46 Cf. Borgeaud and Volokhine (2000); Versluys (2013), p. 235–259.

47 See n.12 above. Beck (2004e) has suggested that Tiridates’ journey to Rome in AD 67 may have stimulated the development of a proto-Mithraism.

Nos. 02 and 05 concern appropriations or interpretations within the context of Mithraic practice insofar as we can infer them from the archaeology and, to a much smaller extent, epigraphy. In other words, these forms of Persianism are mainly, but not entirely, modern inferences from ancient archaeological evidence as assembled in the recognised Corpora. The other two (03, 04) concern ancient interpretations primarily by authors not themselves active in the cult, although it is likely that the sources used by Middle- and Neoplatonists were at least partly indebted to practitioners of the cult as known to us primarily through archaeology.

These distinctions between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ are however themselves problematic. My model of the growth and development of the Roman cult of Mithras is of small-time religious entrepreneurs, whom I denote by the Weberian term ‘mystagogues’, inspired by a tradition (expressed in the mithraeum as a recognised architectural form, in the bull-killing icon, and in the figure of Mithras himself), yet as leaders constantly on the look-out for new ideas and interpretations with which to increase the conviction and appeal of the *Heilsgüter* they claimed to be able to provide through this figure, using materials mediated orally, in iconography and through texts.⁴⁸ Major resources in this continuing effort were the ‘new’ cosmology and its associated star-lore, the story of Mithras’ life and deeds, which could be embroidered and developed *ad lib.*, and then used as inspirations for rituals, and finally snippets of information about ancient Persian religion ultimately derived from the late-Classical interest in post-Xenophontic Persia as mediated by the Hellenistic encyclopaedic tradition. It is thus by no means impossible that some at least of the speculations about the beliefs of the Magi we find cited by Middle and Neoplatonists from writers on Mithras could originally have been appropriations on the part of mystagogues interested in exploring this type of resource and not merely ways of legitimising Platonist readings of the cult of Mithras. Ideas about post-mortem fate, though they do not concern me here, may also have been quite diverse.⁴⁹ If all that is true about the leaders of these small groups, it is still more true of individual worshippers of Mithras, who, though to some degree dependent upon their mystagogues (i. e. the *Patres*, the Fathers), were free to make what they wanted of a deity whose identity and powers were set out neither in received mythology nor in local civic cult.

The implication of these two assumptions, the organisational primacy of individual religious entrepreneurs (‘mystagogues’) on the look-out for compelling inducements to believe in the *Heilsgüter* they had to offer, and the absence of normative pressures from the wider culture – the parallel with earliest Christianity obtrudes itself⁵⁰ – is that there must have been considerable diversity of actual belief and ritual practice within a tradition held together by an icon, an architectural form, the reproduction of a practice, namely the shared meal, traced back to the First Cult-meal instituted by Mithras and Sol, and the institution of the formal votive –

48 Cf. Gordon (2012), p. 161–165.

49 I suggest some possible approaches to Mithraic post-mortem expectations in Gordon (forthcoming).

50 E. g. Luttikhuisen 2002.

all of these being simply special cases of forms generally held to constitute ‘good religious practice’ in antiquity.⁵¹

Indeed, I see the mystagogues, insofar as they depended upon the voluntary support of those they could persuade to join them, as structurally dependent on innovation, as a means of binding their groups to them. The institution of grades or ranks, where it was practised, is best understood as such a device, which in turn produced a need for ‘intermediate’ rituals (i. e. initiations) requiring their own structures and legitimations, and functioning in turn as nodes for new elaborations, for example the idea, found only at Sta Prisca on the Aventine in Rome (c. AD c. 200–220) and in the Mitreo di Felicissimo at Ostia (c. 250), that each grade was ‘protected’ by a specific planet.⁵² In other words, if we look below the level of ‘Mithraism’ at which every bull-killing icon looks the same, we can certainly find evidence for the type of innovation that interests me here.⁵³ Persianism can be used as a shorthand for one such node of innovation or ‘development’.

PERSIANISM 02: THE ARCHAEOLOGY AND EPIGRAPHY OF PERSIAN MITHRAS

There is every reason to think that the mystagogues and other patrons who were responsible for the furnishing of Mithraic temples agreed with Statius that Mithras (and his two acolytes, Cautes and Cautopates) was a Persian deity who should properly be depicted as such.⁵⁴ These claims can be addressed under four headings: dress-code, accoutrements, hunting and terminology.

51 Some stimulating remarks on ‘tradition’ from an anthropological point of view can be found in the concluding chapter, ‘Koryak culture and the future of tradition’, of King (2011), 234–261.

52 Rome: Vermaseren and Van Essen (1965), p. 148–178; Ostia: Becatti (1954), p. 105–11.

53 The traces of ‘Orphic’ interpretation are a case in point: Gordon (2013). But the most generally used form of personal or individual innovation involved appeal to astronomic/astrological lore, cf. Beck (1988); (2004g) and (2006), p. 30–39.

54 Only Lucian, *Deor. concil.* 9 slyly makes Mithras, “who cannot even speak Greek,” into a Mede, playing on the negative image of the Medes by contrast with the ‘noble’ Persians; cf. the idea that it was Medea who introduced this clothing style: *FGrH* 696 F22 = Strabo, *Geogr.* 11.13.10, 526C.

a) Oriental dress-code

Of the two models for Orientals current in the early Principate, one bearded, one youthful, the latter seemed more appropriate:⁵⁵ there is not a single instance of a bearded Mithras, though there are two ‘deviant’ cases (related to one another) in which the god is not shown as an oriental deity.⁵⁶

According to the stereotypes established by the Hellenistic craft-tradition, Oriental dress meant sleeved tunic (*kandys*), trousers (*anaxyrides*), Phrygian cap (*τιάρα*).⁵⁷ In examples carved in stone that is all that was required (Fig. 1);⁵⁸ mural painting, usually on a larger scale, made it possible to add additional refinements, especially embroidery on sleeves and trousers, which can only be illustrated in colour, unfortunately not available for this volume.⁵⁹ The best examples are the cult-niche paintings at S. Maria Capua Vetere near Naples, Marino in the Alban Hills, the Barberini Mithraeum in Rome and the fragmentary feast-scenes at Dura-Europos on the Euphrates.⁶⁰ Additional exoticism could be suggested by exaggerating the flaps of the ‘tiara’, as at Marino.⁶¹ Oriental dress gains further specific value in the narrative

55 Cf. Schneider (2012). The bearded type was reserved for Zeus Sabazios.

56 V.230 (Mitreo delle Terme del Mitra, Ostia) is a re-used statue of a Greek hero in a chiton subduing a small bull, signed by the Athenian sculptor Kritôn (colour photos in Pavia 1999, p. 63 f. unnumbered). Rolf Schneider tells me he believes the original is to be dated to the mid-first century AD. This is the sole Mithraic sculpture of which an exact copy is known to have existed in antiquity, which was for long in the Giustiniani-Odescalchi gardens in Bassano Romano (prov. Viterbo) until it found its way to the J. Paul Getty Museum in Pacific Palisades (Vermaseren 1956–60], 2: p. 24 no. 230, cf. Valeri 2003). One or two other images likewise adapt one of the Victoria stereotypes and make Mithras raise his arm with the sword instead of plunging it into the bull’s neck, e. g. the bronze medallion of Tarsus issued under Gordian III: V.27 with Turcan 2001 2004. In all these cases, however, Mithras is still represented as an oriental god.

57 All three: Herodotus 7.61.1, cf. Strabo, *Geogr.* 11.13.9, 526C (who says they are suited to the rough climate of Media); tunic and trousers: Xenophon, *Anab.* 1.5.8; tiara and trousers: Hdt. 5.49.3 (where the tiara is termed *κροβάσῖα*); Philostratus, *Apoll. Tyan.* 1.25, p. 28.25 f. Hercher; tunic and tiara: Lucian, *Deor. concil.* 9. I infer from the latter text that Lucian did not know what we mean by the standard bull-slaying relief, where Mithras always wears trousers, but was referring to images of the god current in Asia Minor, which only depict the tiara and tunic, e. g. the bust of a curly-haired, beardless Helios Mithras at Oenoanda in Lycia, II–III^P (*SEG* 44: 1204b with ref.). The image of Apollo-Mithras-Hermes at Nemrud-Dağ in Commagene, which already shows the god in *anaxyrides*, seems likewise not to have fitted his scheme.

58 Additional details might of course be added when the statue or relief was painted.

59 For a time, Vermaseren thought that such colouring might have some religious significance, and described them in detail, e. g. V.37, 40 (Dura); Vermaseren (1971), p. 5–10 (Capua); (1982), p. 5–11 (Marino). ‘Oriental’ might however only extend so far: the embroidery along the bottom of the torch-bearers’ tunics at Capua shows Classical meanders.

60 Colour images can be found in the following publications: Pavia (1999), p. 49–53 (unnumbered), also Clauss (2012), Farbtafel 6 (Capua); Pavia (1999), p. 124–128 and 243–246 unnumbered (Marino); Pavia (1999), p. 184–186 unnumbered (Barberini); Rostovtzeff et al. (1939), pl. XXX (reconstruction of the colours on the relief of Zenobios at Dura, V.40) = Clauss (2012), Farbtafel 4; Hinnells (1975), 2: Plates 22–30; the fragment from the large feast-scene from the left-hand wall of the niche of Phase II at Dura (Rostovtzeff 1939, p. 102 f. = V.49) is illustrated on Plate 26.

61 Vermaseren (1982), p. 8; clearly visible in the colour photo on the jacket of Clauss (2012).

Fig. 1 Marble relief found near the Chiesa Nuova in Rome in XVIth cent., dedicated *deo invicto* by four freedmen (CIL VI 735 = V.603). L'Ermitage, St. Petersburg. Photo: W. Blawatsky.



of Mithras' encounters with Helios/Sol after the death of the bull: whereas Mithras is invariably clothed as a 'Persian', Helios/Sol is often shown nude or simply with a shoulder-cape, as required by craft-convention.⁶² Where the cutter could be bothered to go into such detail, Helios/Sol is still nude when he takes Mithras up into heaven in his chariot; yet when he is represented in a tondo in the standard 'cosmic' position at the top left of the relief, he is always shown clothed.⁶³ These variations, slight though they may be, suggest that 'oriental dress' at least sometimes remained a significant marker of difference. Yet it may well be that for many groups, especially those remote from larger urban areas, Mithras' specifically Persian identity was not of much significance: he just looked like that. The process of assimilating the god to others, such as Mercury, as well as the adoption of local religious customs, especially in northern Gaul, tend to suggest as much.

An important value of the tiara ('Phrygian cap') was that it could denote not just the Persian deities but also the leaders of Mithraic groups, the *Patres*, Fathers.

Similar exaggerations can be seen in V. 1902 (Jajce, Dalmatia); torch-bearers: 1743 (Siscia, Pannonia Sup.); Mithraeum II, Göglingen: Hensen (2013), p. 58 fig. 51 (both).

62 E. g. V.42.11 (Dura); Vermaseren (1982), p. 10f. scenes R6,7 (Marino); V.390 R1,3 and 4 (Barberini); V.1292.5c,d,e (Osterburken); Schwertheim (1974), p. 188 f. no. 144 (Ladenburg, feast-scene); Madarassy (1991), p. 211 (far better in Clauss 2012, Farbtafel 3) (Aquincum V). There are however a number of exceptions, esp. in representations of the feast-scene, e. g. V.42.13 and 49 (Dura); V.641' (Fiano Romano); 1083B (Hedderheim I) and V.1137B (Rückingen).

63 E. g. V.390 R.4 (Barberini), 1247A12 (Dieburg); 1935.11 (Partos, Apulum); 1958 scene 11 [omitted by Vermaseren] (Apulum); 2244.12 (Tavalicavo, Moesia Sup.). V.1430 C6 (Virunum) is a striking exception, since both Sol and Mithras are nude, the latter except for his Phrygian cap.



Fig. 2 The Mithraic Pater, in flowing robes and 'tiara', from the scene of the *Miles*-procession on the Schlangengefäß from Mainz (c. AD 120-140).

Photo: Direktion Landesarchäologie, Mainz.

Thus the rank of the *Patres* depicted in barbotine technique on the two faces of the Schlangengefäß from Mainz (Figs. 2 and 5), which can be dated relatively early, certainly before c. AD 140, is indicated by their headgear. A century later, the tiara is used alone in the floor-mosaic of the Mitreo di Felicissimo at Ostia, c. AD 250, as a synecdoche for the grade or rank of *Pater*, alongside the sickle of Saturn, to indicate the planet, farthest from the earth, that now 'protects' the rank, and a staff and *patera*, a visual hendiadys to indicate sacerdotal authority.⁶⁴ Else-

where, freed from all narrative or organisational association, relief images of the Phrygian cap could be used to denote the idea of the cult as a whole, the claim to be Persian, the central role of the mystagogue in the group, unspecified ritual events ...⁶⁵

Apart from the re-used statue at Ostia by Kritôn and the Giustiniani-Odescalchi copy, virtually the only representations of Mithras without oriental dress are of the rock-birth: the standard iconography, derived from the Greek anodic stereotype, shows him emerging out of the rock, very occasionally accompanied by flames.⁶⁶ And even here, his identity is almost always indicated by a tiara, as well as proleptic signs of his future exploits, a sword or dagger, a torch, an ear of grain, a cosmic globe, the torch-bearers ...⁶⁷

64 See Becatti (1954), Plate XXIV.2; Squarciapino (1962), Plate XVI; there is a rather poor drawing in Claus (2012), p. 130.

65 See e.g. V.321.L4 (Phrygian cap in a tree, Quadraro, Ostia); 987 = Schwertheim (1974), 230 no. 190c with pl. 53; 1059 (Friedberg); 1083B (draped over the sword); 1087 (both Hedderheim/Frankfurt I); 1137A 3c [Vermaseren's 3b] (3 caps in a tree) (Rückingen); 1247 A10 (3 bearded heads in caps in a tree) (Dieburg); 1496 (raven, bow, sword and cap) (Poetovio I); 1973 (series of 7 altars, trees, swords, caps on a stand) (Apulum); 2320.6 (on lower rim, between a boar and dog) (Iarlovtsi, Thracia). The pair of tiaras surmounted by a star at the beginning of the floor mosaic in the Mitreo di Felicissimo at Ostia presumably stands for the torch-bearers (Becatti 1954, p. 107 = V.299.4).

66 See Vermaseren (1951), which is still the standard reference; the flames are visible in V.42.5 (Dura), 2237 = Claus (2012), p. 122 fig. 98 (Civitas Montanensium, Moesia Sup.).

67 Cf. Claus (2012), p. 65–72 with a useful selection of images.

Fig. 3 ‘Water-miracle’, showing one torchbearer drinking, the other entreating or thanking Mithras. Osterburken relief (V.1292 scene 5a). Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe. Photo: Museum für AbgüÙe klassischer Bilderwerke, Munich.



b) Accoutrements

One of the more important Greek *topoi* about the Persians was their skill at archery, both in hunting and in warfare: we need only think of Aeschylus’ coinage of the epithet $\tau\acute{o}\xi\alpha\rho\chi\omicron\varsigma$ for King Darius.⁶⁸ Although Mithras does not of course use a bow to hunt the bull (which he needs to capture alive in order to perform the sacrifice), he is once shown with a quiver slung over his back,⁶⁹ and the bow itself plays an essential role in one of his early exploits, the ‘water miracle’. This is the theme of one of the most frequent by-scenes, in which Mithras fires an arrow at a rock and thus causes water miraculously to gush forth (Fig. 3).⁷⁰ At any rate in the Pannonias, it became fashionable to make dedications to this ‘never-failing source’, *fons perennis*.⁷¹ In the most detailed representations, Cautes and Cautopates are shown drinking from the spring thus created, whose water is specified in line 4 in the Mithraeum of Santa Prisca in Rome as ‘nectar’, i. e. a divine liquid destined for gods.⁷²

68 *Pers.* 556; cf. e.g. Herodotus 1.136.2; Xenophon, *Cyrop.* 1.3.14; 6.3.26; Strabo, *Geogr.* 15.3.18, 733C, cf. 11.13.6, 524C (Medes). There is plenty of confirmation in Achaemenid art, e.g. the Captain of the Guard of Archers standing directly behind Darius I at Behistun/Bisutun, who holds a bow, and the magnificent frieze of marching Bowmen from the terrace abutting the eastern entrance to his palace at Susa, part of which is now in the Louvre (inv. nos. Sb 3302 and 3309), cf. Matthiae (1999), p. 253 and 255.

69 V. 546 (Rome). All the other examples occur in the context of the hunt-scene (see p. 305 below).

70 Cumont (1894–99), 1: p. 165 f. of course adduced Moses in the desert. Kuiper (1961–62) pointed to the connection between Vedic Mitra and the release of waters; in *Yt.* 10 § 61, Miθra is the ‘replenisher of waters’ (*fraŧ. āpem*), cf. Gershevitch (1959), p. 210.

71 V. 1465 = *ILSlo* 1 no.51 (Trebnje); 1533 (Poetovio II); 1753 = TitAq 1 no. 233 (Aquincum II); *AE* 2011: 967 = LapSav 56 (Savaria). *CIL* V 5766 (Mediolanum) may be a further instance.

72 Drinking: V.1083A (the scene appears twice, possibly ‘before’ and ‘after’ (Heddernheim/Frankfurt I); 1128.10 (Heddernheim/Frankfurt III); 1292 5a (Osterburken, see Fig. 3); 1972.2 (Apulum). Sta Prisca 1.4: Vermaseren & Van Essen (1965), p. 193: *Fons concludit petris, qui geminos aluisti nectare fratres*, which as read is a 7½-foot dactylic hexameter; cf. *Phryx ... qui nunc / cum dis potandas nectare miscet aquas*: Ovid, *Heroid.* 16.197 f.; nectar like dew that falls on specially beneficent days: Pliny, *HN* 11.37.



Fig. 4 Left-hand lateral face of the altar of Ulp(ius) Am(---) from Kalkar (*AE* 1999: 1098), showing Mithras' 'Persian' bow, crossed by an arrow, with a *Schlangengefäß* below. Photo: Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn.

Just as with the Phrygian cap, the bow could also be depicted out of narrative context as a condensed sign. On the left lateral face of an important altar from Burginatum (Kalkar, Nordrhein-Westfalen), it is crossed by an arrow and located directly above a *Schlangengefäß* (Fig. 4), thus creating a tight visual association between the water-miracle (mythical drink), the death of the bull, and the drinking of wine at the First Cult-meal shared by Helios/Sol and Mithras, which provides the model for the central ritual activity of the continuing cult.⁷³ Elsewhere, the bow is combined with a quiver and the sword with which Mithras dispatches the bull.⁷⁴ At Capua, where, as I have mentioned, a patron commissioned an exceptionally persianist image of the bull-killing, the Persian bow

has been transferred to the torch-bearers, each of whom holds an unstrung bow in his left hand.⁷⁵

In several of the small-scale representations of the 'water-miracle', Mithras shoots at the rock while sitting on a stone.⁷⁶ Though this was probably a neutral cutter's device to save space, it seems to have inspired at least one 'mystagogue' to invent an initiation ritual in which he, as *Pater*, threatens to shoot a terrified initiate with an arrow (Fig. 5).⁷⁷ That this ritual is an appropriation from the 'water-miracle' is suggested by the otherwise odd fact that the *Pater* is shown seated on a folding chair, similar to those sometimes used by Roman magistrates. The 'Persian' character of the Roman cult, emblematised by the rôle of the bow in myth and votive, has been transferred to the re-production of the group through performance of ritual.

73 Horn (1985), cf. *AE* 1999: 1098.

74 V.1584 (left lateral face of the altar of Flavius Aper, Poetovio III). The fragmentary Scene 16 in the Hawarte Mithraeum in Syria shows ?Mithras holding an arrow in his raised right hand; the remainder is lost (Gawlikowski 2007, p. 358 no. 16 with colour fig. 15 on p. 346). The scene is situated on the east wall of the cella (i.e. facing the entrance), to the right of the tauroctony scene, and immediately to the right of the 'initiation' of Helios/Sol, which here is performed by a blazing torch held in Mithras' r. hand.

75 Vermaseren (1971), p. 16. There is only one other case in which a torchbearer carries a bow in the bull-killing scene, V.1084 (Heddernheim/Frankfurt I), a relief that was clearly brought from the Danube area. Vermaseren cites five other cases, three of them from Dacia, in which either one or both torch-bearers hold(s) a bow.

76 E.g. V.1128.10 (Heddernheim/Frankfurt III); 1422.3 (Lauriacum, Noricum); 1740.5 (Alcsút, Pannonia Inf.); 1935.2 (Apulum) and many others in the Lower Danube area.

77 Scene A on the Mainz *Schlangengefäß*: Huld-Zetsche (2008), p. 77–79 no. 552 "Driergruppe", with pl. 64.

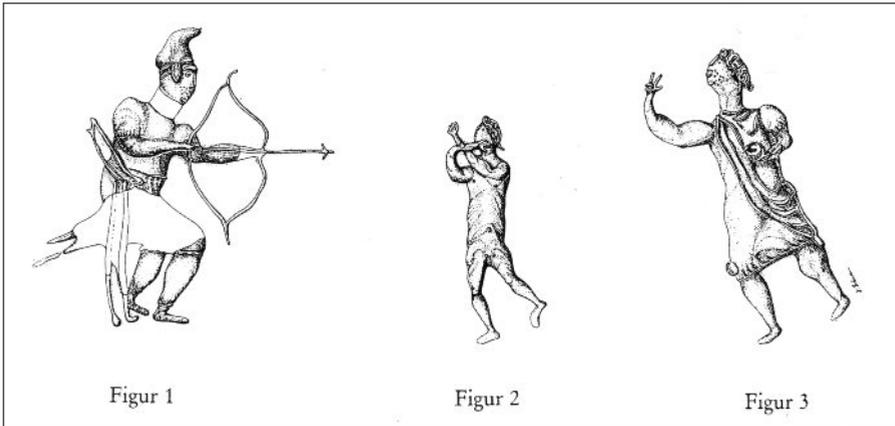


Fig. 5 The initiation scene on the Schlangengefäß from Mainz (c. AD 120-140). Direktion Landesarchäologie, Mainz.

Rhyta (horn-shaped drinking vessels) are a prominent feature of the First Cult-meal between Mithras and Helios/Sol.⁷⁸ They are also prominent in Iranian feast contexts.⁷⁹ They may therefore have been viewed as Persian items. However, the Greek iconography of heroic and Dionysiac feasting provides an equally plausible evocation.⁸⁰

c) Hunting

Intimately related to archery in the Greek *imaginaire* of Persia was hunting from horseback.⁸¹ I postpone a discussion of the theme as found in mithraea in Roman Syria until later; here it is just worth noting its occasional appearance in Germania Superior – and apparently nowhere else in the western Empire, not even in central Italy, where, as we shall see, we do find some effort to stress the Persian character of the cult. The scene of the mounted hunt is only once incorporated into the optional series of scenes conveniently referred to as ‘the Mithras-myth’, namely in

78 E. g. Rostovtzeff (1939), p. 103 (Middle Mithraeum) and 108 (phase III) = V.49 and 42.13, with Cumont (1975), p. 176 f.; 179–181; First Meal depicted on the fresco on the North wall at Sta Prisca: Vermaseren and Van Essen (1965), p. 148–178; 641 reverse (Fiano Romano); 798 (Tróia, Setúbal); 988 (ts dish from Skt. Matthias cemetery, Trier); 1083 B (Heddernhem/Frankfurt I); 1128.16 (Heddernhem/Frankfurt III); 1137 B (Rückingen) and many others.

79 Cf. Matthiae (1999), p. 259 with images of Sasanid rhyta on the following pages. Iranian-style rhyta were enthusiastically imitated by Attic *rf* potters.

80 Cf. Lissarague (1987), p. 21 f. on the specifically divine connotations of the rhyton.

81 Cf. Gignoux (1983). Hunting and archery are generally mentioned together in the stereotyped Greek accounts of Persia and its education, e. g. Xen., *Anab.* 1.9.2–6; [Plato], *Alcib.* 121e, Strabo, *Geogr.* 11.13.9, 526C, and the passages cited in n. 66 above, cf. Asheri *et al.* (2007), p. 170 on Hdt. 1.136.2.

the most elaborate of all, that from Osterburken.⁸² For what it is worth, given that the relevant sequence of scenes does not correspond to their ‘proper’ narrative sequence, it is set between two scenes linked to the First Cult-meal.⁸³ This location, whatever its significance, seems to be confirmed by two other major representations, at Heddernheim/Frankfurt Mithraeum I, and at Rückingen, where the hunting scene occurs directly above the First Cult-meal.⁸⁴ At Dieburg, where one face of the two-sided relief shows Phaethon and Helios in a scenario adapted from early Phaethon-sarcophagi, the hunting-scene is on the other face, and, again uniquely, occupies the place normally taken by the tauroctony-scene, whose absence – or possibly whose functional equivalence to the hunting scene – is stressed by the inclusion of the torch-bearers in their usual positions, left and right.⁸⁵ Finally, a small free-standing relief of Mithras hunting on horseback, accompanied by a lion and a snake – two of the animals that repeatedly occur together with the krater on German tauroctony-reliefs, was found near Mithraeum I at Neuenheim/Heidelberg sometime before 1865, and two similar statuettes have since turned up on the antiquities market.⁸⁶ None of these images bears a close resemblance to one another: it is clear that there was no stereotype available for commissioning patrons to fall back on.

No satisfactory explanation of the hunting motif in the Roman cult has been offered.⁸⁷ If the Classical Greek view of the Persian valuation of archery and hunting as crucial to the formation of brave warriors also formed part of the later Mithraic reception, we might guess that one evocation of hunting on horseback was to provide a narrative justification for the standard epithet *invictus* – by the middle Principate Roman emperors were also represented hunting from horseback.⁸⁸ But the insistent association with the First Cult-meal shows that this cannot be the whole

82 V.1292Bf = Schwertheim (1974), 192–195 no. 148a.6, with Cumont (1894–99), 1: p. 174.

83 i.e. dexiosis of Mithras and Sol over the altar on which the noble innards will be roasted (directly above) and the First Cult-meal itself (immediately below).

84 Heddernheim: V.1083B = Schwertheim (1974), 67–69 no.59a B; Rückingen: V.1137B = Schwertheim (1974), 101–104 no. 85a Rückseite.

85 V. 1247A = Schwertheim (1974), 160–162 no. 123a. There is an indirect allusion to the bull-killing scene in the fact that the torch-bearers are present on either side of the hunt-scene, standing on wine-kraters.

86 V.1289 = Schwertheim (1974), p. 187 no. 140 g. Antiquities market: Duchesne-Guillemin (1978b) and (1982).

87 Cumont (1894–99), 1: p. 174, though of course aware of a Persian reference, saw a contamination with Anatolian rider-gods, cf. (1975), p. 189 f.; Alföldi (1952) saw a reference to the Final Conflagration hypothesised by Cumont (1931); Vermaseren (1963), p. 93 f. thought the hunt represented Mithras’ “struggle against the powers of darkness”; Campbell (1968), p. 263 f. interpreted each of the hunting scenes as a different (but equally implausible) eschatological event; Schmitt (1977) wanted to find a genetic connection between Mithras and the minor Hindu deity Revanta, who is often shown on horseback, shooting with bow and arrow. On my model of the cult, the very idea of a ‘real’ meaning is itself quite inappropriate.

88 Hadrian’s obsession with hunting (cf. the tondo on Constantine’s Arch showing him hunting a boar from horseback, albeit with a javelin [Meyer (1991), p. 218–221], and the foundation of Hadrianoutherai in Mysia) is too well-known to require comment: see Aymard (1951), p. 173–182. The imagery begins however with Domitian: Tuck (2005), and continues well beyond L. Verus.

explanation; and why, among the Latin-speaking provinces, only in the Germanies? It is perhaps better to treat the motif as a locally specific assertion of Mithras' Persian origin – i. e. as a purely Persianist theme – a motif that may even have been introduced to Germania through the movement of military units between Syria and the Rhine.⁸⁹ The reverse process cannot, however, be excluded, since the surviving depictions of the hunt at Dura date from the second quarter of the third century AD and the re-foundation of the Dura Mithraeum (phase II) was directly due to Roman military units in the Severan period.⁹⁰

d) Terminology

If we disregard the name Mithras itself, there is little evidence in the West for explicit stress on the cult's Persian identity. In the epigraphic (i. e. cult-internal) evidence in Latin, even among the verses at Sta Prisca, there is not a single reference either to the Magi, who in Cumont's scenario mediated the cult, or to Zoroaster. The name of the fifth grade or rank, *Perses*, occurs epigraphically prior to the late fourth century just once, in Gallia Narbonensis, apart from the references at Sta Prisca and in the similar *dipinti* at Dura (see below).⁹¹ The sole explicit reference to Mithras as a Persian god occurs in a brief poem by a late-fourth-century senator, Rufius Caeonius Sabinus, attached to a record of his having performed a *taurobolium* for Mater Magna.⁹² Among his religious offices he mentions being a Mithraic *pater sacrorum*, which versified becomes: *Persidiciq(ue) Mithrae antistes Babylonie templi*. By comparison with the situation in other appropriated Roman cults, where exoticism is explicit, this is quite insignificant.

In the late Antonine period, however, – at any rate so far as we can tell – we begin to find some explicit linguistic indication that some worshippers had become

89 “The representation of the mounted bowman hunting is common at Dura and scarcely requires comment”: Rostovtzeff et al. (1939), p. 383 (on their nos. 931–933, ink drawings on ostraka of hunting-scenes, found in different houses); cf. Rostovtzeff (1938), p. 94f. with pl. XVII on the hunting-scene in the house of Bolazeos, which resembles those on early Sasanid silver dishes.

90 The Neuenheim example alone bears a typological resemblance to the Dura hunt-fresco, though the latter is of course executed in local Duran style.

91 *L. Apronius Chrysomallus ob gradum persicum dedicavit*: *CIL* XII 1324 = *ILS* 4266 = V.887 (Vasio/ Glanum). Sta Prisca: Vermaseren and Van Essen (1965), 156 (right wall, upper layer, c.220); nothing remains of the relevant acclamation on the lower layer; Dura: Rostovtzeff et al. (1939), p. 120 no. 856: [νά]μα λέουσιν [άβρ]οίς καὶ περσεσ[ιν..]ΕΛΕΜΝΟΙΣ = V.58. Despite E. D. Francis' additional notes to Cumont (1975) and his important paper on the graffiti (Francis 1975), these remain the only items of internal evidence for the grade that have yet been published. Late-antique: on 4th April 358, the Roman senators Nonius Victor Olympius and Aur. Victor Augustinus performed initiations into the grade *Perses* (*tradiderunt persica*) in their mithraeum beneath the modern Palazzo Marignoli, Rome (*CIL* VI 750 = *ILS* 4267b = V.401); Jerome, *Ep.* 107.2 ad Laetam, listing seven grades incl. *Perses*, in the context of an incident in AD 376 involving the *praef. urbis Romae*, Furius Maecius Gracchus.

92 *CIL* VI 511 = Vermaseren (1977), no. 243 = V.522 = EDCS-17300659. For the form of the name, see *PLRE* 1 s.v. Rufius Caeonius Sabinus; O. Seeck in *RE*² 1.2 (1920), col. 1598 s.v. Sabinus (17) preferred Rufius Caeonius Caecina Sabinus.

interested in stressing the fact that the cult was Persian. The most obvious indications are the two words *nama* and *nabarze*. The first, derived from an Avestan word *namō* (nom.) meaning ‘homage to!’ or ‘hail!’,⁹³ occurs repeatedly in the acclamations to the different grades, and to the group of Lions, painted on the walls of Sta Prisca/Rome in two layers at the beginning and end of the first quarter of the third century AD, but, likewise as an acclamation, in two votive dedications, at Tibur and in Ostia, by members of the Imperial household whom we can assume to have been relatively educated.⁹⁴ Its formulaic status is amply confirmed by its appearance in dozens of acclamations painted on the walls of the third phase of the mithraeum at Dura, datable to the 240s AD.⁹⁵ *Nabarze* by contrast, an epithet of Mithras, occurs explicitly only in four votives, two of them from Rome and another in a dedication by a *tribunus laticlavius* in Aquincum, i. e. a young man towards the beginning of his senatorial career.⁹⁶ The etymology of *nabarze* is debated among Iranists; it could be an indication of direct transmission, but could equally be a Persian invention on the basis of the Iranian aristocratic name hellenised as Μιθροβαρζάνης.⁹⁷ If

93 So E. Benveniste ap. Cumont (1975), p. 196.

94 Sta Prisca: Vermaseren and Van Essen (1965), p. 148–150 (left wall, upper layer: Leo acclamations); 155–158 (right wall, upper layer: acclamations to the seven grades); 160–162 (right wall, upper layer: Leones bearing gifts); 165–167 (left wall, lower layer: Leo acclamations); 167–169 (left wall, lower layer: acclamations to the seven grades). Tibur: *CIL* XIV 3567 = *Inscr.It.* 4.1 no. 67 = *ILouvre* 30 = V.214 (dedication *nama cunctis* by a *Caes.n. verna dispensator*, probably a member of the administrative staff of the Villa Hadriana; slaves who dealt with cash were not freed until their forties); Ostia: *AE* 1911: 63 = *CIL* XIV 4315 = V.308 = EDCS 11900036 (re-used, poor quality): an *Aug. lib.* restoring statues of the torch-bearers *nama Victori patri*. The two *namas* inscribed on the ‘Lo Perso’ relief found on the Capitol in Rome, which has at last been properly restored by the Louvre (*CIL* VI 30819 = XIV 3566 = V.415) are too uncertain to include here, as is *CIL* VI 731 = V.591 (Dublin), which was extensively restored in the 17th/18th century before being bought by Edward Hill, professor of Botany 1773–1800, and of Physick 1781–1830.

95 Rostovtzeff et al. (1939), p. 121 f.; Cumont (1975), 195 f.

96 Rome: *CIL* VI 742 = p. 3006 and p. 3757 = *ILS* 4262 = V.501 (*Invicto d(eo) navarze*). The spelling shows that the dedicant knew the word from Gk. ναβαρζε, as in *IG* XIV 998 = *IGVR* 125: Ἡλίω Μίθρα ἀστοβροντοδαίμονι ναβαρζε (cf. *AE* 2006: 177). Aquincum, Pannonia Inf.: *CIL* III 3481 = *ILS* 4260 = *TitAq* 1, 256 = V.1790, *Invicto Mythrae nabarze*. The altar must have come from the mithraeum in the house of the *tribuni laticlavii* (Aquincum V), though none of the others found there use the epithet, cf. *AE* 1990:814–820. Sarmizegetusa, Dacia Apulensis: *IDR* 3.2, 307 = V.2029, *nabarze deo* (see the drawing in Cumont 1913, p. 113 fig.20) This was dedicated by the *vicarius* (slave deputy) of a *dispensator*, again still a slave, presumably in the procuratorial administration of the province. If, with Cumont (1894–99), II, p. 533 s. v. ‘Invicto deo Navarze’, one expands N in the nomenclature of Mithras as *nabarze*, there may be a couple of others, but some are certainly not Mithraic and all are in one way or another problematic.

97 On the authority of Géza Kúun, Cumont originally believed the word *nabarza* was Persian and meant ‘le fort, le courageux’, (1894–99), I: p. 208 n. 6; elsewhere, however he thought it meant ‘victorious’, more or less the same as *invictus* (p. 308). Μιθροβαρζάνης appears in *Diod. Sic.* 15.91 as the name of the satrap of Cappadocia under Artaxerxes Memnon, and in *Appian, Mithr.* 84 = *Plutarch, Lucull.* 25, as the name of one of the generals of Tigranes of Armenia. One of these passages, or their source, must be the inspiration for the name Lucian gives his Chaldaean *magos* who has access to the Underworld (*Menipp.* 6 and 9). In his learned footnote on

we prefer the latter option, however, we would have to admit that the motive for selecting this particular word rather than any other ‘Persian’ word escapes us entirely. As in the case of *nama*, it is easier to imagine some direct literary transmission, revalorised in the course of the late-Antonine period as a means of affirming the Persian character of the cult.

There is however another important, albeit rather late, indication of the same trend, the appearance of a small number of votives to a *deus Arimanius*. Although one of these, found at the foot of the Esquiline, is to be dated to the reign of Valentinian, the text from Ostia recording a statue of Arimanius (*signum Arimanium*) is likely to date from around AD 250.⁹⁸ Two others, oddly enough, but strikingly similar to the case with *nabarze*, were found in Aquincum.⁹⁹ Now one significant strand of information mediated to the Graeco-Roman world regarding Persian religion – though admittedly not the dominant one – highlighted its dualism: the two fundamental principles were one of good and order, the god Ὠρομάζης, and an opposite principle of disorder, Ἀρειμάνιος, sometimes represented as a god, sometimes, especially in platonising contexts, as a δαίμων, i. e. a divine being of lower status.¹⁰⁰ These Mithraic votives are the sole occurrences of the negative principle in Latin. Theopompus of Chios, in the fourth century BC, seems to have equated Ἀρειμάνιος with Hades, a deity who never occurs in Mithraic iconography or epigraphy.¹⁰¹ This is yet another argument in favour of the hypothesis that *deus Arimanius* did not form part of an organized ‘Mithraism’ but is simply an example of

this name, Cumont suggests it is mostly likely to have meant ‘feu ou éclat de Mithra’: (1894–99), 1: p. 83 f. note 5, though again this is not one of the etymologies of *nabarze* generally favoured by modern Iranists. As Cumont also points out, several analogous names in -βαρζάνης are recorded, including Nabarzanes. A title Μίθραζ/Μίθρηζ ναβαρζε could have been a bit of pure persianist fancy, but again it is hard to justify this particular choice unless it is indeed a piece of direct transmission.

- 98 Esquiline: *CIL* VI 47 = *ILS* 4263 = *AE* 1982: 42 (*Agrestius v. c., defensor (civitatis), magister*). Ostia: *AE* 1899: 205 = *CIL* XIV 4311 = *ILS* 4265 (associated with the Mitreo della Caseggiata di Diana, which was only constructed in phase V (AD 250–350) of an originally Hadrianic building: White 2012, p. 452–459).
- 99 *CIL* III 3415 = *ILS* 4264 = *TitAq* 1, 258 = V.1773 (*Deo Arimanio Libella leo fratribus voto dic(avit)*); 3414 = *TitAq* 1, 257 = V.1775 (*Deo Arimanio*). The latter is said to be a base, possibly for a statue; the other is a small votive altar, found – rather startlingly – with a Mithraic altar dedicated by C. Iulius Septimius Castinus (*PIR*²I 0566), the governor of Pannonia Inf. AD 208–11, who was later murdered by Macrinus. Both are old stray finds, which cannot be associated with any of the known mithraea.
- 100 The main texts are Diogenes Laertius, VP 1.8 f. (= Bidez and Cumont 1938, 2: p. 67–70 Zoroastre frg. D2), citing numerous earlier authors; Plutarch, *De Iside* 46 f., 369d–370c (= Bidez and Cumont 1938, 2: p. 70 Zoroastre frg. D4, with extensive comm.); *de animae procreat.* 27, 1026b (= Bidez and Cumont 1938, 2: p. 79 Zoroastre frg. D6); [Hippol.] *Ref. haer.* 1.2.12 f.; Damascius, *Dubit. et solut. de primis princ.* 125bis (Ruelle); Georgios Plethon, *Μαγικά λόγια* ad fin. = Bidez and Cumont (1938), 2: p. 253 frg. Zoroastre O109a; implicitly already Diod. Sic. 1.94.2. It is however striking how few allusions there are to dualism in the texts collected by Clemen (1920a).
- 101 *FGrH* 115 F65 (from a sub-section of the *Philippika* entitled ‘Thaumasias’) = *De Iside* 467, 370b; cf. de Jong (1997), p. 313 f.

local, intermittent attempts to ‘persify’ the cult on the basis of written sources about Persian religion available in Rome in the later second century AD.¹⁰²

To judge from these sources, Ὠρομάζης was usually associated with light, Ἀρειμάνιος with darkness. This must have struck a chord with some worshippers familiar with the paradox of a cult of a sun-god celebrated in a cave: if Mithras was a Persian god, a negative principle ought to be present in the cult. It is extremely unfortunate that the Ostian dedication, which mentions a votive statue, *signum Arimanium*, was inscribed not on the statue, which is lost, but on an architrave.¹⁰³ Both this and at least one of the items from Aquincum, which is a statue-base, nevertheless prove that one or two worshippers made an effort to create some sort of iconography of *deus Arimanius*,¹⁰⁴ and may even have attempted to imitate the “gloomy offerings” to avert evil described by Plutarch.¹⁰⁵

Such efforts to underline the Persian character of the Roman cult are perfectly consistent with my model of a loose tradition consisting of an Iranian (pro-)creative bull-sacrifice, an elastic narrative capable of unlimited ‘midrashic’ expansion, and an architectural form compatible with the fundamental idea of a cave, all developed at will by ‘mystagogues’ determined to maximise the quality of the *Heilsgüter* they had to offer within the framework of Graeco-Roman small-group religious practice. One such mode was to find new means of emphasising the authentically Persian character of the cult, by drawing on written materials on Persian religion available in Greek. Oriental dress, archery and hunting were all very well but could not claim to have any link with Persian *religion*. Iranian words were better; best of all, though, was an appeal to what Persians actually believed, or at any rate what Greek tradition represented them as believing.

102 Gershevitch (1959), p. 63f. did however develop an argument in favour of an ‘Ahrimanic Mithraism’ spreading to the West.

103 See Becatti (1954), 13f., a stray find in the ‘via della Fontana’, evidently removed from the Caseggiata di Diana.

104 There is no space to discuss the implications of the statuette of the Lion-headed God found near York with a broken inscription (*RIB* 641). I am inclined to accept the suggestion that we should read ARIMANIV[--- as a personal name (cf. *CIL* III 11661: *Vindae Arimani f(iliae)*), i. e. *Vol(usii) Ire[naeus (et)]/ Arimaniu[s] // d(onum) [d(ederunt)]*. It seems to me quite implausible that the Lionheaded God, whose iconography is relatively frequent, could have been regularly identified with *deus Arimanius*, to whom there are only four known dedications (if we exclude the York case). I am therefore astonished at David Stocker’s casual assumption that the identification is an established fact, not a rather weak hypothesis: “Images of Arimanius are not uncommon in across the Empire” (Stocker 1998, p. 360). It is however remarkable that not one of these images reveals the god’s identity, implying some kind of inhibition.

105 *De Iside* 46, 369e, possibly from Hermodorus, if he was Plutarch’s main source in this section.

PERSIANISM 03: 'MITHRAISM' AS A SUB-CATEGORY
OF MAGIAN WISDOM

I have used the example of *deus Arimanius* because it proves that (limited) efforts were made by worshippers in the third century to 'persify' the Roman cult on the basis of written texts. Through the literary tradition, however, we know of far more extensive efforts to link the cult to Persia, through the medium of the Magi. Already in Aristotle, the Magi are represented as philosophers and by the late Republic/Augustan period they could routinely be described as teachers of ethics and wisdom.¹⁰⁶ The Middle and Neoplatonist tradition had a specific interest in the religions of the 'wise' barbarian peoples, including the Persians, because they were held to provide clues to the nature of the primitive Ur-religion that supposedly pre-figured Plato's religious ideas.¹⁰⁷ The idea of philosophical Magi fitted perfectly into this scheme.

A generation ago, Robert Turcan devoted an entire book to the problems raised by the Neoplatonist appropriation of 'Mithraism'.¹⁰⁸ Since at that time he assumed a version of Cumont's strong Iranian hypothesis, his aim was to show that the Neoplatonist tradition had systematically distorted Mithraic teaching in order to make it compatible with its own agenda. The claims about 'Mithraism' to be found in Neoplatonist texts could not therefore be used, as they regularly had been, as reliable evidence in reconstructing the claims of the cult. If, however, we replace the hypothesis of 'Mithraism' with a looser model of independently active 'mystagogues', we can accept both that some of them appropriated materials from written sources on a much greater scale than we could guess from the internal evidence and that the relevant platonising authors – on the one hand Numenius of Apamea and his close associate Kronios, on the other Euboulus and Pallas – derived some of their detailed knowledge of practices within the cult from active 'mystagogues'.¹⁰⁹ In other words, we do not need to choose between 'reliable' and 'unreliable' evidence, but should accept that any of the claims and interpretations to be found in the Neoplatonist sources may have been previously developed or employed by individual 'mystagogues' in their Mithraic constructions.

For me, it is particularly instructive that the word *μυστήρια* is only ever used in connection with the Roman cult in Neoplatonist and Christian contexts – the latter, I would say, directly dependent on the former. *Μυστήρια* offered the desirable qualities of high seriousness and secret knowledge associated with the Magi, which might equally stimulate a pseudo-history of the foundation of the cult of Mithras by Zoroaster, the arch-mage, in Persia.¹¹⁰ A 'mystagogue' familiar with the subjection of the

106 E. g. Cicero, *De div.* 1.90; Nigidius Figulus frg. IV Swoboda = Servius, *in Verg., Bucol.* 4.10; Philo, *De spec. leg.* 3.100; Nicolaus of Damascus *FGrH* 90 F67 = Stobaeus, *Exc. de virtute* 1, 345.14.

107 This was essentially an appropriation of a thesis by the Stoic Posidonius, cf. Boys-Stones (2001), p. 99–122; esp. on 'the rhetoric of ancient wisdom' from Plutarch via Numenius of Apamea to Apuleius: Van Nuffelen (2011), p. 48–98.

108 Turcan (1975). According to *L'Année philologique* on-line, the book was only reviewed twice (by P. Boyancé and J. Dillon), despite its importance.

109 Discussed by Turcan (1975), p. 62–89 (Numenius and Kronios), 23–43 (Euboulus and Pallas).

110 Cited by Porphyry, *De antro* 6 from Euboulus. On fabrications centred upon Zoroaster, see

Primal Bull in a cave, but also with the usual Roman *Vereinshaus* model, might find it attractive to imagine Zoroaster looking out a cave in the Persian mountains for his first mithraeum, surrounded by flowers, with a stream nearby ...¹¹¹ Given the close association between Magi and astrology, others might be tempted to try interpreting the Mithraic relief in astrological terms: “They (i.e. the sources Numenius and/or Kronios are following) assigned the equinoctial region to Mithras as an appropriate seat. And that is why he holds the sword of Aries, the sign of Mars, and rides on the bull of Venus: <for Libra is also the domicile of Venus>, like Taurus”.¹¹² Yet others would see Mithras as lord of the cosmos, as is evident from votives naming him *omnipotens* and from the representations of his fluttering cloak as the starry sky, which could easily be translated into Platonic terms as ‘demiurge’.¹¹³

The reliability of some of the information available to these Neoplatonist writers – reliability in the sense that it seems to be confirmed by at least some of the archaeology – is apparent from a number of passages: I have already mentioned the theme of bull-stealing, which is alluded to by Kronios in a particularly dense passage of theological evocation; we may add the idea that some mithraea at any rate were conceived as representations of the whole cosmos; the relation between Cautes, light and heat, and Cautopates, darkness and cold; the use of neuter plurals of adjectival forms, such as τὰ λεοντικά, to denote initiation into grades; the idea that the occupants of the lowest grade or rank Corax, Raven, acted as servitors (at the communal meals) ... All these details seem to be based on good information, not that they were applied or known everywhere. At the same time, Euboulus and Pallas in particular seem to have been keen to apply to the Roman cult ideas that they found in the Graeco-Roman materials on the Magi, no doubt especially in Hermippus, *On the magi*, for example that there were three sorts of Magi, of which the highest and most learned were vegetarians, and that they believed in metempsychosis, the possibility of souls migrating from body to body according to their moral deserts in a past life – itself a central element in Platonism.¹¹⁴ Pallas in particular seems to have used the allegorical method to transform the animal-names of two grades, Lions and Ravens, into proof of commitment to metempsychosis in the Roman cult.¹¹⁵

briefly Momigliano (1975), p. 144–149. Bidez and Cumont (1938) was a largely misguided and uncritical collection of ‘sources’.

111 Πρώτου μὲν Ζωροάστρου αὐτοφυῆς σήλαιον ἐν τοῖς πλησίον ὄρεσι τῆς Περσίδος ἀνθηρὸν καὶ πηγὰς ἔχον ἀνιερώσοντος ... (ibid.).

112 Porphyry, *De antro* 24 (following the emendation of Beck 2004d; this may not represent Porphyry’s actual text, but certainly what he should have written). Such a claim involved some sleight of hand: the equinoctial zodiacal signs are Aries and Libra; Aries is also the lunar domicile of Mars; Mars is conventionally represented as armed, usually with a spear (as at Sette Sfere, Ostia: V.241.6), “vereinzel[t mit einem] Schwert” (W. & H. Gundel 1950, 2175). Taurus is the lunar domicile of Venus, but her solar domicile is Libra. [I prefer the French term ‘domicile’ for οἶκος to the usual English ‘house’]. This type of allegorisation needs to be distinguished from that employed by the modern neo-Renaissance allegorists, who identify the figures on the relief as a map of the zodiacal constellations (plus some *paramatellonta*, i.e. non-zodiacal constellations, when things get difficult) between Taurus and Scorpius.

113 *Omnipotens*: Clauss (1988). Cloak as starry sky: Vermaseren (1982), p. 61 f.

114 Porphyry, *De abstin.* 4.16.3 with notes complémentaires 28, 29 by Alain Segonds (p. 81 f.)

115 ibid. 4.16.4.

Given that our notion of ‘Mithraism’ is based almost entirely upon archaeological finds in Italy and along the Rhine-Danube frontier area, and its preferred linguistic expression almost exclusively Latin, it is sobering to reflect that so much of this more or less learned discussion about the cult was conducted in Greek. A particularly blatant form of such speculation can be found in a report by the anti-Christian writer Celsus of “the λόγος of the Persians, i.e. the cult of Mithras which they practise (καὶ ἡ τοῦ Μίθρου τελετή, <ἡ> παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἐστίν)”.¹¹⁶ Just as with Euboulus and Pallas, therefore, we are supposed to be learning about genuine beliefs and practices current in Persia itself. This λόγος (account or schema) turns out to be a symbolic representation (σύμβολον) in the form of a ladder with seven ‘gates’ (i.e. rungs) of the ascent of the soul (from earth) to the eighth gate, the realm of the fixed stars. Each ‘gate’ is formed of a different metal and assigned to a different planetary deity, in the sequence Kronos/Saturn, Aphrodite/Venus, Zeus/Jupiter, Hermes/Mercury, Ares/Mars, Selene/Luna, Helios/Sol. Now it is obvious that such a sequence has nothing to do with any known cosmography based on supposed distances from earth: it is, as Turcan was the first to point out, the reverse sequence of the days of the week, an abstruse astrological scheme worked out on the basis of the so-called chronokrators of each hour, the planet to which the first hour of each 24-hour sequence happened to be assigned being taken as the chronokrator of that day.¹¹⁷ Cumont nevertheless constructed, on the basis of Celsus’ remark about the ascent of souls, an entirely unwarranted ‘gnostic’ scenario whereby each soul as it ascended after death was stripped of vices.¹¹⁸ After the discovery of the Phaethon relief at Dieburg, he altered this scheme to turn it into Mithraic commitment to the Zoroastrian account of the conflagration at the end of the world.¹¹⁹ Both versions completely ignored the continuation of Celsus’ account, which, even in Origen’s dismissive summary, makes clear that he found the scheme in a secondary or even tertiary text that accounted for it in terms of two different musical theories. If Celsus is anything to go by, the ‘Magian mirage’ stimulated a wild variety of speculation that could be associated with the ‘Magian mysteries’, i.e. the cult of Mithras, just as in the case of Euboulus and Pallas. Any of these writings might in turn have stimulated ‘mystagogues’ in their interpretative efforts and so have played some role in the religious practice of their own groups.¹²⁰ And at some point such efforts might be further assimilated into still more complex scenarios, which in themselves have no connection with the versions of Mithraic cult practiced in the western Empire, such as the revelation-ritual of the so-called ‘Mithras-liturgy’.

116 ap. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.22 (ed. Borret).

117 Turcan (1975), p. 46–61; cf. Beck (1988), 73–85.

118 Cumont (1894–99), 1: p. 309f.; 1913, p. 114f.

119 Cumont (1931).

120 There exists one monument that presents the planetary deities in the reverse order of the days of the week, namely V.693 (Bologna). But here the sequence serves to link Sol (as usual, top left) to Luna (top right), which can only be done by reversing the weekly order (Sol, Saturn, Venus etc., see Beck 1988, p. 17); the only other complete sequence, V.1727 (Aquinum), shows the planets in the order Saturnus (I.) → Venus...; if a temporal sequence is intended, this would signify the days of the week (Saturday → Friday).

PERSIANISM 04: MITHRAS IN THE LATE-ANTIQUÉ
ENCYCLOPAEDIC TRADITION

The late antique lexicographers, Hesychius, the Suda and Photius, agree in defining Mithras as the Persian name of the sun, to whom plentiful sacrifice was offered.¹²¹ It is clear from the continuation of the Suda entry that this thumb-nail sketch is an excerpt from a longer notice derived from the commentary-tradition on two passages of an invective against Julian by Gregory Nazianzen, describing fanciful horrors involved in Mithraic initiation.¹²² As this suggests, the late-antique encyclopaedia/commentary tradition is completely ignorant of the association between Magian wisdom and ‘Mithraism’ forged in the Platonist tradition, from Plutarch to Porphyry (and indeed to Proclus). Conversely, that tradition never alludes to the identification of Mithras with the sun, which is central to Persianism 04.

The equation of *Miθra*/Mithras with the sun, which I call Persianism 04, can be traced back to the source of Strabo, *Geogr.* 15.3.13, 732C: (the Persians) *τιμῶσι δὲ καὶ ἥλιον, ὃν καλοῦσι Μίθραν*, which evidently relates to an observation about developments in western Parthia in the late Hellenistic period.¹²³ Some later authors relying on earlier sources apparently distinguish between *Miθra* and the sun: as we have seen, Quintus Curtius has Darius III invoke “*solem et Mithram, sacrumque et aeternum ... ignem*”, while Plutarch makes him adjure a slave to speak the truth, “as you honour the great light (*μέγα φῶς*) of Mithra”.¹²⁴ The only Classical author to link Mithras *quâ* sun with the Roman cult of Mithras is Statius;¹²⁵ otherwise almost all references to this identification, such those by Ptolemy, ‘Menander Rhetor’, pseudo-Clement, and Nonnus of Panopolis, amount to nothing more than Dracontius’ formula *Sol persice Mithra*.¹²⁶

There are however three slightly more interesting late-antique attempts to link Roman Mithras with Persia. One is Firmicus Maternus’ account, written in the mid-340s, which forms part of an analysis of pagan error focalised upon the four elements.¹²⁷ The section on fire begins by noting that the Persians and *magi omnes*

121 Suda, s.v. *Μίθρου*: *Μίθραν νομίζουσιν εἶναι οἱ Πέρσαι τὸν ἥλιον, καὶ τοῦτω θύουσιν πολλὰς θυσίας*. The same notice in Photius, *Lex.* s.v. *Μίθρου*.

122 This material was taken from the commentaries on Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 4 *adv. Iulianum*, particularly [Nonnus], *Comm. in Or.* 4, 6 and 47; in *Or.* 39.18 Nimmo Smith (cf. her tr. 2001, p. 7, 34 f., 104 f.); the relevant passages and the still later commentaries, such as that by Cosmas of Jerusalem, are most conveniently to be found under ‘Nonnus le Mythographe’ in Cumont, 1894–99, II: p. 26–30. Hesychius has two relevant entries, one for *Μίθρας*, the other for *Μίθρης*. The first makes Mithras the Persian sun, the second the most important Persian deity.

123 See *FGrH* 696 F23; Momigliano rightly reckoned that his main source for Parthia was Apollodorus of Artemita (1975), p. 139 f. Against that, Strabo’s knowledge of Parthia at this time has been judged as “not impressive”: Drijvers (1998).

124 Quintus Curt.: see n. 4 above; Plutarch, *Alex.* 30.8.

125 Note that some of the earliest epigraphic evidence often refers to Ἥλιος *Μίθρας*/Sol Mithras, cf. Gordon (1977–78), p. 159 f.

126 Ptolemy, *Apotel.* 2.2; ‘Menander Rhetor’, *Epideikt.* 2.446 Russell & Wilson = Spengel 3, p. 468; [Clement], *Hom.* 6.10 (= Apollo, completes its circuit in one year); Nonnus, *Dionys.* 21.218 f. and 40. 400 f. (M. as Syrian Phaethon/Babylonian Helios); Dracontius, *Romul.* 10.538.

127 Cf. Turcan (1975), p. 90 f.; Busine (2009).

qui Persicae regionis incolunt fines hold fire in the greatest honour and therefore divide it into two aspects, one female, the other male.¹²⁸ The male is Mithras, the bull-thief, who is worshipped in caves; the female principle has three faces and is entwined by snakes.¹²⁹ The Mithraists are said to claim explicitly that their rites follow those of the Magi (*magorum ritu persico*), which, at this period, naturally leads into the (unique) denunciation of the cult as pro-Persian just at a time of protracted warfare with the Sasanian empire. Since the passage on Mithras cites *propheta eius* for a verse acclamation in Greek, it must be a citation from a text claiming to be by Zoroaster.¹³⁰ On the other hand, it is by no means impossible that the account of the female principle, however muddled, is taken from an attempt, naturally in Greek, to incorporate some of the ideas of the Chaldaean Oracles into a Mithraic scenario.¹³¹

The second late-antique representation of Persian Mithras is found in the complicated ms. tradition of the scholia on Statius' *Thebais* handed down under the name 'Lactantius Placidus', which must be treated as a living text to which alterations and additions were made over an unknown period by unknown hands.¹³² The scholia to *Theb.* 1.717–20 (esp. 719f.) contain material found nowhere else and whose source(s) are quite unknown. One strand provides a unique line of transmission of 'Mithraism' from East to West: *quae sacra primum Persae habuerunt, a Persis Phryges, a Phrygibus Romani*, in which one can already see the germs of Cumont's strong Iranian theory. It is also unique in citing *Ostanes*, a famous 'Magian' (i. e. pseudonymous) author-tradition, for the standard 04 information that

128 Firm. Mat., *De errore* 5.1f. It is striking that no reference is made to a special connection between the grade *Leo* and fire, which is implicit in lines 16f. at *Sta Prisca, accipe thuricremos, Pater, accipe, sancte, Leones, // per quos thuradam[us], per quos consumimur ipsi*, and explicit in Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion.* 1.13: *aridae et ardentis naturae sacramenta leones Mithrae philosophantur*, "the learned explanation of the Mithraic Lions is that they symbolise the dry and burning/hot in Nature".

129 *Et mulierem quidem triformi vultu constituent, monstruosis eam serpentibus inligantes*. For attempts to make sense of the female principle, see Turcan (1975), p. 92–95; 1982, 204. From at least the time of Hesiod, Hekate could be represented as the daughter of the Titan Perses (*Theog.* 409–412); she is given the epithet Persia in *PGrMag* IV 2715: Fauth (2006), p. 32.

130 Μύστα βοοκλοπίης, συνδέξιε πατρὸς ἀγαθοῦ (see also n.13 above). Although they do not say so explicitly, Bidez and Cumont (1938), 2: p. 153f. Zoroastre frg. O9a, rightly took *propheta eius* to be an allusion to Zoroaster (cf. Turcan 1982, p. 207). The word βοοκλοπίη is a *hapax* (*LSJ* Suppl. s.v.), clearly calqued upon [Orph.], *Arg.* 1057; cf. Nonnus, *Dionys.* 1.337 (pseudo-pastoral context); ἀγαθός is archaising, being used of human beings mainly in Homer and early epic (e.g. *Od.* 11.213; *Minyas* frg. dub. 7.12 Bernabé).

131 In the Chaldaean system, the snakes that form the hair of Artemis-Hekate were understood as 'winding fire' and equated with the action of the Cosmic Soul. "[The] function of the Chaldean Cosmic Soul was apparently symbolized by the windings of the snakes with which the body of the statue was wreathed. This body consequently represented the universe; the hairs visible 'by the glaring, terrifying light' of the fiery snakes symbolizing the spheres": Lewy (1978), p. 92. A late tradition associated Zoroaster with the Chaldaean Oracles: Bidez and Cumont (1938), 1: p. 158–161.

132 On the text of 'Lactantius Placidus', an author much read in the Renaissance, see Sweeney (1969) and (more briefly) Sweeney (1997), p. vii–ix and xxxii–xxxvi; his conclusions about the mss. are handily summarised in the review by D. E. Hill, *Classical Review* 50.1 (2000), p. 57–59. The main author is generally reckoned to have been born between AD 350 and 400.

the name of the sun among the Persians is Mithras.¹³³ The longest scholion (to 1. 719–20), which contains glosses to Lactantius Placidus by unknown hands, fills out Statius' words as follows: (*Mithras*, not mentioned by name) *est enim in spelaeo Persico habitu cum tiara et utrisque manibus bovis cornua comprimens*.¹³⁴ Except for Lucian, *Deor. Concil.* 9, where we find the very same word *τιάρα*, this is the sole allusion to Mithras' 'Phrygian cap' in the entire tradition. Yet there is no mention of the sword, which, as we saw, did feature in the platonising tradition ("the sword of Aries, the sign of Mars").

The commentator then introduces three further novelties. The repeated insistence on 'twisting the horns' turns out legitimate an allegory:¹³⁵ the bull-killing scene is 'really' a solar eclipse, with the Moon blocking the Sun's light, while Mithras becomes the Sun itself, with the visage of a lion and wearing a tiara, dressed in Persian attire (*ipse Sol leonis vultu cum tiara, persico habitu . . .*).¹³⁶ The lion is appropriate because, as the dominant heavenly body, it controls the others, just as lions do, or perhaps the reason is just that lions can run fast. Finally, the Moon controls and leads the Bull and is thus represented as a cow.¹³⁷ Here we are confronted with the mere rags of a living tradition,¹³⁸ with guess-work filling up the yawning gaps; yet this is the sole allusion to (apparently) the Lion-headed God in the entire literary tradition,¹³⁹ and the sole reference to the ubiquity of lions in Mithraic iconography,

133 p. 87f. ll.1968–1972 Sweeney; the reference to Ostanès is reprinted by Bidez and Cumont (1938), p. 271 Ostanès frg.8a. The name might have been taken from Minucius Felix, *Octav.* 26.11, where Hostanes is said to be *magorum . . . primus*.

134 p. 88, l.1983f. S.

135 There are a very few atypical cases where Mithras is shown standing beside the bull and twisting his horns, just as Statius describes, e.g. V. 839 (Rudchester, Hadrian's Wall) with the good photo in Merkelbach (1984), p. 332 fig. 86a; 1301 (Besigheim) = Schwertheim (1974), 198 f. no. 155. Turcan (2000), p. 161 n. 29 lists one or two others, one at least of which (V.1137Af, Rückingen) seems to show Mithras hanging onto a horn with his left hand, about to be carried off by the bull – i.e. not *inside* the cave at all. On p. 132 fig. 7 he incautiously illustrates from V.204 (fig.64) a late-Renaissance drawing of a lost fragmentary relief from Anzio, originally published as the frontispiece to della Torre (1700), p. 157, which shows Mithras holding one of the bull's horns, without reflecting on the fact that the detail may well be inspired not by what the draughtsman *saw* but what he *knew*, i.e. the passage from Statius (see explicitly p. 180: *MITRHA [sic] & TAVRVS sub antro occurrunt, cujus ille, specie iuvenis, cornua per vim torquet*, followed immediately by the reference to Statius).

136 p. 88 ll. 1994–2000 S. Sweeney takes these words to be those of Lactantius Placidus. The previous gloss understood the allegory to refer not to an eclipse but to the monthly phases of the moon: the horns stand for the crescent moon, which is "reluctant to follow" the sun. Cumont cited a passage from cod. Paris. 13046, f.13^r that repeats this explanation: (1894–99), 2: p. 48 ad fin.

137 p. 89 ll. 2009–2015 S., which again he takes to be by Lactantius Placidus himself.

138 "Les interprétations [de Lactantius Placidus] ressemblent beaucoup à du radotage": Cumont (1894–99), 1: 29.

139 Unless we also count Arnobius' *videmus . . . leonis torvissimum faciem mero oblitam minio et nomine frugifero nuncupari* (*Adv. Nat.* 6.10). Cumont included the passage among his 'textes douteux': (1894–99), 2: 58. Scarpi (2002) rightly omits it, Sanzi includes it without comment (2003, 423). On African Saturn and the lion, see e.g. Leglay (1966), 1: p. 352–354 (Tebessa no. 47).

which is one of the cult's most puzzling enigmas. Moreover, the final section about the Moon only makes any sense at all if we assume it is derived ultimately from a description of a tauroctony-relief, in which the bust (or the *biga*) of Luna is placed directly above the muzzle of the bull.

The last, and no doubt the least substantial, of these texts dates from the sixth century. In the course of a contrived parallelism between the circus factions and the four elements in *De mensibus*, Johannes Lydus presents a chorographic scheme linking cardinal directions to the elements and chief deities.¹⁴⁰ The West is appropriate to earth, so the Romans worship Hestia/Vesta above all gods. The Persians in the East worship 'rockborn Mithras' (τὸν πετρογενῆ Μίθραν), "because of the cardinal direction associated with fire" (διὰ τὸ τοῦ πυρός κέντρον),¹⁴¹ while the peoples of the North worship the watery principle and the Egyptians (in the South) worship Isis = the Moon, mistress of air. Not only is this rather creaking chorographic scheme evidence of the persistence into the sixth century of Firmicus' use of element-theory as a means of organising pagan religion, it attests to the existence of a strand of Persianism 04 we have not yet encountered, linking the rock-birth with fire.¹⁴²

Despite its relative lack of coherence, Persianism 04 is a necessary supplement to categories 02 and 03, since it reminds us of the existence in ancient literature not merely of a stereotype of 'Mithras the Persian sun' but of a variety of speculative attempts to link that idea with 'Mithraism'.¹⁴³ As I have pointed out, the texts in this category seem to be completely independent of Persianism 03 ('Mithras platonicus'), yet they likewise contain fragments of more or less plausible knowledge about the cult as known archaeologically in the western Empire. Here again, despite the intrusion of 'blind' speculation, as in the case of 'Lactantius Placidus', the model of multiple internal interpretations within a tradition seems to be the one that best accounts for the phenomena.

140 *De mens.* 4.30, p. 90.6–13 Wünsch. As he explains in his preface (p. lix), Wünsch placed the passage here on the authority of C. E. Gleye, who was the first to recognise that it was genuinely by Johannes Lydus; Cumont believed it was a Byzantine paraphrase (1894–99), 2: p. 458. Kaldellis (2003) argues that Johannes Lydus was a Neoplatonist with pagan leanings.

141 This association may be linked to the definition found in a papyrus lexicon of the late second/early third century AD, which defines Mithras as "Prometheus among the Persians": *POxy* 15.1802-1.64; one entry in [Nonnus], *Comm. in Or.* 39.18 Nimmo Smith makes 'some people' say Mithras is the patron of fire.

142 Despite being a central element of practical 'Mithraism', the rock-birth is not a prominent feature of Christian apologetic, being mentioned just three times in connection with Mithras, beginning with Justin, *Dial. c. Tryph.* 70: (λέγουσιν) ἐκ πέτρας γεγενῆσθαι (Μίθρην); then Commodian, *Instr.* 1.13: *Invictus de petra natus*; finally Jerome, *Adv. Iovin.* 1.7: *Mithram et Erichthonium vel in lapide vel in terra esse generatos*. None of these mentions Persia. There is a fourth allusion, in Firm. Mat., *De errore* 20.1, but the passage, which cites the acclamation θεὸς ἐκ πέτρας, does not mention Mithras or Persia, and it is unclear whether Firmicus Maternus knew its cultic origin. Curiously enough, the rock-birth is *never* mentioned in what survives of the Platonising tradition.

143 It seems to me doubtful whether this literary tradition is to be linked to the very common expressions in the votive inscriptions that associate Mithras with the Sun-god, e.g. *Deus Sol invictus Mithras*. Beck (2006), p. 6 terms this association a Mithraic 'axiom'.



Fig. 6 Magus or Father on the right-hand abutment of the arcossolium of the Late Mithraeum (phase III) at Dura-Europos (c. AD 240–256). Yale Art Gallery. From Rostovtzeff et al. (1939), pl. XVI.1.

PERSIANISM 05: MAGOI AT DURA-EUROPOS; MANICHAEISM AT HAWARTE?

My final category can also be thought of as a special case of Persianism 02. It covers just a couple of hints from the third phase of the Dura-Europos Mithraeum on the Euphrates, and a new theory relating to some of the more startling images found in the late-antique mithraeum at Hawarte, near ancient Apamea in northern Syria which was only discovered in 1997.

As I have mentioned, the Dura Mithraeum turned out to be useless for Cumont's strong Iranian theory, both because it was only founded c. AD 168 and because its re-foundation in c. AD 210 was carried out by the centurion commanding a force of vexillations from two legions based in northern Syria/Comma-gene, *leg. IV Scythica* (Seleukia/Zeugma) and *XVI Flavia Firma* (Samosata).¹⁴⁴ But this phase (II) and especially phase III (from c. 240 to the destruction in 256) did contain a number of interesting divergences from the 'Mithraism' known archaeologically in the Latin-speaking Empire. Perhaps the most important of these are the paintings on the *arcossolium* (the brick-built arciform projection framing the two cult-reliefs) of two bearded men in 'Perso-Palmyrene' dress, wearing high tiaras, and seated on high-backed thrones. The best-preserved (on the right) holds a tall staff in his r. hand and a scroll in his left, marking him out as an educated man of high status (Fig. 6).¹⁴⁵ The images carry no inscriptions; the *Preliminary Report* suggested that they are intended to represent Magi, possibly even the arch-magus Zoroaster and (H)ostanes, and this was emphatically endorsed by Cumont in his contribution to the never-published Final Report.

The latter possibility is strengthened both by the occurrence, uniquely at Dura, of persons termed μάγοι, possibly officials or an honorific title, about whom nothing can really be said until the graffiti are finally published *in toto*; and by an ex-

144 Rostovtzeff et al. (1939), p. 83–89 nos. 845–847, cf. Cumont (1975), p. 160–162; Dirven (1999), 260–272. A Mithraic relief has now been found at Zeugma (M. Blömer).

145 Rostovtzeff (1938), p. 97, "the figures of the two prophets of Mithraism – probably Zoroaster and Osthanes"; Rostovtzeff et al. (1939), p. 110, cf. Cumont (1975), p. 182–184 "the earliest known portrait of Zoroaster".

Fig. 7 Lion-headed God (V.383), holding a blazing torch in each hand and blowing onto a flaming altar, from which a snake coils upwards. Collezione Colonna, Rome. Photo: Museum.



tremely suggestive graffito scratched on a piece of fallen plaster, of which in my view the best reading is: $\pi\upsilon\rho\omega<\tau>\delta\acute{\nu}\ \acute{\alpha}\sigma\theta\mu\alpha / \tau\acute{o}\ \kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\ \mu\acute{\alpha}\gamma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \acute{\eta}\ \nu\acute{\iota}\pi\tau\rho\omicron\nu\ \acute{\omicron}\sigma\{\sigma\}\acute{\omega}\langle\nu\rangle$.¹⁴⁶ Assuming this to be an acclamation drawing upon claims made in the cult at Dura, it can be translated ‘fiery breath, which is indeed for Magi too a purification of holy (ones)!’¹⁴⁷ The obvious, albeit indirect, link here is with the line at Sta Prisca, quoted above, that refers to the ‘consumption’ i. e. purification of the speakers by the Lions (perhaps representing fire).¹⁴⁸ The idiom at Dura is however different, inasmuch as it apparently invokes the Magi as a source of claimed authority in

146 Rostovtzeff (1939), p. 126f. no. 865, reading $\acute{\eta}$ without a translation to explain what the editors thought it might mean. Cumont reproduced this reading (which was presumably his own) in Bidez and Cumont (1938), 2: p. 155 frg. Zoroastre O9e (again with the incorrect accentuation $\acute{\alpha}\sigma\theta\mu\alpha$), associating it with Gnostic baptism by fire. In the English tr. by David Francis of the chapter prepared for the Final Report, which has a very large number of editorial additions (e. g. a reference to Vermaseren & Van Essen 1965 in n.301 just here), we find the reading $\pi\upsilon\rho\omega\pi\acute{\omicron}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\sigma\theta\mu\alpha / \tau\acute{o}\ [for\ \acute{\omicron}]\ \kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\ \mu\acute{\alpha}\gamma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \acute{\eta}\ \nu\acute{\iota}\pi\tau\rho\omicron\nu\ \acute{\omicron}\sigma\{\sigma\}\acute{\omega}\langle\nu\rangle$ (sic), with a reference to Edsman (1949), p. 221, i. e. two years after Cumont’s death (Cumont 1975, p. 204f.). I think this must be Francis’ own re-reading of the text, adopting Edsman’s $\acute{\eta}$ (3rd person sing. of the present subj. of $\epsilon\iota\mu\acute{\iota}$) for Cumont’s $\acute{\eta}$. Edsman’s reading was picked up by Vermaseren in vol. 2 of the Corpus: Vermaseren (1956–60), 2: p. 14 no.68.

147 In other words, I take $\acute{\eta}$ as an asseverative particle, typical of acclamations, the copula being understood. I do not understand either of the older readings, $\acute{\eta}$ or $\acute{\eta}$: why introduce an alternative here, or a wish?

148 Cf. Bidez and Cumont (1938), 2: p. 155 Zoroastre frg. O9e, cited Porphyry, *De antro* 15, which reports the use of honey instead of water as a means of purifying Leones: they are initiates of fire, and fire is inimical to water, so honey represents for these initiates the $\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\ \nu\acute{\iota}\pi\tau\rho\alpha$, the appropriate purification. Cumont, however, omitted the reference to honey entirely, thus giving the impression that Numenius and Kronios claimed that fire was used to initiate the Leones. Scene 16 at Hawarte (see n. 74 above) may, however, be relevant here, since it shows Helios/Sol being initiated by Mithras with a burning torch, not a bull’s haunch as usual in the west. This in turn recalls the scene RII at S. Maria Capua Vetere, in which a burning torch is being held close to the initiate’s face: Vermaseren (1971), p. 28; see Claus (2012), Farbtafel 11. Indeed, the *symbolon* $\pi\upsilon\rho\omega\pi\acute{\omicron}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\sigma\theta\mu\alpha$ might even be an address to such a torch used in initiation, or an acclamation intended to mark its use in such a ritual.



Fig. 8 Scene 6 in the Mithraeum of Hawarte, Syria (late IV^p). Demonic heads arranged along a city-gate. Gawlikowski (2007), p.355 ('The City of Darkness'). Photo: M. Gawlikowski.

the cult, something, as I have said, which is never found in the west.¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, the mention of 'fiery breath' at once recalls two famous images of the Lion-headed God, one of which, found in Rome at the beginning of the modern Via Venezia in the late XVIth century, represents him blowing onto a flaming altar (Fig. 7), while other, from a late fourth century group from Sidon, has a hole at the back of the head so that a lamp can be placed in

such a manner that the flame could be seen through the open mouth.¹⁵⁰

The Magi may be unique to Dura, but that clearly does not exclude the existence of links between ideas and practices found there and those known in the west. A further example is the hunt-scene, two versions of which are known from Dura phase III, one showing Mithras hunting from horseback accompanied by a large lion and a snake, the other apparently lacking the snake.¹⁵¹ Rostovtzeff observed of these scenes: "There is ... not the slightest doubt that the painter of the two hunting scenes had before his eyes paintings which dealt with the same subject, made by Iranian painters or painters trained in the Iranian and specifically in the Parthian school".¹⁵² Typologically however, as I have pointed out, they are similar to the small relief from Neuenheim. A rather fragmentary version of the hunt-scene, this time including at least two mounted hunters, and a leopard among the quarry, was also found in the newly discovered late-antique cave-mithraeum at Hawarte, to which I now turn.¹⁵³

149 However, in view of the existence of persons in the Dura Mithraeum with the title *μάγοι*, we cannot exclude the possibility that it is they who are purified by the fiery breath (just like some others of the group).

150 Resp. V.383 (Rome) and 78 (Sidon). The latter is illustrated in Cumont (1913), p. 177 figs. 26–27; Merkelbach (1984), p. 280 fig. 20; Claus (2012), p. 153 fig. 119 (front), p. 154 fig. 120 (rear).

151 Rostovtzeff et al. (1939), p. 112–115; Cumont (1975), p. 186–192.

152 Rostovtzeff et al. (1939), p. 113.

153 Gawlikowski (2007), p. 358 Scene 18, with figs. 17 and 17a on p. 359. The scene occupies the SW angle of the mithraeum *cella* ('Room A'), the riders being shown on the south wall, the animals on the west. So far as I know, the only published image of the riders is the indistinct photograph on p. 349 fig. 8, of which I at any rate can make out nothing.



Fig. 9 Scene 2 in the Vestibule of the Hawarte Mithraeum (late IV^p). The dismantled 'guardian' to the r. of the entrance to the *cella*. Gawlikowski (2007), p.353 ('the twin riders'). Photo: M. Gawlikowski.

The wall-paintings in this mithraeum, which are of high quality and indicate a patron of high status, are mainly variants upon themes known in the west.¹⁵⁴ Among several scenes that are unparalleled in the western material, however, three (or four) are of special interest here.¹⁵⁵ One of these is painted in a corner of the *cella* (Room A), on the north wall immediately to the left of an apsidal niche 1.4 m wide, which is approached by a couple of steps.¹⁵⁶ It shows eight ghastly heads, seven of them arranged along a city-gate, and one fallen to the ground (Fig. 8). A brown line extends at an angle of 60° from each head.¹⁵⁷ The others are located in an ante-chamber outside the *cella* proper, named by the excavators the Vestibule (Room B): two, with the same motif, are situated on either side of the entrance to the *cella* (Fig. 9): a male figure, richly-dressed in 'oriental fashion' and holding a staff stands frontally, in front of his stallion, holding a small squatting black figure, apparently with two heads, and quite naked, on a long chain.¹⁵⁸ The third scene is on the north wall of the Vestibule (i. e. at right-angles to the horsemen and to their left) and poorly pre-

154 Gawlikowski (2007) is currently the fullest account, until the publication of the promised final report. Note esp. the list of 19 scenes provided on p. 352, some better preserved than others.

155 There are seven other unique scenes, or scenes with unusual details, on the walls of the *cella* (Room A). Employing Gawlikowski's numbering, they are nos. 5, 7, 8, 10, 15, 16, 17. There are plenty of unusual or unique scenes in the western evidence too, as one would expect on my model of free interpretation and development by individual 'mystagogues'.

156 *ibid.* p. 348 with fig. 7 and p. 339 fig. 1. The scene is thus situated between the NE angle of the room and the niche. This niche, which was empty when excavated, was however apparently *not* the location of the tauroctony-scene, which was painted on the east wall, opposite the entrance.

157 *ibid.* p. 355, Scene 6.

158 *ibid.* p. 353 no. 2 with Colour fig. 9 on p. 243. The upper part of both frescoes is missing; the one on the left of the doorway is by far the better preserved.

served. It shows part of at least one male lion attacking a small black man dressed only in a red loin-cloth; another man, in a different kind of skirt, stands behind.¹⁵⁹

The excavators rightly emphasised the unexpectedness of these images. They interpreted the brown lines sticking out of the row of heads in scene 6 as shafts of light, the intention being to represent the ‘City of Darkness’ captured by Light, a theme, though unparalleled elsewhere, “strikingly Zoroastrian in spirit”.¹⁶⁰ The ‘twin riders’ on either side of the doorway to the *cella* were tentatively understood as Mithras reduplicated, fending off evil, while the lions were seen as the forces of good destroying evil, represented by the little black men.¹⁶¹ Lucinda Dirven has recently suggested that at least two of these scenes, the row of ghastly heads and the lion(s), are rather to be understood as representations of Manichaean themes.¹⁶² She reads the sequence of scenes inside the *cella* (Room A) as beginning with the ‘City of Darkness’ to the left of the niche on the north wall, rather than with Zeus punishing the giants located immediately to the right of the niche, and as representing an incident in the/a Manichaean account of the (extended) process of creation, the moment at which the *Spiritus Vivens* retrieves the light imprisoned in the demons by causing them to emit the Light they had swallowed. The brown lines are thus to be interpreted not as light-shafts hurled from above but as rays *emitted* by the demons. The scene with the lions would represent the moment before the creation of Adam and Eve when the two Arch-demons in the form of lions devour lower demons.

Now it is not at all clear whether the versions of Mani’s teachings circulating in late fourth-century Syria bore much relation to these cosmological accounts, which derive from (much) later sources found in central Asia. Dirven urges that the imagery of these two scenes nonetheless imply that some Manichaean ideas were assimilated into a Mithraic context at Hawarte, precisely because both were understood in Syria to be Persian religions. This does not seem to me in principle impossible: although the Manichaean texts found at Kellis in the Dakhleh oasis, for example, have re-affirmed the essentially the Christian-gnostic character of the religion – after all, Mani’s σωτήρ is Jesus, ‘son of God’ – there certainly was some Iranian influence.¹⁶³ I am not competent to judge whether in late fourth-century Roman Syria Manichaeism would have been received as a ‘Persian’ religion.¹⁶⁴ If,

159 The excavators see (parts of) two lions facing one another, each mangling a small black man, with another little black man behind; only the tail of the l.h. lion is preserved. Little of the description can actually be verified from the colour photo 10 (p. 343), so one has to take it on trust.

160 Gawlikowski (2007), p. 355.

161 *ibid.* p. 353 (Scene 2), 354 (Scene 3).

162 Dirven (forthcoming). I thank Dr. Dirven for sending me a copy of her presentation at Naples. She plans a co-authored publication with Albert de Jong in *Numen*.

163 E. g. Gardner et al. (2007) on *P. Kell. Gr.* 97–98 and *P. Kell. Copt.* 53, 54, 55 and 56. Iranian influence, e. g. Sundermann (1979). In the Iranian Manichaeism that developed after Mani’s death, Miθra was identified in Sogdian and Parthian with the *Tertius Legatus*, but in Middle Persian with the *Spiritus Vivens*: Gershevitch (1959), p. 40 f.

164 By the late fourth century, the days of official Iranian support by Šapur I and Hormizd I were long since passed; the usual (late) Zoroastrian view was that Manichaeans were “evil-teaching and empty-skulled”: *Sikand Gūmānik Vigār* 10.59 tr. West (1885), p. 170.

for the sake of argument, we grant the possibility, the question is what we want ‘assimilating cosmological lore’ to involve. What kind of a Manichaean package are we to envisage, given the extreme complexity of the Manichaean account of creation? In my view, if we are to entertain some sort of Manichaean scenario, we should emphasise a rather different point that Dirven also makes, namely that Mani and his followers are known to have used illustrated chap-books to convey the teachings.¹⁶⁵ It seems to me much easier to envisage selective appropriation into a Mithraic context mainly on the basis of images encountered than on the basis of a highly involved narrative account. The image offers little resistance to re-readings.

All this must remain speculative. Selective appropriation of one or two Manichaean images could easily be accommodated into my model of Mithraic ‘mystagogues’ ever on the look-out for new materials they could assimilate into their Mithraic constructions. On the other hand, especially given that Dirven has no suggestion to make about the two dismounted riders, we should not ignore other, non-Manichaean sources that may have inspired these three scenes. Although I see no justification for Gawlikowski’s choice of the name ‘City of Darkness’ for scene 6, his inference that the theme is the destruction of evil demons seems to me correct; I have elsewhere suggested that this might have been inspired by reports of the Miθra-Yašt reaching Syria through Nisibis – the destruction of contract-breakers and demons by Miθra is a major theme of this hymn.¹⁶⁶ If so, the patron/designer of the image at Hawarte has assimilated the motif to his own context, for the city gate is clearly taken over from a very common fourth-century reverse coin-type, the ‘camp-gate with door’.¹⁶⁷ More remotely, Zoroastrian lore knew of a ‘fortress of the angels’ against which the demons vainly fought when Ahriman tried to conquer heaven.¹⁶⁸ The fact that the scenes in the Vestibule lack even the context provided by the Mithraic programme of the *cella* means that the chances of finding appropriate contexts for interpretation are minimal; at any rate, I see no clear evidence of Persianist claims being involved here, unless we are to recognise in the pair of guardians Miθra’s brothers, Rašnu and Sraoša, or two of the other companion-entities associated with him.¹⁶⁹

165 Tubach (2000), p. 626.

166 See e.g. § 43, 99, 129, 130, 134; spears with long shafts: § 102, 130; knocking off heads: § 37; cf. Gershevitch (1959), p. 26f. This is *not* an eschatological motif. Gawlikowski thinks the demons have been/are being killed by shafts of light; in my view, the lines at 60° represent Mithras’s missiles, just as in the representations of dead animals in hunting mosaics. If they represent light, one does not understand why they are all the same length and do not continue up out of the frame; on Dirven’s hypothesis, I cannot see how one can account for the fact that they are not vertical.

167 E.g. *RIC* VII Siscia 214 (Constantine I, AD 328–29). The motif continues to appear throughout the century.

168 *Bundahišn* 3.26 (= West [1880, p. 19]).

169 See e.g. Gershevitch (1959), p. 58–61. The two door-guardians standing in front of their horses reproduce a common stereotype for the Dioscuri, itself adapted to funerary iconography in the *Pferdevorführung*-motif, and here again evidently in a different sense; the crouching black figure on a chain is a version of a motif known in Asia Minor since the second century AD,

CONCLUSION

Persianism is not so much an agent's (or emic) category as a heuristic device to enable historians to build different forms of reception and appropriation into their models of cultural exchange operating concurrently or successively. It is of course a limited concept, insofar as it views matters entirely from a Graeco-Roman viewpoint.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless I have found it an extremely useful device in helping to sort out the complexity of Graeco-Roman receptions of the god Miθra/Mithras over an extended period. Whereas it is often supposed that we have to choose between the terms of a binary option: Iranian or Roman, the concept of Persianism allows us to re-instate agents' beliefs about the possible implications of their cult, to trace their efforts to validate or explore the notion that Mithras was a Persian deity, to examine how these internal claims in turn impinged upon intellectuals, primarily Neoplatonists, with no personal involvement in the cult, and how their views in turned affected (or failed to affect) later writers and the encyclopaedic or commentator tradition. From the point of view of the interpretation of 'Mithraism' as a religious phenomenon, Persianism has the welcome effect of reminding us that ancient literary evidence cannot be used as 'sources' without regard to the interests being played out or to the origins of the initial information. Combined with the individualising, bricolagiste, approach to religious behaviour in antiquity followed by the Erfurt project 'Lived Ancient Religion', as a contrast-programme to the overwhelming dominance of collectivism in the study of ancient religion,¹⁷¹ Persianism has thus an important rôle to play in creating a more realistic appreciation of the dynamics of the cult of Mithras, by focusing attention upon the individuals responsible for mediating the tradition and, as often as not, designing and furnishing the temples. To the degree that such 'mystagogues' were interested in exploiting the Persian origin of Mithras, they thought of themselves as affirming a fact given by the iconography, or, more vaguely, the tradition they inherited. In order for Euboulus and Pallas to have written their multi-volume works on Mithras, there must have been an enormous quantity of Persianist material in circulation, at least potentially available for individual exploitation and evocation both within the cult and outside it. If there was a powerful tradition favouring stability – expressed in the phrase *deus vetusta*

while the Janus-face again implies a specific local narrative reference we do not (yet) understand: Gordon (2001), p. 109–116. Despite the off-hand rejection of the idea by Gawlikowski and Dirven, I still see little difficulty in linking the scene of the lion(s) with the grade Leo.

170 "Religious flows in the Ancient World", a sub-project of the Heidelberg Cluster of Excellence *Asia and Europe in a Global Context*, tries to avoid this by building retrojection and re-assimilation into its model, cf. Witschel (forthcoming).

171 *Lived ancient religion. Questioning 'cults' and 'polis religion'*, directed by Prof. Jörg Rüpke and funded by the European Union Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2013) under grant agreement n° 295555 (ERC-Advanced Grant) (until 2017). For a summary description, see the home-page www.uni-erfurt.de/max-weber-kolleg/projekte/koooperative-projekte/lived-ancient-religion/ and the introductory remarks to the new journal *Religion in the Roman Empire* by Raja and Rüpke (2015).

religione ...formatus in the Mitreo Aldobrandini at Ostia¹⁷² – there were also pressures, including Persianism, towards diversity, of ritual practice – no cult-niche in an excavated mithraeum closely resembles any other – of organisation and of interpretation. What ‘Mithraism’ looks like will always be a matter of the model one starts with.

172 AE 1924: 119 = CIL XIV 4314 = V.233: *Deum vetusta religione in velo formatum et umore obnubilatum marmoreum ...fecit* (late II^p).

THE EMPIRE BROUGHT BACK: PERSIANISM IN IMPERIAL GREEK LITERATURE

Eran Almagor

The great interest in Persia during the Imperial period (1st–3rd centuries CE) among Greek authors, orators and men of letters is undeniable.¹ For the first time in the long history of the Greek world, the great divide between East and West was now, in the Roman period, once again ostensibly definitely marked. With the loss of political freedom and the disappearance of the great Hellenistic monarchies, the Persian Wars were seen as something of the remote past, without obvious relevance for other epochs and other events.² Given the immense literary output of this period as compared to preceding times, and the fact that the survival rate of literature from this period is higher than from previous generations, one may say with justification that the notion we have today of the Greek perception of Persia is influenced to a significant extent by the images from this period, with its manifestations of ‘Persianism’. In addition, the picture of Persia is influenced by the way earlier texts were received in Imperial times. For instance, it is no coincidence that the only fully extant Greek accounts of Alexander’s campaign come from this period alone, whereas none of the earlier accounts has survived.³

How can we explain the sudden interest in Achaemenid Persia in this period? How can we relate the Greek interest in the Greek-Persian Wars to the contemporaneous context of 2nd century CE Roman Empire? In the first section of this paper I will try to find reasons for the upsurge in attention Greeks give to Persia. In the second I will discuss several ways in which this interest in Persia was apparent in the topics raised in the rhetorical schools, and examine their significance. The third section, while showing the extent of the examination of Achaemenid Imperial reality as based on the lost works on Persia (the *Persika* of the 4th Century BCE), will reveal how allusions to the Achaemenids operated in a more subtle way as implicit references to Rome. This will be shown through an example from the biographies of Plutarch, probably the most sophisticated and influential author in this group of Greek authors.

- 1 Cf. Bowie (1970: 7, 14, 27), Anderson (1993: 56, 179), Swain (1996: 95–96), Whitmarsh (2011: 50, 51–58). I would like to thank Rolf Strootman and Miguel John Versluys for the invitation and for organising the wonderful conference.
- 2 The attitude to the Persian Wars in the pre-Roman era may have been coloured by Alexander’s campaign, local traditions (in the eastern and western Greek speaking world), the impact of the Celtic attack on Thermopylai and Delphi (279 BCE) and images propagated by the Ptolemaic and Seleukid dynasties. See Priestly (2014: 149–186) and Kosmin (2014a: 287 n. 159). All these attitudes seem to have disappeared with the coming of the Romans.
- 3 Diodorus 17, Plutarch’s *Alexander*; Q. Curtius Rufus, *Historiae Alexandri Magni*; Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandrou*. Cf. Just., 11–12. See Hammond (1983; 1993).

RESURRECTION OF A DEAD EMPIRE

The eastern power that existed and was contemporary with the Greek writers during most of the period considered here – roughly 50 BCE to 250 CE – was that of the Arsakid Parthians, while the Achaemenid Persians belonged to the distant past.⁴ The Greek concern with Persia paralleled the current Roman fascination with the clash of East and West as a continuation of the Persian Wars, and which was sometimes channelled through the memory of the old conflict.⁵ This Greek manifestation of ‘Persianism’ sprang, however, from completely different reasons. First and foremost, the attitude prevalent among Greek writers and men of letters towards the previous period was nostalgic. Almost all Imperial Greek authors who wrote about this era saw it as an epoch in which Hellenic identity was formed in response to the old threat of barbarian Persia.⁶ This Imperial Greek attitude accelerated a Pan-Hellenic sentiment already present in the Classical period.⁷ The trend was expressed particularly in the so-called anti-“medizing” policy of certain Greeks during the Persian Wars, presented most succinctly by Herodotus (8.144) with the response of the Athenians to the Spartan delegates that they would not collaborate with the Persians because the Greeks have certain features in common (including the same blood, language, temples, and rites).⁸ While the approach of Greek authors of the Classical period was in fact more nuanced and complicated,⁹ Imperial authors appear to have consciously presented an artificially simplistic world view, which allegedly went back to previous times. Thus, the Imperial authors criticised the “medism” of old,¹⁰ terming the phenomenon “persism” (περσιζέειν).¹¹

Our group of writers even employed the notion *barbaros* in a denigrating sense.¹² Plutarch coined a derogatory epithet, Φιλοβάρβαρος, and used it in two passages – once to denounce Herodotus (for acquitting the Egyptian Busiris from the guilt of trying to sacrifice Herakles: *De malig. Herod.* 857a), and once to crit-

4 On the Arsakids see Debevoise (1938), Colledge (1967), Bivar (1983), Wolski (1993).

5 Cf. Spawforth (1994).

6 See Bowie (1970: 7). Cf. Dio Chrys. 4.30; Polyæn. 8.53.1. On the importance of barbarians in the Second Sophistic period see e.g. Anderson (1993: 101–133); Swain (1996: 68, 78, 87–89); Saïd (2001: 286–295); Schmidt (2011).

7 Cf. Paus. 2.29.8; 2.30.4. Cf. Whitmarsh (2001: 23). Its climax was the institute of the Panhellenion erected by Hadrian (131–132 CE). See Dio Cass. 69.12.2. See the evidence in Spawforth and Walker (1985) (1986) and Romeo (2002). As in the classical period, and more significantly in the Hellenistic era, the question of whether Greekness (and hence membership of the Panhellenion) was a matter of *paideia* or *genos* (descent) was relevant and real. See Ferrary (2011) and next note.

8 On the ‘Medism’ of old see Graf (1984). On this passage from Herodotus see Romeo (2002: 31–37).

9 Cf. Plato, *Pol.* 262d. Cf. Saïd (2002: 62, 87–100) on the Greek–barbarian opposition contested or reversed in Euripides.

10 E.g., Plut. *Arist.* 18.6–7, *Them.* 7.2, 21.7, *Ages.* 23.2, *Art.* 22.4, *De Herod. Malig.* 863f., 864a, 865c, 867bc, 868be; Dio Chrys. 4.55; Ael. *Arist. Or.* 46.181; Polyæn. 1.33, 8.51; Paus. 3.4.2; Ael. *VH* 9.41; Cf. Philost. *VS* 580.

11 See Arr. *Anab.* 7.6.3; Ael. *VH* 1.21. Cf. Philost. *VS* 522. See Hood (1967: 10, 16, 18, 26).

12 Cf. Almagor (2005: 45).

icize fate which disfavoured Alexander in his clash with the Achaemenid Persians (*De Alex. magn. fort.* 344b). This employment of a simple, mutually exclusive distinction between Hellenes and barbarians¹³ in an age when the ethnological scheme was in fact much more complex, points at an attempt to revert to the glorious era gone by, in which the divisions were allegedly clearer.¹⁴

Persia was made relevant to Imperial-period Greeks in another respect as well, which pertained to their position in the Roman imperial framework. The great debate of mid-fourth century BCE Athens, between a pro-Macedonian, anti-Persian, policy (advanced by Aischines) and an anti-Macedonian, even pro-Persian policy at times (advanced by Demosthenes), also resurfaced in Imperial times.¹⁵ As Philostratos described the situation (*VS* 507):

The whole government at Athens was divided into two parties, of which one was friendly to the Persian king, the other to the Macedonians. Now among those who favoured the Persian king, Demosthenes of the deme Paeania was the recognized leader, while Aischines of the deme Kothokidai led those who looked to Philip ... (trans. W. C. Wright, slightly changed).

ἡ Ἀθήνησι δημαγωγία διειστῆρει πᾶσα, καὶ οἱ μὲν βασιλεῖ ἐπιτήδειοι ἦσαν, οἱ δὲ Μακεδόσιν, ἐφέροντο δὲ ἄρα τὴν πρώτην τῶν μὲν βασιλεῖ χαριζομένων ὁ Παιανιεύς Δημοσθένης, τῶν δὲ ἐς Φίλιππον ὀρώντων ὁ Κοθωκίδης Αἰσχίνης ...¹⁶

Demosthenes, who was ostensibly pro-Persian, had an enormous impact on many sophists and a great number of declamations were inspired by him.¹⁷ Philagros of Kilikia is said to have assumed the figure of Aristogeiton denouncing Demosthenes for collaborating with Persia (and Aischines for colluding with Philip) (*VS* 580); Marcus Aurelius suggested a Demosthenes-related theme for declamation to Adrian the Phoenician (*VS* 589), and likewise Caracalla to Heliodoros (*VS* 626); Dio Chrysostom carried with him into exile both Plato's *Phaidon* and Demosthenes' *On the False Embassy* (*VS* 488); Philostratos himself uses examples from the life of Demosthenes when discussing Herodes (*VS* 565) and Aelius Aristides (*VS* 584). Demosthenes mostly influenced Polemo. Many of the declamations of the latter, as described by Philostratos (*VS* 538, 542–543; cf. τὸ Δημοσθενικὸν), were related to Demosthenes; the sophist also erected a statue of Demosthenes in the Asklepieion of Pergamon.¹⁸ Yet, Aischines' popularity was no less pro-

13 As in *Them.* 15.4; *Per.* 15.1, 17.1; *Alc.* 26.8; *Cim.* 18.6, 19.3; *Pelop.* 17.11; *Arist.* 19.4, *Lys.* 6.7; *Pyr.* 14.6; *Eum.* 16.6; *Ages.* 15.2; *Alex.* 74.2; *Phoc.* 17.7; *Demet.* 8.2; *Art.* 16.2; *Quaest. Conv.* 649e. Cf. Schmidt, (1999: 133–137, 236–237).

14 Even in Plutarch's *Roman Lives*, there is ostensibly a division into Greeks and barbarians, ignoring a more complex scheme that includes the Romans. Cf. Almagor (forthcoming).

15 Among studies of this dispute see Rowe (1966), Harris (1995), Buckler (2000), Worman (2004). On Demosthenes as pro-Persian see Aisch. 3.156, 173, 209, 239, 250, 259 (cf. 164). See Cawkwell (1969: 176–178).

16 Philostratos mentions the rivalry between Aischines and Demosthenes at the beginning of the work (*VS* 483), by saying that both branded each other with the title of 'sophist', referring to *Against Timarchus* 170 and *On the Crown* 276, respectively.

17 See Swain (1996: 96) for the relatively high percentage of declamations with themes related to Demosthenes. Cf. Whitmarsh (2005: 67).

18 See Habicht (1969: 75); *OGIS* 399 (no. 210). Whitmarsh (2005: 67) claims that 'Polemo's identification with his famous forebear' is remarkable, and Philostratos ironically points at this

nounced, and his durable influence on Imperial orators and writers was considerable.¹⁹ While Demosthenes became a symbol of ancient Greek freedom rising against foreign rule, Aischines actually was more relevant to the Greek situation under the Empire. In agreement with contemporary trends, Aischines' celebrated oration *Against Ktesiphon* (or the *confirmatio* section of that speech) was now used as some sort of model in the formation of similar justifications advocating acquiescence to the ruling foreign power – not the Macedonians this time, but rather the Romans (cf. Agrippa's speech in Josephus' set piece, *BJ* 2.345–401). The influence of Aischines was so great that Lucian sarcastically called at one point (*Rhet. Pr.* 10) not to emulate “the son of a school master (*sc.* Aischines) [...] in times of peace, when no Philip is making raids and no Alexander is giving orders”. Judging by Aischines' popularity and his significance, it is no surprise that Philostratos would make Aischines the forerunner of a phenomenon widespread under Roman rule (the Second Sophistic, see below).

To these attitudes was related the impact of the current “Cold War”, or the political and sometimes military clash with the Arsakid kingdom. This empire was presented in Roman propaganda as a reincarnation of the Achaemenid monarchy, and was occasionally described through motifs and themes used to depict the former empire, namely, a decadent oriental court, characterized by intrigues, lack of freedom and cruel savagery.²⁰ For the Romans, the opposition, and later war with the Parthians was presented as a renewal of the conflict between East and West, in particular the expedition of Alexander the Great.²¹ This was expressed, for instance, by the appellation “Persae” to the contemporary eastern kingdom, even though Persis (Pārsa/Fārs) was not a core region of the Parthian Empire.²² Aiding this association of the Achaemenids and the Parthians was the Arsakids' probable view of

emulation in the sophist's own life: Polemo was accused by the people of Smyrna of having taken from the Emperor a great sum of money intended for the city and of having spent it on his own pleasures. Polemo, however, wrote an account of the money and was exempt from the charges – in conformity with the declamation, in which Demosthenes declares that he did not take the bribe of fifty talents against Demades' charges.

- 19 Alongside Demosthenes, Aischines supplied many topics for declamation (Kohl, 1915: nos. 203–328; Russell, 1983: 11, 12, 35, 44, 118, 120).
- 20 For instance, the title ‘King of Kings’ (βασιλεὺς βασιλέων) used of the Great King and of the Parthian king: compare Darius' letter to Gadates (*ML* 12 with Briant, 2002a: 491), echoing Achaemenid practice (cf. *DNa* 1.1–3) and Plut. *Pomp.* 38.2. See the comparison between the nomadic practices of the Achaemenid and Parthian kings: Strabo, 15.1.16, Athen. 12.513f. Clothes: ἀναξυρίδες or ἀναξυρίς, *Hdt.* 5.49 and Luc. *Quom. hist., scrib.* 19. Cf. an inscription from the Parthenon at Athens in honour of the Emperor Nero (dated to 61/2 CE), *IG* ii 3277 = Sherk (1988), no. 78. Cf. Spawforth (1994: 237).
- 21 See Seager (1980), Rosivach (1984: 2–3), Spawforth, (1994, especially 237–243) and Hardie (1997) on Augustan appropriation of fifth century images of the Persian Wars. Cf. Isaac (2004: 375–380); Jung (2006). Cf. n. 69 below.
- 22 For this identification see Cic. *Pro domo sua* 60; Verg. *Georg.* 4.290; Propert. 2.13.1–2, 3.3.11.21; Horace, *Od.* 1.2.22, 51; 1.21.14; 2.2.17; 3.3.44; 3.5.4; 4.14.42; Ov. *AA.* 1.225; Sen. *Apoc.* 12. For the original meaning and later uses of “Persians” in the Ancient World see the Introduction to this volume.

themselves as the successors of the Persians (cf. Tac., *Ann.* 6.31).²³ The interest of second century CE Greek authors in Parthia was therefore intensified in the wake of Roman concern with the eastern kingdom, climaxing in the campaigns of the Emperor Trajan (114–117 CE) against Osroes I,²⁴ and of the co-Emperor Verus (161–166 CE), a generation later, against King Vologesos (Vologaeses) IV.²⁵

Among the works inspired by these political developments were Arrian's *Parthika* (*FGrH* 156 F 30–50), treatises by anonymous writers (*FGrH* 203–206),²⁶ by Antiochianos (*FGrH* 207), Crepereius Calpurnianus (*FGrH* 208),²⁷ Demetrios of Sagalassos (*FGrH* 209) and Kallimorphos (*FGrH* 210).²⁸ One result of this tendency was to conflate allusions to the distant past with the present Roman-Parthian rivalry.²⁹ This is evidenced, for instance, by the fascination with Alexander's campaign or references to Xenophon's march. For example, Lucian, dealing with historians of the Parthian wars, also cited *Anabasis* 1.1.1 (*Quom. hist. scrib.* 23). Some of the historians Lucian mentioned called the Parthians "Persians" and used Herodotean allusions (18: ἔδεε γὰρ Πέρσημι γενέσθαι κακῶς, "for the Persians had to fare badly").³⁰

In this way, description of the Persian Wars really referred to the inevitable collision of Rome and Parthia. Mention should be made here of a corollary to this approach which was the notion that Rome would be vanquished by the eastern empire, in a certain reverse outcome of the Persian Wars. Admittedly, this was not, and could not have been, a mainstream view but rather one entertained by several Greek authors (whom the Romans despised as *Levissimi*, 'light-headed': Livy 9.18.6). These individuals, presumably like Timagenes (*via* Pompeius Trogus), predicted a Parthian victory (cf. Justin, 41.1.7).³¹ In this scheme, Persia was thus deemed just another entity in a sequence of world empires (four or five items from the Assyrians onwards),³² and its end was to parallel the coming fall of Rome.³³ In the scheme of

23 Arsakids as successors of Achaemenids: cf. Shayegan (2011: xiii, ch. 3). Cf. Lerouge-Cohen (2007).

24 On this war cf. Statius *Silvae* 5.1; Dio Cass. 68.17.1–3, 19–23, 26–30; Arrian, *Parthika* F 37–48. See Longden (1931), Debevoise (1938: 213–139), Lepper (1948).

25 On this war cf. Dio Cass. 71.2. See Luc. *Quom. hist. scrib.* 20–21, 30; *SHA Av. Cass.* 6.5; *Marc.* 9.1; *Ver.* 7.1–2. See Mitford (1980: 1203), Birley (2000: 160–165).

26 See Strobel (1994) and Georgiadou and Larmour (1994: 1448–1478).

27 See Baldwin (1978) and Von Möllendorf (2001).

28 This is of course true if these historians and their works were real; cf. Anderson (1994: 1433–1434), who claims they were not. Cf. Homeyer (1965: 20–23); Macleod (1991: 284–286). See also Anderson (1976: 79–80); Hall (1981: 314–321) and Anderson (1994: 1433–1434), Jones (1986: 161–165), MacLeod (1994: 1362–1379).

29 See Almagor (2011), (forthcoming).

30 Cf. Hdt. 1.8.2: χοῆν γὰρ Κανδαύλη γενέσθαι κακῶς, 'it was destined that evil should happen to Candaules'. Cf. 2.161 [Psammis]; 4.79 [Skyles]; 9.109 [Artaunte].

31 Cf. a similar sentiment in Jos. *BJ* 2.388. That Timagenes was indeed insinuated by Livy is doubted by Laqueur (1936: 1070).

32 See e.g., Polyb. 38.22.1–3; Vell. Pat. 1.6.6 [Aemilius Sura]; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.2.1–4; cf. Tac. *Hist.* 5.8; Appian, Praef. 9; See Mendels (1981b). See Almagor (2011: 5).

33 See Swain (1940: 12–22). Cf. Lact. *Div. Inst.* 7.15.11. Cf. Philostratos, *VS* 560–1. See Jos. *AJ* 10.213 on Daniel 2:34–35 (fourth kingdom). Josephus is silent in his interpretation of Daniel's

Alexander Polyhistor of Miletos (1st century BCE), the Parthians were to be one of the empires in this sequence (cf. *FGrH* 273 F 81a and 81b). Other writers may have alluded to this idea, but only through what is termed as ‘figured speech’, namely, the literary means of irony and innuendo, in order to obscure the real intent.³⁴

ACTING AND RE-ENACTING THE PERSIAN

The most significant Greek cultural phenomenon current at the time was centred on performances of oratorical declamations for educated elites, and reached its peak at the middle of the second century CE. The phenomenon was termed by the Greek author Philostratos, writing with hindsight in the mid third century CE (*VS* 511–512), as the ‘Second’ Sophistic, as opposed to the ‘First’ Sophistic of the Classical period. It was characterized by the practice of an ‘epideictic’ oratory, that is, oratory delivered for the occasion and one that was meant to entertain, i. e., not one intended to convince or sway opinion in legal or political situations. Philostratos maintained that this phenomenon began with Aischines, and interestingly named his immediate followers as the orator Niketes Sacerdos of Smyrna, under the reign of Nero (54–68 CE), and Skopelian of Klazomenai (*VS* 514–521) in Domitian’s Rome.³⁵

Events and occasions known from the period of the Persian Wars were very popular in the oratorical schools.³⁶ Not surprisingly, in the still unmatched study provided by Kohl (1915), many subjects are related to the Persian Wars. For instance, there are topics related to the expeditions of Darius and Xerxes (nos. 28–47), or themes related to Miltiades, Aristides, Themistocles (nos. 48–71). The orator Herodes was even portrayed (Philostratos, *VS* 545/6) as showing himself a descendant of heroes of the Persian Wars. On his father’s side, his family dated back

predictions, presumably to conceal this sort of understanding: ‘And Daniel also revealed to the king the meaning of the stone, but I have not thought it proper to relate this, since I am expected to write of what is past and done and not of what is to be.’ (Thackeray trans.). See Mason (1994).

34 Cf. Mason (2005); Whitmarsh (2005: 63–65).

35 On Niketes see Sen. *Suas.* 3.6–7, Plin. *Epist.* 6.6.3, Tac. *Dial.* 15.3. On Skopelian see below.

36 One of the outcomes of the preoccupation with Persia in the schools was the appearance of stories related to Persia in compilations. These volumes had special relation with *exempla* collections used in speeches, as mentioned by Quintilian (5.11.6ff.). There were also collections of *acta et dicta* told of illustrious persons and used by historians. Cf. Saller (1980: 72, 74). A development of these collections was first the themed compilations, such as Polyaeus’ *Stratagemas*, Aelian’s *Nature of Animals* and the collection attributed to Plutarch (presumably a posthumous publication if so) *De Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata* (*Sayings of kings and commanders*) or Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae* in a sympotic context. The second development was the literary miscellany works of anecdotes like Aelian’s *Varia Historia*. See Holford-Strevens (2003: 27–36) and König and Whitmarsh (2007: 31–34). An extreme view of *Quellenforschung*, advanced by Enoch Powell (1939) even saw these collections as predominant among the sources of Plutarch’s *Alexander*. The Lexicon of Julius Pollux and the works of Galen can be seen to belong to this compilatory style; in the latter we can find Persian *flora*, names or items. Closely related are doxographic works like that of Diogenes Laertius, in which several allusions to Persians and works concerning the eastern empire are present.

to the house of the Aiakids. In an allusion to Herodotos (8.64), Philostratos then mentioned that Greece enlisted this house as allies against the Persians. Herodes was then presented as stressing kinship with Miltiades and Kimon, who fought for Athens and Greece against the Medes and triumphed. Ptolemy of Naukratis, a student of Herodes (though more influenced by Polemo) was called 'Marathon' (VS 595), according to some, because he enrolled in the deme Marathon at Athens, but as Philostratos claims: "I have been told by others that it was because in his Attic themes he often mentioned those who died bravely at Marathon".

In his *Against Ktesiphon* mentioned above, Aischines compared the deeds of Xerxes and the miserable plight of Darius III 'Kodomannos', and included an example that was to become widespread in the rhetorical schools and literary works of the period. It was the famous example of Xerxes' attempt to navigate the land and tread the sea, by steering through the Athos Mountain and crossing the Hellespont afoot.³⁷ This was such a beloved example in the schools that it appeared in many other contexts (cf. Dio *Or.* 3.29–34; cf. Juvenal, 10.174–187).

The popularity of Persian subjects and of the latter examples in particular is demonstrated in a famous passage by Lucian, mocking the improvising sophist (*Rhet. Pr.* 18)

Cap everything with references to Marathon and Cynegiros, without which you cannot succeed at all. Undeniably let Athos be crossed in ships and the Hellespont afoot; let the sun be shadowed by the arrows of the Medes, and Xerxes flee the field and Leonidas receive admiration; let the inscription of Othryades be deciphered, and let allusions to Salamis, Artemisium, and Plataea come thick and fast. (Trans. A. M. Harmon).

ἐπὶ πάσι δὲ ὁ Μαραθῶν καὶ ὁ Κυνέγειρος, ὧν οὐκ ἄν τι ἄνευ γένοιτο. καὶ αἰεὶ ὁ Ἄθος πλείσθω καὶ ὁ Ἑλλησποντος πεζενέσθω καὶ ὁ ἥλιος ὑπὸ τῶν Μηδικῶν βελῶν σκεπέσθω καὶ Ξερχῆς φευγέτω καὶ Λεωνίδας θαυμαζέσθω καὶ τὰ Ὀθρυάδου γράμματα ἀναγινωσκέσθω, καὶ ἡ Σαλαμίς καὶ τὸ Ἀρτεμίσιον καὶ αἱ Πλαταιαὶ πολλὰ ταῦτα καὶ πυκνά.

What Lucian ironically indicates here is that whether pertinent or not to the case at hand or the *persona* of the presenter, these typical historical instances from the Persian Wars were estimated an essential constituent of any effective speech.

The exercises comprised declamations known in Greek as *meletai*, covering *pragmatikai* (Latin *suasoriae*), that is, fictitious political speeches, or *dikaiologiai* (Latin *controversiae*), that is, fictitious legal orations.³⁸ It was in their public presentation, performed before large groups of spectators, that they were soon seen as a new cultural channel for exploring the Greek character.³⁹ The spontaneous speeches were performed in the person of a mythic/ heroic character or historical figure,⁴⁰ like the Persian king.⁴¹

The sophists of old were contemporaries of the Achaemenids and were occasionally depicted as personally collaborating with Persia. For instance, Protagoras

37 These descriptions are first found in Aesch. *Pers.* 130–132, Hdt. 7.22, 37, 122 and 7.21, 25, 36.

38 See Russell (1983: 4, 106), Lausberg (1998), § 1147–1148.

39 Cf. Anderson (1989: 146–152); Swain (1996: 87–89).

40 See Russell (1983: 1–20); Anderson (1993: 55–68); Swain (1996: 90–96).

41 Russell (1983: 82).

of Abdera hosted Xerxes in his house and obtained a permission that his son would study with the magi (VS 494). The later sophists entertained this close association through their acted *personae*, speeches and interests. In these examples Greek declaimers and sophists not only addressed and dealt with the ‘ghost’ of Persia, but even re-enacted Persian roles and acted as Persians – to the entertainment of many. One example (VS 541) concerns the well-known Polemo:

When he met a sophist who was buying sausages, sprats, and other cheap dainties of that sort, he said: “My good sir, it is impossible for one who lives on this diet to act convincingly the arrogance of Darius and Xerxes.”

σοφιστῆ δὲ ἐντυγῶν ἀλλάντας ὠνουμένῳ καὶ μαινίδας καὶ τὰ εὐτελῆ ὄψα “ὦ λῶστε”, εἶπεν “οὐκ ἔστι τὸ Δαρείου καὶ Ξέρξου φρόνημα καλῶς ὑποκρίνασθαι ταῦτα σιτουμῆν”.

φρόνημα resonates a typical barbarian vice.⁴² It recurs again in another example from the popular Skopelian of Klazomenai (VS 520):

[He] was admirable in his treatment of the more vigorous and grandiloquent themes, and especially those relating to the Medes, in which occur passages about Darius and Xerxes; for in my opinion he surpassed all the other sophists, both in phrasing these allusions and in handing down that sort of eloquence for his successors to use; and in delivering them he used to represent dramatically the arrogance and levity that are characteristic of the barbarians (trans. W. C. Wright).

θαυμασιώτερος δὲ περὶ τὰς ἀκμαιότερας τῶν ὑποθέσεων καὶ πολλῷ πλεόν περὶ τὰς Μηδικάς, ἐν αἷς οἱ Δαρεῖοί τε εἰσι καὶ οἱ Ξέρξαι, ταύτας γὰρ αὐτός τε μοι δοκεῖ ἄριστα σοφιστῶν ἐρμηνεύσαι παραδοῦναι τε τοῖς ἐπιγιγνομένοις ἐρμηνεύειν, καὶ γὰρ φρόνημα ἐν αὐταῖς ὑπεκρίνετο καὶ κουφότητα τὴν ἐν τοῖς βαρβάροις ἦθεσιν.

Skopelian was the student of Niketes mentioned above, who is known to have written a work entitled *Xerxes* (VS 513). Moreover, Skopelian appears to have acted this ‘Persian’ role in real life, as his story ironically echoes the intrigues of an eastern court: the woman brought by his father after his mother’s death made up allegations (delivered by his cook Kytheros) against Skopelian, claiming that he planned to kill his father by using poisonous drugs. The cook was thus made the heir of the estate and property. A tongue in cheek depiction of Skopelian is Philostratos’ portrayal of the orator’s attraction to various ethnic groups that came to see him: Ionians, Lydians, Karians, Maeonians, Aeolians, Hellenes from Mysia and Phrygia as well as Assyrians, Egyptians, Phoenicians – exactly like the delegations coming up to the Great King. Philostratos asserted that Skopelian also appealed to Achaeans and Athenians, thus obviously making him better than the Achaemenid monarch. Aptly, his embassy to the Emperor Domitian, to reverse his ‘prohibition’ decree in the east, is stated to be on behalf of all of Asia (ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἀσίας ὁμοῦ πάσης ἐπρεσβεύθη), and not just of Smyrna.

Darius and Xerxes also appeared in the context of a performance by the orator and *ab epistulis Graecis* (VS 575) Alexander of Seleukeia, nicknamed ‘Peloplato’ (Πηλοπλάτων, ‘Clay-Plato’):⁴³

42 E. g., Isok. 12.159 (τῆς τοῦ βαρβάρου φρονήσεως); cf. Diod. 20.18.3.

43 On this figure see Marc. Aurel. 1.12; *Suda*, s. v. ‘Alexander Aigaios’ (alpha 1128) *ad fin.*

When representing the man who advised Darius to throw a bridge over the Ister (= Danube, cf. Hdt. 4.89]), he said: “Let the Danube of the Skythians flow beneath your feet, and if he gives your army a smooth crossing, do him the honour of drinking of his waters”. Again, when he sustained the part of Artabazus trying to dissuade Xerxes from making a second expedition against Greece [Herodotus 7.10], he summed up the argument as follows: “Now the condition of the Persians and Medes is as I have said, O King, if you stay where you are. But the soil of the Greeks is poor, their sea is narrow, their men are foolhardy, their gods are jealous gods.”

διεξιῶν δὲ τὸν ξυμβουλευόντα τῷ Δαρείῳ ζεύξαι τὸν Ἴστρον· “ὑπορρεῖτω σοι ὁ Σκυθῶν Ἴστρος, κὰν εὐρους τὴν στρατιὰν διαγάγη, τίμησον αὐτὸν ἐξ αὐτοῦ πίων.” τὸν δὲ Ἀρτάβαζον ἀγωνιζόμενος τὸν ἀπαγορεύοντα τῷ Ξέρξῃ μὴ τὸ δεῦτερον στρατεύειν ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα ὧδε ἐβραχυλόγησεν· “τὰ μὲν δὴ Περσῶν τε καὶ Μήδων τοιαῦτά σοι, βασιλεῦ, κατὰ χώραν μένοντι, τὰ δὲ Ἑλλήνων γῆ λεπτή θάλαττα στενή καὶ ἄνδρες ἀπονενομημένοι καὶ θεοὶ βᾶσανοι”.

The mention of Darius’ attempt to cross the Ister may be related to a contemporary situation Alexander experienced himself. He was on a mission to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius in Pannonia (VS 571), where he was engaged in a war (c. 174 CE).⁴⁴ The reference to Xerxes’ wish to invade Greece may be another tongue in cheek reference to Alexander’s own visits to Athens (VS 571) – not an easy journey “for someone coming from the East” (οὐ μέτριον τῷ ἐκ τῆς ἐφ᾽ ἑσῶς ἐλαύνοντι), claims Philostratos. The comparison of the wealth of the east to the poor state of affairs in Greece might evoke Alexander’s competition with the well-known Athenian Herodes Atticus (VS 571–2) and therefore may be a subtle sneer directed at his rival. An allusion to the Persian Wars is made in this contention between the orators, as seen through Alexander’s arrival in Marathon and Herodes’ appearance with his ‘Hellenes’ (μετὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων).⁴⁵ Herodes’ verdict of his rival was that he resembled a “sober Skopelian” (Σκοπελιανὸν νήφοντα), referring to his style and delivery, but this might just as well relate to his themes.

One of the subtle and ingenious ways in which Persian imagery subsists in Philostratos’ work can be seen in the example of Dionysios of Miletos (VS 523–524). This sophist was appointed by the Emperor Hadrian, according to Philostratos, as a ‘satrap’ (σατραπὴν μὲν αὐτὸν ἀπέφηεν) over “no obscure peoples” (οὐκ ἀφανῶν ἔθνῶν). By this title the author means procurator, using the nomenclature from the Achaemenid Empire to denote officials in the roman administration, as will be shown below. Dionysios was buried in Ephesos and his position must have been in Asia Minor.⁴⁶ The title worked to ironically allude to Dionysios’ own alleged ‘Asianism’, for which he was rebuked by the orator Isaeus (VS 513), and a certain story according to which Dionysios used to train his students in mnemonics with the help of Chaldean arts (VS 523).

44 He also referred to the Ister in his *The Scythians* (VS 573).

45 In his *The Scythians* delivered in Athens, Alexander condemned the city as overcrowded and stifling (VS 573). Cf. Russell (1983: 84–86). One should mention that Alexander toyed with these motifs and twisted them about. At another point he presented himself as a poor man from Ionia, belonging to ‘pure Hellenes’ who colonized barbarian areas.

46 See Jones (1980: 373–374). The name is rather T. Claudius Flavianus Dionysios, See Keil (1953: 6). This form also appears as the first of the six archons on a statue-base from Miletus, which originally bore the effigy of Hadrian and dated to 125/6 CE.

Eastern and Persian echoes are also heard in Philostratos' assertion that a certain literary piece called *Araspes the Lover of Panthea* (ὁ Ἀράσπας ὁ τῆς Πανθείας ἐρῶν)⁴⁷ was falsely attributed to Dionysios (and should have been ascribed to a writer on rhetoric named Celer).⁴⁸ This seemingly inconsequential detail displays several fine ironies: just as Panthea was unjustly appropriated by Cyrus the Great, but should have been rightly associated with the king of Susa, Abradates (Xen. *Cyr.* 5.1.3–8, 6.1.45–48, 6.4.2–11, 7.3.8–15), so was the credit for the artistic work describing her unjustly attributed to Dionysios. Just as the sophist was given the title of 'satrap' (by Philostratos' narrator), so was the literary work incorrectly attributed to him. His very position on the imperial staff may have been terminated by the Emperor (like the literary credit given to him and then taken away), if we are to believe Dio Cassius' account (69.3.4–5), according to which Dionysios offended Hadrian and was almost executed, in a manner typical of Achaemenid capriciousness.⁴⁹ In both cases, the impression is that Dionysios appropriated titles (and themes) that had to do with the Persian king.⁵⁰

But the intricate literary allusions to the Persian kingdom do not end here. Dionysios' homonym and fellow Milesian, who probably lived in the early fifth century BCE,⁵¹ was an author who wrote about Persia. The *Suda* (s. v. 'Dionysios', Delta 1180) attributes to him the works *Events after Dareios* in five books, and the *Persian History* in the Ionic dialect (Τὰ μετὰ Δαρεῖον ἐν βιβλίοις ε' [...] Περσικὰ Ἰάδι διαλέκτῳ). According to Jacoby's scheme in his *FGrH*, ethnography was the second historiographic genre, and Dionysios of Miletus was the first author to write a work called *Persika* in this genre. While the ancient Dionysios, similar to Hellanikos of Lesbos, and Charon of Lampsakos (the latter two at the last quarter of the fifth century BCE), does indeed appear to have been one of the first Greek writers interested in Persia, information is too sparse to substantiate Jacoby's claim.⁵² Whether the works *Persian History* and *Events after Darius* are the same composition under different titles, or the same work once treated as a whole and once as one section of it, Dionysios appears to have written after Darius and to have

47 Going back to the story found in Xen. *Cyr.* 6.1.31–37, 41. See Gera (1993: 221–245).

48 On Celer cf. Marc. Aur. 8.25.

49 See Bowersock (1969: 52–53).

50 Another item perhaps worth mentioning is Dionysios' taunt against the orator Heliodoros ('Caesar can give you money and honour, but he cannot make you a rhetor') mentioned by Dio Cassius (69.3.4–5). C. Avidius Heliodoros was a high official (the *ab epistulis graecis* or even *ab epistulis*) under Hadrian and prefect of Egypt during the reign of Hadrian or Antoninus Pius (cf. *SAH Hadr.* 15.10). See Swain (1989: 151–153), yet more important to the context at hand, Heliodoros married Julia Cassia Alexandria, the grand-daughter of Iotape, daughter of Antiochus IV of Commagene (17–72 CE). The kings of Commagene, in particular Antiochus I Theos, claimed descent from the Achaemenid kings. See the eastern terrace in the Nemrut Dagi monument. In the northern row Antiochus claimed Iranian descent on his father's side from Rhodogyne (*OGIS* 389), daughter of the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes II, who married Orontes (called Aroandes), Satrap of Armenia and later Mysia (see Osborne, 1973).

51 His *akme* is said by the *Suda* to fall within Darius' reign (s. v. Hekataios: 'Hekataios, son of Hegesandros; a Milesian. Born in the time of Darius – the king who ruled after Cambyses, when Dionysos of Miletos lived – in the sixty-fifth Olympiad' [i. e., 520–517 BCE]).

52 See Marincola (1999).

described Xerxes' reign.⁵³ Whereas one may not go so far as to accept theories that make Dionysios the principal source for both Herodotos' and Xenophon's depictions of Persian history,⁵⁴ it is a point of interest to note that a presumed influence of the early Dionysios on Xenophon, who wrote about Panthea, would be ironically relevant to the attribution of a later day work on the very same theme to the later Dionysios. The story of the Imperial orator is thus related to both ancient Persian history and Greek literature on ancient Persian history.

ROMANS AS PERSIANS: A PLUTARCHAN EXAMPLE

Parallel to the Roman interest in Achaemenid kingship was the Greek fascination with the Imperial idea and the attempt to explore it through the reading of earlier texts dealing with imperial models and paradigms. It is interesting to observe that according to *TLG* word count, the mention of four Achaemenid kings outnumbers the rest in our group of Greek Imperial authors: Xerxes, Cyrus, Darius I and Darius III. The next reigns mentioned are those of Artaxerxes II, Darius II (almost always in connection with Artaxerxes II and Cyrus the Younger) and Artaxerxes I. While the mention of most of these monarchs is understandable within the context of the Persian Wars and the nostalgic tendency of the Greek authors, the interest in Cyrus the Great seems to betray concern with the Achaemenids in a pure Persian context, or at least as displaying connotations that properly belong to Persia, without reference to the clash with Greeks.

Not a small number of these references was based on works known as *Persika* (literally, 'things Persian'). These Fourth-century BCE works (unfortunately all lost), specifically describing Persia and the royal court, almost formed a literary genre of their own, with unique subject matter, style and form.⁵⁵ Table One lists examples of the *Persika* works cited in Imperial Greek texts. When they included narratives, most of these examples concerned *petite histoire*, or stories of the court.⁵⁶ Otherwise, they were concerned with exotic features – like outlandish animals, plants and practices. Table One includes details from Ktesias' *Indika* (marked *IN*) which should properly belong to this genre (more akin to the *thomata* or paradoxographic literature), as this work was most certainly part of this author's *Persika*.⁵⁷ One cannot deny the appeal of decadent habits of the Achaemenid court,⁵⁸ presumably seen as partially duplicated in imperial Rome. These are the king's table,⁵⁹ royal sexual excess,⁶⁰ royal cruelty,⁶¹ court intrigues and plots among members of the

53 See Drews (1973: 22). Cf. Lenfant (2007: 201).

54 See Lehmann-Haupt (1902a, 1902b).

55 Stevenson (1997: 1–22, 45–48, 80–81, 157–161).

56 Drews (1973: 106, 116, 200 n. 93).

57 Strictly speaking, part of the *Assyriaka*. See Almagor (2012: 19–20). On the character of the *Indika*, see Stevenson (1997: 7–8); Lenfant (2004: CXXXVII–CLVI).

58 See Briant 2002b.

59 *FGrH* 688 F 8d, 39, 40, 53; 689 F 2; 690 F 4, 5, 12ab, 13, 23ab, 24.

60 *FGrH* 688 F 1b (2.13.4, 2.25.2), 13a, 44; 689 F 7ab; 690 F 1, 7.

61 *FGrH* 688 F 6b.5 (= F 90 4.5), 15.4, 16.58, 16.66–7, 26 (17.7–8), 28; 690 F 7.

royal family and courtiers⁶² and court staff, including the typically eastern eunuchs and court women.⁶³

Table 1: *Persika* Works Cited in Imperial Greek Works.

	Ktesias	Hellanicos of Lesbos	Dionon	Herakleides	Charon of Lampsakos
Diodorus	directly: 2.32.4, cf. 1.56.5, 2.1.1–2.28.8, 2.31.10– 2.34.6; indirectly, through Ephorus: 14.46.6.				
Dionysios of Halikarnassos	De Comp. 10, De Demosth. 12	De Thuc. 5 Epist. ad Pomp. 3.7			De Thuc. 5 Epist. ad Pomp. 3.7
Strabo	1.2.35, 11.6.3, 14.2.15, 15.1.12 (IN), 16.4.20, 16.4.27.	11.6.3			13.1.4, 13.1.19
Plutarch	<i>Artaxerxes</i> (1–4, 8, 9–19, 22) <i>De Sollertia animalium</i> , 21.974de	<i>De Herod. Malignitate</i> (36.869a)	<i>Themistocles</i> , 27.1, <i>Artaxerxes</i> 1.4, 5–6, 10, 13, 19, 22, 23–30, <i>De Iside et Osiride</i> 31.363c, <i>Alexander</i> 36.4	<i>Themistocles</i> 27.1–2 <i>Artaxerxes</i> 23.6, (27.7–9)	<i>De Herod. Malignitate</i> 20.859b, 24.861cd; <i>Themistocles</i> 27.1–2
Pausanias	9.21.4–5 (IN)	2.3.8, 2.16.7			10.38.11
Polyaenus	(7.6.10)				(8.37)
Hesychios	v. πάρηβον and σάραπις		(s. v. κίδαρις)		
Pollux	<i>Onomasticon</i> 2.60, 5.41 (IN)				

62 *FGrH* 688 F 1b (2.14.3, 2.20.1), F 1c, 11δ (=90 F 1), 9.6, 9a, 13.11–12, 13.22, 14.34, 15.48, 15.54, 16.59, 16.61, 27.68, 28, 29ab; 690 F 15ab.

63 *FGrH* 688 F 1ab (2.20.1, 2.21.2, 2.24.4, 2.27.2–3), 1n, 1q, 8c, 8d.5 (= 90 F 66.5), 9.6, 9a, 13.9–10, 13.13, 13.24, 14.31–2, 13.42–3, 15.48, 15.50–51, 15.54, 20, 26, 27.70–71; 689 F 1, 2, 4, 5; 690 F 12a, 15b, 26, 27.

Arrian	<i>Anab.</i> 5.4.2 <i>Indika</i> , 3.6 (IN)				
Lucian	<i>VH</i> 1.3, 2.31 <i>Philopseud.</i> 2				
Aelian	<i>NA</i> 3.3 (IN), 4.21 (IN), 4.26–7 (IN), (4.36) (IN), (4.41) (IN), 4.46 (IN), 4.52 (IN), 5.3 (IN), 7,1, 16.31 (IN), 16.42, 17.29 (IN), (17.34)		(<i>VH</i> 7.1) <i>NA</i> 17.10		<i>VH</i> 1.15
Diogenes Laertius			1.8, 9.50	5.93–94	
Athenaeus	1.40.22c, 2.23.45ab, 2.74.67a, 4.27.146c, 10.45.434d (IN), 10.59.442b (IN), 11.11.464a, 12.38.528ef- 529d, 12.40.530d, 13.10.560de 14.44.639c		2.74.67ab, 4.27.146cd, 11.110.503 f., 12.8.514ab, 13.3.556b, 13.10.560de 13.89.609a, 14.33.633ce, 14.67.652bc,	2.31.48c-49a, 4.26.145a- 146a, 12.8.514bc,	9.51.394e
Valerius Harpocra- tion	s. v. Σκιάποδες and Υποκνδεῖς γάρ εἰσιν οἱ τόποι	s. v. Στρέψα			

The Greek twist for this examination of court reality was the description of the Roman Imperial institutions in terms used by classical authors to portray the Persian system, such as ‘satraps’ or ‘Great King’. Many joined this trend, as can be seen by the choice of terminology and used of the literary devices of analogy and juxtaposition. Some, like Plutarch, employed the word ‘up’ (ἄνω) to refer to going to Rome (*Praec. reip.* 814C), just as the writers of old would denote the way to Persia (Cf. Arr., *Diss. Epict.* 1.10.2).⁶⁴

64 See Almagor (2016: 114). An analogy between the Persian king and the Roman Emperor ap-

As a product of his own time, Plutarch is very interested in Persia. Eleven of his extant Greek *Lives* have the confrontation with the Persians as an integral part of their plots, or take place during an era in which the Achaemenid Empire was still in existence (*Themistocles, Alkibiades, Aristides, Lysander, Kimon, Agesilaos, Alexander, Pelopidas, Demosthenes, Pericles and Nikias*). The lost *Epaminondas* would make it more than half of the Greek biographies of the *Parallel Lives*. The unwritten *Leonidas* (*De malignitate Herodoti*, 866b) should be mentioned as well as the extant Life of *Artaxerxes*. Plutarch also refers intermittently to Persian motifs in his *moralia*.⁶⁵ Yet, awareness of the contemporary, potentially delicate subtexts of the Greco-Persian wars in the Roman Empire and of the fact that these examples might have volatile political potential in stirring up the Greek masses may be detected in his writings. It can be seen in Plutarch's advice to refrain from mentioning the past glories of the Persian Wars (*Praec. ger. reip.* 814B-C). Plutarch would rather have the sophists or the orators deal with this explosive material, presumably since their performances are construed as detached from any political import.⁶⁶ This reading and understanding was unique to Greek authors. Furthermore, in all probability, the thought that Greece's submission to the conditions of the King's Peace (*Artaxerxes*, ch. 21) might be analogous to its current political position under Rome, with Persia symbolizing the Roman Empire, could not have been entertained by a Roman reader.⁶⁷

It might also be said that a similar implicit allusion to Rome is found in Plutarch's biography of *Artaxerxes*. To his Roman audience, the biographer may appear to indicate the possibility of overcoming the eastern Empires, because Parthia, like Persia, ostensibly shares the same inherent corrupting weakness. Yet, from the Hellenic point of view, Greece's yielding to the terms of Artaxerxes II in the King's Peace (387/6 BCE) was similar to its situation under Rome.⁶⁸ The mention of Persia thus may allegorically represent the Imperial system.

Let us see how the image of Ancient Persia works within Plutarch's *Caesar*, echoed in the other descriptions of Parthia and its clash with Rome. It would seem that Persia is insinuated in Caesar's unfulfilled idea to march against the Parthians (*Caes.* 58). The Roman audience would recognize the similarities between this planned expedition and Alexander's campaign. It is a parallelism strongly suggested by the foregoing and paired *Life*, leading to the drawing of analogies between Caesar and Alexander and between Persia and Parthia. The analogy was certainly utilized for propagandistic means during Trajan's campaign as a clash between East and West.⁶⁹

pears at the dedication of the collection of sayings *De Regum et Imperatorum Apophthegmata* attributed to Plutarch, which has Trajan explicitly compared to Artaxerxes II (172b-e).

65 Almagor (forthcoming).

66 cf. Jones (1971: 113–114); Spawforth (1994: 245–246); Whitmarsh (2005: 66–67).

67 Culturally speaking, this reading implies the mutually exclusive antithesis between Greeks and all 'others', Romans and Persians included – as noted above.

68 Almagor (2011).

69 Trajan and Alexander: Dio Cass. 68.26.4, 28.29.1, 68.30.1; *SHA, Hadr.* 4.9; Dio Chyrs. *Or.* 4 (presumably); Lepper (1948: 191–204).

But Plutarch complicates this allusion to yield almost the complete opposite understanding of Persian imagery. Firstly, both Caesar's wish to dig through the isthmus of Corinth and divert the Tiber into a deep channel on the one hand, and his plan to convert the marshes about Pomentinum into a plain and to build moles which would barricade the sea close to Rome (*Caes.* 58.8–10),⁷⁰ cannot but evoke the famous deeds of Xerxes in his campaign against Greece, that is, the proverbial attempt to navigate the land and tread the sea, by steering through the Athos mountain and crossing the Hellespont afoot. This image was popular in the rhetorical schools, as we have seen above. Plutarch's Caesar thus insinuates the analogy that subsists between the dictator and the Great King.

Caesar's unrealised campaign appears to be emulating Alexander's war against the Persians but is in effect of a different character altogether. For after the future subduing of the Parthians, the plans attributed to Caesar include marching around the Euxine by way of Hyrkania, the Caspian Sea, and the Caucasus, invading Scythia, and reaching Germany. The movement is, broadly speaking, from East to West, once again evoking the direction of Persian ambitions, not those of Alexander in his campaign.⁷¹ One should note that while the aim of these plans is stated to be the creation of an empire bounded on all sides by the ocean, they do not make mention of India but rather Scythia.⁷² In this, Caesar does not seem to be wishing to emulate Alexander, but ostensibly the Great King (cf. *Hdt.* 4.83–144).⁷³

There is also a sense in which Caesar and Alexander not only parallel each other but even switch sides. Alexander's unfulfilled plans to circumnavigate Libya and enter the Mediterranean by way of the Pillars of Herakles (*Alex.* 68.1) is almost as insane and unrealistic as Caesar's program of reaching the Germans from the east.⁷⁴ Combining these two plans together evokes another rhetorical commonplace, of the hypothetical clash between Rome and the Macedonian king – found in Livy (9.17–19), and at the end of Plutarch's *De fortuna Romanorum* 326bc (the essay conveniently breaks off before dwelling on this counterfactual battle).⁷⁵ Yet, here it is Caesar who comes from the east to oppose Alexander coming from the west. The association of Caesar and the Persian Empire becomes thus more apparent.

While the Roman reader would freely associate the Parthians with the Persians, and see it as 'another world' (*orbis alter*), to quote Manilius (4.674–5), the Greek

70 Cf. Suet. *Caes.* 44.3, Dio Cass. 44.5, Cic. *Att.* 13.33a (330).1, *Phil.* 5.7. See Pelling (2011: 432, 437–438), who admits that '[a]t first sight this sits oddly with the plan to develop Ostia' (437), but surely one cannot disregard the rhetorical impact of this juxtaposition.

71 See Pelling (2011: 434–437)

72 Cf. Plut. *Pomp.* 38.4–5.

73 Scythia and Germany are absent from the parallel Suet. *Caes.* 44.2 and the latter's sequence of planned campaigns in 44.3 (cf. Vell. 2.59.4) is in reverse order: first an expedition to restrain the Dacians and then an invasion of Parthia. See Pelling (2011: 434–435). Note that Alexander's ritualized universalism (for instance, in reaching the Ocean), if genuine, was derived from the Persian example in the first place.

74 See Townend (1983: 601), but cf. Dobesch (1980: 353–354 n. 21). These goals go back to a rather commonplace imperial (universalistic) ideology, typical of the Assyrian, Achaemenid, early Ptolemaic, and Seleukid empires, and the idea of the Roman *imperium sine fine*.

75 Cf. Plut. *Pyr.* 19.1–2. Cf. Whitmarsh (2001: 176).

reader would see the Arsakid kingdom as more slippery in terms of political and cultural significance and would rather consider it a liminal entity, a place at the juncture of worlds. In Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* (*Alex.* 45.1–4), Parthia is presented as the place where the Persian king begins to put on the barbaric dress, adopt native customs of the barbarians, and introduce the gesture of prostration before the king (in 330 BCE):⁷⁶

From thence he marched into Parthia, where, during a respite from fighting, he first put on the barbaric dress, either from a desire to adapt himself to the native customs, believing that community of race and custom goes far towards softening the hearts of men; or else this was an attempt to introduce the obeisance among the Macedonians, by accustoming them little by little to put up with changes and alterations in his mode of life.

ἐντεῦθεν εἰς τὴν Παρθικὴν ἀναζεῦξας καὶ σχολάζων πρῶτον ἐνεδύσατο τὴν βαρβαρικὴν στολὴν, εἴτε βουλόμενος αὐτὸν συνοικεῖσθαι τοῖς ἐπιχωρίοις νόμοις, ὡς μέγα πρὸς ἔξημέρωσιν ἀνθρώπων τὸ σύνηθες καὶ ὁμόφυλον, εἴτ' ἀπόπειρά τις ὑφέιτο τῆς προσκυνήσεως αὐτῇ τοῖς Μακεδόσι, κατὰ μικρὸν ἀνασχέσθαι τὴν ἐκδιαίτησιν αὐτοῦ καὶ μεταβολὴν ἐπιζομένους ...

Alexander even attempts (and fails) to pursue the Scythians – exactly like the Persian king (τὸν Σκύθας τρεψάμενος, ἐδίωξεν ἐπὶ σταδίου ἑκατόν). So Parthia is where Alexander's emulation of the Great King is clear. Ironically, the later Parthians, whom one might see as Hellenized,⁷⁷ become the context of Alexander's orientalizing policy.

The mention of Parthia is set by Plutarch as a 'trigger' to the reader of the pair of *Lives*, to consider it again in the biography of Caesar. A campaign against Parthia is made to be an excuse by Caesar's supporters that the dictator should assume royal power, based on a prophecy in the Sibylline books (*Caes.* 60.2).⁷⁸ Combining these two scenes together might indicate that Caesar wished to emulate Alexander, but given that Alexander imitated the Great King, the orientalizing significance of Caesar's passion for royal power becomes clear. As in a platonic scheme,⁷⁹ Caesar's work is an emulation of emulation, twice removed from the genuine article, which is the Persian King.

76 On Alexander's assumption of Persian court protocol cf. Diod. 17.77.4–7, Curt. Ruf. 6.6.1–10, Just. 12.3.8–12, Arr. *Anab.* 4.7.4–5 (7.29.4). Cf. Plut. *De Alex. Magn. fort.* 330a. Among the signs of Alexander's 'barbarization' are the introduction of Asian chamberlains and Persian bodyguard, the introduction of *proskynesis*, the adoption of certain items of Persian dress, the giving of purple robes to his Macedonian companions and the taking over of Darius' harem. See Ritter (1965: 31–55). See Bosworth (1980) for a suggestion that this was done as propagandic means in response to the rivalry posed by Bessos.

77 Parthia saw the first Greek city in Asia: Alexandropolis (Plin., *NH* 6.29.113). The Arsakid coinage was distinctly Hellenistic. See Alam (1986b). See Curtis (2007a: 3, 9, 15, 19, 22). There are two Parthian reliefs in Greek in Behistun. See Debevoise (1938: 44–45, 173–174); cf. 46, 93, 119 for the impact of hellenism on Parthian policies. See Bickerman (1983: 17–18).

78 See Pelling (2011: 444–445). Cf. Suet. *Caes.* 79.3, App. 2.110, Dio Cass. 44.15.3.

79 Cf. Plato on art as imitation of an imitation, removed twice from reality: *Rep.* 10.596a–598b. See Tate (1932), Cherniss (1932), Golden (1975), Nehamas (1982), Moss (2007). See 10.597e: the tragedian is twice removed from the *king* and the truth.

CONCLUSION

In surveying the ways in which authors in this period revived the memory of Persia, this chapter began with three main reasons for this 'resurrection' among Greek Imperial authors and men of letters: nostalgic memories of the glorious and independent Greek past, an association of the condition of submission to Roman power against the east with the ancient obedience to Macedonia and a comparison of the Greek/Macedonian clash with Persia and the conflict between Rome and Parthia. This varied scope of allusions found its way into the rhetorical schools and the declamations performed by Greek sophists, who negotiated their own imagined Hellenic identity by dealing with the idea of 'Persia'. This 'Persianism', or construction of the memory of the Persian Empire in later times for specific, social, political and cultural reasons, reenacted the figures of Achaemenid monarchs and alluded to Greek texts describing Persia. In this mode, Achaemenid Persians were often acted out and appropriated. The last part of this chapter addressed the way Greeks styled the Romans as Persians both in an attempt to explore the nature of imperial reality (by the use of the *Persika* works) and in an implicit sophisticated insinuation to the reality of conquered Greece under the Romans (with a subtle innuendo to the fate of the Roman Empire). The popular image of Classical Greece during the 19th century was an ideological construct, i. e., that when the Persian monarchy was still thriving, Greeks sacrificed their lives in order to protect their liberty against it. Ironically, several centuries later, one of the most obvious autonomous paths left for the Greeks under Rome, in literary and public performative displays, was Persianism, i. e., to go back and revive the Persia of old.

THE ETERNAL PERSIAN: PERSIANISM IN AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS

Michael Sommer

In AD 238 the Roman city of Histria in Lower Moesia, a little south of the estuary of the Danube into the Black Sea, became the target of a large group of tribal warriors who captured and sacked the place and then withdrew, loaded with booty, to the plains to the north of the delta. As we know, the warriors who devastated Histria were the vanguard of a new tribal confederacy that had, unbeknownst to the Romans, formed in southern Russia and Ukraine in the course of the past decades. The Roman observers had largely been ignorant of the profound changes in the ethnographic setup of South-eastern Europe and western Central Asia. To the Athenian historiographer Dexippus, a contemporary of the calamities, the events at Histria were the overture to the “Scythian Wars”.¹

The nomenclature employed here by Dexippus betrays an ethnographic world-view that is both simplistic and lacking any notion of dynamism. Ethnic groups, in this case ‘Scythians’, are pinpointed in given areas, here the Pontic Steppe to the north of the Black Sea, once and for all. Invariably, changes in the ethnic composition of such areas’ inhabitants go unnoticed for a long time: the ‘successors’ to the Scythians in the Pontic Steppe were, from the 3rd century BC onwards, the Sarmatians. They shared the Scythians’ nomadic lifestyle, their warlike habitus, solid build and Iranian language. Without further ado, Greek historiographers and their Roman counterparts identified them with their predecessors in the northern steppe. The Scythian had become the prototypical northern barbarian, along with the Celt, who, for the Greeks at least, populated the northern space to the west of the Rhine.²

‘Scythian’ to Greeks and Romans was hence a placeholder for all those nomads roaming about the northern steppe. Similarly, collective designations such as *Arabes*, *Araboi*, *Arabi*, *Sarakenoi* or *Saraceni* were used, interchangeably but indiscriminately, for the nomads of the Syro-Mesopotamian desert; *Mauri* for those of the Sahara. Greek and Roman ethnographers were not too concerned about the *identity* of their interest’s objects; constructing *alterity* was what they regarded as their primary mission. The nomads from far-flung areas of this world were profoundly different from Greeks and Romans, the champions of the Mediterranean *oikoumene*, whose profile was sharpened through the objectifying view of writing intellectuals: the only reason why such barbarians were noteworthy was the perception that they were exotic and in all their actions did the precise opposite of what Hellenes would have done – like the nations in Herodotos’ Sahara excursus: the

1 Dexipp. fr. 20 (14).

2 Fundamental on the representation of Scythians in Greek literature and art is still Minns (1913). On stereotypes about Scythians in Greek ethnography see now Skinner (2012), 68–79.

Garamantes, for instance, whose cattle walk backwards, or the Atarantes, who have no names, or the Aithiopians, whose language sounds like the buzzing of bats.³ Names, concepts and stereotypes were impressively long-lived, easily surviving several centuries and diverse historical watersheds. The ancient *oikoumene*'s orientalism was the ethnographers' and historians' 'barbarianism'; as Disraeli put it for the Orient: to Greek and Roman writers, the 'barbarian' was "a career".⁴

Now, where was the Persians' place in this geography of alterity? My working hypothesis for this paper claims that the people inhabiting the only empires that rivalled Rome after the fall of Carthage, the Parthian and Sasanian kingdoms respectively, were pressed into stereotypical patterns similar to those made for the nomadic groups on the Greco-Roman world's northern, eastern and southern fringes. In other words: as the steppe was populated by the eternal *Scythikoi*, *Arabes* and *Mauri*, the imperial enemy in the east was the eternal Persian featuring a whole set of conveniently tailored characteristics.

In order to explore the landscape of stereotypes into which Greek and Roman intellectuals place the Persians, we shall first revisit Herodotus' Persian ethnography and then see as to whether and to what degree this image persists in Ammianus' portrayal towards the end of antiquity. In such a way, it is hoped, we can retrace the continuity of Persia as an idea as it lived in the cultural memory of Greeks and Romans. It can be seen how 'basic patterns'⁵ observed by travellers and elaborated into a narrative by Herodotus rapidly crystallised into a solid core of notions of alterity. Such notions, in turn, helped Greeks and Romans to define their respective identities: knowing who the Persians were told those who took pride in their Greek *paideia*, who they were themselves – even in the later, Christianising Roman world.

1. MOTLEY CANVAS: HERODOTUS' PERSIANS

The starting point for any exploration of Greek and Roman narratives about Persians has to be Herodotus' famous excursus in book one, beginning with the words: "These are the customs, so far as I know, which the Persians practise".⁶ In this digression, aspects of Persian religion, cuisine, social practices, values and onomastics come up. Persians are different from Greeks, as they do not worship *ἄγάλματα* and have neither temples nor altars. None of the rituals associated with Greek sacrifice is practiced when Persians sacrifice to their gods; instead, a *Μάγος ἀνήρ* has to be present, and the king and all Persians are included into the prayer.⁷ The Magi are said to differ from all other Persians in that they kill and eat any animal, except dogs and men.

3 Herodot. 4, 183–184.

4 Disraeli, Tancred.

5 "Irreduzible Grundbedingungen des Menschseins" or "Grundstrukturen" as described by Assmann (1997), 133.

6 Herodot. 1, 131 (Πέρσας δὲ οἶδα νόμοισι τοιοῖσιδε χρεωμένους). See Müller (1972); Bichler (2000); Harrison (2007); Nesselrath (2009); Gruen (2011); Miller (2011); Thomas (2011); West (2011); Dan (2013).

7 Ibid., 131–132.

Herodotos also reports burial customs: corpses are covered with wax before buried, and at least the Magi do not bury their dead until it has been torn by a wild animal.⁸

The meals of the Persians consist of several courses; the main course is followed by several deserts; Persians eat and drink more lavishly than the Greeks, whom they claim to get up from dinner hungry.⁹ The Persians frown upon vomiting and urinating in public; which, according to Herodotos, gives evidence of their sternness.¹⁰ The way they greet each other strictly reflects social hierarchy: kisses are in order between coequals or when the difference in rank is only slight; inferiors salute higher-ranking Persians with proskynesis. They give honour in proportion to distance, thinking of themselves very highly and holding those in low honour who dwell furthest from them.¹¹

This somewhat contradicts the next item in Herodotos' list: the historian reports that no people is as open-minded as the Persians, who easily borrow innovations from other civilisations – costume from the Medes, armour from the Egyptians, paederasty from the *Hellenes*.¹² In addition, each Persian married to several women. Persians hold bravery and truthfulness in high esteem. They teach their sons only three things: to ride a horse, to use the bow and to tell the truth. Herodotos praises their shunning of death penalty and the absence of parricide.¹³ Finally, according to Herodotos, all Persian names end in 's' and are associated with characteristics of the body.¹⁴

To be sure, this is a crude collection of oddities. What makes it puzzling is the fact that many items from the excursus blatantly contradict Herodotos' own narrative. It is downright opposed to the representation of the individual kings: Kambyses, Kyros, Dareios and Xerxes invariably appear as cruel despots, driven by hubris and corrupted by decadence. Dareios is shrewd, deceitful, manipulative – features that pave his way to supreme power. When, for instance, the Persian king Dareios praises deception as the strategy of choice in warfare, this is hardly reconcilable with the claim that no virtue was held in higher esteem than truthfulness. "For where it is necessary that a lie be spoken, let it be spoken", are the words Herodotos puts into the Dareios' mouth.¹⁵ To make things worse, Dareios does not see any significant difference between the liars and the truth-tellers: "those lie whenever they are likely to gain anything by persuading with their lies, and these tell the truth in order that they may draw to themselves gain by the truth, and that things may be entrusted to them more readily."¹⁶ Xerxes, his son, on the other hand, is a decadent, immature weakling aspiring for world domination. Decadence,

8 Ibid., 140.

9 Ibid., 133 (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο φασὶ Πέρσαι τοὺς Ἑλληνας σιτεομένους πεινῶντας παύεσθαι).

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., 134.

12 Ibid., 135.

13 Ibid., 136–138.

14 Ibid., 139.

15 Ibid., 3, 72 (ἔνθα γάρ τι δεῖ ψεῦδος λέγεσθαι, λεγέσθω).

16 Ibid. (οἱ μὲν γε ψεύδονται τότε ἐπεὰν τι μέλλωσι τοῖσι ψεύδεσι πείσαντες κερδήσεσθαι, οἱ δ' ἀληθίζονται ἵνα τῇ ἀληθείῃ ἐπιπάσωνται κέρδος καὶ τι μᾶλλον σφί ἐπιτραπίται).

hubris and tyranny – three leitmotifs altogether absent from the excursus – guide Herodotos’ representation of his Persian protagonists.

The purpose of such overt discrepancies is not, as Erich Gruen has recently pointed out, “to expose hypocrisy, contrasting lofty principles with shabby behaviour”.¹⁷ Nor is it the historian’s intention to portray the Persians as “craven minions of a despotic ruler, by contrast with Hellenic freedom fighters”.¹⁸ What emerges from the eclectic compilation of ethnographic detail and historical action is rather a strikingly multi-dimensional image of the Persians, whose invading armies the Greeks had fought off just a little more than a generation before Herodotos wrote the histories. Again in Gruen’s words: “Herodotos presents a motley canvas, no black-and-white images.”¹⁹

The historian’s motley canvas is largely consistent with other voices from the 5th and early 4th centuries BC: In his *Persai*, the tragedian Aischylos, himself a veteran of the Battle of Salamis, combines a differentiated view of the Persians with the topos of Xerxes’ despotism and hubris; Timotheos of Miletus, in his poem *Persai*, of which fragments survive, likewise depicts the Battle of Salamis from a Persian point of view; like Aischylos and Herodotos, Timotheos refrains from black-and-white images: the listener suffers with Persian commoners, but is led to condemn Xerxes for his weak-mindedness.²⁰ Even Xenophon’s *Kyrou paideia* paints a picture with many shades of grey: while Kyros, owing to his *paideia*, is of course the prototypical good ruler, the antithesis of an Oriental despot as it were, the Persian empire after Kyros is disfigured by the scourges of despotism and decadence.²¹

As we can see, the perception of the Persians who, albeit enemies and barbarians, were regarded as a civilised people and deemed worthy of a differentiated analysis, was quite different from how the nomadic nations were treated by Greek ethnography. While their portrayal was by no means free from stereotypical patterns, intellectuals at least abstained from obvious absurdities and from reducing them to the role of anti-Hellenes noteworthy only for their spectacular exoticism. In that respect the image of the Persians stands out from the clichés and stereotypes usually nurtured about ‘barbarians’ by Greek historiography and ethnography. While certainly not Greek, Herodotos’ and his fellow Greek intellectuals’ Persians could still lay claim to participating in the civilised world.

17 Gruen (2011), 74.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 80.

20 Keil (1913); Ebeling (1925).

21 Xen. *Cyrop.* 8, 8, 27.

2. FROM XERXES TO SHAPUR: AMMIANUS' PERSIANS

The set of stereotypes implicit in Persianism proved to be remarkably persistent despite all historical changes and disruptions. As with nearly all ethnic stereotypes, those associated with the Persians were attached to the area where the Persians had once ruled: western Asia in general and the Parthian empire in particular.²² When, in AD 224 and 226, Ardashir, the representative of a new dynasty from the Persis (Fars), defeated the rivalling Parthian kings, Vologaeses and Artabanos, Cassius Dio was quick to call him a Persian.²³ Even the Hellenised name used by Cassius Dio, Artaxerxes, evokes an unbroken tradition, stretching all the way from the Achaemenid empire to Dio's own days. And of course the imperialist ambition he senses in Ardashir has its roots in the olden days of Achaemenid hegemony over the Near East. According to the Roman historiographer, Ardashir "boasted that he would win back everything that the ancient Persians had once held, as far as the Grecian Sea, claiming that all this was his rightful inheritance from his forefathers."²⁴

While it is unlikely that Ardashir and the early Sasanians had any notion of the Achaemenid past, Roman intellectuals, throughout the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, continued to identify the Sasanians with their alleged forefathers, employing wholesale the stereotypes once created by Herodotus and his contemporaries. One particularly striking example for how potent Persianism after so many centuries still was, is Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae*. At the end of book 23 Ammianus, himself a participant in the emperor Julian's disastrously failed Persian campaign of 363, gives a detailed account, in no less than 88 paragraphs, of what he knows about the Persian empire of the Sasanians, its history, territory and people. This is merely one of many ethnographical digressions in Ammianus' work. In the extant parts of the *Res gestae*, the author interrupts his historical narrative in regular intervals in order to provide background information on, for instance, the peoples of the Rhine area (15, 4–6), the Saracens (14, 4), the Huns and Alans (31, 2) or indeed, even twice, the city of Rome (14, 6; 28, 4).²⁵

There is some scholarly debate as to the purpose of such excursions. Were they simply meant to show off knowledge – or was there some sort of hidden narratological concept underneath?²⁶ At any rate they add, in a manner of speaking, a third dimension to the canvas of events unfolding in the 4th century, giving them a degree of historical depth they would otherwise be lacking. The Persian digression makes Julian's campaign the – from Ammianus' perspective – final link in a chain of struggles between west (Greece and Rome) and east (Persia). In order to create

22 On the representation of Parthians in Roman art see Landskron (2005); for a more comprehensive approach Lerouge (2007).

23 Cass. Dio 80,3,1.

24 Ibid. 4,1.

25 For an overview see now Feraco (2011) and Vergin (2012); on the Persian digression Feraco (2004). See also Brok (1975); Drijvers (1999); Teitler (1999); Drijvers (2006), 59–65; Hartmann (2007), 50–52; Drijvers (2011).

26 In favour of the latter Vergin (2012), 287 and passim, who claims that Ammianus created "Erfahrungsmuster der Welt [...], durch die die Rahmenhandlung sinnkonstituierend untermauert wird."

this effect, Ammianus evokes a historical continuum which is, to put it mildly, idiosyncratic.

The digression is preceded by a speech by the emperor Julian that, in its turn, works like a teaser for the events to follow.²⁷ First, Julian addresses those (“some evil-minded men”) who believe the campaign to come were just another Roman aggression against Persia.²⁸ He then recalls the whole series of clashes between Rome and “Persia”, from (wrongly) Lucullus and Pompey all the way down to Gordianus III, whose epitaph Julian visited when invading Babylonia. Julian mentions Trajan, Lucius Verus and Septimius Severus, who all “returned from here victorious and adorned with trophies”²⁹, but he omits, for obvious reasons, Valerian and his ill-fated campaign against Shapur I. Julian frankly admits to the fact that the Romans in all these instances were the aggressors: “Those emperors, indeed, their own desire, inclined as they were to lofty enterprise, drove to undertake noteworthy exploits.”³⁰ His own intentions, Julian claims, are quite different: “we are urged on to our present purpose by the pitiful fate of recently captured cities, by the unavenged shades of armies destroyed, by the great disasters that have been suffered, and by the loss of many a camp.”³¹ In order to achieve this purpose, “we must wipe out a most mischievous nation [*natio molestissima*], on whose sword-blades the blood of our kinsmen is not yet dry.”³² It is good Roman tradition, Julian reminds his soldiers, to get rid of such nations. Julian, he claims, fears nothing “save the craft and treachery of the over-cunning enemy [*dolos et insidias hostium nimium callidorum*].”³³

This is the first stereotype about the Persians Ammianus, through Julian’s mouth, introduces to his narrative. Downright choke-full of stereotypes is the digression, on which he embarks in the following chapter. It is clearly structured into three sections: one opening paragraph (§ 1) and a very short outline of Persian history (§§ 2–8), followed by a detailed geographical survey (§§ 9–74) and another brief passage on customs and mentalities (§§ 75–84). At last, there is a coda-like and not very elegantly introduced excursus on pearls (§§ 85–88).

Of particular interest for the purpose of this paper is, of course, the history section. The enemy kingdom, Ammianus sets out, was “once small [*quondam exiguum*]” and “for reasons which we have often given was called before by various names [*multisque antea nominibus appellatum*]”.³⁴ In other words: to Ammianus, the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian kingdoms are all manifestations of the same political entity, Persia. Arsakes, the mythical founder of the Parthian kingdom, in this version appears as the restorer of Persian power: the king who defeats

27 Amm. 23, 5, 16–23.

28 Ibid. 23, 5, 16 (*ut maledici mussitant*).

29 Ibid. 5, 17 (*hinc sunt digressi victores et tropaeati*).

30 Ibid. 5, 18 (*et illos quidem voluntas ad altiora propensior subire inpulit facinora memoranda*).

31 Ibid. (*nos vero miseranda recens captarum urbium et inultae caesorum exercituum umbrae et damnorum magnitudines castrorumque amissiones ad haec, quae proposuimus, hortantur*).

32 Ibid., 5, 19 (*abolenda nobis natio molestissima cuius in gladiis nondum nostrae propinquitatis exaruit cruor*).

33 Ibid. 5, 21 (*nihil enim praeter dolos et insidias hostium vereor nimium callidorum*).

34 Ibid. 6, 2 (*hoc regnum quondam exiguum multisque antea nominibus appellatum ob causas quas saepe rettulimus*).

Seleukos Nikator, the successor of Alexandria, imposes Persian rule on neighbouring nations and fills his land with cities. After this, Ammianus goes further back in history, to Kyros, Dareios and Xerxes under whom the Persian empire “extended its domain as far as the Propontis and Thrace”.³⁵ But the hubris (*superbia*) of its leaders brought disaster upon Persia: due to imperial overstretch, Ammianus points out, and because they “lawlessly extended their raids”, the Greeks inflicted catastrophic defeats on the empire.³⁶ The collapse of the Achaemenid kingdom and the interlude of Alexander the Great is worth no more than a side note to Ammianus. “After this was done and a long time had passed, during which the Roman commonwealth was governed by consuls and later brought under the sway of the Caesars, these nations carried on wars with us from time to time, and sometimes the contest was equal, at other times they were conquered, and occasionally they came off victorious”, he concludes his summary of Persian history.³⁷

This historical account is remarkable in three respects:

1. it artificially constructs an historical continuity stretching from Kyros to Shapur II. Alexander is a mere interlude; Arsakes, the founder of the Parthian kingdom, is a restorer of Persian power; the transition from Arsakid to Sasanian rule is not mentioned at all; the appearance of different imperial outfits in the Persian sphere is explained away by – in this context – unnamed *causae* leading to *multa nomina*.
2. it takes up the motif of hubris (*superbia*) we know from the classical period: hubris afflicts Persian leaders and brings about calamity for the empire.
3. vital information is omitted: not a single Sasanian king is mentioned, not even Shapur I, Gordian’s and Valerian’s adversary; he does not refer to any Parthian ruler but Arsakes; no individual conflicts between Parthians and Sasanians on the one hand, the Romans on the others are accounted for.

This being said, it is obvious that Ammianus’ account is neither very accurate nor is it complete – nor indeed very original. For Ammianus, the Persians Julian encounters in AD 363 are essentially the same the Greeks fought at Marathon and Salamis. After all, it does not come as a surprise that the historian shamelessly borrows from the stereotypes Herodotos, Aischylos and the likes of them have created.

The geographic survey, which is likewise flawed in many details, comprises an area far larger than the Sasanian empire. The account starts with a description of the Persian Gulf and neighbouring areas (§§ 10–13) and then proceeds to a list of *regiones maximae* (§ 14), which, according to Ammianus are ruled by *vitaxae*, officials whom he believes to be roughly equivalent to Roman *magistri equitum*.³⁸ Among the *regiones* he counts well-known provinces of Persian empire, such as Assyria, Susiana, Media, Persis, Carmania, Hyrcania, Sogdiane, Bactria, Arachosia

35 Ibid., 6, 7 (*regna [...] dilatasse ad usque Propontidem et Thracias*).

36 Ibid. (*licenter grassantium per longinqua*).

37 Ibid., 6, 9 (*quibus peractis transcursisque temporibus longis sub consulibus et deinceps in potestatem Caesarum redacta re publica, nobiscum hae nationes subinde dimicarunt paribusque momentis interdum, aliquotiens superatae, non numquam abiere victrices*).

38 Ibid. 6, 14.

and Gedrosia; but also territories well beyond the empire's frontiers (Serica – China, Arabia Felix – Yemen) and such areas which cannot be clearly defined in geographical terms.

The following paragraphs (15–73) provide further information on all these areas and the people inhabiting them, a lot of which is utterly stereotypical: “The Seres themselves are frugal beyond all others”, reports Ammianus, “live a quiet life, and avoid intercourse with the rest of mortals.”³⁹ Similarly, the *Arabes beati* are rich, “have an abundance of towns” and know how to take advantage from the natural benefits of their country.⁴⁰ Even more curious is the reference to the *Arabes beati*, the inhabitants of present-day Yemen, whom Ammianus takes for neighbours of the Persian heartland of Persis. Evidently, his main point of reference for the geography is Klaudios Ptolemaios, who deals with the areas in question in precisely the same order.⁴¹ Ammianus' dependence on Ptolemaios is further highlighted by his inclusion of places with little or no connection to the Persian empire. Once again, Ammianus shows that he has “only the vaguest of notions” of the topic he writes about.⁴² After centuries during which the Indian Ocean was used as a commercial hub by westerners, one should expect intellectuals to know a lot more about the geography of the world beyond Rome's frontiers.

Of particular interest in the present context is his image of the Sasanian empire's core regions. A lengthy digression within the digression is dedicated to the Magi (§§ 32–36). Ammianus outlines their origin and gradual coming to power and then dwells on their role in Persian society. The magi had a very mixed press in the Roman world, but Ammianus seems to take a rather positive view: they are specialists of the divine world, possessing reliable knowledge of all things religious. Nothing of this is very original, and again it is more interesting what Ammianus omits than what he actually tells us: though he mentions Zoroaster and his coming into contact with Brahmins in India, nothing is being said about the role of the Zoroastrian church in contemporary Persia.

The final passage of Ammianus' Persian digression is some sort of ‘anthropology’: the author lists factual or fictional attributes of Persian physical appearance and mentality: “in general” (*generaliter*) they are “almost all” (*paene omnes*) slender and dark, “with eyes grim as goats”, joined, curvy eyebrows, beards and “long shaggy hair”;⁴³ “all of them, without exception”, bear swords at all times, which Ammianus believes to be “an old Greek custom”.⁴⁴ What follows is a list of topical traits all related to decadence: the Persians have an extravagant sex life, are promiscuous, have numerous wives and concubines; on the other hand, they avoid lavish banqueting and “immoral relations with boys”; they also boast impeccable

39 Ibid., 6, 68 (*ipsi praeter alios frugalissimi pacatoris vitae cultores vitantes reliquorum mortali-um coetus*).

40 Ibid., 6, 45–47.

41 For instance Aria being treated immediately following Serica (Ptol. 6, 16–17). See Boeft et al. (2000), 209.

42 Ibid.

43 Amm. 23, 6, 75.

44 Ibid., 6, 76.

manners, refraining from urinating and defecating in public.⁴⁵ However, they do not eat in fixed intervals, but whenever they are hungry.⁴⁶ Ammianus' Persians appear "free and easy" (*dissoluti*) and "move about with such a laxity of their limbs and such an extravagant gait" that one could take them for *effeminatos*. But in fact they are *acerrimi bellatores*, formidable more through sophistication than through strength.⁴⁷ While they are "boastful, harsh and offensive", "flay men alive" and treat their servants most rigorously, they are also excessively law-obedient. Some of their laws are "detestable", namely the one that condemns all the relatives of a single offender to death. Ammianus praises Persian jurisdiction: in contrast to the Romans, they employ judges who know their business, not eloquent men. He reports an ancient custom, now defunct or altogether legendary, according to which judges had to sit on the skins of such predecessors who had been condemned for injustice.⁴⁸ Then follow some remarks on the Persians' military performance: training is constant, hard and of good quality; the *nobilitas* serves in the cavalry, which outweighs the infantry in vigour and prominence. However, the power of the Persian military is thwarted by constant fighting, which includes civil war.⁴⁹ Finally, the Persians wear clothes that "flutter in the wind", cover the whole body and are "gleaming with many colours".⁵⁰

Some of this, in particular the remarks about promiscuity, food and table manners, but also the passage on jurisdiction, is borrowed directly from Herodotos or from sources based on the *pater historiae*'s narrative, like Curtius Rufus and Diodoros. Some bits and pieces conspicuously contradict Herodotos: while the Greek historiographer reports the Persians to have adopted paederasty from the *Hellenes*, Ammianus – along with Curtius Rufus⁵¹ – believes them to abstain from this custom. But even where Ammianus differs from Herodotos, he accepts his analytical toolbox as timelessly relevant. The only subject where Ammianus possibly displays some degree of independence is the Persian military. Here, the historiographer could rely on his autopsy as a participant in Julian's war. Being an officer, he could observe the Persian army in action and judge their performance. Yet, even in this regard his description is hardly analytical and, from a professional point of view, rather poor.

This being said, it is remarkable how profoundly ahistoric this historian's narrative is. In the entire digression about Persia, there is no visible awareness of historical development, diachronic ruptures or structural patterns that may or may not be genetically related to each other. To Ammianus, the "Persians" are simply the "Persians", once and for all. Their portrayal is, hardly surprisingly, saturated with prejudice and stereotype. There is no evidence for any attempt to overcome, deconstruct or replace such established patterns.

45 Ibid., 6, 77–79. See Herodot. 1, 133; Xen. Cyrop. 8, 8, 11.

46 Amm. 23, 6, 79.

47 Ibid., 6, 80.

48 Ibid., 6, 81–82. See Herodot. 5, 25; Val. Max. 6, 3, ext. 3; Diod. 15, 10.

49 Amm. 23, 6, 83–84.

50 Ibid., 6, 84.

51 Curt. 10, 1, 26.

On the contrary. While Herodotos' Persian digression clearly betrays the author's intention to present a multi-dimensional image of the enemy the Greeks fought some two generations before him, the counterpart composed by Ammianus shows no trace of such a motley canvas. There are a few positive characteristics he sees in his Persians, but they are invariably put into perspective with the subsequent sentence: Persians fight gallantly, but their army is the instrument of a despotic system; Persian judges are commendable, but the legal system they represent is unduly harsh; Persians move freely and with grace, but they appear effeminate. This is what the audience expects: an enemy that can be reduced to a few pithy attributes; an enemy that can be abominated.

CYRUS TO ARSAKES, EZRA TO IZATES: PARTHIA AND PERSIANISM IN JOSEPHUS¹

Richard Fowler

You know, moreover, of the bondage in Babylon, where our people passed seventy years in exile and never reared their heads for liberty, until Cyrus granted it in gratitude to God; yes, it was through him that they were sent forth and re-established the temple-worship of their Ally.

Josephus, imploring the Jewish rebels in Jerusalem to surrender to Rome, 70 CE, as reported by himself: *BJ* 5.389.²

Josephus, as everybody knows, was in the camp of Titus at the siege of Jerusalem. He tells us that he begged the defenders to capitulate, and he was there when the Romans sacked the city and the Second Temple burned down. Afterwards, he was at great pains to emphasise that his patron had not desired this outcome and that the catastrophe had been brought on the rebels by their own acts. We might think he protests too much³; but however that may be, my concern here is with his broader historical outlook on the event.

Josephus's perspective on the burning of the Temple is complex and interesting. He was both a Jewish priest and aristocrat (albeit one who had thrown in his lot with Rome in general and the Flavians in particular), and a scholar and historian⁴, and thus a figure with a heavy investment in both the Jewish present and the Jewish past. His speech to the rebels reflects a consciousness that the events of 70 CE completed a cycle in the history of Judea, from the construction of the Second Temple under the royal authority of Cyrus and in reliance on Persian subsidy, to its destruction under Roman siege. The Temple had experienced its vicissitudes, of course; desecrated by the Seleukid Antiochos IV, re-consecrated by Judas the Maccabee, entered by Pompey and looted by Crassus, and then rebuilt by Herod the Great. It is only to be expected that this final cataclysm would have provoked renewed

1 An early draft of this paper was given at the conference on "Persianism in Antiquity", which was held in April 2014 at the Netherlands Institute in Istanbul. I should like to thank Rolf Strootman and Miguel John Versluys for their kind invitation to speak at the conference and their encouragement then and subsequently, the Netherlands Institute for its warm hospitality, and all the participants, in particular Josef Wiesehöfer, Rahim Shayegan, Michael Sommer, Matthew Canepa and Albert de Jong, for their helpful comments.

2 Translations of Josephus in this article are adapted from the relevant volume of the LCL series edited and translated by Thackeray (1926–1930), Marcus (1933–1937) Marcus & Wikgren (1963), Feldman (1965).

3 For contrasting views of Titus and the Temple, see e.g. Rajak (2002), p. 206–212 (who would allow Josephus's exoneration of Titus to stand) and Schwartz (2013), p. 136–139 (who would reject it).

4 See e.g. Jos. *BJ* 1.3; 1.15–16; *Ant.* 1.1–9; *Vit.* 1–12.

reflection on, among other things, the origins of the Temple and the significance of Achaemenid Persia in the re-establishment of the Jewish community in Judea.

After all, for peoples throughout west Asia and the eastern Mediterranean, the rise of Persia in the mid-sixth century changed everything. The famous fragment of Xenophanes of Colophon captures the sense that the Persian conquest represented a form of “year zero”:

So should you speak by the fire in the season of winter, lying on a soft couch, full of food, drinking sweet wine, chewing chick peas: “Who are you, from where among men, how many years do you have, sir? How old were you when the Mede arrived?”⁵

Again, from the very end of Achaemenid dominion, we recall Aeschines’s astonishment at Alexander’s smashing victories over the Persian superpower:

For it is not the life of men we have lived, but we were born to be a tale of wonder to posterity. Is not the king of the Persians – he who channelled Athos, he who bridged the Hellespont, he who demanded earth and water of the Greeks, he who dared to write in his letters that he was lord of all men from the rising of the sun unto its setting – is he not struggling now, no longer for lordship over others, but already for his life?⁶

One could not ignore Persia. In reality, of course, Greek individuals and Greek states made their accommodations with the Achaemenid empire, whether willingly or under compulsion. The predominant attitude of Greek literary discourse, however, was that the rise of Persia was disastrous, and its ultimate demise (whatever reservations one might have about Alexander) a miraculous deliverance.⁷

It could have been otherwise. Jewish perspectives on Persia are a potential corrective. Any assessment of these should start from the decree of Cyrus itself, as reported by biblical Ezra:

The decree of King Cyrus of Persia. The Lord the God of the heavens has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he himself has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. Whoever among you belongs to his people, may his God be with him; and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and build the house of the Lord the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. Let every Jew among us, wherever he is settled throughout the country, be helped by his neighbours with silver and gold, goods and livestock, in addition to the voluntary offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem.⁸

The patronage of non-Persian temples and cults by the Achaemenid kings seems to have been a recognisable policy; the parallel is often drawn with Cyrus’s support for the temple of Bēl (Marduk) at Babylon, as attested in the Cyrus Cylinder.⁹

Whether such patronage was primarily philanthropic or political is beside the point for our purposes (though we may suppose that policy was to the fore). What matters is that there was apparently every reason for Jewish writers to look back

5 The perspective is that of Greek Asia Minor: Xenophanes, fr. 22 Diels-Kranz; translation (and sentiment) from Murray (1993), p. 261.

6 Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon*, 132 (translation: Adams (1968)).

7 See e.g. Hall (1989), esp. p. 56–100.

8 Ezra 1.2–4. (This and other biblical translations below are all adapted from REB).

9 For the Cyrus Cylinder, see (e.g.) Kuhrt (1983); Briant (1996), p. 50–60, and (2002a), p. 40–9; McCaskie (2012), p. 160; Van der Spek (2014).

to Cyrus with approval or even affection. Their general perspective, one might assume, was the converse of that of Greek commentators.

Persian patronage of Judea did not stop, of course, with Cyrus. For example, Josephus, following biblical *Ezra* and the Greek *I Esdras*,¹⁰ reports that Xerxes, on succeeding his father Darius as king of Persia, wrote to his satraps and Ezra conferring further benefits on the Jewish people. Josephus's account adds the following detail:

Then he [Ezra] read the letter [of Xerxes] in Babylon to the Jews who were there, and, while he kept the letter itself, sent a copy of it to his countrymen who were in Media. When they learned of the king's orders and of his piety toward God as well as his goodwill toward Ezra, they were all greatly pleased, and many of them, taking along their possessions also, came to Babylon out of longing to return to Jerusalem.¹¹

There is more to be said about this passage. In general, however, our starting point is that there was every reason for a Jewish writer in Josephus's position to be profoundly interested in the Achaemenids, and apparently good reason too for him to be well disposed to them.

PERSIANISM, PARTHIA AND JEWISH PERSPECTIVES

Our primary concern here is not of course with Persia but with "Persianism". What do we mean by the term? Its kinship with concepts such as "Hellenism" or "Judaism" is clear; even so, it has the advantage over those terms that it is an obvious neologism, and thus not freighted with layers of ancient meaning. "Hellenism" and "Judaism", by contrast, struggle to escape entirely the ideological agenda of II Maccabees¹², or of early Christian writing.¹³

Of course, the Greeks had the term "Medism", but this had a specific (and derogatory) sense in the context of fifth-century Greek resistance to the Achaemenids.¹⁴ It carries a double meaning, implying both the adoption of Persian cultural practices (including dress and language) and political alignment with the Achaemenid empire, both illustrated by perhaps the two most famous practitioners of *Mēdismos*, the

10 *Ant.* 11.120–130; *Ezra* 7.1 ff.; *I Esdras* 8.1 ff. Josephus silently "corrects" both *Ezra* and *I Esdras*; while they imply that Artaxerxes succeeded Darius, Josephus expressly refers to "His [Darius's] son Xerxes" (11.120), and turns the biblical "letter of Artaxerxes" into a "letter of Xerxes" accordingly.

11 *Ant.* 11.131–133 (extract).

12 *Hellenismos*: II Macc. 4.13; *Ioudaïsmos*: II Macc. 2.21, 8.1, 14.38. These terms and their context have generated an enormous literature, of course, but see now the compelling arguments of Honigman (2014a).

13 On *Ioudaïsmos* and "-ismos" words generally in Greek, Mason (2007) is now fundamental.

14 Note too the equation of "Medes" and "Persians" in Greek conceptions of the Achaemenid empire. For *Mēdismos*, see e.g. Herodotos 4.165.3 (Arkesilaos of Kyrene); 8.92.2 (of Aegina, used ironically); Thucydides 1.95.5 (Pausanias the Spartan); 1.135.2 (Pausanias and Themistokles); Demosthenes 23.205 (Themistokles).

Spartan regent Pausanias and Themistokles the Athenian.¹⁵ Interestingly, *Mēdismos* seems to have been preferred in Greek to the more obvious *Persismos*.¹⁶

For its part, modern scholarship has produced the term “Iranism”; this has been used (notably by Wolski) to describe aspects specifically of Parthian royal ideology and culture. His argument, put simply, is that the public image of the Parthian Arsakid dynasty, and perhaps indeed Parthian elite culture in general, displays a duality, reflecting both “Hellenism” and “Iranism”. From the first century CE, it has been suggested, Iranism comes to predominate. Iranism in this context has both a particular meaning (the recognition of continuities with the Achaemenid empire and the attempt to appropriate the Achaemenid royal image) and a general one (such as the depiction of Parthian elites in contexts or costumes that we would categorise as “Iranian”).¹⁷

Persianism, I would suggest, is slightly different; narrower, in the sense that it is concerned primarily with the image of the Achaemenids, rather than with the culture of Iran in general; broader, in that the use of the term is not to be confined to analysis of the Parthian empire and of elite imagery in the late- and post-Hellenistic East. For my purposes here, various aspects of Persianism can be identified; these overlap, and in some circumstances may even appear mutually contradictory.

In its essence, the term may mark out a phenomenon, or a practice, or an individual or group, as an “outsider” with regard to Persia or the Achaemenids; if I “Persianise”, then by implication in some sense I am not (or not at the outset) “Persian”. At the same time, by labelling something as “Persianism” we are often recognising an attempt (more or less conscious) to be or appear Persian. This may mean that we are “calling the bluff” of the object in question: for example, if we describe the activities of Themistokles and Pausanias the regent as Persianism, we are highlighting the fact that, however many Persian banquets Pausanias might have held or however adept Themistokles might have become at court etiquette and Persian linguistic idiom, neither was in reality “Persian”.

Another possibility is that an individual might self-consciously maintain the status of an outsider, “dressing up” as a Persian for pragmatic or subversive purposes. It may be hard to distinguish this from the preceding example. If we characterise Themistokles’ activities as Persianism, are we criticising the performance of an outsider who was trying earnestly to be absorbed into the Persian elite? Or are

15 In general see Thucydides 1.95, 126–138. For Pausanias’s Persian dress, Persian banquets and Persian (and Egyptian) bodyguards, see Thucydides 1.130; and 1.138.1 for Themistokles’ study of the Persian language and Persian *epitēdeumata* (“customs”, “practices”) on his defection.

16 Note that Arrian uses the verb *Persizein* of Peukestas, appointee of Alexander the Great as satrap of Persis (*Anabasis* 7.6.3); the context indicates Macedonian hostility. Again, the specific elements of “Persism” identified by Arrian are dress and language; he also describes them (or has the Macedonians describe them) more generally as *barbarismos*. For *Persizein*, compare Strabo 11.11.8 C520 (in a purely ethnographic context, of the customs of the Siginnoi, a people from near the Caucasus).

17 On Parthian “Iranism” (also “neo-Iranism”), see e.g. Wolski (1991); (1993), p. 151–160. On “Iranian” aspects of Parthian costume and iconography, see e.g. Curtis (1998); (2000); (2004); (2007b).

we suggesting that Themistokles himself (as a number of Persians suspected¹⁸) was acting in bad faith, and effectively “winking at the (Greek) audience” from under his Persian disguise? It may be impossible to judge, but we must be aware that a “Persianist” pose may be adopted in earnest or in irony.

A third possibility is presented by the Roman Lucullus, the extravagance of whose parks near Naples prompted Tubero the Stoic to call him “Xerxes in a toga”.¹⁹ This piece of Persianism, we may suppose, was unconscious; it is not the point of Tubero’s pleasantry (I think) that Lucullus was *trying* to look like an Achaemenid.

Yet a fourth aspect is illustrated by the story of Esther and Mordecai in biblical *Esther*, who adopt the usages and dress of the Achaemenid elite while at the same time consistently and forcefully promoting their Jewish identity and Jewish practices;²⁰ there need be no contradiction between the two identities, it seems, and we need not (necessarily) assume that one of them is being presented to the world in bad faith.

Our next observation is that Persianism does not exist in a void. If we describe behaviour or a phenomenon as Persianist, then it stands in contradistinction to something else, most obviously, in the context of this article, Hellenism and Judaism.

As we have seen, the practice of Persianism might not necessarily involve any form of ethnic claim. One might in principle engage in Persianism without making a claim to Achaemenid descent or to Persian (or Iranian) “ethnicity”. The Achaemenid empire itself readily absorbed and Persianised non-Persian elites: Pausanias and Themistokles are good examples, as are Mordecai and Esther. Even so, one common phenomenon which can be understood as a kind of Persianism is the claim to Achaemenid descent, advanced by rulers in various parts of western Asia in late-Hellenistic and Roman/Parthian times. Perhaps the most spectacular example is in the royal monuments of Antiochos I of Kommagene, which depict and describe his Achaemenid (and Macedonian) ancestors, or purported ancestors, in enormous detail.²¹ The important point about such claims is not whether they were true (though they may have been), but that they were made. Dynasts sought legitimacy by presenting themselves not merely as like the Achaemenids but as their actual descendants.

The examples given so far illustrate a further point. Persianism is a phenomenon both of the Achaemenids’ own times (e. g. Themistokles, Esther) and centuries later (e. g. the royal house of Kommagene). Self-evidently, the Persianism of the Achaemenids’ contemporaries and that of their successors are rather different in purpose and effect; even so, as will be apparent, I hope, by the end of this article, the one informs the other, and the connections can be tight.

18 See e. g. Plutarch, *Themistokles* 29.1.

19 Plutarch, *Lucullus* 39.3.

20 Esther receives the Persian royal diadem: *Esther* 1.17; Mordecai receives the king’s signet ring and a royal Persian robe and crown: *Esther* 6.8–11; 8.2, 8.15. Esther intercedes with the king on behalf of the Jews: *Esther* 8.5–6; Mordecai’s pre-eminence both at the Persian court and amongst the Jews: *Esther* 10.3.

21 See Facella (2006), p. 250–297; Jacobs in this volume.

The kind of Persianism with which we are primarily concerned here is that of the Parthian empire. It involves an awareness or consciousness of the Persian (specifically Achaemenid) past, and in particular its royal past. At the same time, this interest in the Achaemenids is not mere antiquarianism; it also embraces a desire to put Persia (or “Persia”) to present use for ideological or political ends. It does not necessarily require, indeed may in reality eschew, an understanding of the Achaemenid past that we would regard as historically accurate. Rather, it involves creating or reshaping or imagining that past. The most important feature of this kind of Persianism is current ideological usefulness.

The rest of this article examines the depictions of Parthian kings and the Parthian “ruling elites” in the writings of Josephus, and attempts to make connections between those and his treatment of Achaemenid Persia. It can be no more than a brief sketch (since the subject of Persianism in ancient Jewish writing, or even in Josephus’s works as a whole, would merit a separate volume of its own); but it will, I hope, at least draw attention to some rich and fertile texts.

Let us start with a number of propositions that inform the remainder of the analysis. These may themselves be contested, or require further nuance, but at any rate they set out a framework or heuristic structure for the arguments that follow.

First, Parthian kings sought at some level of consciousness to align themselves with Achaemenid traditions of kingship.

Secondly, at the same time, Parthian kings retained some form of consciousness of the Seleukid past, and sought to position themselves (at least to some degree) within Hellenistic dynastic traditions as well.

Thirdly, in the light of this, a Jewish perspective on Parthian elites is potentially highly instructive. After all, there were substantial Jewish populations both inside and outside the Parthian empire, most obviously in Babylonia and Judea, but also elsewhere. The significance of the Jewish material is sharpened by the fact that, during the last two centuries or so of the Parthian empire²², the Jewish population in Judea suffered a series of shattering crises in its relations with Roman imperial power structures (and also with Roman culture and religious practice), of which the destruction of the Temple was the most dramatic but by no means the last. On the Roman side, the Jewish community in this period was one under pressure.

Fourthly, the Achaemenid past, whether remembered, imagined or constructed, remained a vital force in Jewish conceptions of their identity in Hellenistic and Roman times. We have already seen the fundamental importance attributed to Cyrus and his successors in Jewish writings as the human instruments behind the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its Temple and the return of a substantial Jewish community to Judea after the Babylonian exile.

Lastly, therefore, in these circumstances, the Jewish experience of the Parthian kings carries a special charge. Jewish writers, if anyone, would seem ideally placed to reflect (or criticise, or subvert) those aspects of Parthian royal ideology which sought to appropriate the Achaemenid past. Jewish thinkers had their own uses for the Achaemenids. They also had ongoing difficulties with Rome, Parthia’s rival.

22 It ceased to exist in the 220s CE.

Thus, unlike the general run of Greek writers, their outlook on both Persia and Parthia might in principle be expected to be positive.

PARTHIA AND THE ACHAEMENIDS

It seems abundantly clear that Parthian rulers sought in various ways to align themselves with what they conceived of as the Achaemenid past. Some obvious examples are the use of the title “King of Kings” in official Arsakid contexts, on coins and in documents, from the reign of Mithridates II (c. 124/3–88/7 BCE), or the appropriation for Arsakid monuments of ideologically charged sites with an Achaemenid connection, such as Bisitun²³.

Further, at a more general level, and apparently increasingly from the first century CE, Arsakid royal ideology appears to align itself with cultural practices and traditions that we would now characterise as (and that perhaps they themselves would have understood to be) “Iranian”.²⁴ It may not always be possible to draw a clear distinction between cases where the Arsakids merely placed themselves in a general Iranian cultural-religious tradition, and cases where they portrayed themselves specifically as heirs to the Achaemenids. Indeed, no doubt sometimes both strategies were in play simultaneously, and it may well be that the distinction was not (or not always) clearly articulated anyway. The Arsakids’ primary concern, after all, would not have been antiquarian precision.

At the same time, Parthian rulers and elites were not culturally detached from the wider Hellenistic world. In spite of a tendency in previous generations of scholarship to treat the Parthian state as an alien irruption into the Hellenistic world, and thus by implication as somehow not part of it²⁵, three things now seem clear: Parthian elites were anchored in a thoroughgoing way into Hellenistic cultural practices;²⁶ they were able to “speak Greek”, both in the literal sense of conducting business with *Hellēnes* in their empire in Greek²⁷, and in the ideological sense of describing themselves explicitly as *Philellēnes*;²⁸ and they were heavily intermarried with the Seleukid royal family, amongst others.²⁹

23 “King of Kings” on coins (in Greek): Sellwood (1980), types 27 ff.; in Greek inscriptions: e. g. Artabanos II’s letter to Susa of 21 CE (Welles (1934), no. 75, p. 299–306); in Babylonian tablets (in Akkadian): e. g. Sachs & Hunger (1996), no. -110 ‘Rev’ 1, no. -108, Upper edge 1. Use of Bisitun: e. g. Fowler (2005).

24 See note 17 above. For what this means for Parthian elite portraiture and iconography, see again e. g. Curtis (1998); (2000); (2004); (2007b). See also Strootman in this volume.

25 Note e. g. the comparative (not total) invisibility of Parthia in Tarn and Griffith (1952); Rostovtzeff (1941).

26 See e. g. the evidence of Nisa in modern Turkmenistan: Invernizzi (1998); (2001).

27 Cf. the examples in note 23 above.

28 Used consistently as a title of Parthian kings on their coins, at least in Mesopotamia, from around 141/0 BCE under Mithridates I down to the first century CE: see Sellwood (1980), nos. 13/1–4 and *passim*.

29 For Arsakid/Seleukid intermarriage, see e. g. Sullivan (1990), p. 117, 380–1 n. 42. In any event, the expression “Hellenistic world” is itself ideologically charged: the world it describes was

BRIDGING THE EUPHRATES

Our focus here is not, however, on the Persianism of the Parthian public image as constructed by the Arsakids themselves, but as it was understood, interpreted and constructed by Jewish observers, in particular Josephus.

One further methodological problem thus confronts us. One might reasonably ask whether it is even meaningful to talk about “Jewish perspectives” on either Persia or Parthia. We can identify both general and specific difficulties here.

As a first point, even the use of the term “Jewish” in this context is problematic. Many modern scholars would prefer “Judean”.³⁰ There are in principle at least three broad categories of people we might wish to identify: those inhabitants of Judea and its environs who considered themselves, or were considered by others, to be *Ioudaioi* (as Josephus defines the term,³¹ with both a geographical and an ethnic sense); those living outside Judea who considered themselves such (as we would say now, by ethnicity);³² and converts, who adopted (again, in Josephus’s terminology) the *nomoi* or *ethē* or *patria* of the *Ioudaioi*. An example of the last category is the royal family of Adiabene, a kingdom in the vicinity of Irbil in what is now north-eastern Iraq, whom we will consider further below.

Even membership of these categories could be contested and a matter of keen debate. Josephus’s own sardonic observations on the Samaritans are in point: he suggests that, whenever the *Ioudaioi* were prospering under a benevolent imperial government, the Samaritans claimed to be *Ioudaioi*; whenever they were not, the

complex and the term “Hellenistic” hardly does justice to that complexity. Even if one looks only at the Seleukid dynasty, one must recall, among other things, (1) its own ideological alignment with Mesopotamian traditions of kingship in general and the Neo-Babylonian empire of Nebuchadnezzar and his dynasty in particular (e.g. Sherwin-White (1987); Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993), p. 149–161, 215–216), and (2) its cultural intertwining with Iranian and (more broadly) west-Asian models of kingship. We have only to recall that the second Seleukid king, Antiochos I, was the son of Apama, a Bactrian princess, and was brought up in Babylon (Sherwin-White (1987), p. 7–8), while in 222 BCE Antiochos III married Laodike, the daughter of Mithridates of Pontus, in an elaborate ceremony at Seleukeia/Zeugma, the “Bridge City” on the Euphrates (Polyb. 5.43). As Polybios notes, Mithridates himself claimed to be a descendant of one of the “Seven” who assassinated Smerdis and put Darius I on the Persian throne, and thus traced his royal authority back to a grant of Darius. See also Canepa in this volume.

30 See e.g. (from the very substantial literature) Mason (2007) (*Ioudaios* in Greco-Roman times should be understood as describing an ethnic group, not a “religion”, and thus translated “Judean”); Esler (2009), p. 73 (*Ioudaios* in Josephus’s *Against Apion* should be translated as “Judean”, not “Jew” or “Jewish”); contrast Schwartz (2007) (arguing for the translation “Jewish”); and Cohen (1994), p. 37–38 (in Hellenistic times, it means “Judean”, with an ethno-geographic meaning; by Roman times, “Jewish”, with religious connotations).

31 Josephus, *Ant.* 11.173: etymology of the term *Ioudaioi*.

32 For example, the large populations east of the Euphrates. Those who assisted the Hasmonean Hyrkanos II in his return from Parthian captivity to Judea are described by Josephus as *homoethneis*, that is, “of the same (i.e. Jewish / Judean) *ethnos*”; see *BJ* 1.434, and compare *Ant.* 15.14–15: when Hyrkanos was released by the Parthian king and allowed to settle in Babylon, the whole Jewish *ethnos* east of the Euphrates honoured him as high priest and king.

Samaritans emphasised their distinctiveness³³. Again, and notoriously, Josephus quotes the last Hasmonean king, the Parthian-backed Antigonos, disparaging his rival, Herod, as “Idumaeen, that is, semi-Jewish”.³⁴ In this article (primarily to avoid ambiguity, and with some misgivings), I reserve “Judean” for geographical description, in the sense “of Judea”, while using “Jewish” to refer to the wider ethnic and cultural *milieu*, including communities outside geographical Judea and also converts. I concede that this is not a wholly satisfactory distinction.

The fact that the Jewish world (if we can so call it) was split between the Roman and Parthian empires is significant, but of course that did not make it unique. Cities and communities of “Greeks” (or let us say, to avoid question-begging, *Hellenes*) continued to exist within the Parthian empire and are attested in both the historiography and the epigraphical record.³⁵ *Philellēn* was a constant royal title in the Parthian west for a century and a half from Mithridates I’s conquest of Seleukeia on the Tigris,³⁶ and we can readily assume that this was intended to mean something to the empire’s subjects, not merely to its neighbours.

The Jewish experience of Parthia is perhaps distinctive in this respect, however. The Jewish communities east of the Euphrates were substantial, as Josephus is at pains to emphasise. His account of the letter of Xerxes to Ezra and the satraps, described above, records the enthusiasm of many Jews to return to Judea from Babylonia, and then continues as follows:³⁷

But the Israelite nation [*laos tōn Israēlitōn*] as a whole remained in the country [i. e. east of the Euphrates]. In this way has it come about that there are two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while until now there have been ten tribes beyond the Euphrates – countless myriads whose number cannot be ascertained.

Thus if we wish to understand the Jewish evidence on the Roman and Parthian empires, we must recall that, contrary to what the weight of material (at least prior to the third century CE) might suggest, the Jewish experience is not only part of the Roman east, but as much or more part of the Parthian west.

Certainly, the major focus of Jewish concerns, Jerusalem, its Temple and hinterland, was outside the Parthian sphere, except for a brief and, for Jewish observers, rather discouraging episode (to which we shall return) when the Parthian crown prince Pakoros occupied the city during his sweep through the Levant in 40 BCE. Even so, the Jewish population within the long-term limits of the Parthian empire was very significant, especially in Mesopotamia. In addition, of course, the Jewish

33 Josephus on the Samaritans: e. g. *Ant.* 9.288–291; 10.184; 11.84–85, 88, 114, 303, 340–345, 12.257–261.

34 Or “semi-Judean”: *Hēmīōudaios* (*Ant.* 14.403).

35 See e. g. Tacitus, *Ann.* 6.42 and Josephus, *Ant.* 18.372–374 on Seleukeia on the Tigris; Welles (1934), no. 75, p. 299–306 on Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa) (note 23 above), and see in general Le Rider (1965); note also Isidore of Charax, *FGrHist* 781 F2, and his use of the term *polis Hellenis* to describe settlements east of the Euphrates (e. g. (1), (2), (3), (19)).

36 Note 28 above.

37 *Ant.* 11.133: see notes 10 and 11 above. The original, Aramaic version of the *Jewish War* was supposedly aimed at readers within the Parthian empire, including the *homophylon* (i. e. the Jewish population) beyond the Euphrates and the Adiabeniens: *BJ* 1.3, 6.

communities of what is now Iraq had arguably greater practical significance for the future and development of Jewish identity than those in Judea itself. The last two centuries of the Parthian empire can be seen as a pivotal period in Jewish history. On the one hand, the Roman eastern provinces witnessed an ongoing crisis in Jewish relations with Rome, where the disaster of 70 CE was followed by further catastrophes, most notably the Bar-Kokhba war of the 130s. On the other hand, in the flourishing of the Jewish communities east of the Euphrates in late-Parthian times we see the environment which produced the great rabbinical schools of the third century and later, perhaps the dominant force in shaping Jewish identity thereafter. We should recall that, ultimately, from the Parthian western provinces emerged the Babylonian Talmud.

At the same time, it is misleading to regard the Roman and Parthian worlds as isolated spheres, sealed off from each other. Of course, the Euphrates might be regarded, both politically and ideologically, as the boundary between the two empires. Thus when Sulla met the Parthian ambassador Orobazos in 96 BCE to agree a treaty between Rome and Parthia, the location chosen was a bridge over the Euphrates, seemingly a symbolic “neutral space” where the two empires bounded each other.³⁸ Even so, the river’s significance varied over time. We might contrast the “expansionist” Parthia of the time of Pakoros’s invasion of Syria and Judea in 40 BCE with the apparently non-interventionist Parthia of the mid-first century CE.³⁹ The position in the second century and thereafter was different again, as Roman armies overran the Parthian west repeatedly, though proved unable to hold it for long; as a summary of that era we have only to recall the vivid rabbinical comment: “Helzon, Hadyav [Adiabene] and Nisibis which she [Rome] sometimes swallows and sometimes spits out”.⁴⁰

In reality, the Roman / Parthian border is best regarded as a “permeable membrane”, with significant movement between the sides. It was permeable in particular for Jewish groups. One famous example is also an instance of royal mobility: Helene, the mother of Izates, king of Adiabene, travelled to Jerusalem following the royal family’s conversion to worship at the Temple. It so happened that the city was enduring famine at the time, which Helene helped to alleviate by purchasing food from Egypt and Cyprus. According to Josephus:

38 Orobazos and Sulla: Plutarch, *Sulla* 5.4–5. Note likewise the treaty of Vitellius and Artabanos II of the mid-30s CE (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.96–105, esp. 102), agreed on a bridge in the middle of the Euphrates. Compare again the wedding of the Seleukid Antiochos III and Laodike of Pontus at Zeugma (note 29 above), though here the symbolism lies not in the meeting of two separate realms at the Euphrates, but the unity of the Seleukid empire across it.

39 Note Agrippa II’s speech to the Jewish would-be rebels in 66 CE, at the outset of the revolt against Rome (*BJ* 2.388–389). Do not expect help from your *homophyloi* (“kinsmen”) over the Euphrates and in Adiabene, he says: “the Parthian would not permit it; for he is careful to maintain the truce with the Romans, and would regard it as a violation of the treaty if any of those subject to him were to march against them.” We will return to this passage.

40 *Qiddushin* 72a: see Oppenheimer (1983), p. 21.

She has thus left a very great name that will be famous forever among our whole people for her benefaction. When her son Izates learned of the famine, he likewise sent a great sum of money to the leaders of the Jerusalemites.⁴¹

Helene and Izates thus put themselves firmly in the context of royal euergetism within the Roman sphere, notwithstanding the fact that their kingdom lay within Parthian-controlled Iraq. Indeed, their connection with Judea went deeper than that; both were buried at Jerusalem, not in Adiabene. Further, several members of the Adiabenean royal family seem to have kept palaces in Jerusalem as well.⁴²

Mobility between Parthian and Roman spheres was not just the preserve of Jewish royal families. Josephus tells the story from Herodian times of one Zamaris,⁴³ a “Jewish man from Babylonia”, who had crossed the Euphrates with five hundred mounted archers and one hundred kinsmen and gone to Antioch. Herod the Great induced him with tax exemption to move to Batanea, to deploy his Babylonians as, in effect, a police force to control the Trachonites. This Zamaris did, establishing fortresses and a village called Bathyra, and protecting Jewish pilgrims coming from Babylonia to sacrifice in Jerusalem from the Trachonites. Josephus reports that he grew very prosperous, at least until the Romans removed his tax exemption.

This is a rich passage, although the full range of its implications is beyond our scope here. Josephus describes Zamaris with some care, both as *Ioudaios* and as *Babylōnios*; this simultaneous emphasis on both aspects of his identity is significant, and complicates our reading of both terms; is “Babylonian” here purely a geographical description, or an ethnic one too? We learn as well of the traffic in pilgrims to Jerusalem; this must have been on a considerable scale if it justified Herod in setting up effectively a petty principedom to protect them. One last point merits emphasis; even in the (comparative) stability of the Herodian period, it was possible for a Jewish Babylonian with a modest band of armed retainers to set himself up, with royal blessing, as a largely autonomous prince within the Herodian realm.

Similarly, within the Parthian sphere, King Izates of Adiabene was able to take instruction from two Jewish teachers. The first was a merchant called Ananias, who met him in Charax Spasinu, at the mouth of the Gulf, and accompanied him to Adiabene. Thereafter he was also visited in Adiabene by one Eleazar from Galilee, a man with a reputation for strictness in interpreting Jewish law.⁴⁴ The fact that the presence of these men deep in the Parthian empire passes wholly without comment by Josephus tells its own story; there was nothing remarkable in finding a Jewish teacher from Galilee in the environs of Irbil, or in a Jewish merchant travelling the length of the Tigris from Charax to Adiabene.

41 *Ant.* 20.52–3.

42 The tombs of Helene and Izates: *Ant.* 20.95; *BJ* 5.55, 119, 147; Fowler (2010), p. 69 n. 42. Palaces of Helene and of her son Monobazos: *BJ* 5.252–3; 6.355. Palace of Grapte, a relative of “King Izas of Adiabene”: *BJ* 4.567.

43 *Ant.* 17.23–31. Zamaris is described both as a “*Ioudaios* from Babylonia” (23) and as a “*Babylōnios*” (26, 29). Compare the term “*Babylōnioi Ioudaioi*” in *Vit.* 54.

44 Izates and Ananias: *Ant.* 20.34–35, 40–42, 46–47. Izates and Eleazar: *Ant.* 20.43–46. The dispute between Ananias (who argued that circumcision was not necessary for a convert) and Eleazar (who insisted that it was) has provoked much discussion, but is not our concern here.

PERSIANISM AND THE MACCABEES/HASMONEANS

Any attempt to survey the full range of Jewish writing from the Hellenistic period on Persia and the Achaemenids is well beyond the scope of this article. It is worth dwelling briefly, however, on the Maccabean/Hasmonean dynasty of Judea. The Seleukid Antiochos IV Epiphanes' plundering of the Temple and persecution of his Jewish subjects, their revolt under Mattathias and his son Judas the Maccabee from about 166 BCE, and the establishment of the Hasmonean high priesthood and then monarchy (the latter from Aristoboulos I, who was, according to Josephus, the first to put on the royal diadem in Judea since the Babylonian exile),⁴⁵ might seem fertile ground for observing Persianism. After all, it is in precisely this environment, in which the Seleukid empire was splitting in pieces, and new dynasties were rising to power, that one finds the image of Achaemenid Persia being widely invoked, as a source of dynastic authority and a justification of empire. It was during the century or so from the Maccabean revolt to the end of the Hasmonean dynasty in which both the Arsakids and the royal house of Kommagene, among others, made vigorous efforts to appropriate the Persian past for their own uses. Are any reflections of this visible in Judea?

Some Jewish texts of the period do consciously hark back to Achaemenid times. For example, *II Maccabees*, a history of Seleukid Judea down to the Maccabean victories of 161 BCE, contains a preface which preserves two pieces of (purported) correspondence from the Jews of Jerusalem to those of Egypt. The second describes in detail the activities of Nehemiah in sacrificing at the Temple at Jerusalem, drawing an explicit parallel with the purification of the Temple by Judas the Maccabee in 164 BCE, and concludes:

These same facts are set out in the official records and in the memoirs of Nehemiah. Just as Nehemiah collected the chronicles of the kings, the writings of prophets, the works of David, and royal letters about sacred offerings, to found his library, in the same way Judas has collected for us all the documents that had been dispersed as a result of the recent conflict. They are in our possession, and if ever you need any of them, send messengers for them.⁴⁶

The letter aligns Judas's activities with those of Nehemiah, restorer (along with Ezra) of the Temple under Persian patronage. It also aligns them both with the traditions of Jewish kingship from before the Babylonian exile and as far back as David. This, I would suggest, is the crucial point. While the Achaemenid "background" to the restoration of the Temple was no doubt important to the Maccabees/Hasmoneans, there was neither good reason nor any credible means for them to appropriate the Achaemenid past for their own use. They could not claim Achaemenid descent and seem not to have invoked in any systematic way Achaemenid authority or precedent for their restoration of the Temple cult and Jewish practices; one supposes that this is because there would have been no obvious ideological benefit in doing so. Rather, the past with which the house of Hasmonai aligned itself was the past

45 In 104/3 BCE: see *Ant.* 13.301; Schürer (1973), p. 216–218. According to Strabo, it was his brother and successor, Alexander Iannaios, who took this step: Strabo 16.2.40 C762.

46 *II Macc.* 2.13–15.

of kingship and high priesthood in Judea itself. For this there were models readily to hand.⁴⁷

Likewise, the role of the Arsakids in *I* and *II Maccabees* and even in Josephus's Hasmonean narrative⁴⁸ (at least in all but its latest parts) is peripheral to the point of invisibility.⁴⁹ This might seem odd in view of what was happening the wider Seleukid empire, especially in the period covered by *I Maccabees*, which narrates the period down to the death of Simon in 135/4 BCE and is aware of the activities of John Hyrkanos I (who died in 104 BCE). The Arsakids had occupied Babylonia by 141 BCE.⁵⁰ Once again, however, whatever the importance of the Parthian empire in the broad geopolitical realities of the late second and early first centuries BCE, it was not significant in Hasmonean ideology.

JOSEPHUS AS OBSERVER

By contrast, the Parthians are very prominent in Josephus's accounts of the century or so between Crassus' disastrous defeat at Karrhai in 53 BCE and the arrival of Florus as Roman procurator of Judea in 64 CE.⁵¹ Not only does Josephus discuss Parthian involvement in Judean affairs (most obviously Pakoros's invasion of 40–38 BCE) and Roman engagement with Parthia (such as Crassus's campaign itself, or Vitellius's diplomacy with Artabanos II in the 30s CE); he devotes large sections of books 18 and 20 of the *Jewish Antiquities* to descriptions of the internal affairs of the Parthian empire. Three of these, it is true, explicitly concern themselves with aspects of the Jewish experience of Parthian rule;⁵² but others deal with matters of internal Arsakid dynastic politics.⁵³

It is striking that Josephus gives so much space to Parthia in this period, in particular in view of his earlier comparative silence (a reflection of *I* and *II Maccabees*). The size and significance of the Jewish population subject to Parthia perhaps played a part (though it makes the earlier reticence more surprising), along with the fact that the Parthian world was impinging more on specifically Judean affairs in

47 For Hasmonean use of "reinvented" or "rediscovered traditions" of specifically Jewish high priesthood and kingship, see Rajak (1996) (esp. p.108). On *I* and *II Maccabees* and the legitimising of Maccabee/Hasmonean rule, see Honigman (2014a) (esp. pp. 119–181). Hasmonean numismatics confirms the substantial irrelevance of "Persianism": in accordance with Jewish custom, but contrary to almost universal practice elsewhere in the post-Achaemenid and post-Seleukid worlds, there is no royal portraiture on their coins at all: Schürer Vol. I (1973), p. 602–5.

48 By which I mean roughly *Ant.* 13.230 to the end of 14, and the summary in *BJ* 1.54–357.

49 NB fleeting appearances in *I Macc.* 14.1–3; *I Macc.* 15.22–3; *Ant.* 13.184–186, 249–253.

50 See e.g. Fowler (2005), p. 138 and n. 36; and note 28 above.

51 Especially in *Ant.* 18–20 (from the fall of Archelaos to the arrival of Florus), which is best understood as a unit.

52 The story of Asinaios and Anilaios (*Ant.* 18.310–373), the fate of the Jewish community of Seleukeia on the Tigris (*Ant.* 18.374–379), and the story of Izates, King of Adiabene (*Ant.* 20.17–96).

53 The story of Thesmoussa (*AJ* 18.39–45), and the civil war of Artabanos II and Vonones I (*AJ* 18.46–52).

this period, most obviously by reason of Pakoros's invasion, but also by the kind of "soft power" manifest in the Adiabenean royal family's euergetism in Jerusalem, or the flow of pilgrims from the east to the Temple. No doubt, at a more general level, Josephus also reflects Roman engagement with Parthia; after Crassus's defeat it must have been apparent to Roman eyes that Parthia was the new superpower in the east, something that was by no means clear when the empires of Tigranes the Great of Armenia and Mithridates VI of Pontus were still ascendant. It can also be argued that relations between the Parthians and their Jewish subjects and neighbours were generally cordial (more so than Jewish/Roman relations), and that this too played its part in shaping Josephus's narrative.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, Josephus himself is hardly an uncomplicated observer of Parthia, or for that matter of the Parthians' Jewish subjects. When he completed the *Jewish Antiquities*,⁵⁵ he had long since thrown in his lot with Rome and was, at least to all appearances, a committed and influential member of the Flavian elite.

Josephus scholarship has developed substantially in recent decades. Where once the *Jewish Antiquities* might have been deprecated as an ineptly-stitched patchwork of borrowings from other writers, many critics have come to see Josephus as a competent historian (at the very least), and moreover as a sophisticated thinker not above irony or subversive criticism of his own societies, both Jewish and Roman.⁵⁶

One significant aspect of Josephus the historian is his self-consciousness. He is not reticent in describing his activities on both sides in the *Jewish War*, and also prepared a detailed autobiography, apparently as an appendix to the *Jewish Antiquities*.⁵⁷ At the same time, he is consistently alive to past parallels for present circumstances. It would hardly surprise to find these two tendencies interacting with each other, and indeed, in book 10 of the *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus shows particular enthusiasm for the stories of Daniel; so much so that it has been argued that at some level Josephus, the prophet of the rise of the Flavian dynasty at Rome, saw himself as the heir of Daniel, the prophet of the fall of the Neo-Babylonians and the rise of Persia.⁵⁸ But although the Daniel of the *Book of Daniel* was depicted as the associate of kings of many dynasties, his relations with his royal patrons were never wholly uncritical or wholly trusting.⁵⁹

54 In general see Neusner (1969), p. 23–73, esp. 31–3, 70–73.

55 In 93/4 CE: *Ant.* 20.267, and see e. g. Rajak (2002), p. 237–238.

56 The bibliography is extensive, but see in general Rajak (2002), and, for two "poles" of the contemporary debate, Schwartz (2013) (e. g. p. 10–14: source-criticism is not to be despised), and Mason (2009a), p. 36–41; (2009b), p. 106 (Josephus as a genuine historian). For the ironic or subversive Josephus, see e. g. Mason (2005); Barclay (2005).

57 As implied by *Ant.* 20.266; see Schürer Vol. I (1973), p. 53–4.

58 Josephus and Daniel: see e. g. Mason (1994); Begg and Spilsbury (2005), p. 267, 307–9. Note that Josephus, the historian of the fall of the Second Temple, equates himself too with Jeremiah, the prophet of the fall of the First: *BJ* 5.391–3 (from his speech to the Jewish rebels at Jerusalem, on which see the epigraph to this article); see also Rajak (2002), p. 170–171.

59 In the reign of Cyrus, Daniel is described as predicting the downfall of Persia (Daniel 10–12), just as he prophesied the downfall of the Neo-Babylonian monarchy to its rulers (Daniel 2, 5, 7).

Josephus's analysis, too, is not always to be taken at face value. Two examples must suffice. The first is the epigraph to this article, where Josephus has himself remind the rebels at Jerusalem that they owed the rebuilding of the Temple to Cyrus. On examination, this passage reveals itself as a masterpiece of special pleading. Josephus's case is that, for the Jewish people, quietism is the only way to prosper. The rebels should put down their arms because the Temple was re-founded not by force, but by God working through an external instrument, Cyrus. There is of course no place in such an assessment for the efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah, still less for the militarism of the Maccabees, the success of whose work in re-consecrating the Temple and resisting the Seleukids by force occupies so many chapters of Josephus's own works.

As a further example, one might recall his account of Agrippa II's speech to the Jewish would-be rebels at the outset of the revolt in 66 CE: they should expect no help from beyond the Euphrates and Adiabene, he told them, as the King of Parthia would not permit it. Not long afterwards, and entirely without comment, Josephus reports the involvement of kinsmen of King Monobazus of Adiabene and one "Silas the Babylonian" on the side of the rebels in an engagement with the Roman army outside Jerusalem.⁶⁰

If nothing else, these deadpan remarks remind us that these rich and complex texts must be handled with care. Josephus may indeed have been *Daniel togatus*, but as with his exemplar, he is not always in earnest and his own meaning is not always obvious.

PERSIANISM IN JOSEPHUS

Cases where Josephus makes a specific connection between the Persian past and his own times are few and far between. Two contrasting examples stand out, and the first is a very striking detail from his account of Daniel; this may be significant in itself, given Josephus's particular interest in him.

King Darius [...] showed Daniel extraordinarily high honour by designating him the first of his friends [*philoï*]. And Daniel, being now so renowned and distinguished because of his reputation as a man dear to God, built at Ekbatana in Media a fortress which was a very beautiful work and wonderfully made, and remains and is preserved to this day; it appears to those who view it to have been recently constructed and to have been completed on the very day on which the visitor sees it, so fresh and radiant is its beauty [...] In this fortress they bury the kings of Media, Persia and Parthia even now, and the person to whose care it is entrusted is a Jewish priest; this custom is observed to this very day.⁶¹

This is an odd passage in various respects. The reference to Daniel's fortress in Ekbatana is sometimes conflated in modern scholarship with the supposed "tomb of

60 Agrippa's speech: *BJ* 2.388–389 (see note 39 above). Relatives of the King of Adiabene and Silas the Babylonian in action against the Romans: *BJ* 2.520. See Mason (2005), p. 271, for this example, and *passim* for others.

61 *Ant.* 10.263–265 (extracts). One assumes that "this very day" means Josephus's own time, unless the passage has been borrowed wholesale from an unknown source.

Daniel”, which was described in medieval times and is still identified today.⁶² The “tomb”, however, was (and is) at Susa, while Josephus is clearly speaking here of Ekbatana. That is not all: Ekbatana was the royal burial place neither of the Achaemenids, nor of the Arsakids.⁶³

For all its strangeness, however, the excursus is ideologically highly significant. Josephus, who seems ready to depict himself as the new Daniel, directly links the Achaemenid royal past and the Parthian royal present through a monument built by Daniel. The miraculous fortress never ages and looks newly built, remaining forever in a sort of eternal present, just as, one supposes, a Parthian king might seek to promote himself as a fresh, contemporary Achaemenid. Most striking of all is Josephus’s conclusion: it is to a loyal Jewish priestly guardian that those kings of Persia, Media and Parthia owe their protection in death, just as (he rather implies) the first two dynasties did in life to Daniel.

A very different and much more commonplace use of the Persian past is to be found in the story of Glaphyra. She was the wife of Alexander, son of Herod the Great and Mariamme. This made her a rival of Salome, Herod’s sister, whom Antipater, Herod’s son by another wife, had set against Mariamme’s children. At one level, her history is no more than a minor incident in the internecine dynastic rivalries of Herodian Judea, but Glaphyra was also the daughter of King Archelaos of Kappadokia.

Salome’s hostility [to Mariamme’s sons] was aggravated by Glaphyra, Alexander’s wife, who boasted of her noble ancestry and claimed to be mistress of all the ladies at court, because she was descended on her father’s side from Temenos, on her mother’s from Darius son of Hystaspes. On the other hand, she was constantly taunting with their low birth Herod’s sister and his wives, all of whom had been chosen for their beauty and not for their family.⁶⁴

Glaphyra claims descent both from the kings of Macedonia (through Temenos, the mythical founder of the dynasty) and from the Achaemenids. The assertion of dual legitimacy from Persia and Macedonia is interesting, but hardly unusual for the time; as we have seen, Kommagenian and Parthian royal ideology are two obvious parallels. Even so, while we are familiar enough with the idea of a claim to Achaemenid (or Temenid) descent in, for example, the numinous environment of Antiochos I’s cult monuments at Nemrud Dağı, what is novel (and novelistic) about Josephus’s account of Glaphyra is that he puts the Persianist pose into a domestic, almost comical setting at court. Her claim to be the heiress of Darius and Alexander the Great is pitched at a level of family snobbery and sibling rivalry.⁶⁵

62 See Coloru in this volume; Marcus (1937), note to 10.265; Begg & Spilsbury (2005), p. 307–309.

63 The tombs of the Achaemenid kings were at Pasargadae (from Cyrus), then Naqš-i Rostam (Darius onwards), then Persepolis (Artaxerxes II onwards): Briant (1996), p. 106–8, 185–187, 694 (= 2002a, p. 94–6, 172–174, 675), while those of (at least) the early Arsacids were at Nisa (Parthunisa) in modern Turkmenistan: Isidore of Charax, *FGrHist* 781 F2(12).

64 *BJ* 1.476–7. See also *BJ* 1.478–480. Compare *Ant.* 16.193 (which omits the detail of Glaphyra’s boasts).

65 For Temenos as the ancestor of the kings of Macedonia: Thucydides 2.99. For Archelaos I of

FOUR PARTHIAN SKETCHES IN JOSEPHUS

While narratives such as the tales of Daniel's fortress and Glaphyra's boastfulness are specific instances in Josephus's text where a live connection is made between the Achaemenid past and the royal (near-) present, such material is rare. Even so, as noted above, the Parthians figure prominently in Josephus, especially in books 18 to 20 of the *Jewish Antiquities*. As we shall see, his descriptions of Parthian royalty raise wider themes which can be "read back" to his (and earlier) accounts of the Achaemenid dynasty and other rulers in various striking ways. Let us first identify four key vignettes of Parthian royalty in Josephus, and then briefly sketch some of the themes that emerge.

*Pakoros and Barzaphranes in Jerusalem*⁶⁶

The Arsakid king Orodes II took advantage of the disorder of the Roman civil wars and invaded Syria and Judea in 40 BCE. The Parthian army was commanded by Orodes' son, Pakoros, and the satrap Barzaphranes, and Pakoros installed Mattathias Antigonos, the last Hasmonean king, in place of Herod the Great in Judea. In general, however, it would be hard to characterise the episode as a happy one for Judea, at least in Josephus's telling, since the Parthians plundered the city and palace of Jerusalem, together with other places.⁶⁷ Any Parthian pose as the heirs to Achaemenid philanthropy would no doubt have been harder to sustain in the eyes of the Judeans after this.

Contrasting views are attributed to the cities of Syria in the same period. Dio reports, in the context of describing Pakoros's death in 38 BCE, that they:

... felt unusual affection for Pakoros on account of his justice and mildness, an affection as great as they had felt for the best kings that had ever ruled them.⁶⁸

Pakoros's death notices in Josephus, by contrast, are markedly curt.⁶⁹

*Phraates, Phraatakes and Thesmoussa/Theamoussa*⁷⁰

The story of Phraatakes and Thesmoussa could fairly be described as a racy read with a novelistic tone. This is something it shares with Josephus's accounts of the

Kappadokia: Sullivan (1990), p. 182–5, 397–9. For Glaphyra's later life and further royal marriages, see *Ant.* 17.349–353.

66 *Ant.* 14.330–434; *BJ* 1.248–273; 317.

67 *Ant.* 14.363–364; *BJ* 1.268–269.

68 Dio 49.20.4 (translation: Cary (1917)).

69 *Ant.* 14.434; *BJ* 1.317.

70 *Ant.* 18.39–46. See recent discussions by Gaslain (2003); Bigwood (2004); (2008), p. 248; Strugnell (2008).

Parthian elite generally, but also, it might be said, with his Herodian and Hasmonean narratives.

The Parthian king Phraates IV owned an Italian slave whose name Josephus gives as “Thesmoussa”; it may in fact have been simply “Moussa”, if one accepts that her later royal style was actually “Thea Moussa”, “Goddess Moussa”, as her coinage implies. She was reportedly a gift to Phraates from “Julius Caesar”, though one assumes that Josephus means to refer to the emperor Augustus. She bore Phraates a son, Phraatakes, and her power over the king grew, such that she was able to persuade him to send his other children, by different mothers, to Rome as hostages. Ultimately, Thesmoussa and her son plotted Phraates’s murder, as well, Josephus suggests, as engaging in other intimacies. They then ruled together⁷¹; at least, that is the natural implication of Parthian coins which bear the portraits of both and the legend *THEAS OURANIAS MOUSÊS BASILISSÊS*. This may imply that Thesmoussa took the dominant role, or that Phraatakes used her image to add legitimacy to his own rule.⁷²

Thesmoussa and Phraatakes were rapidly driven out; Josephus identifies Parthian distaste for both the murder and the incest, as well as for Thesmoussa’s origins, as the determining factors. After trying Orodes III and Vonones I without success, the Parthians ultimately settled on Artabanos II, a member of the Arsakid family but king of Media, to be the new King of Kings.⁷³ Artabanos, who ruled for nearly three decades (10/11–38 CE), is a consistent presence in Josephus’s subsequent Parthian stories.

*Anilaios and Asinaios*⁷⁴

The story of Anilaios and Asinaios is a particularly rich text, but we need only consider the bare bones of it here. These two brothers, Babylonian Jewish artisans, took refuge in the countryside over a personal slight and established themselves with a warrior band. They defeated the satrap of Babylonia in battle, and their burgeoning reputation brought them to the notice of King Artabanos himself. Artabanos offered them royal friendship and authority over Babylonia; his plan is stated to have been to leave them in power in order to act as a counterweight to his own rebellious satraps. Anilaios then embarked on an affair with the wife of a Parthian *stratēgos*, and ultimately killed her husband. The affair generated scandal from the Jewish side, because the widow (who is never named) continued to observe her own religious customs. To protect her own position, the widow then poisoned Asinaios.

71 From about 2 BCE to 2 CE.

72 Thesmoussa dominant: Strugnell (2008), p. 277; her image used by Phraatakes for his purposes: Bigwood (2004), p. 61.

73 *Ant.* 18.44–52.

74 *Ant.* 18.310–373; NB also Josephus’s appendix on the fate of the Jewish community of Seleukeia on the Tigris: *Ant.* 18.374–379. In general, see e. g. Rajak (1998); Fowler (2007), and references therein. The events can be dated (broadly) to the 20s and 30s CE.

Anilaios thereafter engaged in a vendetta with one Mithridates, a Parthian commander and Artabanos's son-in-law. Anilaios brought disgrace upon Mithridates by capturing him and parading him naked on an ass; Josephus, ever with an eye for an ethnographic detail, notes that this "is considered the greatest of all humiliations among the Parthians".⁷⁵ In retaliation Mithridates attacked him in force and routed his band. Ultimately, Anilaios was ambushed and killed by Babylonians, apparently enraged at his depredations.

*King Izates of Adiabene*⁷⁶

The ostensible focus of Josephus's account of Izates, king of Adiabene, is on his decision, and that of his mother Helene, to convert to Judaism. For our purposes, however, the story is most interesting for the sequence of encounters which Josephus describes between Izates and various Parthian kings.⁷⁷

Josephus first describes how Artabanos II took refuge with Izates when faced with rebellion at home. Izates took him in and encouraged the Parthians to accept Artabanos once more as their king, which they did. Izates was rewarded with the right to wear the *tiara orthē* and to sleep in a golden bed, which Josephus describes as privileges of the Parthian kings themselves, together with a grant of territory in Armenia.

Less happy were Izates' relations with Artabanos's successor, Vardanes I. Vardanes demanded assistance from Izates against Rome, which Izates thought it politic to refuse, apparently because both his mother and his sons were in Jerusalem. Vardanes declared war on Izates, but was then assassinated by the Parthians themselves, as was his successor Gotarzes II.

Thereafter, Josephus states that the Adiabene nobles called upon the Parthian king Vologases I to replace Izates as ruler, because they disapproved of the adoption by Izates and his family of the customs of the *Ioudaioi*. Vologases marched against Izates and menaced him, but Izates, reduced to praying for salvation, after the manner of Hezekiah of Judah in the face of Sennacherib of Assyria, was saved when the Dahae and Sacae invaded the Parthian empire in Vologases's rear.⁷⁸

PARTHIAN THEMES

In Josephus's Parthian narratives we see a number of motifs emerge repeatedly. They are interesting in themselves, I would suggest, but become striking when understood in the context of depictions (by Josephus and his predecessors) of Jewish

75 *Ant.* 18.356.

76 *Ant.* 20.17–96. See e.g. Rajak (1998) (again); Fowler (2010). This story is set in the period from the 30s to the 50s CE.

77 *Ant.* 20.54–91.

78 *Ant.* 20.89–91; for the parallel with *II Kings* 19.8–36, see Feldman (1965), p. 47 n. c.

relations with the Achaemenid empire and indeed with other powers. Constraints of space mean that we can touch briefly on only five of them here.

Clothed and naked

As we have seen, Izates is rewarded for his services to Artabanos with clothing and royal symbols, as well as a gift of territory. The same Artabanos also gives to Asinaios, for his part, both unidentified “gifts” and the land of Babylonia as a protectorate.⁷⁹

These catalogues of royal gift-giving to a loyal subordinate are a commonplace that can be instantly recognised elsewhere in Jewish writings. From the Achaemenid context, compare for example Mordecai’s royal robe, gold crown and purple cloak, honours from King Ahasuerus.⁸⁰ More pointed, however, are the parallels supplied by the Seleukids’ gifts to the Maccabean leaders, as attested by *I Maccabees*: the pretender Alexander Balas sends Jonathan a purple robe and a gold crown, appoints him to various imperial offices, and ultimately awards him a gold clasp and further territory; Antiochos VI sends him gold plate and gives him the right to drink from a gold cup, to be robed in purple and to wear the gold clasp.⁸¹ Indeed, one may trace this theme all the way back to Joseph, and the fine robes, gold chain and signet ring that he received from Pharaoh.⁸²

Adopting a new costume is never a neutral step, of course. The fact that the Spartan general Pausanias had started to wear Persian clothes was one significant element of the Greek charges against him in his fall after the triumph of Plataea, while conversely, when Alexander the Great’s satrap Peukestas did the same, the aim (one supposes) was to present himself in a way that his Persian subordinates would find acceptable, however much it annoyed the Macedonians. Themistokles’s similar adoption of the Persian language and customs marked his absorption into Achaemenid power structures.⁸³

Losing one’s clothes may be as significant as dressing up. The case of the Parthian Mithridates, publicly humiliated and driven by his wife to revenge after the terrible insult of being sent home naked on an ass by Anilaios, is one more piece of evidence for the social significance of nudity in antiquity (unless, that is, *gymnos* in this passage means simply “unarmed”; but query whether that would have been such an unforgiveable outrage). In the royal context, it is significant that Vologases, seeking a pretext to attack Izates, formally demands the return of the upright tiara and gold bed (and, one supposes, the land in Armenia) granted by Artabanos. Izates

79 Izates’s rewards: *Ant.* 20.66–68; Asinaios’s: *Ant.* 18.336–338.

80 Esther 8.15, and see further note 20 above.

81 Gifts of Alexander Balas: *I Macc.* 10.20; 62–65; 89. Gifts of Antiochos VI: *I Macc.* 11.58. Interestingly, when, as *I Maccabees* reports, “the Jews and their priests” (*I Macc.* 14.41) formally conferred leadership on Simon by edict (*I Macc.* 14.27–49), they also authorised him to wear a purple robe and golden clasp (*I Macc.* 14.43).

82 *Genesis* 41.42.

83 For Pausanias and Themistokles: note 15 above; Peukestas: note 16.

was saved from this attempt to “denude” him by the timely invasion of Parthia by the Dahae and Sacae.⁸⁴

The instability of status

While the visible expression of power in the clothes and symbols of royal authority has a part to play in Josephus’s Parthian narratives, their broader emphasis is on the general theme of power’s unreliability and instability. In the Izates story, Artabanos is reduced from royalty to the status of a private citizen by the Parthians’ revolt against him, and performs *proskynēsis* before Izates, his subordinate; he is then elevated once more by Izates in a memorable scene of status-play, where Izates insists on Artabanos mounting his horse while he, Izates, goes on foot, but Artabanos threatens himself to dismount if Izates too will not ride. Izates also honours Artabanos at councils and banquets, as befits his status as the “greater king”.⁸⁵ Izates himself, as we have seen, although laden with honours by Artabanos following the latter’s restoration, is ultimately ordered to return his awards by Vologases, and escapes purely by reason of Vologases’ difficulties in the East.

Even more spectacular is the rise and fall of Thesmoussa, from Italian slave to royal concubine to queen (and arguably dominant force) of the Parthian empire, and then to victim of Parthian dynastic struggles. The story of Anilaios and Asinaios, too, is an extreme version of the same theme, as they are reduced from modest origins to outright banditry, and then rise to be confidants of King Artabanos himself, before meeting squalid ends, Asinaios poisoned by his own sister-in-law, Anilaios killed with his companions while in a drunken stupor. Artabanos himself is made to remark on this very theme, as he

... was astonished at Asinaios’s courage in action, when he observed that he was quite short in outward appearance and thus gave those who got sight of him for the first time reason to disregard him and judge him of no account.⁸⁶

Once again, Josephus’s concern in these stories reflects an overarching theme of his works, particularly the *Jewish Antiquities*, which may be a more or less banal *topos* of Greek, Roman and Jewish historiography but which is found again and again in his accounts of the Achaemenids, Seleukids and Hasmoneans, the family of Herod and the Roman empire. Appearances can deceive, and one cannot rely on status and power to endure.

84 Mithridates: *Ant.* 18.356; Izates and Vologases: *Ant.* 20.82.

85 Izates and Artabanos: *Ant.* 20.54–61; Artabanos the “greater king”: *Ant.* 20.60.

86 *Ant.* 18.333.

Ethnicity

We have already noted that a particular feature of these texts is Josephus's sensitivity to questions of ethnicity⁸⁷. In the story of Anilaios and Asinaios, he is careful to distinguish between *Ioudaioi*, *Babylōnioi* and *Parthoi*, while in the account of affairs at Seleukeia on the Tigris which follows he identifies the *Hellēnes* and the *Syroi* as opposing groups, subsequently united in hostility to the *Ioudaioi*. In the Izates narrative, he distinguishes between the *Parthoi* and the nobles of Adiabene, as well as the *Araboi*.

While Josephus is alert to the importance of ethnic identity as an explanatory force, his text also reveals a sophisticated awareness of the complexity of his categories, which were not mutually exclusive and could embrace ethnic, cultural and geographical elements. We have already met Zamaris, who set up his little principedom in Batanea under Herod the Great, and is identified both as a *Ioudaios* and as a *Babylōnios*, while Izates was an Adiabenean who controversially adopted the customs of the *Ioudaioi*.⁸⁸

In the light of Josephus's general care with ethnic terminology, occasional exceptions merit comment. In the *Jewish War* he refers to the campaign of the Seleukid Antiochos VII against the Parthians and states that it was directed against the *Mēdoi*.⁸⁹ In the context of Josephus, this is worthy of remark. It may be no more than mere inadvertence, or thoughtless reproduction of a source. Nevertheless, it reproduces a distinctively Greco-Roman equation: "Parthian equals Persian equals Mede".⁹⁰ The very fact that this is unusual in Josephus, who is generally very precise in his use of the term *Parthoi*, may make it significant; even Josephus, it seems, can slip on occasion into the ideologically-charged discourses about "Persian" Parthia that are much more generally visible in Greek and Roman writing. One might call this a piece of "accidental Persianism".

The Persian past

It should be remarked that Josephus makes use of the Persian past in other ways too. When "rewriting" the biblical narratives he is prepared to engage in silent correction of his original; we have already noted how he replaces "Artaxerxes" from *Ezra* and *I Esdras* with "Xerxes".⁹¹ Again, he uses Cyrus as a chronological marker, describing important events in Jewish history with reference to the number of years

87 See Rajak (1998), p. 316, 323, and on ethnicity in Josephus in general, Millar (1993), p. 5–12.

88 Zamaris: note 43 above.

89 *BJ* 1.50, 62. Contrast *Ant.* 13.250–3, where Josephus, describing the same events, consistently refers to *Parthoi*.

90 For this equation in Roman ideology, see Spawforth (1994); Lerouge-Cohen (2007), p. 124–127.

91 Note 10 above.

since Cyrus's edict, although it ought to be added that he uses the sack of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians as a similar yardstick as well.⁹²

More interesting are his references to the Samaritans. We have noted above his view that the Samaritans claimed to be *Ioudaioi* only when it suited them; what must be added is that Josephus himself had a clear belief about their "actual" origins, one which he claims they themselves advanced when necessary. He repeatedly refers to them as "Persians" (as well as "Cuthaeans"), claiming that they were Persian colonists⁹³. This is one notable (and somewhat unusual) example where identifying something as "Persian" has explicitly derogatory connotations in Josephus.

Kings: mad, bad and dangerous to know

Notwithstanding our earlier suggestion that Jewish writers might tend to be favourably disposed to the Arsakids, in reality it is readily apparent that Josephus's descriptions of Parthian kings and nobles frequently take a negative tone. It is perhaps not surprising that Pakoros and Barzaphranes do not emerge well from his account of the Syrian and Judean campaigns of 40–38 BCE, in view of what they did in Jerusalem. In describing them, Josephus repeatedly uses words connoting untrustworthiness, secrecy and conspiracy.⁹⁴ Artabanos II by contrast emerges creditably from the Izates story, but even he appears double-dealing in the affair of Anilaios and Asinaios, playing off Asinaios against his own *stratopedarchēs* Abdagases.⁹⁵ As for the story of Thesmoua, Phraatakes murdered his father Phraates IV and then was himself deposed by civil war and died. His successor Orodes, reportedly given to fits of anger, was himself assassinated, and thereafter there ensued further civil war between Vonones and Artabanos.⁹⁶ Even Izates, in spite of his good relations with Artabanos, was subsequently menaced by both Vardanes and Vologases I, the intermediate Parthian king Gotarzes having himself been killed by a conspiracy.⁹⁷

Again, however, these features of Josephus's Parthian narratives should remind us once more of Jewish depictions of Achaemenid Persia. Ahasuerus in biblical *Esther* is dangerously fickle and not to be trusted. Even in *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, where approbation of the Persian kings as supporters of the reconstruction works in Judea might be thought most pronounced, "[t]he texts, on closer scrutiny, show a more cynical and subversive stance."⁹⁸ Notably, it has been argued that Josephus actually tones down criticism of the Achaemenid kings (as of other foreign dynasts) when compared with his sources, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah* and *Esther*.⁹⁹

92 Cyrus: e. g. *BJ* 6.270; *Ant.* 20.233. Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians: *BJ* 6.268; *Ant.* 20.231.

93 References in note 33 above. Josephus's point in *Ant.* 11.114 seems to be that the Samaritans pretended to be related to the Persians to win favour from them, whereas elsewhere he seems to claim that they were actually Persian (e. g. 9.288; 10.184; 12.257).

94 See e. g. *BJ* 1.254, 255, 256, 257, 260, 261, 263, 268; *Ant.* 14.340–1, 343–4, 346–351.

95 *Ant.* 18.333–8.

96 *Ant.* 18.39–52.

97 Izates and Vardanes: *Ant.* 20.69–73. Gotarzes: *Ant.* 20.73–4. Vologases: *Ant.* 20.74, 81–91.

98 Gruen (2007) p. 72.

99 Feldman (1998), e. g. p. 511.

The narrative of the untrustworthy and unreliable foreign ruler, and of the dangers he can present to his Jewish subjects, is of course itself a commonplace, to be found extensively in *I* and *II Maccabees* (of the Seleukids and Ptolemies), in *Daniel* (of numerous dynasties), and as far back as *Genesis* and *Exodus*; these examples are reflected in Josephus's own versions of those stories. It is for Josephus a readily observable phenomenon that kings really are by turns mad, bad and dangerous to know. They could also be benefactors and friends to the Jewish *ethnos*, and so far as a political pragmatist like Josephus was concerned, it was therefore necessary to learn to work with them; the idea of a renewed independent Judea such as that of the Hasmoneans was to him unrealistic. This perhaps is the real lesson in Parthian "Persianism" that one learns from Josephus. Parthian kings could help and could harm, but in this respect they were like the Persians, and indeed not so different from the Seleukids and Ptolemies, the Roman emperors, and those other dynasties who had exercised power over Jewish populations.

At the same time it can be added that, in his Parthian narratives, Josephus also turns the mirror back on his contemporary Roman audience. A Roman reader of ordinary acuity would have recognised that, while Parthian dynasts might have abused their client kings and mistreated their Jewish subjects, so had Roman emperors and provincial administrators. The repeated Parthian civil wars and succession crises described in book 18 of the *Jewish Antiquities* had their obvious counterpoint in the succession crises of Rome in the first century CE that reached their climax in the "Year of the Four Emperors" and brought Josephus's Flavian patrons to power. Even the incest of Thesmoussa and Phraatakes finds its (loose) parallel in the stories told of Nero and Agrippina.¹⁰⁰ Thus while Josephus's Parthian narratives look back (in some respects) towards Persia, they simultaneously look west across the Euphrates towards contemporary Rome.

CONCLUSIONS

Our conclusion, then, is not a negative one. While it is clear that the Arsakids represented themselves and were represented by others as successors to the Achaemenids, Josephus's writings do not reflect this to any great degree. That may not be surprising in itself; Josephus had joined the Roman elite and thus had limited reason to indulge the Arsakids' Persianist pretensions, while the Parthians' own incursions into Judea hardly encouraged their depiction by a Judean as heirs to Cyrus.

Even so, on occasion Josephus does "zoom in" on a detail, and makes an explicit, specific connection between the Jewish or Parthian present and the Achaemenid past. Obvious examples are the story of Daniel's tomb, or that of Glaphyra's family history. In other details, such as dress or court protocol in the stories of Anilaios and Asinaios or of Izates, Josephus's Parthian court seems to recall that of the Achaemenids. What is unclear in each instance (and perhaps ultimately unan-

100 Incest of Nero and Agrippina: Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.2.

swerable) is whether Josephus's account reflects the Parthians' own "Persianism", or whether he is himself "Persianising" the Parthians.¹⁰¹

More generally, however, to understand his Parthian stories, we must look to the broad sweep of Josephus's historical narrative in the *Jewish Antiquities*. We can identify a repeated theme: the question of how a small, specifically *Jewish* power (very small in the case of the "bandit-state" of Anilaios and Asinaios, fairly substantial in the case of, say, Judea itself or Adiabene) responds to superpower politics. Whether the superpower is Persia or Parthia, or indeed the Seleukid empire or Rome, certain kinds of problems and processes recur repeatedly: local leaders are constantly compelled to negotiate with the imperial power to maintain their position in its hierarchies, adopting its symbols (such as clothes and crowns) and practices, while at the same time trying not to compromise themselves utterly with their own subjects.

This then, I suggest, is the real meaning of "Persianism" in Josephus; that combination of patronage and menace, philanthropy and danger, that the Achaemenids offered to their Jewish subjects, and that every subsequent imperial dynasty down to Josephus's own time repeated.

101 Rajak (1998), p. 323.

ĒRĀN UD ANĒRĀN: SASANIAN PATTERNS OF WORLDVIEW

Josef Wiesehöfer

In 2002, after the end of Taliban rule in Baghlan in Northern Afghanistan, the inhabitants of the village Shamarq addressed the local Department of Culture for help; their request concerned a rock relief one kilometer south of the village, known to the locals as Rag-i Bibi ('Veins of the Lady'). Shortly before, the Taliban, who had been entrusted with the protection of the road from Pul-i Khumri to Doshi, had tried, on a tip from local sympathizers, to destroy this holy place because of its human figures. The title *Bibi* ('Lady') refers to Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad; the word *rag* ('veins') to the deep red layers of the rock facade.¹

The relief is 4.9 m high and 6.5 m wide and has both Sasanian as well as local stylistic features. It shows a Sasanian king while hunting a rhinoceros. The king, who, if he stood upright, would be 2.40 m tall, rides a galloping horse. In front of the king, near the rhinoceros, a Kushan noble can be seen; behind the Sasanian, there are two more riders, the second of whom is also wearing Kushan dress. Because of his damaged head, the ruler's personal crown cannot be determined, a fact that complicates the man's identification, but for stylistic reasons, much speaks in favour of the second Sasanian king, Shabuhr I. Thus, the relief was probably sculptured in the 260s CE.

Why did Sasanian authorities at that time order workers and apparently excellent sculptors to portray Shabuhr in the hunt for a rhino under mango trees at this remote location in Eastern Iran, in a valley moreover where at that time there were neither rhinos nor mango trees? One could have encountered those animals and plants in more ancient times, but in the third century only in the plain of Peshawar in present-day north-western Pakistan, *i.e.* in ancient India beyond the Khyber Pass. In his historical commentary on the relief, Frantz Grenet rightly argued that Shabuhr had inherited from his father, Ardashir, the possession of Baktria, *i.e.* today's Northern Afghanistan where the relief is located, and furthermore suggested that Shabuhr himself had expanded his realm up to the Upper Kabul Valley at the expense of the Kushan kings; proof of this success, according to Grenet, is the territorial formula '*Kushanshahr* up to the gates of Peshawar' (*Kušānsahr ta frāz ō Paškabūr*) in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* from Naqsh-i Rostam near Persepolis, which outlines the possessions of the Sasanians in the East. A few decades later, the so-called Kushano-Sasanian dynasts, by order of their Sasanian overlords, probably advanced into Gandhara itself.²

1 For the relief, its history and interpretation, see Grenet 2005; Grenet *et al.* (2007).

2 Grenet (2005), p. 129 f.

In other words: here, at the strategically important north-south link at Pul-i Khumri in Baghlan,³ Shabuhr presents himself as a ruler whose kingdom is bordered by areas where mango trees grow and rhinos are hunted. Hunting scenes are an important feature of Sasanian art, referring both to Iran's garden and game park culture and to the physical abilities of the 'King of Kings'. This ruler is able, like his mythical and historical ancestors, to tame and subdue the wild, unpredictable and terrifying nature, thus demonstrating his ability to govern the empire. However, the Afghan relief has got a unique characteristic aspect: unlike the Iranian prey depicted on Middle Sasanian hunting bowls or on the Late Sasanian reliefs of the Taq-i Bostan at Kermanshah, which include lions, bears, wolves, wild boar and deer, Shabuhr here goes after royal Indian prey; we know the Indian royal title *khadgatrāta* ('Conqueror of Rhinos') from coin legends of the Gupta ruler Kumaragupta I (5th century CE).⁴

And the people around Shabuhr are chosen wisely, too: One of them, equal in size to Shabuhr himself, can probably be interpreted as a Kushan noble or king, the second rider as his companion. Unlike the triumph reliefs from Fars, where Shabuhr perpetuates his victories over the Romans and where he attempts to thwart Roman symbols of victory – we shall come back to that in a moment – the Rag-i Bibi relief indicates a peaceful cooperation of the new overlord and his new subjects: For the early Sasanians *Kushānshahr* is an integral part of *Ērānshahr*/Iran, its inhabitants and their elites are Iranians (*ērānagān*) like the Sasanian king himself.⁵

ROMAN-SASANIAN COMPETITION

The reference to *Ērānshahr* and to the Romans takes us into the realm of agonistic Sasanian royal ideology and representation, but most of all, as this is the article's object of study, into that of Sasanian worldview. It has rightly been observed, in particular by Matthew Canepa,⁶ that Romans and Sasanians in the context of their triumphal art and inscriptions mutually tended to use the visual imagery and the ideological vocabulary of their respective enemy in order to stress their own political and military superiority, and sometimes even their claim to an *imperium sine fine*. For the Sasanians, this observation is especially true for the rock reliefs. Shabuhr I in particular reverses typical Roman images in the imagery of the reliefs he creates, in order to celebrate his own victories over the Romans: Roman emperors appear on them either as prisoners – like Valerian, seized by Shabuhr's arm. Valerian had been taken prisoner in 260 CE at Edessa and later perished in Sasanian captivity. Roman opponents also appear as opponents begging for mercy, like the kneeling

3 For the historical role of Baghlan and the Kunduz region in Late Sasanian times, see Grenet (2002), p. 217.

4 Grenet (2005), p. 130.

5 As Albert de Jong rightfully points out in his contribution to this volume, language was not a defining characteristic of Iran/Iranianness in Sasanian times. Instead, lineage, culture, and most of all religion decided whom to consider *ēr*.

6 Canepa (2009), and Canepa in this volume.

emperor Philip the Arab, who had been forced to ask for peace and to conclude the ignominious treaty of the year 244 CE. Roman emperors even appear as victims of the Sasanian king's bravery, like Gordian III, who had recently been killed in the context of the Battle of Mishik under unknown circumstances and appears on a Sasanian rock relief under the hooves of Shabuhr's horse. The domestic political opponent and the non-Roman, e.g. the Arab enemy, also appear in Sasanian art, overcome in single combat or in war.

The Roman answer to Shabuhr's provocations in the medium of pictorial art did not take long to appear. The Roman emperor Galerius celebrated his Armenian triumph over Narseh in the year 298 on a monumental arch at Thessalonica that was probably erected in 303. Here, we find the defeated Iranians not only in a contiguous image cycle that documents the superiority of Rome, but also – in a battle scene on the northeast side of the monument – in the form of a knightly single combat between the emperor and the King of Kings. Here Galerius uses Eastern imagery to emphasise his own victoriousness over his Eastern adversaries. The monument in Thessalonica also for the first time shows the motif of the tribute bearer procession in a Roman context, which later developed into the Roman image of the Persian "barbarians" presenting rich gifts to the Emperor and thus admit their subjection to him.

Let us change sides once more: both the Sasanian royal inscriptions and the Iranian mythical tradition underline the primacy of Iran over Rome: The *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* present, so to speak, a historical commentary or a caption to the victory reliefs, for instance when the Sasanian ruler styles his battles with the Roman emperors as single combats:

In the third campaign, when We attacked Carrhae and Urhai (Edessa) and were besieging Carrhae and Edessa Valerian Caesar marched against Us. He had with him a force of 70,000 from Germany, Raetia, Noricum (etc.) [...] And beyond Carrhae and Edessa We had a great battle with Valerian Caesar. We made prisoner Ourselves with Our own hands Valerian Caesar and the others, chiefs of that army, the praetorian prefect, senators; we made all prisoners and deported them to Persis.⁷

The theme of single combat plays an important role in the Iranian written and pictorial tradition. The fact that the Roman opponent knew about that preference is shown by an episode from the work of John Malalas, referring to the battle of 6 September 421 that led to an end to the hostilities between Romans and Sasanians, and to the conclusion of a peace treaty between Theodosius II and Vahram V Gor one year later:

In that year Blasses (*sc.* Vahram V), king of the Persians, came, making war on the Romans. When the emperor of the Romans learnt of this, he made the patrician Procopius *magister militum per Orientem*, and sent him with an army to do battle. When he was about to engage in battle, the Persian king sent him a message, 'If your whole army has a man able to fight in single combat and to defeat a Persian put forward by me, I shall immediately make a peace-treaty for fifty years and provide the customary gifts.' When these terms had been agreed, the king of the Persians chose a Persian named Ardazanes from the division known as the Immortals, while the Romans selected a certain Goth, Areobindus, [who was] *comes foederatorum*. The

7 Mpl §§ 18 ff.; transl. after T. Daryaeae.

two came out on horseback fully armed. Areobindus also carried a lasso according to Gothic custom. The Persian charged at him first with his lance, but Areobindus, bending down to his right, lassoed him, brought him down off his horse and slew him. Thereupon the Persian king made a peace treaty.⁸

It has been rightfully stressed that this episode is probably not historical. Nevertheless, the historian chose it not without reason, as he seems to have been familiar with the motif of the single combat in an Iranian context. From its very beginning, the Sasanian art of rock sculpturing had known jousting scenes (probably derived from Hellenistic-Parthian models) that imagined decisive historical events and turning points. More complex historical processes were depicted by adding several jousting scenes, both in juxtaposition and underneath each other. It is likely that these big-sized scenes of combat had originally been designed for the mosaics and paintings of Sasanian palaces and from there found their way to other art forms. The fact that the Iranian heroic tradition also presents important historical and military decisions as duels, viz. as jousting or wrestling matches, seems to speak for a common root of the literary as well as iconographic conversion of such ordeal-like situations.⁹

The most famous literary expression of the single combat motif in Iran is the confrontation between the great Iranian hero Rostam and his own son, Sohrab, in Firdowsi's epic *Shāhnāmeḥ*, where the father kills the son who is unknown to him:

Again they firmly hitched their steeds, as ill-
Intentioned fate revolved above their heads.
Once more they grappled hand to hand. Each seized
The other's belt and sought to throw him down.
Whenever evil fortune shows its wrath,
It makes a block of granite soft as wax.
Sohrab had mighty arms, and yet it seemed
The skies above had bound them fast. He paused
In fear; Rostam stretched out his hands and seized
That warlike leopard by his chest and arms.
He bent his strong and youthful back, and with
A lion's speed, he threw him to the ground.
Sohrab had not the strength; his time had come.
Rostam was sure he'd not stay down for long.
He swiftly drew a dagger from his belt
And tore the breast of that stout-hearted youth.

(transl. J. Clinton)

Every Iranian knows this scene, and it still moves many of them to tears when it is, as the author experienced it himself at Tus, publicly performed.

8 Ioh. Mal. 14.23; transl. E. Jeffrys and R. Scott.

9 For the motif of the single combat in Iranian tradition see Wiesehöfer (2007).

THE IDEA OF ĒRĀNSHAHR

Let us return to the Sasanian idea of *Ērānshahr*. In the Sasanian concept of Iran, a special role is assigned to the royal ‘ancestors’ (Mpl *niyāgān*, GkI *pappoi*) and ‘forebears’ (Mpl *ahēnagān*, GkI *progonoi*) and their territories,¹⁰ as well as to Zoroastrian religious traditions and practices. Specific means and institutions were employed to strengthen the idea that the ruler and his subjects in Ērānshahr shared the same destiny: symbolic references (e.g., an era, starting from 205/6 CE); an iconography, closely connected to the royal inscriptions and also underlining the kings’ close relationship to the gods; special rites and practices, like the lighting of royal and other fires, as well as donations for the welfare of the souls of deceased and living persons; and finally, important memorial places and monuments (as, for instance, the sacred shrine of Anahita at Istakhr, the big fire temples, the cliff of Naqsh-i Rostam, and the towers both there and at Paikuli).

Touraj Daryaee has made clear that three different concepts of ‘Ērān’ were current in Sasanian times. First, the pre-Sasanian Avestan notion in which Ērān was part of the *Xwanirah* clime.¹¹ Second, the Ērān of the early Sasanian kings, *i.e.*, where the *ērānagān* lived,¹² and where their kings ruled. And finally, the wider territory that Khosrow II tried to bring under his control and attempted to administer. The process of the creation of a specific identity both for members of the Sasanian dynasty and for their subjects in *Ērānshahr* had not only inclusive but also exclusive features. Excluded from the close relationship between the king and the *ērānagān* were the inhabitants of *Anērān*, *i.e.* the areas that Shabuhr I and his successors had been able to conquer only temporarily, and all non-subjects of the King of Kings – in Shabuhr’s *Res Gestae* the latter category included first of all the subjects of Rome, but later came to include also those who were not willing to serve the kings and sustain the empire. Daryaee again has convincingly shown that the Manicheans, among others, belonged to this group of non-Iranians.¹³ By contrast, the members of the Parthian clans who had changed sides in time or who had been allowed to remain in office by the new lords for political reasons, were still considered worthy members of this ‘imagined community’ of Iranians, to which belonged also the Jewish and, later on, Christian subjects of the empire. Surely, terms like *Ērān* and *Anērān*, which had their roots in Zoroastrianism, had religious connotations, as the first was considered to be under divine protection (*i.e.*, a domain of the *yazdān*), and the latter to be a place of idols (*dēwān*). However, such a distinct Sasanian Iranism was a big drawback. It stood in the way of developing an integrative imperial ideology,¹⁴ which – as is shown by the Achaemenid royal inscriptions and reliefs – presents the ruler and all his subjects as a community of interests, cho-

10 Shayegan (2011), p 14–24, with the older literature on the question who was meant by those terms: Achaemenids, Kayanids or Sasanian forefathers?

11 According to the Avestan hymn to Mithra (Mihir Yasht: X.15), the world is divided into seven climes the central and most prominent one of which is the *Xwanirah* clime.

12 Daryaee (2010), p. 100. His use of the word ‘Persians’ in that context is, however, not fitting.

13 Daryaee (2010), p. 105 f.

14 For universalism being a main characteristic of pre-modern empires, see Bang (2012) and

sen, fostered and legitimised by the gods. On the one hand, it is no wonder that the official Sasanian ‘Iranism’, also to be observed in Zoroastrian literature, eventually was the basis for the development of a kind of ‘Iranian’ identity. On the other hand, this ‘Iranism’, which – not least in times of crisis – succeeded in strengthening thoughts of a clear distinction between friend and foe, stood in the way of a dissemination of an ‘Iranian’ and Zoroastrian system of thought. Shabuhr I’s temporary interest in Mani’s universal message, hinted at in Manichean literature, may have been an expression of royal discontent with the lack of integrative power of Zoroastrianism on an imperial level.

When *Ērānshahr* (‘Land/Empire of the Aryans’) became the official and prescribed point of reference of all Sasanian subjects, the age-old idea of a dangerous, hostile outer world developed accordingly. The importance of Rome for the identity of the Sasanian Iranians is particularly obvious in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*, Shabuhr’s report on his personal deeds and his court. In this text, the neighbour in the west – despite his special dangerousness, which lifts him far above the group of the other enemies and justifies a personal royal account at a memorial place such as Naqsh-i Rostam – is portrayed not as a second world power, but as a tributary to Iran:

And Caesar Philip came to sue for peace, and for their lives he paid a ransom of 500,000 denarii and became tributary to Us (grī kai eis phorous hēmein estē). For this reason, We have renamed Mishik Peroz-Šabuhr (“Victorious is Šabuhr”).¹⁵

On the other hand, the Roman Empire is the only foe to whom the principle of *bellum iustum* (‘just war’) is applied. In §91 of his *Res Gestae* at the tower of Paikuli, Shabuhr’s son Narseh stresses the fact that, at the beginning of his rule, there were peaceful and friendly relations between himself and the Roman Emperor. However, he also does not fail to emphasise that it had been the Romans who had eagerly tried to obtain peace and friendship from him. This idea imitates the style of Roman panegyric with its emphasis on Persian supplication:

And Caesar and the Romans were in gratitude (?) and peace and friendship with Us.¹⁶

In addition to reliefs and inscriptions, the Sasanian kings used various other media, such as glyptic art, to express their superiority *vis-à-vis* the Romans. And they never released the Romans from their subordinate position in their ideology, despite significant changes in royal titlature to which Rahim Shayegan has repeatedly drawn our attention.¹⁷ Thus, much speaks in favour of the idea that the Iranian rulers of the 5th and 6th centuries CE, like Shabuhr I with his demands for money to Philip the Arab, understood Roman payments to support the Iranian border security in the Caucasus region against the peoples of the steppes or mountains as ideological rather than financial concessions. Henning Börm has been able to show that the monetary claims of the Sasanians to the Romans were meant to symbolically un-

Strootman (2014b); for universalism as an age-old Near Eastern tradition, see Strootman (2010b) and Rollinger (2012).

15 MpI § 8; transl. after Dodgeon & Lieu.

16 NPī 3.1, § 91.

17 See e.g. Shayegan (2011) and Shayegan in this volume.

derline their primacy; the Romans, by contrast, aimed at real territorial gains, not symbolic payments, to show their superiority.¹⁸

In diplomatic practice, however, the Sasanians were for a long time apparently satisfied with Roman recognition of the equal status of the two kingdoms and dynasties, while the Romans accorded what they called the ‘Persians’ a special position among the ‘barbarian’ rulers, but denied them their equality: this is particularly evident in the titlature of diplomatic correspondence, where the ‘King of Kings’ and the Emperor normally address each other as ‘brothers’, but where only the Persians use the famous comparison of the two kingdoms with two lighted lamps or two shining eyes. By contrast, the East Roman historiography of that time, by deliberately manipulating royal Iranian titlature, even uses this correspondence to present the Sasanian ruler as presumptuous and arrogant or just powerful. Only Khosrow II, in the early 7th century, waived the imperial annuities as a symbol of Persian superiority and dropped the fiction of a *fraternitas* when his military successes against the East Roman Empire temporarily led him to believe in the possibility of a final submission of Constantinople.¹⁹

SASANIAN VIEWS OF THE PAST

For a long time, scholars have debated the existence of an ‘Achaemenid *leitmotiv*’ (to use Shayegan’s term) for the incursions into Roman territories by the early Sasanian kings and later by Khosrow II.. A profound Sasanian knowledge of Achaemenid institutions and affairs is to the mind of this author highly unlikely; what we should rather envisage, is a more generic early Sasanian notion of a powerful Iranian imperial precursor that had once stretched far to the west. Others however have postulated an early Sasanian claim to be the successors of the mythical Kayanian kings, or, that the Sasanians by introducing the concept of *Ērān ud Anērān* created an ‘ideological riposte’ (Shayegan) to Rome’s view of its empire as an *imperium sine fine*; the titlature of the later kings (*kay*, *abzōn*, *xwarrah abzūd*) is here interpreted as part of an ideological agenda created in reaction to ‘Turanian’ (*sc.* Hephthalite and/or Turkic) aggression, or connected with the temporary chance of finally solving the problem of a war on two fronts, respectively.²⁰

In a thought-provoking article, Matthew Canepa was able to show to what extent and by what artistic, architectural and ritual means the post-Achaemenid dynasts of Fars and the Early Sasanians integrated the Achaemenid patrimony into their own vision(s) of the past.²¹ Rahim Shayegan, moreover, has shown how deeply the Early Sasanians’ royal inscriptions were influenced by formulas and concepts of oral literature, some of which can also be detected in written sources dating to Achaemenid times.²² Thus, although we do not find direct Sasanian ref-

18 Börm (2008).

19 Howard-Johnston (2004; 2010), s. v. Khosrow II; Wiesehöfer (2013).

20 Shayegan (2013), with previous literature.

21 Canepa (2010).

22 Shayegan (2012).

erences to Achaemenid-Persian kings or institutions, ‘Persian’ sites and themes did not lose their relevance in Sasanian times. However, the term Persianism in the sense of a post-Achaemenid construction of cultural memory by a re-invention and re-appropriation of the Persian past can hardly be applied to those agendas: Even if we detect “Achaemenid” reminiscences in Early or Late Sasanian times, these were nonetheless not called “Persian” or “Achaemenid” by the kings and their intellectual collaborators. The Iran of the Kayanids, the partly mythical and partly historical ‘petty kings’ of the past, and of the Sasanians – as the home of people who allegedly shared a common lineage, culture and value system – remained the decisive point of reference to Ardashir and his successors and their loyal subjects.

Let us now look at the worldview of the still powerful Iranian ‘historical’ tradition that was decisively formulated in Late Sasanian times. Our evidence points to a growing literary reading society in Iran only for the 6th to 7th century, an aristocratic society that increasingly sought to put knowledge into writing. In late Sasanian, or even Early Islamic times, Middle Persian texts existed that were either related in a sense to the Avesta, as a kind of commentary literature; or that, in epic form or as poetic songs, belonged to a courtly context. From the reign of Khosrow I onwards, a kind of (originally chronographic?) ‘Iranian National History,’ later entitled *Xwadāy-nāmag* (‘Book of Lords’), based primarily on oral traditions, offered a semi-official written account of the complete history of *Ērānshahr*, starting with the first world king and ending with the rule of Khosrow himself. As the Avesta, only recently put into writing, probably responded to the holy books of the Christians and Manicheans, so too was this ‘National History’ likely a response to the impressive graecocentric historiography of the East Roman Empire and to the Syriac-Christian historical tradition.

Previously, script had been more or less a matter of professional scribes for administrative and economic purposes, and Iran had only been exposed to a very limited process of literacy. However, it would be wrong to measure an oral society by the standards of a literate one. Historical traditions in an oral society are dynamic and often adapt to the needs of influential contemporary groups, and the official story of a new dynasty usually moves along the policy patterns and value systems of its predecessors. The knowledge of concrete names and specific actions of these precursors is disappearing over time when confronted with new political or literary contexts; but also a deliberate *damnatio memoriae* of predecessors is feasible, as is proven by the removal of the Arsacids from the ‘National History’ in Late Sasanian times. However, as the Armenian historian Movses Khorenat’si already rightly pointed out in the 5th century (I 14), the introduction of a script system does not necessarily cause oral traditions to disappear, and the existence of a central or centrally controlled written tradition does not necessarily imply the abandonment of regional or local traditions.

In pre-Sasanian times, the production, upkeep, performance, and transmission of ‘historical’ material had been in the hands of singers and minstrels, the so-called *gōsān*, who travelled from one court or one aristocratic place to the other or were members of a noble man’s entourage and performed those songs in an epic or poetic form. Like the Homeric epics, it was the taste, the self-image and the interests of

an aristocratic audience that these artists had to take into account. Scholars have rightly characterized the history of Old Iranian, pre-Sasanian epic poetry as a development from heroic sagas to aristocratic epics.²³ In the case of the heroic sagas, the poetic impact of scribes – mostly stemming from literate parts of the Iran-based empires – and priests is noticeable, both of them no ideal figures of heroic poetry, but active as editors of sorts: the scribes by adding, with the help of their ‘historiographical’ records, historical material to the old legends of the Iranian people; the priests by, for example, allowing the legendary history of Iran to culminate in the rule of king Gushtasp, a king whom the Avesta knows as Vishtaspa, patron and sponsor of the prophet Zarathustra, or by presenting a Zoroastrian time frame and a pseudo-historical chronological framework to the national legendary tradition.

These agents’ literary endeavours were probably responsible for the creation of the idea of a tripartition of the world and, more important for our main topic, for the disappearance of the Achaemenids from the Middle-Persian historical tradition of Iran (and thus also from the Arabic and New Persian tradition), most probably in the Parthian period – due to a substitution of southwest Iranian traditions by more prestigious, more religiously coloured ones from eastern Iran.²⁴ It explains the role of the hero Rostam and the rather critical view of some of the Kayanid kings in the ‘Book of Lords’ and in the Šāhnāme: here, a Sistanic-aristocratic heroic cycle is likely in the background that probably influenced tradition in pre-Sasanian times. A 5th century Sasanian revision of the ‘National History’ led to two remarkable changes with regard to the enemies of Iran: on the one hand, perhaps as a result of the disastrous invasions of Hephthalites, the role of Turan became even more significant than that of Rum (finally leading to an identification of Turanians and Turks); on the other hand, this was lately made clear again by Rahim Shayegan, the title *kay* was adopted by Yazdgerd II, thereby reinvigorating the eastern mytho-epic tradition of kings who had been able to overcome the Turanian archenemy and who had ruled over a confessionally united empire. Later on, under again different historical circumstances, there were new changes in the titlature: under Kawad I, only the king’s name was given, followed by the term *abzōn* (‘increase’), under Khosrow II, the element *xwarrah abzūd* (‘Khosrow whose *xwarrah* is increased’ or ‘Khosrow, by whom the *xwarrah* is increased’), sometimes in connection with the old title *shāhān shāh*.²⁵ That the positive image of Alexander in the ‘Alexander Romance’ (and his probable appearance as the Dhū-l-Qarnayn of Sura 18) joined the accursed Alexander of the Middle Persian religious tradition and probably also of the ‘Book of Lords’, probably was due to a special royal-aristocratic and Muslim preference for the hero and explorer Alexander;²⁶ however, we cannot determine exactly when, where and with whose help Firdawsi became acquainted with this second Alexander.

23 Huyse (MS).

24 Wiesehöfer (2005), p. 129–149; cf. Daryaei (2006), p. 389–393. There are, however, some who see this development only happen in Late Sasanian times (cf. Shayegan 2011, p. 23–29).

25 Shayegan (2013), p. 805 f.

26 Wiesehöfer (2011).

Hamza al-Isfahani informs us that eight different Arabic versions of the ‘Book of Lords’ were extant in the 10th century. His informant Bahram b. Mardar Shah, who still wrote in Middle Persian, even knew twenty copies and versions of that work.²⁷ This might indicate that there were different recensions of the work already in the 7th century, maybe with different endings (depending on the date of the edition) and with material added at different times and for different reasons. Other historical material, in addition to the *Xwadāy-nāmag*-tradition, circulated in Iran in Late Sasanian and Early Islamic times, material that the *Fihrist* (Ibn an-Nadim) notified by its titles.²⁸ And Ibn al-Muqaffa’, Hamza al-Isfahani, al-Tabari, al-Dinawari, Ibn Qutayba and other writers probably had, within their framework of a sacred and/or universal history, enormous margins for their own specific modes of composition, emphasis, rating and processing of Persian historical material and information. In other words, we have to imagine the process of the emergence of Persian and Arabic historical tradition, such as that of Firdawsi’s ‘Book of Kings’ or the *Annals* of al-Tabari, to have been a lot more complicated and surprising than is commonly held. It was, however, thanks to the endeavours of Ibn al-Muqaffa’, who was much more than a mere translator or compiler of Persian historical material, and of other Arab/Iranian authors of the 8th and early 9th century that this Persian material became synchronized with the ‘Sacred History’ and the native Arabian tradition and that their works by that took the form of world histories.

CONCLUSION

The Sasanians used the term *Ērān(shahr)* to emphasise to their subjects both the experiences shared in former times and the common cultural traditions of Iran. These integrative factors were probably meant in part to prevent dangerous regional particularism within Iran and to legitimise the newly established rule. The creation of a special Iranian identity is to be seen in connection with similar tendencies toward regionalism in the Roman Empire. That this Sasanian concept of a connection between “Iranism” and “Mazdaism” and of an ethnically, culturally and religiously self-contained Iranian community depended exclusively on royal ideology has correctly been postulated with reference to the numerous ethno-linguistic and religious minorities in the Sasanian empire, not least in its most fertile regions. Under the influence of the concrete danger of Roman and Hephthalite-Turkish pressure on the western and eastern frontiers of the empire, the oral traditions of Sasanian Iran, as well as its representational art, condensed already existing patterns of external threats into the image of an eternal enmity between Iran and Rum or Turan. *Ērān* – including *Kushānshahr* – and *Anērān* were, in the words of Reinhard Koselleck, juxtaposed as ‘asymmetric counter-terms’ (“asymmetrische Gegenbegriffe”).²⁹ In view of the character and the attractiveness of the ‘National History’, it is not surprising that an early Islamic historian of Iranian descent like al-Tabari, who had been inter-

27 Rubin (2008).

28 Personal communication J. Hämeen-Anttila (Helsinki).

29 Koselleck (1989).

ested in writing an Arabic account of pre-Islamic Iranian history within the framework of universal history, thereby stressing God's saving grace, had great difficulty with extracting historical facts from the mythical, legendary and anecdotal material of the *Xwadāy-nāmag* and from other similar Sasanian and Early Islamic sources. His world history from the early Muslims' point of view gives us information both about Muhammad's historical forerunners and about the predecessors of the political leaders of the Islamic world. For that, it neither had to break with anti-Iranian taboos, as was assumed until recently, nor had it to construct a national identity with an anti-Arab or even anti-Islamic slant. The same applies to Firdawsi's epoch-making *Šāhnāme*: like al-Tabari relying on the late Sasanian and Early Islamic views of the history of Iran that were to be found in various sources, the poet used the Iranian and non-Iranian dynasts' and peoples' special liking for Sasanian (especially royal) topics, as well as the linguistic potential of the already Islamised Persian language supremely well. Thereby, he helped to turn the pre-Islamic legendary sagas he considered worth preserving into a piece of world literature.

THE IDEA OF THE SACRED LAND OF ĒRĀNŠAHR

Touraj Daryae

The tenth century CE scholar Tha'alibī, born in Khurasan, provides us with the story of the famous Iranian archer Arash (also known in Persian as *Kamāngīr*) and the setting of the eastern boundary of Iran. Arash the archer through an agreement between the forces of the Iranians and Afrāsīyāb, the king of Turan, is to shoot an arrow to mark the boundary between Iran and Turan. From a mountain peak in Tabaristan, where Afrāsīyāb could see him, he unleashed an arrow, which miraculously hit a walnut tree in the land of Kholm, a district of Balkh. The location was agreed to be the boundary between Iran and the land of the Turanian Turks.¹ The geographical location given for the landing of this mightily shot arrow is near Balkh on the banks of the Oxus River (Āmū Daryā), by the various medieval Persian authors such as Bal'amī and Abu Reyhan Bīrunī. What makes this tradition so interesting is that in an early Persian text, *The Preface to the Šāhnāme of Abū Mansūrī* (dated to 960 CE), it is stated that:

[...] the boundary of *Iranshahr* is from the Āmū Daryā (Oxus) river to Forāt (sc. the Euphrates, or, alternatively, the Nile) river and these other regions are around it, and from these seven regions/countries, *Iranshahr* is more magnanimous in every part.²

Thus, here we see that two rivers, one Euphrates and the other Oxus are seen as the westernmost and easternmost limits of *Iranshahr*, *i. e.*, the "Empire of the Iranians." In the same vein a similar eastern boundary (Balkh) is given in the Middle Persian text, the *Šāhrestānīhā ī Erānšahr* ('The Provincial Capitals of *Iranshahr*'), a Sasanian geographical treatise, originally composed during the reign of King Kawād I (499–531 CE),³ where it is stated that:

In the brilliant Balkh [...] he (Spandīyād / Isfandīyār) set the miraculous Wahrām fire there and struck his lance there and he sent a message to Yabbu Khāgān, Sinjēbīk Khāgān, and Čōl Khāgān and the Great Khāgān and Gohram and Tuzāb and Arzāsp, the king of the Hayōns (Khionites): "Behold my lance, whoever beholds the movement of this lance is like they have rushed to *Iranshar*."⁴

There are yet more Middle Persian references pointing to Balkh and the Oxus River as the traditional eastern boundary of *Iranshahr* in the imperial imagery of the Sasanians in Late Antiquity.⁵ Of course, Ctesiphon as the capital of the empire necessitated a strong defense against the Romans and so some territory beyond the

1 Tha'alibī, p. 90–91.

2 Qazvīnī (1984), p. 49.

3 In Arabic the text is known as *Qawādiyān* or the *Book of Kawād*, see Zakeri (2011), p. 218.

4 *Šāhrestānīhā ī Erānšahr*, ed. Daryae (2002b), p. 17–18.

5 See *Wīzīdagīhā ī Zadspram* (Gignoux & Tafazzolī) 1993, p. 58–59. Here *Nawāzag* is the main place for the boundary between Iran and Turan.

Euphrates became contested regions, including Syria between the two great powers of the Eurasian world. The boundary on the western front is also outlined by the Roman defensive forts, which were built south, and west of the Euphrates River, where the river itself in the northern reaches created a natural boundary. However, we should also point to the boundary as agreed in treaties dealing with commerce in Mesopotamia between the Romans and the Sasanians. For example in 408/409 CE it was agreed that Nisibis, Callinicum and Artaxata were the commercial border between the two sides.⁶

Thus, there seems to be a conceptual spatial unit for Iranshahr, which expands from river to river, that is from the Oxus to the Euphrates. This spatial unit was what the Sasanians themselves called *Iranshahr* / *Ērānšahr* (**aryānām xšaθra*), that is, the “Empire of the Iranians”, from the third to the seventh century CE. The Italian scholar, G. Gnoli, in a well-known work entitled *The Idea of Iran*, showed that it was not the Achaemenids, nor the Parthians, but the Sasanians who first used such a terminology to identify their imperial location with precision.⁷ How did the Sasanians create such a spatial boundary and set such border markers as a conceptual unity of Iranshahr? In this essay, I wish to delineate the use of rivers and walls built by the Sasanian at the edges of the empire, which promoted and created a conceptual vision of Iranshahr where the Iranians lived and the King of Kings ruled. Iranshahr was both a sacred and imperial space as we learn from the inscriptions of the third century CE.

Furthermore, the Sasanians infused a set of cultural values, however pertaining to the high culture, it could be found in Middle Persian texts (eg. *Xusrō ud Rēdag* / Khusro and the Page), as part of acquiring culture (Middle Persian *Frahang*), ultimately found in the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsī (Book of Kings), which is based on the Sasanian *Xwadāy-nāmag* (Book of Lords).

THE IMPERIAL AND CULTURAL BOUNDARIES OF IRANSHAHR: ĒRĀN UD AN-ĒRĀN

Starting with the first major inscription of the Sasanian Empire, that of Šāpur I at Ka'be-ye Zardošt (ŠKZ) we find an imperial geographical setting after the repeated defeat of the Roman Empire in the third century CE. Šāpur I recognizes the boundary of his empire as such:

Ērānšahr xwadāw ahēm ud dārām šahr: Pārs, Pahlaw, Xūzestān, Mēšān, Asōrestān, Nōdštragān, Arabestān, Ādūrbādagān, Armen, Wiruzān, Segān, Alān, Balāsagān yad frāxš ō kōf ud Alānān bar ud hamāg Padišwar kōf, Mād, Wurgān, Marg, Harēw ud hamāg Abrāhār, kermān, Sagastān, Tūrān, Makrān, Pāradān, Hindestān, Kūšanšahr yad frāx ō Paškbūr u dyad ō kāš Sugd Čāčestān marz ud az hō ārag zrēh Mazūnšahr.

I am the ruler of Iranshahr and hold these realms: Persia, Parthia, Xuzistan, Mēšān, Assyria, Adiabene, Arabia, Azarbījān, Armenia, Georgia, Segan, Albania, Balasagān, up to the Caucasus mountains and the Gates of Albania, and all the mountain chain of Pareshwar, Media, Gur-

6 *Codex of Justinian*, IV.63.4, in Greatrex & Lieu (2002), p. 33–34.

7 Gnoli (1989).

gan, Marv, Heart and all of Abaršahr, Kermān, Sistan, Turan, Makrān, Paradene, India, Kūšān lands up to Peshawar and up to Kašgar, Sogdiana and to the mountains of Tashkent, and on the other side of the sea, Oman.⁸

However, we should remember that Šāpur I also adopted the title of *Šāhān Šāh ī Ērān ud an-Ērān* “King of kings of Iranians and non-Iranians”, so it is difficult to see what part of the list provided in the ŠKZ is *an-Ēr* (“non-Iran”). Here I believe the inscription of the third century Zoroastrian priest, Kerdīr, may be of help. Kerdīr in his inscription(s) delineates the geographical boundary of the Iranian Empire / Iranshahr as:

Persis, Parthia, Xūzestān, Mēšān, Asūrestān, Nōdšīragān (Adiabēnē), Ādurbāyagān, Spāhān, *Ray, Kirmān, Sagestān, Gurgān, Marw, Harēw, Abaršahr, Tūrestān, Makran, and the Kushan country up to Peshawar.⁹

By defining Iranshahr as such, he leaves some provinces mentioned by Šāpur I outside of the Iranian realm, namely “Arabia, India, Oman, Armenia, Georgia, Albania, and Balāsagān.”¹⁰ One may suggest that the imperial notion of Iranshahr is somewhat different from the religious notion, and the reason may be that the idea of Iranshahr is originally a Zoroastrian notion. But we should remember that Šāpur I was defining his realm as that of *Ērān* (Iranian) and *an-Ērān* (non-Iranian).

However, by the sixth century CE, a series of walls were constructed to further solidify the imperial space. Textual and archaeological sources have attested four such walls constructed during the late Sasanian period. These are: I the Wall of Gorgan, II the Wall of Tammishe, III the Alān Gates (Darband), and IV the Wall of the Arabs.

As late as 2006 a group of European and Iranian archaeologists has been working on walls I and II, called by them “the great wall of Gorgan and the wall of Tammishe.” The wall of Gorgan, known also as *Sadd-ī Iskandar* (“Barrier of Alexander”), runs across the Turkmen steppe from the Caspian Sea to the mountains. It is about 195 km. long with some 33 forts and in fact is the longest wall built in antiquity (longer than Hadrian’s Wall),¹¹ indeed a huge engineering feat. The wall has been dated to the fifth and early sixth century CE, and no doubt was built as a defensive structure against the Hephthalites and other nomadic peoples trying to enter Iranshahr.¹² Nokandeh and Sauer have correctly stated that the wall “bears the hallmarks of a powerful demonstration of military superiority and an effective security measure against future threats.”¹³ The Wall of Tammishe is the other important wall in the same region, which runs from the southeast corner of the Caspian Sea into the foothills of the Alborz mountains. The excavation report suggests that it was also built during the Sasanian period.¹⁴ Textual sources such as Yāqūt

8 ŠKZ, Huyse (1999), p. 22–23.

9 KKZ, ed. Gignoux (1991).

10 See “Ērān, Ērānšahr,” in MacKenzie (1998).

11 Nokandeh & Sauer (2006), p. 127. See now also Sauer *et al.* (2013).

12 *Ibid.*, p. 163.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

14 Bivar & Fehèrvéri (1966), p. 40.

and Tabarī associate this wall with the time of Khusro I to the sixth century CE. According to Yāqūt:

It was Kisrā Anūšīrvān who built it as an obstacle against the Turks and their raids in to Tabaristan.¹⁵

The third wall is located on the western side of the Caspian Sea. It was built during the reigns of Kawād I and later Khusro I in the fifth and sixth century CE.¹⁶ The Darband Wall was a project for which the Romans provided subsidy for its upkeep, as nomadic raids endangered both empires, but also as a symbol of tribute received by the Sasanian Empire.¹⁷ The Darband Wall was at least 40 km long, extending into the wooded area and impassable mountains. It had 7 gates and some 27 towers with intervals of 170–200 meters, and it was considered by the Arabs, as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Its most interesting feature is that it has at least 25 Middle Persian inscriptions on it dated to the sixth century CE.¹⁸ The last and far less known defensive system is called *Khandaq-ī Šāpūr* in the Perso-Arabic sources and *War ī Tāzīgān* (“Wall of the Arabs”) in Middle Persian Sources. The ŠĒ mistakenly confuses Šāpūr I for Šāpūr II as the builder and states (ŠĒ 25):

Šahrestān ī hērt šābuhr ī ardaxšīrān kard, u-š mihrzād ī hērt marzbān pad war ī tāzīgān be gumārd

The city of Hīra was built by Šāpūr, the son of Ardaxšīr, and he appointed Mihrzād as the margrave of Hīrā over the Wall of the Arabs.¹⁹

The Sasanians appear to have controlled the region by appointing a margrave over the wall, where the Lakhmid chiefs became its protector from the fourth century CE onward. They were placed to defend the area from the Romans and their client kingdom of the Ghassanids. The Sasanians no doubt were protecting the agricultural lands of Mesopotamia from the Bedouins of Arabia.²⁰ We should also keep in mind that Hira is just west of the Euphrates, the hydraulic boundary between the Sasanian and Roman worlds. The Wall of the Arabs was important enough that a *Marzbān*, “Margrave”, was appointed to oversee it (ŠĒ 52). Yāqūt states that:

Khandaq-ī Sābūr is in Bariyata al-Kufa, as was dug by the order of Sābūr to separate his (realm) from that of the Arabs, for fear of their raids. Sābūr the Lord of Shoulders (Šāpūr II), built and made frontier watchtowers to protect the areas that laid near the desert, and ordered a Mote (*Khandaq*) to be dug from the lower region of the desert to what precedes Basra, and is joined to the sea (Persian Gulf). There, he built turrets and forts and arranged frontier watchtowers, so that the mote could be barrier between the inhabitants of the desert and the people of as-Sawād.²¹

I believe that H. Mahamedi has convincingly demonstrated that *khandaq* not only means “mote” or “trench,” but can also mean “wall”. The wall seems to have been

15 Wüstenfeld ed. II, p. 574; Mahamedi (2004), p. 147.

16 Artamonov (1962), p. 122.

17 Börm (2008).

18 Kettenhofen (1994).

19 Daryae (2002b).

20 Bosworth (2003).

21 Yāqūt, Wüstenfeld ed. II, p. 65.

built from the Persian Gulf to the Basra area already in the fourth century CE as a reaction to Arab raids into the Sasanian the agricultural lands of Iranshahr.

The walls were a barrier between the known and the unknown, the civilization and the uncivilized periphery, but also between *Ērān* and *an-Ērān* (Iranians and non-Iranians). Thus, rivers and walls demarcated Sasanian imperial space. Of course, these physical barriers, I believe, created also mental and psychological barriers, which contrasted the self and the other for the Sasanians in Eurasia. Furthermore, this mental vision had made the Sasanian Empire the center of Eurasia.

SACRED GEOGRAPHY AND THE SASANIAN IMPERIAL SPACE

In the past, I have tried to demonstrate how the Sasanians were able to create an imperial space that fitted their sacred tradition.²² The world of the ancient Iranians, according to the Zoroastrianism was divided into seven continents, climes, regions or, in the modern sense, countries (Avestan *karšuuar*, Middle Persian *Kišwar* “Avestan *karš* in the sense of boundary). This is apparent from the Mihr Yašt (Yašt X) of the *Avesta*, which was probably composed already in the Achaemenid period.²³ By the Sasanian period, they were reworked and commented upon by Pahlavi scholars. According to the ninth century encyclopedic work, the *Bundahišn*, or “(Book of) Primal Creation”, the Middle Persian terms used for these regions were (Bundahišn):

Pārag-ē pad kust ī xwarāsān sawah kišwar (pārag-e pad kust ī) xwarwarān arzah kišwar dō pārag pad kust ī nēmrōz fradadafš ud widadafš kišwar dō pārag pad kust ī abāxtar wōrūbaršt wōrūjaršt kišwar dō pārag ān ī mayān xwanirah

The part in the northeast direction is the country of Sawah, the part in the southwest direction is the country of Arzah, two parts are in the southeastern direction, the climes of Fradadafš and Widadafš, two parts are in the northwester direction, the countries of Wōrūbaršt and Wōrūjaršt, two parts in between Xwanirah.²⁴

In this Sasanian era text, it is *Xwanirah*, which is the center of attention and the Bundahišn states:

ud az ēn haft kišwar hamāg nēkīth andear xwanirah wēs dād

and from these seven countries, all the goodness was created more in Xwanirah.²⁵

The Sasanians took the Avestan Zoroastrian concept of seven climes and created seven countries/realms, no doubt due to the realities of Late Antiquity, and through manipulation (commentaries) the Arabs, Turks, Romans, Indians and others became the inhabitants of each realm/country. More importantly, the middle realm/country of *Xwanirah* was now equated with Iranshahr, which has strong connections with the mythical homeland of the Aryans, the Weh Dāitiy, i. e., Oxus/Amū Daryā region. Thus, the imperial boundary of Iranshahr grew to a large extent *vis-*

22 Daryaee (2005), p. 124–138.

23 Daryaee (2002c) also Humbach & Faiss (2016).

24 *Bundahišn*, ed. Bahār, p. 70.

25 *Bundahišn*, ed. Bahār, p. 70.

à-vis other neighbors. It is in this light that we can understand the list of territories (*šahrs*) claimed by Šāpūr I as his empire.

Iranshahr was held together by means of an ideological vision rooted in the Zoroastrian sacred texts, which was manipulated by the Sasanians to fit their imperial agenda. The realm of the Iranians in the *Avesta* was Central Asian and specifically the Bactrian world, but by the Sasanian period sacred names and lore was transformed from the Eastern world to the Western part of the Iranian Plateau. Thus, Adūrbādagān (Azarbijān) became the religious center of Iranshahr, and the sacred fire, Adūr-Gušnasb, was located there,²⁶ while the birth of Zoroaster was now associated with Rayy; Iran's epic history was revealed in Sīstān, and some of the ancient heroes and sacred personages of the *Avesta* also became associated with the province of Fārs²⁷, where the Achaemenid rock reliefs, then known as *Naqš-e Rostam* ("Rostam's Image") and *Takht-e Jamshīd* ("Jamshīd Throne") were associated with respectively the epic hero Rostam and the Avestan ruler Yima, the world ruler Jamshīd of later, Sasanian tradition.

More problematic was the Mesopotamian territory with the Sasanian capital of Ctesiphon, which had been the center of that region, also in Seleukid and Parthian times. This region, too, was mythologized in the Iranian context. Ctesiphon (Tīsfūn) and its history was couched in Iranian lore, and its foundation was now associated with Tūs (ŠĒ 21), the Avestan Tūsa- and the Tūs of the Book of Kings, the warrior hero who defeated his enemies with the aid of the deity Anāhīta. This is not the place to discuss the connections and the symbiosis of Lady Anāhīta and the Babylonian deity Ishtar, as a good bit of cross-fertilization probably took place.²⁸ However, I do believe that the idea of Markwart that the connection of Tīsfūn and Tūs is a "childish etymology" of our Sasanian authors is misunderstood.²⁹ Rather one can posit the idea that the Sasanians deliberately connected the two relative homonyms with the aim to create an Iranian tradition for their capital based on pre-existing local traditions and thus claim ownership of the city.

In this manner, every province received a new mythologized and sacred history as part of Iranshahr, protected by the rivers Oxus and Euphrates and by the four walls (Sadd-ī Iskandar, Tammishe, Darband, Arabs). Thus, the Sasanians created an imperial space to bind the Iranians/*Ērānagān* and to create a single, unifying culture for the ethnically enormously heterogeneous inhabitants of a vast area. All that remains unclear is why no wall was built at the southeastern frontier of the Sasanian Empire. I would only hazard a guess that there seems to have been fewer troubles on the southeastern front and that the Sasanians infiltrated and influenced that region with less trouble. We know relatively little about the Indo-Iranian borderlands, although this is slowly improving. Perhaps the Indus River was the other hydraulic boundary for the Sasanian Empire.

26 Huff (2008).

27 Canepa (2013).

28 Brosius (1988), 127–138.

29 Markwart (1932), p. 62.

This boundary was also infused with a set of cultural values (Middle Persian *Frahang*), that is *Ērīh* (Iranianness) represented a set of markers. The behavioral norms, learning, physical and the intellectual activity included writing, reading, knowing religion and history, but also being knowledgeable in sciences and the arts. On the other hand the mental exercise included the playing of such games as chess and backgammon, which the physical readiness was done through such games as polo and jousting.³⁰ These were the cultural values of Iranshahr which by learning it made one Iranian. Thus, not only a territorial but also a cultural setting was brought to fore in the Sasanian period which continued into the Islamic period.

CONCLUSION

The culmination of the idea of Iranshahr was a product of a long historical as well as religious tradition. While the *Avesta* provided the religious ideology which had the idea of the mythical land of the Aryas/Iranian attached to it, but it was the Achaemenid idea of being an Arya/Iranian which gave it a temporal sense. It was also the Achaemenid realm, however, limited its memory may have been, that provided a framework for imperial propaganda for a territory claimed by the Sasanians, which the late antique authors such as Ammianus and Herodian noted. The Achaemenid Persians had already established the Avestan idea of the Haft Kīšwar (Seven Climes) as an ideological idea, and the Sasanians capitalized on this “Persianism,” and made the central clime its largest and equated with Iranshahr.

Even the religious aspects of the Sasanian period owe not only to the Avestan tradition, but also from the Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid region of Persis, which was the heart of “Persian” practices. The worship of fire, sacred monuments such as the Ka‘be-ye Zardosht and a sacred banner had already been shown to exist at the time of the Fratarakas. The attachment to the cult of Anahita which became prevalent in the Sasanian period was already established in the mid-Achaemenid period. Hence, there was a long tradition at work to create the notions of Iranianness and Iranshahr.

Rivers and walls protected the imperial space of the Iranian world in late antiquity in a manner that was not to be repeated, although the idea of Iran/Iranshahr would be revamped in the later history with the formation of the gunpowder empires of the Safavids and Qajars. Within these boundaries, each province became identified with a specific sacred tradition and history of the Iranians transmitted through the Zoroastrian tradition. The fire-temples in Azarbījān, Khurasan, Sīstān and Fārs marked the sacred localities of Iranshahr, while monuments of Fārs, Media (Rayy) and other regions provided a sacred history for those regions. Consequently, the Sasanian rulers, who symbolically were the patrons of the “Good Religion”, protected a coherent sacred, civilized space, which coincided exactly with the imperial space actually under the control of the Sasanians.

30 Azarnouche (2013).

PERSIANISM:
OR ACHAEMENID REMINISCENCES IN THE IRANIAN AND
IRANICATE WORLD(S) OF ANTIQUITY *

M. Rahim Shayegan

IN GUISE OF AN INTRODUCTION

Surveying the reception of the Achaemenid empire in the post-Hellenistic and late antique “Iranian and Iranicate world(s)” (what is thus exquisitely called in the German cultural realm: *iranisch und iranisch geprägte Kulturen*), that is, a period roughly corresponding to the rise of the Parthian empire as the dominant power of the Near and Middle East, consequent upon the conquest of Babylon in 141 before the common era, to the end of the Sasanian empire in mid-seventh century of the common era, is a daunting task, not only on account of the envisaged temporal expanse, but also because the reception of the past did not always rise to a precise historical awareness.

This means that, even when subsequent Iranian dynasties might have sought the proximity of Achaemenid monuments, or emulated Old Persian iconography, this perforce did not translate into a historical awareness of the *authors* of things being emulated. Thus, while the very perception of things Achaemenid under the Arsakids, the *fratarakā*, the *Dārāyanids*, the rulers of Pontos and Commagene, and the Sasanians, may qualify this intellectual *Rückschau* as *Persianism* as defined by the theoretical confines of the present volume, it is still permitted to query to what extent recognition of past historical actors at least *as who they were*, in this case as Achaemenids, however imaginary and constructed their later reception might have been, to what extent awareness of the identity of past historical actors ought to be a defining moment in establishing the boundaries of *Persianism*.

A case in point, in order to qualify our intent, is the association by the late Sasanians of the Achaemenids with the mytho-epic Kayānid dynasty, to the extent as to evanesce Achaemenid historical authorship; does the perception of this construed past, where Achaemenid Persia is absent from the equation, still count as *Persianism*. At issue is not the inadequate or incomplete knowledge of ancient Persia, and its resulting imperfect ideation, but at issue is whether the reception of a past, whose constitutive moments is bereft of a link to the Persian Achaemenid element, or whose Persian actors have fallen into desuetude, and reinvested with mytho-epic authorship, still *Persianism*.

* I would like to seize this opportunity to thank my dear colleagues Rolf Strootman and Miguel John Versluys for having conceptualized and organized an exceedingly stimulating conference on Persianism, as well as for their hospitality, in Stamboul.

Especially in the world of Iranian antiquity, where the conception of history and historiographical practices are decidedly different than those prevailing in the classical world, and where the forces of orality and oral transmission cast the individual historical *Gestalt* of past actors and events into models of archetypal rulers and patterns of conduct, of a mytho-epic dimension, thereby rendering them de-historicized idealized entities, in this world of Iranian antiquity, it is particularly challenging to identify any informed reception of the past. To this one may add that although historical knowledge of the past, and its reception, are only rarely afforded to the post-Achaemenid empires through autochthonous tools of perception, other cultural forces pertaining to Iranian subjects or foes, be it the Babylonian literary tradition, or be it Roman historiography, by virtue of possessing the Persian past more immediately than the veritable heirs to the Achaemenids, have often filled this lacuna for the post-Achaemenid empires, and, in a dialectical process, bestowed upon them a sense of historical continuity, of which they might have otherwise remained bereft. This agency as a defining moment of *Persianism* also needs to be accounted for, as it interjects different traditions and intellectual mindsets as intermediaries in what ought to have been a more linear path of transmission.

Within the confines of the present paper, we shall also venture, beyond the discussion of more *tangible* traces of Achaemenid cultural practices surviving in Iranian antiquity, into no less rewarding queries probing the *intangible* ones. With this we mean those intellectual structures and cultural practices that might have been carried down from the Achaemenid to the Sasanian periods, without us having to assume the Sasanians were cognizant of them, or even applied themselves in emulating the ways of their historical predecessors.

One such field of inquiry shall be the discursive strategies at play in the composition of inscriptions during the Achaemenid and Sasanian periods. Indeed, these strategies show such organizational analogies in spite of millennia separating them, that one may be hard-pressed to account for them merely by dint of random reminiscences, or sheer serendipity; hence prompting us to envisage the possibility of certain continuity of mental structures, a collective cultural memory that could have recreated anew the selfsame intellectual patterns of thought. These *intangible* patterns, whereof those operating with them were unaware, are yet another field of reception, and ought to be an integral part of our discussion about *Persianism*.

Since a holistic treatment of the manifold phenomena constituting *Persianism* in the (post-)Hellenistic and Late Antique Iran is not possible within the confines of the present paper, we shall perforce limit ourselves to more discrete aspects of late Seleukid, Arsakid, Fratarakid, Dārāyānid, Pontic, Commagenian and finally Sasanian reception of Persian past, wherewith we claim a modicum of familiarity.

We shall first investigate, among the more *tangible* paradigms of *Persianism* the transmission of titulary and functions, followed by examples exhibiting how the Achaemenids have been referred to, for genealogical and ideological constructions. Finally, among the more *intangible* forms of *Persianism*, we shall turn to the discursive strategies of third and fourth century Sasanian inscriptions, whose authors responded to the sensibilities of varied target audiences, and in doing so, made use

of mechanisms reminiscent of those we encounter under the Achaemenids, when Elamo-Persian scribes successfully applied them to disseminate the content of the Bisotun inscription to the manifold constituencies of the empire in the sixth century before our common era.

ON THE SURVIVAL OF ACHAEMENID TITLES

The Titles of “King” and “King of Kings” in post-Achaemenid Babylonia and Iran

One of the most distinctive Achaemenid attribute to have survived in the post-Achaemenid successor states is the imperial title of “king of kings.” Having fallen into desuetude in the wake of the Macedonian conquest, and during the Seleukid period, it was nonetheless resurrected sometime following the Arsakid conquest of Mesopotamia in 141 BCE.

While the title of “king of kings,” itself tributary to Mesopotamian precedents, is abundantly attested in Achaemenid inscriptions, it is, bar a few contested cases, absent from the Babylonian documents of the Achaemenid period. Its recurrence hence, almost half a century later first on Babylonian documents of the Arsakid era, is most striking, and begs the question of agency in resurrecting it.

While considering the Achaemenid titulatures that are reflected in Old Persian inscriptions, we may observe the relative consistency of its structures from its beginnings under Dareios I to the end of Ochos’ rule.¹ Dareios’ titulatures exhibit the most variety, and it was only under his successor Xerxes that the titulary, with minor inflections, became canonical. In general, the following pattern may be observed under Dareios:

adam Darayava^huš | xšāyaθiya vazarka | xšāyaθiya xšāyaθiyānām | (xšāyaθiya Pārsaiy) | xšāyaθiya dahayānām (paruzanānām/vispazanānām) | xšāyaθiya ahayāyā būmiyā (vazarkāyā dūrai y apiy) | Vištāspahayā puça | Haxāmanišiya | (Pārsa Pārsahayā puça Ariya Ariyaciça).

I, Dareios | great king | king of kings | (king in Persis) | king of the lands (of many races/all races) | king on this (great) earth (far and wide) | son of Vištāspa, | an Achaemenid | (Persian, of Persian descent, Aryan, of Aryan seed).

Under Xerxes, bar a single exception, the title is reduced to its core seven elements, which were already preeminent under Dareios:

adam xšāyavršā | xšāyaθiya vazarka | xšāyaθiya xšāyaθiyānām | xšāyaθiya dahayānām paruzanānām | paruv zanānām | xšāyaθiya ahayāyā būmiyā vazarkāyā dūrai y apiy | Dārayava-hauš xšāyaθiyahayā puça | Haxāmanišiya

I, Xerxes | great king | king of kings | king of the lands | king of this earth | son of X | an Achaemenid | (Persian, of Persian descent, Aryan, of Aryan seed).

1 For a general overview, see Colditz (2003), p. 61–78; and Shayegan (2011), p. 247–257.

Of these seven core elements, one designates the king's name, one his genealogy (son of X, grandson of X), and another is the dynastic appellation (Achaemenid), which means that the proper components of the title are in reality four in number, namely: great king | king of kings | king of the lands | king of this earth.

In contrast, Babylonian legal and economic documents present a different picture of Achaemenid titulary. From Cyrus to Dareios, the title (*šar Bābili*) *šar mātāti* “king of Babylon, king of the lands,” was exclusively used,² before undergoing substantial changes under Xerxes, and eventually taking on, in its extended form, a tripartite structure, whereby multiple variations of the selfsame could occur, because of the combination, or omission, of one or several element(s):

šar (māt) Parsu (u) (māt) (Mādaya) | (šar) Bābili | (šar) mātāti

“king of (the land of) Persis (and) (the land of) (Media) | (king) of Babylon | (king) of the lands.”

Under Artaxerxes I the title of *šar mātāti*, which had risen to prominence already under Xerxes, became the norm.³

The testimony of the *Diaries*⁴ exhibits yet another variance. The king was either called with his bare given name,⁵ or with his throne name alone (that is, without any title accompanying either name).⁶ When his given name differed from the adopted throne name, the given name could be followed by the formula: [given name] *ša* [throne name] *šarru/šar mātāti šumšu nabû*, “[given name], who is called [throne name], king/king of the lands,” e. g., *Umakuš ša Artakšatsu šarru šumšu nabû*, “Ochos, who is called king Artaxerxes [III],”⁷ and *[Ar]šu ša Artakšatsu šar mātāti šumšu nabû* “[Ar]ses who is called Artaxerxes [II], king of the lands.”⁸ The same naming formula is also known from the chronicle on Dareios III and Alexander, wherein the name of Bessos and his royal title appear to have been evoked: *Bī[su ša Artakšatšu] šumšu nabû* “Be[ssos] who by his name is called Artaxerxes.”⁹ Further-

2 See Shayegan (2011), p. 247, 257.

3 See also, Boiy (2002), p. 245, nn. 19–20.

4 For a topology of the royal names and titles in the *Diaries*, see still Sachs (1977); and now Shayegan (2011), p. 249–256.

5 AD 1, no. -372 A upper edge 1, E lower edge.

6 For evidence, see AD 1, no. -453 obv.' 1; and no. -418 A obv.' 1, A 'rev. 15'.

7 For examples, see AD 1, no. -418 B obv.' 1; no. -391 obv.' 1; no. -381 A obv.' 1; no. -378 left edge 1; no. -372 A col. i 1, B 'rev. 3', B upper edge 1; no. -366 col. iv 23', A upper edge 1, A left edge 1, B lower edge; no. -361 obv.' 1, 'rev. 1'; no. -346 obv. 1, lower edge 1, rev. 35, upper edge 1, left edge 1; no. -342 A obv.' 1, left edge 1; no. -338 'rev. 4', upper edge 1–2; no. -332 A obv.' 1, A rev.' 8'–9', A left edge 1, B lower edge 2.

8 See Hunger and Van der Spek (2006), no. -362 obv. 1, rev. 9'. This particular diary, recently dated by the authors to 29.xi.–28.xii.363 BCE. (= month ix of year 42 of Arses), and attributed to the reign of Artaxerxes II, was not originally included by Hunger in the edition of the *Astronomical Diaries*, for want of a date; the date was recently computed and the text of the diary, purveyed with translation and commentary, published in conjunction with van der Spek.

9 See van der Spek (2003), no. 3, obv. 3'–4', 303–304; Glassner (2004), no. 29, obv. 3'–4', 240–241; Glassner (1993), no. 29, obv. 3'–4', 205–206.

more, in the *Diaries* the king could also simply be called by his given,¹⁰ or throne,¹¹ name in conjunction with the title *šarru* “king.”

In Seleukid Babylonia, Mesopotamian traditions mingled with Macedonian elements continued to shape the Seleukid royal titulature with expressions of kingship particular to the Babylonian (Babylonian-Achaemenid) tradition(s), such as *šarru rabû* “great king,” *šar mātāti* “king of the lands,” and even *šar kiššati* “king of the world.”¹² As expected, the title of “king of kings,” being eminently reminiscent of Achaemenid rulership, is not attested in the Seleukid world, or on cuneiform documents of the Seleukid age, and we have to await the arrival of a new Iranian dynasty on the historical scene to observe its reintroduction. The title of (βασιλεύς) μέγας “great (king)” is also attested outside of the Mesopotamian context for the Seleukids,¹³ to express diverse political agendas. Whether it represented a reaching back to the Achaemenid imperial ideology (albeit the Seleukids seem to have strictly avoided drawing on the Achaemenid title of “king of kings”), or whether it arose in reaction to political pressures, as a means to express the superiority of the Seleukid house in the face of emerging new vassal kingdoms in the East,¹⁴ (as

10 In several occurrences, Artaxerxes II is called *Aršu šarru* “king Arses,” thus called with his given name and the title *šarru*; see AD 1, no. -384 lower edge 1²; no. -382 right edge 1–2; no. -381 A upper edge 1²; in one instance, Ochos is also called *Umakuš šarru* “king Ochos,” AD 1, no. -342 B left edge 1.

11 See AD 1, no. -418 B ‘rev. 5’.

12 The titles *šar kiššati* “king of the world and *šar mātāti* “king of the lands” occur in the Antiochos Cylinder. For a new edition, based on recent collations of the Cylinder, see Stevens (2014), p. 68–69, i2–i3. Also Stevens (2012), for the collations of the Antiochos Cylinder. On Antiochos I’s titles, notably *šar mātāti* on his foundation cylinder from Borsippa, see Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991), p. 71–86, especially 78–81 and 85–86; also Olmstead (1937), p. 7. For a recent and informed discussion of the Antiochos Cylinder as a vehicle expressing the local dimension of Seleukid relationship with Babylonia, rather than an expression of Seleukid projection of universalist imperial power, see Stevens (2014), where on page 67, she states: “I shall suggest that for all its universalizing claims about Antiochus, ‘king of the world’ ... ‘king of the Lands,’ the Antiochos Cylinder itself tells us more about relations between Antiochus I and the priestly elite of the city of Borsippa than about Seleucid patronage of Babylonian cult or culture more generally, or Seleucid imperialism in a ‘global’ sense.” Compare also the study by Strootman (2013a), especially 90–91: “Far from adopting pre-existing traditions and conforming to varying local expectations, the Seleukids sought to integrate into their system of imperial control culturally diverse peoples by (a) consistently patronizing sanctuaries dedicated to deities that could be associated with the imperial gods Apollo and Artemis (and their father Zeus), (b) by cultivating an umbrella culture of empire that connected civic elites of manifold cultural backgrounds.” Compare similarly Kosmin (2014), p. 193–194: “Ideas, discourses, symbols could be pan-imperial in content and local in idiom.”

13 For a nuanced and informed study on the changes of Seleukid royal titles and epithets, see Muccioli (2013); see also Strootman (2014b), 45–47.

14 The process leading to the adoption of the term (βασιλεύς) μέγας by Antiochos III, in order to assert the king’s superior status *vis-à-vis* his regal subjects is described as vassalization by Strootman (which *en passant* he does not consider to be a sign of Seleukid decline): “Antiochos III’s title of *basileus megas* is directly connected with this process of vassalization ... Because Antiochos III appointed more kings than any other ruler before him, he also had more need to articulate his own superior status”; Strootman, (2016b) (see also Strootman in this volume).

possibly in the case of Antiochos III),¹⁵ or of new imperial polities (as was the case of Antiochos Sidetes *vis-à-vis* the Parthians),¹⁶ has not been yet conclusively established, although a combination of both *stimuli* (Achaemenid precedence and realpolitical considerations may also be envisaged).

Under the Arsakids, the standard royal formula on Babylonian documents consisted of the dynastic name “Aršak” followed by the title *šarru* “king,” thus, *Aršakâ šarru* “Aršak king.”¹⁷ During the rule of Frahāt II (*Phraates*) (early 133[?]–mid[?] 127 BCE), son of Miθrdāt I’s (171[?]–early 133[?] BCE), we may also observe the use of the Babylonian titulature *šar mātāti* “king of the lands,”¹⁸ which, as indicated above, had occasionally occurred during the Seleukid period;¹⁹ but for the Arsakid age, we dispose of a single extant attestation of the selfsame title, the one pertaining to Frahāt II’s rule. Even the great Miθrdāt II (mid 125[?]–fall/winter[?] 91 BCE), upon his accession in 125, was merely called *šarru* “king,”²⁰ and it was sometime in the period extending from March to August 111 BCE, some decade after his accession, that the title *šar šarrāni* “king of kings” was first introduced,²¹ and was to be subsequently employed exclusively until mid 91 BCE. Simultaneous to its occurrence on cuneiform tablets in the spring or summer 111, the imperial title of “king of kings” made also its appearance on coinage.²²

We have in the past argued that the uninterrupted cuneiform tradition in Babylonia, might have been responsible for resurrecting the Achaemenid title of “King of Kings” for the Arsakids. In other words, Babylonian scholars, drawing upon their own literary heritage, may have extracted for their new Iranian overlords a title that had previously belonged to their former Persian masters. Thus, this perception of imperial continuity, which might have not otherwise arisen without Babylonian agency, made the Arsakids the recipients rather than the actors in this complex operation of recovery.

On the *peripeteiae* of the Title *karanos*

Among Achaemenid functions and titles that seem to have survived down to Seleukid and Arsakid, as well as carried into early Persid, periods we may mention that of the *karanos*. One may recall that in the few instances, wherein the Old Persian title **kārāna-/*kārana-* is reported for the Achaemenids – under the guise of the Greek word *κάρανος* – it referred to the extraordinary powers bestowed by Dareios II

15 For the epigraphic evidence on Antiochos III’s titles, still Ma (2002), p. 271–276.

16 For the evidence on Antiochos Sidetes’ use of βασιλεύς μέγας, see Strootman, *forthcoming*.

17 See Oelsner 1964, 263.

18 See Shayegan (2011), p. 43, 45–47.

19 See Oelsner (1964), p. 268–69; Stevens (2014), p. 68–69, i2–i3.

20 See Oelsner (1975), p. 35–37; Oelsner (1986), p. 275–276.

21 See Shayegan (2011), p. 42–43, n. 22.

22 See Le Rider (1965), p. 389–390; See Shayegan, (2011), p. 44, n. 23.

upon his son Cyrus the Younger, which enabled the latter to assume command over the military forces of several satrapies in Asia Minor.²³

In two passages of his *Anabasis*, Xenophon mentions that aside from being appointed satrap over three satrapies of Asia Minor, that is, Lydia, Greater Phrygia, and Cappadocia, Cyrus the Younger was also made commander (στρατηγός) of all the troops that gathered in the plain of Kastolos:

ἐπεὶ δὲ κατεπέμφθη ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς σατραπίας Λυδίας τε καὶ Φρυγίας τῆς μεγάλης καὶ Καππαδοκίας στρατηγὸς δὲ καὶ πάντων ἀπεδείχθη οἷς καθήκει εἰς Καστωλοῦ πεδῖον ἀθροίζεσθαι ...

“Again, when he was sent down by his father to be satrap of Lydia, Greater Phrygia, and Cappadocia and was also appointed commander of all the troops that ought to assemble in the plain of Kastolos.” (Xen. *Anab.* 1.9.7)

and:

Κῦρον δὲ μεταπέμπεται ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἣς αὐτὸν σατραπὴν ἐποίησε καὶ στρατηγὸν δὲ αὐτὸν ἀπέδειξε πάντων ὅσοι εἰς Καστωλοῦ πεδῖον ἀθροίζονται

“Cyrus he [Dareios] summoned from the dominion over which he had made him satrap, and he had also made him commander of all the forces that assembled in the plain of Kastolos.” (Xen. *Anab.* 1.1.2)

In the *Hellenica*, it is reported that Dareios supplied Cyrus the Younger with a letter, wherein he was introduced as the *κάρανος* – instead of the *στρατηγός* used in the *Anabasis* – of the troops to be mustered at Kastolos; the *κάρανος* is then glossed as *κύριος*:

κύριος: καταπέμπω Κῦρον κάρανον τῶν εἰς Καστωλὸν ἀθροιζομένων. τὸ δὲ κάρανον ἔστι κύριον.

“I send down Cyrus as *karanos* of those assembling in Kastolos; *karanos* means ‘lord’.” (Xen. *HG* 1.4.3–4).

The title *κάρανος* had been deemed hitherto to be limited to Asia Minor.²⁴ More recently, however, following the publication of Aramaic documents from Achaemenid Bactria by Naveh and Shaked, a certain *wšt 'sp krny* “Hystaspes *krny*” has been identified, which could be testimony to the use of the title *karanos* by Achaemenid commanders in eastern provinces. Indeed, in a note announcing, during the first year of an unidentified Achaemenid ruler, the dispatch of some forty sheep

23 See Keen (1998), p. 88–95; and Klinkott (2005), p. 320–330.

24 See also the more recent study by Rung (2015), especially the conclusions at p. 352, for a more relativizing appreciation of the functions of the *karanoi*, as regional commanders, but also more broadly as generals (of campaign armies, or army detachments). Although, it is sound to assume the title and function of *karanos* was not merely limited to Asia Minor, since we have Achaemenid Aramaic documents from Bactria attesting to its presence in Central Asia, its mere equalization with the function of a *stratēgos* cum is unsatisfying. Presuming a broad usage of the function ought to have left a more pronounced trace in (post-)Achaemenid Iran, but the paucity of its attestation renders the probability of its extraordinary nature still more likely.

to an Iranian lord (*ʾl mr ʾy* “to my lord”) called *wdywr* by an agent by the name of *kwpdt*,²⁵ we read as follows:²⁶

Inside:

C2: 1 bšnt 1 wštʾsp *krny* ʾzgmʾ mn kwpdt npq qn

C2: 2 ʾl mrʾy wdywr qn 40

Outside:

C2: 3 kwpdt

Inside:

1: In the year 1. Vishtaspa *Karanya*. The disbursement from Kaufadāta: sheep came out

2: to my lord Vaidyura, 40 sheep.

Outside:

3: Kaufadāta.

What precisely the role of Hystaspes *krny* is in this transaction may be difficult to gauge, as he could have served either as the administrative official under whose authority sheep were delivered, or been possibly the seller. Moreover, the identity of the sovereign, whose first regnal year graces the document, remains uncertain, although Artaxerxes III Ochos, Artaxerxes IV Arsēs, Dareios III, Bessos or even Alexander, are all possible candidates.

We know of a certain Hystaspes among the high Persian nobility on the eve of the Macedonian conquest, whom Curtius describes as *propinquus hic Darei fuerat*,²⁷ and whose spouse is reported to have been a daughter of Bisthanēs, son of King Artaxerxes III Ochos.²⁸ Still following Curtius, this Hystaspes was commander of a large army (*magni et ipse exercitus praetor*);²⁹ and ought to have participated at the battle of Gaugamela, since his wife fell into captivity only in the aftermath of Dareios III’s death.³⁰ This Hystaspes, whom Arrian calls “the Baktrian” (Ἰστάσπης ὁ Βάκτριος) was appointed by Alexander as commander (*hēgemōn*) of the Iranian noblemen who were admitted to the *agēma* of the *hetaïroi*,³¹ another sign of his high aristocratic lineage.³²

If this Hystaspes is the same as *wštʾsp krny*, then he might have been in Baktria, as Arrian’s note suggests, prior to his appointment as *hēgemōn* of the *agēma* by Alexander, and consequently could not have been in Baktria during the first regnal year of either Bessos or Alexander, which leaves Ochos, Artaxerxes IV Arsēs and Dareios III as the candidates. Hystaspes’ family ties with Ochos could suggest placing him in Baktria during his reign.

25 *Kwpdt* is related to Parthian *Kōfzāt* < **kaufa-zāta* “born to the mountain.” The expected Old Persian form of *zan-/zā-* “give birth; procreate,” namely, *dan-/dā-* had been hitherto only attested in the Elamite *Nebenüberlieferung*; other cognates of *zan-*, such as, °*zana-* “people; race” (e. g., *vispa-zana-*; *paru-zana-*) are well attested in royal inscriptions.

26 For text and commentary of C2, see Naveh and Shaked (2102), p. 187–191.

27 Curt. 6.2.7.

28 Arr. *Anab.* 3.19.4.

29 Curt. 6.2.7.

30 *Ibid.*

31 Arr. *Anab.* 7.6.5.

32 On Hystaspes, see also Shayegan (2007) [2012], p. 109.

As to the word *krny* in the Achaemenid documents of Baktria, it could certainly be the same word as the *κάρανος* we know from Asia Minor;³³ or simply a family name, as Naveh and Shaked have suggested.³⁴ It is true that the proposition that *krny* might reflect *κάρανος* resides primarily in our equating Hystaspes the Baktrian with *wšt'sp krny*, which is not unlikely, but far from certain; and secondly, in assuming the function of *krny* was also attested in eastern Iran, for which this would be the only evidence. Again, the paucity of the material does not permit us to settle this one way or another.

Supra-regional Commands under the Seleukids and Arsakids: An Achaemenid Reflex?

The title *κάρανος* is ostensibly absent from the Seleukid registry, although vestiges of the function might have perdured. Thus, we know of the position of Seleukid vice-roys of Asia Minor,³⁵ such as Zeuxis, who reportedly was *stratēgos*,³⁶ but also ἀπολελειμμένος ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου ἐπὶ τῶν ἐπιτάδε τοῦ Ταύρου πραγμάτων “the one left by king Antiochos [III] in charge of affairs on this side of the Taurus.”³⁷

We hear that, already in 204/203 BCE, when Antiochos III, probably accompanied by queen Laodike, and the court passed through Teos in Ionia – which the king had wrested from the kingdom of Pergamon³⁸ – the king, or more likely the vice-roy of cis-Tauric Asia Minor, Zeuxis, the ἀπολελειμμένος³⁹ – was campaigning in Karia.⁴⁰ Similar to the Achaemenid *karanoi* of Asia Minor, who could have

33 See Hyland (2013).

34 Naveh and Shaked (2012), p. 191: “The full name given here, *wšt'sp krny*, suggests that the Vishtaspa in question belongs to a family well known in later Iranian history, that of Kāren.”

35 On the *Sonderstellung* of the vice-roys of Asia Minor, see Bengston (1944), p. 90–115, among them: Alexandros (brother of Laodike I), the καταλελειμμένος ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως; Antiochos Hierax (brother of Seleukos II); and Achaios (under Seleukos III).

36 Zeuxis is called by Josephos (*AJ* 12.147) ὁ Ἀντιόχου στρατηγός; Zeuxis' title, in the Decree of the Priensians, may be restored as: πρὸς Ζεῦξιν τὸν τοῦ βασιλέως στρατηγόν; see Ma (2002), p. 348–349, no. 33, l. 17, and 349, n. 17; also Bengston (1944), p. 112.

37 On (the position of) Zeuxis and his precedents, see Bengston (1944), p. 109; Ma (2002), p. 53–54; 123–130, and 125, n. 68, and Ma (2003c), p. 247; see also Kosmin (2014), p. 151.

38 Based on the interpretation of the Teos inscription, Herrmann 1965 [1967], p. 93–100; 106–111, particularly 100, has determined the years 204/203 BCE as the date of Antiochos III's (initial) presence in Teos, although the author concedes that the duration of the king's stay in the city could well have extended beyond 204/203. For a thorough re-edition and translation of the Teian dossier, see Ma 202, p. 308–320, for the discussion of the documents, 260–265; also Dreyer (2007), p. 276–278, n. 190, who introduces new insights for an early date of 204/203. In favor of a later date (197/196 BCE) for the acquisition of Teos by Antiochos III, compare Piejko (1991), p. 13–69.

39 The full title of Zeuxis was ὁ ἀπολελειμμένος ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου ἐπὶ τῶν ἐπιτάδε τοῦ Ταύρου πραγμάτων “the one left by king Antiochos in charge of affairs on this side of the Taurus”; on the personage and his title, see Ma (2002), p. 53–54; 123–130; Ma (2003c), p. 247.

40 See Shayegan (2011), p. 219–220.

concentrated both military and administrative powers, the vice-roys of Asia Minor, who often were governors of Lydia,⁴¹ encompassed numerous territories (this side of the Taurus).

In this context, another testimony from Arsakid Dura-Europos might prove insightful. Indeed, from Dura, we are informed of a *stratēgos*, whose Greek title, attested in a parchment dated to the year 121/120 CE was στρατηγός Μεσοποταμίας καὶ Παραποταμίας καὶ Ἀραβάρχεις, “the *stratēgos* of Mesopotamia and Parapotamia, and lord of the Arabs.”⁴² The territorial expanse, over which this *stratēgos*, a certain Manēsos,⁴³ son of Phraates, commanded, distinguishes him from other *stratēgoi* we have hitherto encountered. Indeed, Manēsos, who operated in the aftermath of Trajan’s Parthian campaign, was not only in charge of Mesopotamia and its immediate western territory, namely, Parapotamia⁴⁴ – which ought to have comprised both river banks of the Euphrates, for Dura, albeit located on the right bank of the river, was reportedly in Parapotamia⁴⁵ – but was also ruling over the Arabs.⁴⁶ Intriguingly, he is also reported to be of the rank “from among the Batēsas”

41 Bengston (1944), p. 103: “Als Ergebnis is festzustellen, daß der bei Abwesenheit des Königs von Kleinasien ernannte Vertreter in Sardes residierte, den Titel στρατηγός führte ... und jeweils mit dem Statthalter der lydischen Satrapie identisch gewesen ist.”

42 For the Dura parchment no. 10, see Rostovtzeff and Welles (1930), p. 158–181; Rostovtzeff and Welles 1931. The passage of interest to us, wherein one of the contracting parties, the eunuch Phraates, an Arsakid garrison commander, as well as member of the staff of the *stratēgos* Manēsos, made a loan to a certain Barlaas, reads as follows: Φραάτης εὐνοῦχος ἀρχαπάτης τῶν παρὰ Μανήσου τοῦ Φραάτου τῶν Βατησα καὶ τ[ὼν]/[ἐλεύθε]ρων παρ[αλ]ή[π]του) καὶ στρατηγῶν Μεσοποταμίας καὶ Παραποταμίας καὶ ἀραβάρχου ... “Phraates, the eunuch, the Argbed, who belongs to the staff of Manēsos, son of Phraates, one of the *bidaxš* and the free men, the collector customs, *stratēgos* of Mesopotamia and Parapotamia, and lord of the Arabs”; see Rostovtzeff and Welles 1931, ll. 4–5, 6.

43 On Manēsos’ name, see Huysse (1989), no. 3.1.4, 22; also Schmitt (1998), p. 190, no. H23.

44 Parapotamia probably designated the lands in the immediate surroundings of the two rivers Euphrates and Tigris; with its core being the region to the west of Euphrates, as well as the one to the east of Tigris. See Cumont (1926), p. xxv, nn. 1–3 with reference to classical authors; Rostovtzeff and Welles, (1931), p. 44–45, n. 65, and 47–48; also Bengston (1994), p. 285, n. 3, and 183, n. 1. Polyainos (5.69.5) reports that Parapotamia, by which he probably meant the para-Euphratine territories, was ruled by a certain Dioklēs, whom Antiochos III had appointed στρατηγὸν τῆς Παραποταμίας; in another passage, Polyainos (5.48.13–16) mentions, in the context of Molon’s rebellion, that the latter having occupied Babylonia and the region near the Erythrean see, sat out from Seleucia to continue his operations, and to conquer Parapotamia up to the city of Europos (on the Euphrates), and Mesopotamia up to the city of Dura (on the Tigris): ὤρμησε πρὸς τὰς ἐξῆς πράξεις καὶ τὴν μὲν Παραποταμίαν μέχρι πόλεως Εὐρώπου κατέσχε τὴν δὲ Μεσοποταμίαν ἕως Δούρων.

45 In two other documents from Dura-Europos, the city is mentioned to be located in Parapotamia; see Welles, Fink, and Gilliam 1959, no. 18, l. 14: “(ἐν) [Εὐρωπόι] τ[ῆ] (ἢ ἐν Πα)[ρ]-[α]ποτ[αμίας]; and no. 19, ll. 1–2: [ἐν Εὐρωπόι] τῆ ἐν Παραποταμίας.

46 The term Ἀραβάρχεις may indicate that the Arsakids, who during the two centuries in which the *Diaries* recount their activities in Babylonia, were constantly threatened by violent Arab incursions into their imperial space, were finally able to contain the Arab raids. Already the *Diaries*’ reports convey the impression that the Arabs were not politically organized, which seems to be confirmed, some two centuries later, in the use of the vague title Ἀραβάρχεις for Manēsos. Sommer (2005), p. 299, posited that the different titles of Manēsos reflected the

(τῶν βατησα) in which term Rostovtzeff⁴⁷ had justly seen the Iranian title *bidaxš* (< **duitiya-xšāya-*?) “vice-roy.”⁴⁸

Thus, the Arsakid *bidaxš* and *stratēgos* of Mesopotamia and Parapotamia could at first glance continue, in the most western rim of the Arsakid realm, the position of former Seleukid vice-roys of Asia Minor, such as Zeuxis, who reportedly was *stratēgos*,⁴⁹ but also ἀπολελειμμένος ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου ἐπὶ τῶν ἐπιτάδε τοῦ Ταύρου πραγμάτων “the one left by king Antiochos [III] in charge of affairs on this side of the Taurus.”⁵⁰ In the same vein as the military and administrative powers of the vice-roys of Asia Minor – who often were governors of Lydia⁵¹ – encompassed numerous territories (this side of the Taurus), the *stratēgia* of the *bidaxš* Manēsos consisted also of territories known to have formed independent satrapies in Seleukid times (Mesopotamia, Parapotamia). In both cases we deal with military and administrative leaders,⁵² whose commands were superordinate to other governors⁵³ and supraregional in extent, much like the Achaemenid *karanoi* in Asia Minor, whence their function may have ultimately derived. It is worthy of mention that these extensive powers, such as those bestowed upon Zeuxis (and his predecessors) in Asia Minor, and on Manēsos in Mesopotamia and Parapotamia,

polyvalence of a *single* office for different audiences within a polymorphous state structure that characterized the periphery of the Arsakid state. However, it is clear that these titles are not just aspects of the same office to different constituencies, but the (extraordinary) cumulation of different commands, mostly known from Seleukid times, in the hands of supreme commanders, so that they may guard the perilous Arsakid western front.

47 See Rostovtzeff and Welles 1959, p. 51–52.

48 On the title of *bidaxš* and its proposed etymologies, see Sunderman (1990); also Frye 1962, p. 353–354.

49 Zeuxis is called by Josephos (*AJ* 12.147) ὁ Ἀντιόχου στρατηγός; Zeuxis’ title, in the Decree of the Prieniens, may be restored as: πρὸς Ζεῦξιν τὸν τοῦ βασιλέως στρατηγόν]; see Ma (2002), p. 348–349, no. 33, l. 17, and 349, n. 17; also Bengston 1944, p. 112.

50 On (the position of) Zeuxis and his precedents, see Bengston (1944), p. 109; Ma (2002), p. 125, n. 68; and Ma (2003c), p. 247.

51 Bengston (1944), p. 103.

52 Manēsos’ administrative duties are, in our opinion, reflected in his function as a παραλήπτης “collector of customs.” Although originally Rostovtzeff and Welles (1931), l. 5, 6–7, and 51, had read παρ[αλή](πτου) for the word immediately preceding καὶ στρατηγῶ Μεσοποταμίας καὶ Παραποταμίας καὶ ἀραβάρχου, later, however, Rostovtzeff (1936), p. 114, n. 5, adopted the reading παραπάτης following the suggestion by Mlaker *apud* Enßlin (1933), p. 269. Indeed, παραπάτης could derive from *pāhr(agh)ed* “chief of the watchpost” and is well attested in Iranian Manichaean texts, albeit in a theological context, as it refers to the *rex honoris*, the second son of the Living Spirit; see de Blois (2003), p. 37–40. However, some time ago, Wolski (1954), p. 288, identified the *pāhr(agh)ed* with the function of the “satrap of the Great Gates” in Babylon, described by Philostratos (*Appolon* 1.27): ἀφικομένῳ δὲ αὐτῷ ἐς Βαβυλῶνα ὁ σατράπης ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν μεγάλων πυλῶν ... “upon his [Appollonios’] arriving at Babylon, the satrap, the one (in charge) of the Great Gates ...” Thus, it is possible that the Dura parchment entailed the title παραπάτης, which may have derived from Iranian *pāhrbed*, and referred to as ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν μεγάλων πυλῶν, although it should be noted that Manēsos was reportedly the *stratēgos* of Mesopotamia and Parapotamia, and did not operate in Babylonia.

53 It stands to reason that the στρατηγός καὶ ἐπιστάτης τῆς πόλεως of Dura-Europos was subordinate to the *bidaxš* and *stratēgos* of Mesopotamia and Parapotamia, since Dura was deemed to be located in Parapotamia. See similarly Sommer (2005), p. 299.

were granted in periods of crisis: Zeuxis after Achaios' rebellion; Manēsos following Trajan's Parthian campaign.⁵⁴

All this suggests that the Arsakid supreme commanders of Babylonia, who operated during ongoing periods of turmoil, presided over satraps, generals, and garrison commanders in Babylonia, and fulfilled administrative duties – judging from the presence of royal judges in their entourage⁵⁵ – were the equivalents of the Arsakid *bidaxš* of Mesopotamia and Parapotamia, and the Seleukid vice-roys of Asia Minor. Indeed, in once instance, the *Astronomical Diaries* of the Arsakid age expressly describe the supreme commander Antiochos as the king's representative or vice-roy: *ša ana kām Aršakâ šarri* “who in representation of king Arsakes,”⁵⁶ a formula that is not without recalling to mind Zeuxis' title of ἀπολελειμμένος ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως.

In this context, another supra-regional command, which appears to have been a Seleukid creation, but continues under an Achaemenid garb into the Arsakid period, is worthy of mention.⁵⁷ The high command of the Upper Satrapies (ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄνω σατραπειῶν)⁵⁸ – which often was given to members of the royal house in early Seleukid times, and was institutionally different from the office of the vice kings of Asia minor⁵⁹ – was centered in Media, although it could extend to encompass Mesopotamia, as the examples of Antiochos⁶⁰ under Seleukos I, and Timarchos⁶¹ under Antiochos IV bear testimony to it.⁶²

This constellation is not without parallels with the position of a certain *Ba-gayaša*, king Frahāt II's brother, who as the latter's representative (*amtu ša šarri*)

54 On Trajan's Parthian campaign, its motivation, and aspirations, see Lightfoot (1990), p. 115–126, and more recently Hartmann (2010), p. 591–634; and Edwell (2013), p. 251–263; and more recently, Hartmann (2015), p. 325–334.

55 On royal judges, see AD 1, no. -82 B 'rev.' 6'; also Del Monte (1997), p. 56–57.

56 AD 1, no. -140 C obv.; also Del Monte (1997), p. 56.

57 See Capdetrey (2007), p. 267: “cette vaste circonscription orientale ... était avant tout une zone de recrutement militaire placée sous la responsabilité d'un *stratègos* et non d'un *satrapès*. Cette caractéristique signe l'origine achéménide de cette circonscription des Hautes Satrapies.”

58 On the high-command of the Upper Satrapies, still unsurpassed, Bengston (1944), p. 78–89; more recently, see Capdetrey (2007), p. 267–271; also Plischke (2014), p. 195–201; 316.

59 Bengston (1944), p. 79–80: “Unter den ersten Seleukiden ist dieser hochbedeutende Posten im allgemeinen durch ein Mitglied der königlichen Familie, und zwar den Kronprinzen, besetzt worden, der in dieser Stellung den Königstitel geführt hat und Mitregent gewesen ist. Die Stellung dieser ‘Könige des Ostens’ unterscheidet sich deshalb natürlich staatsrechtlich ganz wesentlich von derjenigen der gelegentlich in diesem Kommando nachzuweisenden Statagen, die man als ‘Vizekönige’ – ähnlich wie die Statthalter von Sardes – ansprechen darf.”

60 See Bengston (1944), p. 80–81.

61 Bengston (1944), p. 86–87. Timarchos, who as high commander of the Upper Satrapies exercised close control of Babylonia, was for this reason called satrap of Media by Diodoros (σατραπίης Μηδίας; DIOD. 31.27a) and “king of Medes” by Trogus (*Medorum rex*; Just. Prol. 34), but also satrap of Babylonia by Appian (Συριάς καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτὴν ἔθῶν ἐγκρατῶς ἦρχε σατραπὴν μὲν ἔχων ἐν Βαβυλώνι Τίμαρχον; App., *Syr.* 45).

62 Bengston (1944), p. 87–88: “Das Richtige hat m. E. schon Bevan ... getroffen, der in Timarchos den Generalstatthalter der Ostprovinzen gesehen hat, deren Kern Medien bildete und zu denen wie zu Seleukos' I. Zeit auch Babylonien, d. h. wohl nicht allein dieses, sondern das gesamte Zweistromland, gehörte.”

supervised military preparations in Babylonia on the eve of Demetrios II' *anabasis* against the Arsakids, all the while being based in, and governing, Media⁶³:

From Uruk, went out from Babylon to Uruk. These troops of the king retreated at the midpoint of their journey. The 5th day, [...] / [...] from Seleukia which is] on the Tigris and the king's canal, entered Babylon. The 21st day, this general and the general ... [...] / [...] Bagayaša? who to the cities? of the province of Assyria [...] / [...] ... mustered? his [...] and to the cities of Media [...].⁶⁴

The *Astronomical Diaries* inform us of Bagayaša's involvement in mustering soldiers within territories under his supervision, which seem to have encompassed aside the cities of the province of Assyria (*ālānu ša pīḫāt māt Aššur*), those of Media (*ālānu ša māt Mādaya*) as well. Moreover, his exalted position,⁶⁵ not only as brother of king Frahāt II, commander⁷ of Median and Assyrian troops, but also as the chief of the powerful “general who is over the four generals” in Babylonia, is confirmed again by the *Diaries*. They report of the arrival in Media of Philinos, the general of Babylonia who is above the four generals, to present himself *before* Bagayaša – who unmistakably is his superior – in Media: *ana ālāni ša māt Mādaya ana maḥar Bagayaša aḫi šarri illik-ma [...]* “I went from the cities of Media to the presence of Bagayaša, the king's brother [...]:”

That month, I heard as follows: Pilinus the general of Babylonia who is above the four generals, who in month I had gone to the cities of Media before Bagayaša, the brother of the king [...]⁶⁶

This notice, albeit brief, unequivocally conveys the sense that Bagayaša, the imperial prince, oversaw not only the cities of Media, but therefrom also watched over the supreme commander of Babylonia. What is more, other reports accounts of the continuing involvement of Bagayaša's unspecified office, as the king's representative in Babylonian affairs, in spite of the well attested presence of supreme commanders in Babylonia throughout early Arsakid history.⁶⁷ Thus, in the office of Bagayaša, one may indeed recognize the continuation of the Seleukid high command of the Upper Satrapies, which might have been called “satrap of satraps” (σατραπης τῶν σατραπῶν), that is, the later title of prince Gōdarz, son of Miθrdāt II, before his rise to power.

We may conclude by stating that although the title Achaemenid title of *karanos* is not known in the Seleukid and Parthian empires, the supra-regional high command associated with it may have perdured. The function of the supreme commander of Babylonia in the Arsakid period, that is, the “general who is above the

63 On *bagayaša* and his function, see Shayegan (2011), p. 72–74, 85–88

64 AD 1, no. -137 A ‘obv.’ 16’–19’.

65 We also know of Bagayaša through Justin's note (Just. 51.1.1) on him (*Bacasis*), whom he presents as lord over the Medes, thus appointed by Miθrdāt I: *interim inter Parthos et Medos bellum oritur cum variis utriusque populi casus fuisset ad postremum victoria penes Parthos fuit his viribus auctus Mithridates Mediae Bacasin praeponit ipse in Hyrcanium proficiscitur*, “Meanwhile, war arose between the Parthians and the Medes, whereby one and the other people had changing fortunes, at the end, final victory was with the Parthians. Invigorated by his might, Mithradates set Bacasis as chief over Media, while he himself made for Hyrcania.”

66 AD 1, no. -132 B rev. 21–22.

67 AD 1, no. -134 B obv.’ 15–17.

four generals,” and later the “chief of troops” was similar to that of the Seleukid vice-roys of Asia Minor, and ultimately the Achaemenid *karanoi*, in charge of all military and administrative functions in Babylonia, which appears to have encompassed the whole of Mesopotamia. The four “generals” over whom the supreme commander had authority do not seem to have been the *stratēgoi* of the four major Babylonian cities, as has been suggested in recent scholarship, but rather the *only* four officials with military functions, whose activities are well reported in the *Astronomical Diaries*, namely, the *stratēgos* of Babylonia, the satrap of Babylonia, the governor of Babylon, and the guard commander of Babylon.⁶⁸

Overseeing the activities of the supreme commanders of Babylonia (or the “general who is above the four generals”) was the governor of Media, who at least during the reign of Frahāt II in the second half of the second century BCE, was prince (*rabû*) *Bagayaša*, Frahāt II’s brother, in whom we would like to see the continuation of the Seleukid ὁ ἐπί τῶν ἄνω σατραπειῶν “the one (in charge) of the Upper Satrapies.”

This office eventually became in Arsakid times that of the “satrap of satraps” under the rule of Miθrdāt II, when his son and future king Gōdarz was identified, in the Miθrdāt II’s inscription and relief at Bisotun, the σατράπης τῶν σατραπῶν, the selfsame *Generalstatthalter* of the East.⁶⁹

Command structures in the Seleukid Empire		Command structures in the Arsakid Empire	
Super-regional commands		Super-regional commands	Regional commands
Seleukid Upper Satrapies	– The one in charge of the Upper Satrapies” (ὁ ἐπί τῶν ἄνω σατραπειῶν).	Arsakid “Upper Satrapies”	– Prince (<i>rabû</i>) <i>Bagayaša</i> , representative of the King (<i>amtu ša šarri</i>); “(the one) who (is) the representative of king Arsakes” (<i>ša ana kûm Aršakâ šarri</i>). – Gōdarz (son of Miθrdāt), “satrap of satraps” (σατράπης τῶν σατραπῶν).
Seleukid Asia Minor	– “The one left by king (Antiochos [III]) in charge of affairs on this side of the Taurus” (ἀπολειμμένος ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου ἐπὶ τῶν ἐπιτάδε τοῦ Ταύρου πραγμάτων). – “Vice-roys of Asia Minor”	Arsakid Babylonia	– “The General (of Babylonia) who is above the four Generals” (𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣𐎤𐎥𐎦𐎧𐎨𐎩𐎪𐎫𐎬𐎭𐎮𐎯𐎰𐎱𐎲𐎳𐎴𐎵𐎶𐎷𐎸𐎹𐎺𐎻𐎼𐎽𐎾𐎿𐏀𐏁𐏂𐏃𐏄𐏅𐏆𐏇𐏈𐏉𐏊𐏋𐏌𐏍𐏎𐏏𐏐𐏑𐏒𐏓𐏔𐏕𐏖𐏗𐏘𐏙𐏚𐏛𐏜𐏝𐏞𐏟𐏠𐏡𐏢𐏣𐏤𐏥𐏦𐏧𐏨𐏩𐏪𐏫𐏬𐏭𐏮𐏯𐏰𐏱𐏲𐏳𐏴𐏵𐏶𐏷𐏸𐏹𐏺𐏻𐏼𐏽𐏾𐏿𐐀𐐁𐐂𐐃𐐄𐐅𐐆𐐇𐐈𐐉𐐊𐐋𐐌𐐍𐐎𐐏𐐐𐐑𐐒𐐓𐐔𐐕𐐖𐐗𐐘𐐙𐐚𐐛𐐜𐐝𐐞𐐟𐐠𐐡𐐢𐐣𐐤𐐥𐐦𐐧𐐨𐐩𐐪𐐫𐐬𐐭𐐮𐐯𐐰𐐱𐐲𐐳𐐴𐐵𐐶𐐷𐐸𐐹𐐺𐐻𐐼𐐽𐐾𐐿𐑀𐑁𐑂𐑃𐑄𐑅𐑆𐑇𐑈𐑉𐑊𐑋𐑌𐑍𐑎𐑏𐑐𐑑𐑒𐑓𐑔𐑕𐑖𐑗𐑘𐑙𐑚𐑛𐑜𐑝𐑞𐑟𐑠𐑡𐑢𐑣𐑤𐑥𐑦𐑧𐑨𐑩𐑪𐑫𐑬𐑭𐑮𐑯𐑰𐑱𐑲𐑳𐑴𐑵𐑶𐑷𐑸𐑹𐑺𐑻𐑼𐑽𐑾𐑿𐒀𐒁𐒂𐒃𐒄𐒅𐒆𐒇𐒈𐒉𐒊𐒋𐒌𐒍𐒎𐒏𐒐𐒑𐒒𐒓𐒔𐒕𐒖𐒗𐒘𐒙𐒚𐒛𐒜𐒝𐒞𐒟𐒠𐒡𐒢𐒣𐒤𐒥𐒦𐒧𐒨𐒩𐒪𐒫𐒬𐒭𐒮𐒯𐒰𐒱𐒲𐒳𐒴𐒵𐒶𐒷𐒸𐒹𐒺𐒻𐒼𐒽𐒾𐒿𐓀𐓁𐓂𐓃𐓄𐓅𐓆𐓇𐓈𐓉𐓊𐓋𐓌𐓍𐓎𐓏𐓐𐓑𐓒𐓓𐓔𐓕𐓖𐓗𐓘𐓙𐓚𐓛𐓜𐓝𐓞𐓟𐓠𐓡𐓢𐓣𐓤𐓥𐓦𐓧𐓨𐓩𐓪𐓫𐓬𐓭𐓮𐓯𐓰𐓱𐓲𐓳𐓴𐓵𐓶𐓷𐓸𐓹𐓺𐓻𐓼𐓽𐓾𐓿𐔀𐔁𐔂𐔃𐔄𐔅𐔆𐔇𐔈𐔉𐔊𐔋𐔌𐔍𐔎𐔏𐔐𐔑𐔒𐔓𐔔𐔕𐔖𐔗𐔘𐔙𐔚𐔛𐔜𐔝𐔞𐔟𐔠𐔡𐔢𐔣𐔤𐔥𐔦𐔧𐔨𐔩𐔪𐔫𐔬𐔭𐔮𐔯𐔰𐔱𐔲𐔳𐔴𐔵𐔶𐔷𐔸𐔹𐔺𐔻𐔼𐔽𐔾𐔿𐕀𐕁𐕂𐕃𐕄𐕅𐕆𐕇𐕈𐕉𐕊𐕋𐕌𐕍𐕎𐕏𐕐𐕑𐕒𐕓𐕔𐕕𐕖𐕗𐕘𐕙𐕚𐕛𐕜𐕝𐕞𐕟𐕠𐕡𐕢𐕣𐕤𐕥𐕦𐕧𐕨𐕩𐕪𐕫𐕬𐕭𐕮𐕯𐕰𐕱𐕲𐕳𐕴𐕵𐕶𐕷𐕸𐕹𐕺𐕻𐕼𐕽𐕾𐕿𐖀𐖁𐖂𐖃𐖄𐖅𐖆𐖇𐖈𐖉𐖊𐖋𐖌𐖍𐖎𐖏𐖐𐖑𐖒𐖓𐖔𐖕𐖖𐖗𐖘𐖙𐖚𐖛𐖜𐖝𐖞𐖟𐖠𐖡𐖢𐖣𐖤𐖥𐖦𐖧𐖨𐖩𐖪𐖫𐖬𐖭𐖮𐖯𐖰𐖱𐖲𐖳𐖴𐖵𐖶𐖷𐖸𐖹𐖺𐖻𐖼𐖽𐖾𐖿𐗀𐗁𐗂𐗃𐗄𐗅𐗆𐗇𐗈𐗉𐗊𐗋𐗌𐗍𐗎𐗏𐗐𐗑𐗒𐗓𐗔𐗕𐗖𐗗𐗘𐗙𐗚𐗛𐗜𐗝𐗞𐗟𐗠𐗡𐗢𐗣𐗤𐗥𐗦𐗧𐗨𐗩𐗪𐗫𐗬𐗭𐗮𐗯𐗰𐗱𐗲𐗳𐗴𐗵𐗶𐗷𐗸𐗹𐗺𐗻𐗼𐗽𐗾𐗿𐘀𐘁𐘂𐘃𐘄𐘅𐘆𐘇𐘈𐘉𐘊𐘋𐘌𐘍𐘎𐘏𐘐𐘑𐘒𐘓𐘔𐘕𐘖𐘗𐘘𐘙𐘚𐘛𐘜𐘝𐘞𐘟𐘠𐘡𐘢𐘣𐘤𐘥𐘦𐘧𐘨𐘩𐘪𐘫𐘬𐘭𐘮𐘯𐘰𐘱𐘲𐘳𐘴𐘵𐘶𐘷𐘸𐘹𐘺𐘻𐘼𐘽𐘾𐘿𐙀𐙁𐙂𐙃𐙄𐙅𐙆𐙇𐙈𐙉𐙊𐙋𐙌𐙍𐙎𐙏𐙐𐙑𐙒𐙓𐙔𐙕𐙖𐙗𐙘𐙙𐙚𐙛𐙜𐙝𐙞𐙟𐙠𐙡𐙢𐙣𐙤𐙥𐙦𐙧𐙨𐙩𐙪𐙫𐙬𐙭𐙮𐙯𐙰𐙱𐙲𐙳𐙴𐙵𐙶𐙷𐙸𐙹𐙺𐙻𐙼𐙽𐙾𐙿𐚀𐚁𐚂𐚃𐚄𐚅𐚆𐚇𐚈𐚉𐚊𐚋𐚌𐚍𐚎𐚏𐚐𐚑𐚒𐚓𐚔𐚕𐚖𐚗𐚘𐚙𐚚𐚛𐚜𐚝𐚞𐚟𐚠𐚡𐚢𐚣𐚤𐚥𐚦𐚧𐚨𐚩𐚪𐚫𐚬𐚭𐚮𐚯𐚰𐚱𐚲𐚳𐚴𐚵𐚶𐚷𐚸𐚹𐚺𐚻𐚼𐚽𐚾𐚿𐛀𐛁𐛂𐛃𐛄𐛅𐛆𐛇𐛈𐛉𐛊𐛋𐛌𐛍𐛎𐛏𐛐𐛑𐛒𐛓𐛔𐛕𐛖𐛗𐛘𐛙𐛚𐛛𐛜𐛝𐛞𐛟𐛠𐛡𐛢𐛣𐛤𐛥𐛦𐛧𐛨𐛩𐛪𐛫𐛬𐛭𐛮𐛯𐛰𐛱𐛲𐛳𐛴𐛵𐛶𐛷𐛸𐛹𐛺𐛻𐛼𐛽𐛾𐛿𐜀𐜁𐜂𐜃𐜄𐜅𐜆𐜇𐜈𐜉𐜊𐜋𐜌𐜍𐜎𐜏𐜐𐜑𐜒𐜓𐜔𐜕𐜖𐜗𐜘𐜙𐜚𐜛𐜜𐜝𐜞𐜟𐜠𐜡𐜢𐜣𐜤𐜥𐜦𐜧𐜨𐜩𐜪𐜫𐜬𐜭𐜮𐜯𐜰𐜱𐜲𐜳𐜴𐜵𐜶𐜷𐜸𐜹𐜺𐜻𐜼𐜽𐜾𐜿𐝀𐝁𐝂𐝃𐝄𐝅𐝆𐝇𐝈𐝉𐝊𐝋𐝌𐝍𐝎𐝏𐝐𐝑𐝒𐝓𐝔𐝕𐝖𐝗𐝘𐝙𐝚𐝛𐝜𐝝𐝞𐝟𐝠𐝡𐝢𐝣𐝤𐝥𐝦𐝧𐝨𐝩𐝪𐝫𐝬𐝭𐝮𐝯𐝰𐝱𐝲𐝳𐝴𐝵𐝶𐝷𐝸𐝹𐝺𐝻𐝼𐝽𐝾𐝿𐞀𐞁𐞂𐞃𐞄𐞅𐞆𐞇𐞈𐞉𐞊𐞋𐞌𐞍𐞎𐞏𐞐𐞑𐞒𐞓𐞔𐞕𐞖𐞗𐞘𐞙𐞚𐞛𐞜𐞝𐞞𐞟𐞠𐞡𐞢𐞣𐞤𐞥𐞦𐞧𐞨𐞩𐞪𐞫𐞬𐞭𐞮𐞯𐞰𐞱𐞲𐞳𐞴𐞵𐞶𐞷𐞸𐞹𐞺𐞻𐞼𐞽𐞾𐞿𐟀𐟁𐟂𐟃𐟄𐟅𐟆𐟇𐟈𐟉𐟊𐟋𐟌𐟍𐟎𐟏𐟐𐟑𐟒𐟓𐟔𐟕𐟖𐟗𐟘𐟙𐟚𐟛𐟜𐟝𐟞𐟟𐟠𐟡𐟢𐟣𐟤𐟥𐟦𐟧𐟨𐟩𐟪𐟫𐟬𐟭𐟮𐟯𐟰𐟱𐟲𐟳𐟴𐟵𐟶𐟷𐟸𐟹𐟺𐟻𐟼𐟽𐟾𐟿𐠀𐠁𐠂𐠃𐠄𐠅𐠆𐠇𐠈𐠉𐠊𐠋𐠌𐠍𐠎𐠏𐠐𐠑𐠒𐠓𐠔𐠕𐠖𐠗𐠘𐠙𐠚𐠛𐠜𐠝𐠞𐠟𐠠𐠡𐠢𐠣𐠤𐠥𐠦𐠧𐠨𐠩𐠪𐠫𐠬𐠭𐠮𐠯𐠰𐠱𐠲𐠳𐠴𐠵𐠶𐠷𐠸𐠹𐠺𐠻𐠼𐠽𐠾𐠿𐡀𐡁𐡂𐡃𐡄𐡅𐡆𐡇𐡈𐡉𐡊𐡋𐡌𐡍𐡎𐡏𐡐𐡑𐡒𐡓𐡔𐡕𐡖𐡗𐡘𐡙𐡚𐡛𐡜𐡝𐡞𐡟𐡠𐡡𐡢𐡣𐡤𐡥𐡦𐡧𐡨𐡩𐡪𐡫𐡬𐡭𐡮𐡯𐡰𐡱𐡲𐡳𐡴𐡵𐡶𐡷𐡸𐡹𐡺𐡻𐡼𐡽𐡾𐡿𐢀𐢁𐢂𐢃𐢄𐢅𐢆𐢇𐢈𐢉𐢊𐢋𐢌𐢍𐢎𐢏𐢐𐢑𐢒𐢓𐢔𐢕𐢖𐢗𐢘𐢙𐢚𐢛𐢜𐢝𐢞𐢟𐢠𐢡𐢢𐢣𐢤𐢥𐢦𐢧𐢨𐢩𐢪𐢫𐢬𐢭𐢮𐢯𐢰𐢱𐢲𐢳𐢴𐢵𐢶𐢷𐢸𐢹𐢺𐢻𐢼𐢽𐢾𐢿𐣀𐣁𐣂𐣃𐣄𐣅𐣆𐣇𐣈𐣉𐣊𐣋𐣌𐣍𐣎𐣏𐣐𐣑𐣒𐣓𐣔𐣕𐣖𐣗𐣘𐣙𐣚𐣛𐣜𐣝𐣞𐣟𐣠𐣡𐣢𐣣𐣤𐣥𐣦𐣧𐣨𐣩𐣪𐣫𐣬𐣭𐣮𐣯𐣰𐣱𐣲𐣳𐣴𐣵𐣶𐣷𐣸𐣹𐣺𐣻𐣼𐣽𐣾𐣿𐤀𐤁𐤂𐤃𐤄𐤅𐤆𐤇𐤈𐤉𐤊𐤋𐤌𐤍𐤎𐤏𐤐𐤑𐤒𐤓𐤔𐤕𐤖𐤗𐤘𐤙𐤚𐤛𐤜𐤝𐤞𐤟𐤠𐤡𐤢𐤣𐤤𐤥𐤦𐤧𐤨𐤩𐤪𐤫𐤬𐤭𐤮𐤯𐤰𐤱𐤲𐤳𐤴𐤵𐤶𐤷𐤸𐤹𐤺𐤻𐤼𐤽𐤾𐤿𐥀𐥁𐥂𐥃𐥄𐥅𐥆𐥇𐥈𐥉𐥊𐥋𐥌𐥍𐥎𐥏𐥐𐥑𐥒𐥓𐥔𐥕𐥖𐥗𐥘𐥙𐥚𐥛𐥜𐥝𐥞𐥟𐥠𐥡𐥢𐥣𐥤𐥥𐥦𐥧𐥨𐥩𐥪𐥫𐥬𐥭𐥮𐥯𐥰𐥱𐥲𐥳𐥴𐥵𐥶𐥷𐥸𐥹𐥺𐥻𐥼𐥽𐥾𐥿𐦀𐦁𐦂𐦃𐦄𐦅𐦆𐦇𐦈𐦉𐦊𐦋𐦌𐦍𐦎𐦏𐦐𐦑𐦒𐦓𐦔𐦕𐦖𐦗𐦘𐦙𐦚𐦛𐦜𐦝𐦞𐦟𐦠𐦡𐦢𐦣𐦤𐦥𐦦𐦧𐦨𐦩𐦪𐦫𐦬𐦭𐦮𐦯𐦰𐦱𐦲𐦳𐦴𐦵𐦶𐦷𐦸𐦹𐦺𐦻𐦼𐦽𐦾𐦿𐧀𐧁𐧂𐧃𐧄𐧅𐧆𐧇𐧈𐧉𐧊𐧋𐧌𐧍𐧎𐧏𐧐𐧑𐧒𐧓𐧔𐧕𐧖𐧗𐧘𐧙𐧚𐧛𐧜𐧝𐧞𐧟𐧠𐧡𐧢𐧣𐧤𐧥𐧦𐧧𐧨𐧩𐧪𐧫𐧬𐧭𐧮𐧯𐧰𐧱𐧲𐧳𐧴𐧵𐧶𐧷𐧸𐧹𐧺𐧻𐧼𐧽𐧾𐧿𐨀𐨁𐨂𐨃𐨄𐨅𐨆𐨇𐨈𐨉𐨊𐨋𐨌𐨍𐨎𐨏𐨐𐨑𐨒𐨓𐨔𐨕𐨖𐨗𐨘𐨙𐨚𐨛𐨜𐨝𐨞𐨟𐨠𐨡𐨢𐨣𐨤𐨥𐨦𐨧𐨨𐨩𐨪𐨫𐨬𐨭𐨮𐨯𐨰𐨱𐨲𐨳𐨴𐨵𐨶𐨷𐨹𐨺𐨸𐨻𐨼𐨽𐨾𐨿𐩀𐩁𐩂𐩃𐩄𐩅𐩆𐩇𐩈𐩉𐩊𐩋𐩌𐩍𐩎𐩏𐩐𐩑𐩒𐩓𐩔𐩕𐩖𐩗𐩘𐩙𐩚𐩛𐩜𐩝𐩞𐩟𐩠𐩡𐩢𐩣𐩤𐩥𐩦𐩧𐩨𐩩𐩪𐩫𐩬𐩭𐩮𐩯𐩰𐩱𐩲𐩳𐩴𐩵𐩶𐩷𐩸𐩹𐩺𐩻𐩼𐩽𐩾𐩿𐪀𐪁𐪂𐪃𐪄𐪅𐪆𐪇𐪈𐪉𐪊𐪋𐪌𐪍𐪎𐪏𐪐𐪑𐪒𐪓𐪔𐪕𐪖𐪗𐪘𐪙𐪚𐪛𐪜𐪝𐪞𐪟𐪠𐪡𐪢𐪣𐪤𐪥𐪦𐪧𐪨𐪩𐪪𐪫𐪬𐪭𐪮𐪯𐪰𐪱𐪲𐪳𐪴𐪵𐪶𐪷𐪸𐪹𐪺𐪻𐪼𐪽𐪾𐪿𐫀𐫁𐫂𐫃𐫄𐫅𐫆𐫇𐫈𐫉𐫊𐫋𐫌𐫍𐫎𐫏𐫐𐫑𐫒𐫓𐫔𐫕𐫖𐫗𐫘𐫙𐫚𐫛𐫜𐫝𐫞𐫟𐫠𐫡𐫢𐫣𐫤𐫦𐫥𐫧𐫨𐫩𐫪𐫫𐫬𐫭𐫮𐫯𐫰𐫱𐫲𐫳𐫴𐫵𐫶𐫷𐫸𐫹𐫺𐫻𐫼𐫽𐫾𐫿𐬀𐬁𐬂𐬃𐬄𐬅𐬆𐬇𐬈𐬉𐬊𐬋𐬌𐬍𐬎𐬏𐬐𐬑𐬒𐬓𐬔𐬕𐬖𐬗𐬘𐬙𐬚𐬛𐬜𐬝𐬞𐬟𐬠𐬡𐬢𐬣𐬤𐬥𐬦𐬧𐬨𐬩𐬪𐬫𐬬𐬭𐬮𐬯𐬰𐬱𐬲𐬳𐬴𐬵𐬶𐬷𐬸𐬹𐬺𐬻𐬼𐬽𐬾𐬿𐭀𐭁𐭂𐭃𐭄𐭅𐭆𐭇𐭈𐭉𐭊𐭋𐭌𐭍𐭎𐭏𐭐𐭑𐭒𐭓𐭔𐭕𐭖𐭗𐭘𐭙𐭚𐭛𐭜𐭝𐭞𐭟𐭠𐭡𐭢𐭣𐭤𐭥𐭦𐭧𐭨𐭩𐭪𐭫𐭬𐭭𐭮𐭯𐭰𐭱𐭲𐭳𐭴𐭵𐭶𐭷𐭸𐭹𐭺𐭻𐭼𐭽𐭾𐭿𐮀𐮁𐮂𐮃𐮄𐮅𐮆𐮇𐮈𐮉𐮊𐮋𐮌𐮍𐮎𐮏𐮐𐮑𐮒𐮓𐮔𐮕𐮖𐮗𐮘𐮙𐮚𐮛𐮜𐮝𐮞𐮟𐮠𐮡𐮢𐮣𐮤𐮥𐮦𐮧𐮨𐮩𐮪𐮫𐮬𐮭𐮮𐮯𐮰𐮱𐮲𐮳𐮴𐮵𐮶𐮷𐮸𐮹𐮺𐮻𐮼𐮽𐮾𐮿𐯀𐯁𐯂𐯃𐯄𐯅𐯆𐯇𐯈𐯉𐯊𐯋𐯌𐯍𐯎𐯏𐯐𐯑𐯒𐯓𐯔𐯕𐯖𐯗𐯘𐯙𐯚𐯛𐯜𐯝𐯞𐯟𐯠𐯡𐯢𐯣𐯤𐯥𐯦𐯧𐯨𐯩𐯪𐯫𐯬𐯭𐯮𐯯𐯰𐯱𐯲𐯳𐯴𐯵𐯶𐯷𐯸𐯹𐯺𐯻𐯼𐯽𐯾𐯿𐰀𐰁𐰂𐰃𐰄𐰅𐰆𐰇𐰈𐰉𐰊𐰋𐰌𐰍𐰎𐰏𐰐𐰑𐰒𐰓𐰔𐰕𐰖𐰗𐰘𐰙𐰚𐰛𐰜𐰝𐰞𐰟𐰠𐰡𐰢𐰣𐰤𐰥𐰦𐰧𐰨𐰩𐰪𐰫𐰬𐰭𐰮𐰯𐰰𐰱𐰲𐰳𐰴𐰵𐰶𐰷𐰸𐰹𐰺𐰻𐰼𐰽𐰾𐰿𐱀𐱁𐱂𐱃𐱄𐱅𐱆𐱇𐱈𐱉𐱊𐱋𐱌𐱍𐱎𐱏𐱐𐱑𐱒𐱓𐱔𐱕𐱖𐱗𐱘𐱙𐱚𐱛𐱜𐱝𐱞𐱟𐱠𐱡𐱢𐱣𐱤𐱥𐱦𐱧𐱨𐱩𐱪𐱫𐱬𐱭𐱮𐱯𐱰𐱱𐱲𐱳𐱴𐱵𐱶𐱷𐱸𐱹𐱺𐱻𐱼𐱽𐱾𐱿𐲀𐲁𐲂𐲃𐲄𐲅𐲆𐲇𐲈𐲉𐲊𐲋𐲌𐲍𐲎𐲏𐲐𐲑𐲒𐲓𐲔𐲕𐲖𐲗𐲘𐲙𐲚𐲛𐲜𐲝𐲞𐲟𐲠𐲡𐲢𐲣𐲤𐲥𐲦𐲧𐲨𐲩𐲪𐲫𐲬𐲭𐲮𐲯𐲰𐲱𐲲𐲳𐲴𐲵𐲶𐲷𐲸𐲹𐲺𐲻𐲼𐲽𐲾𐲿𐳀𐳁𐳂𐳃𐳄𐳅𐳆𐳇𐳈𐳉𐳊𐳋𐳌𐳍𐳎𐳏𐳐𐳑𐳒𐳓𐳔𐳕𐳖𐳗𐳘𐳙𐳚𐳛𐳜𐳝𐳞𐳟𐳠𐳡𐳢𐳣𐳤𐳥𐳦𐳧𐳨𐳩𐳪𐳫𐳬𐳭𐳮𐳯𐳰𐳱𐳲𐳳𐳴𐳵𐳶𐳷𐳸𐳹𐳺𐳻𐳼𐳽𐳾𐳿𐴀𐴁𐴂𐴃𐴄𐴅𐴆𐴇𐴈𐴉𐴊𐴋𐴌𐴍𐴎𐴏𐴐𐴑𐴒𐴓𐴔𐴕𐴖𐴗𐴘𐴙𐴚𐴛𐴜𐴝𐴞𐴟𐴠𐴡𐴢𐴣𐴤𐴥𐴦𐴧𐴨𐴩𐴪𐴫𐴬𐴭𐴮𐴯𐴰𐴱𐴲𐴳𐴴𐴵𐴶𐴷𐴸𐴹𐴺𐴻𐴼𐴽𐴾𐴿𐵀𐵁𐵂𐵃𐵄𐵅𐵆𐵇𐵈𐵉𐵊𐵋𐵌𐵍𐵎𐵏𐵐𐵑𐵒𐵓𐵔𐵕𐵖𐵗𐵘𐵙𐵚𐵛𐵜𐵝𐵞𐵟𐵠𐵡𐵢𐵣𐵤𐵥𐵦𐵧𐵨𐵩𐵪𐵫𐵬𐵭𐵮𐵯𐵰𐵱𐵲𐵳𐵴𐵵𐵶𐵷𐵸𐵹𐵺𐵻𐵼𐵽𐵾𐵿𐶀𐶁𐶂𐶃𐶄𐶅𐶆𐶇𐶈𐶉𐶊𐶋𐶌𐶍𐶎𐶏𐶐𐶑𐶒𐶓𐶔𐶕𐶖𐶗𐶘𐶙𐶚𐶛𐶜𐶝𐶞𐶟𐶠𐶡𐶢𐶣𐶤𐶥𐶦𐶧𐶨𐶩𐶪𐶫𐶬𐶭𐶮𐶯𐶰𐶱𐶲𐶳𐶴𐶵𐶶𐶷𐶸𐶹𐶺𐶻𐶼𐶽𐶾𐶿𐷀𐷁𐷂𐷃𐷄𐷅𐷆𐷇𐷈𐷉𐷊𐷋𐷌𐷍𐷎𐷏𐷐𐷑𐷒𐷓𐷔𐷕𐷖𐷗𐷘𐷙𐷚𐷛𐷜𐷝𐷞𐷟𐷠𐷡𐷢𐷣𐷤𐷥𐷦𐷧𐷨𐷩𐷪𐷫𐷬𐷭𐷮𐷯𐷰𐷱𐷲𐷳𐷴𐷵𐷶𐷷𐷸𐷹𐷺𐷻𐷼𐷽𐷾𐷿𐸀𐸁𐸂𐸃𐸄𐸅𐸆𐸇𐸈𐸉𐸊𐸋𐸌𐸍𐸎𐸏𐸐𐸑𐸒𐸓𐸔𐸕𐸖𐸗𐸘𐸙𐸚𐸛𐸜𐸝𐸞𐸟𐸠𐸡𐸢𐸣𐸤𐸥𐸦𐸧𐸨𐸩𐸪𐸫𐸬𐸭𐸮𐸯𐸰𐸱𐸲𐸳𐸴𐸵𐸶𐸷𐸸𐸹𐸺𐸻𐸼𐸽𐸾𐸿𐹀𐹁𐹂𐹃𐹄𐹅𐹆𐹇𐹈𐹉𐹊𐹋𐹌𐹍𐹎𐹏𐹐𐹑𐹒𐹓𐹔𐹕𐹖𐹗𐹘𐹙𐹚𐹛𐹜𐹝𐹞𐹟𐹠𐹡𐹢𐹣𐹤𐹥𐹦𐹧𐹨𐹩𐹪𐹫𐹬𐹭𐹮𐹯𐹰𐹱𐹲𐹳𐹴𐹵𐹶𐹷𐹸𐹹𐹺𐹻𐹼𐹽𐹾𐹿𐺀𐺁𐺂𐺃𐺄𐺅𐺆𐺇𐺈𐺉𐺊𐺋𐺌𐺍𐺎𐺏𐺐𐺑𐺒𐺓𐺔𐺕𐺖𐺗𐺘𐺙𐺚𐺛𐺜𐺝𐺞𐺟𐺠𐺡𐺢𐺣𐺤𐺥𐺦𐺧𐺨𐺩𐺪𐺫𐺬

Command structures in the Seleukid Empire	Command structures in the Arsakid Empire	
Super-regional commands	Super-regional commands	Regional commands
	Arsakid Dura – “The <i>bidaxš</i> and the <i>stratēgos</i> of Mesopotamia and Parapotamia and the Arabs” (<i>Bidaxš</i> and στρατηγός Μεσοποταμίας καὶ Παραποταμίας καὶ Ἀραβάρχης).	“General” (στρατηγός) “Satrap” (σατραπίης / <i>šahrab</i>) στρατηγός καὶ ἐπιστάτης τῆς πόλεως “Castellan” (ἀκροφύλαξ / <i>of (h) = (h)argbed</i>)

The *Fratarakā*, the *karanos*, and the *Dārāyān* in Persis

The early rulers of Persis, known to us mainly through their coinage, may be divided into two groups.⁷⁰ The first group, whose rulers bore the title *fratarakā*, and used a particular iconography and ductus on their coins, encompasses five rulers: Ardaxšahr, Wahbarz, Baydād, Wādfradād I, and possibly Wādfradād II.⁷¹

The second group, whose members adopted, for the first time after the collapse of the Achaemenid state, the title “king” (*šāh*) in Persis, is also known through its inscriptions. This group, whose eponymous founder was a certain Dārāyān I, of the line of *Dārāyānagān*, we have called the *Dārāyānids*.⁷² Both may have associated themselves with the Achaemenids in ways, whose particulars we shall discuss in the following.

Of main interest to us in the present confines are the titles these groups bore on their coinage and inscriptions, and the significance thereof for the notion of Achaemenid reception in (post-)Hellenistic Persis. The first Persid ruler to adopt the title *frataraka* was a certain Ardaxšahr (Aratxerxes), who, as we have argued

70 On the *fratarakā* and early rulers of Persis, see authoritatively Wiesehöfer (1994); Wiesehöfer (1998), p. 36–37; Wiesehöfer (2007b), p. 37–49; and most recently, Wiesehöfer (2011a), and Wiesehöfer (2013b), p. 720–721, wherein the author proposes a change to the traditional sequence of Persid rulers, from Baydād, Ardaxšahr, Wahbarz, Wādfradād I, and Wādfradād II, to Ardaxšahr, Wahbarz, Baydād, Wādfradād I, and Wādfradād II, following in this the new findings of Hoover (2008), p. 213–215. For an early dating, compare Curtis (2010), p. 379–394, who synthesizes the recent findings of Hoover (2008), and Klose and Müseler (2005). Also favoring an early dating of the *fratarakā*, are Hoover (2008), p. 213–215; Klose (2005), p. 93–103; Müseler (2005–2006), p. 75–103; and Klose and Müseler (2008), p. 15–40; the works by Klose and Müseler preceding that of Hoover, still subscribe to the traditional regnal sequence. For an important more recent study (which was also published prior to Hoover’s novel sequencing) with a late dating, see Callieri (2007), with a thorough discussion of the archaeological, epigraphic, and literary material, especially, p. 115–146, for the analysis of the history of the local dynasts of Persis; also Callieri (1998), p. 25–38, and Callieri (2003), p. 153–165. For a more recent study, see Engels (2013).

71 See Skjærvø (1997) [2000], p. 93–104.

72 Shayegan (2005) [2009], p. 171.

elsewhere,⁷³ was probably already instated as the Fratarakid dynast of Persis by Antiochos III, post 220 BCE – for Persian contingents were present as part of the Seleukid levy at the battle of Raphia against Ptolemaios IV in the summer 217.⁷⁴ The full legend introducing the *frataraka* title,⁷⁵ which remained *mutatis mutandis* stable during the rule of the sub-Seleukid dynasty, reads as follows:

Obverse: [name of the ruler] < prtrk' zy 'lhy' br prs > / *frataraka ī bayān* (*pus Pārs*) /

Obverse: [name of the ruler] *frataraka* of the Lords / (their) Majesties (, son of a Persian)

The term *frataraka* “the one ahead (of others); a superior” and related to (< *frataraka* / *fra-θara* – “ahead of”)⁷⁶ has long been recognized as the designation of an Achaemenid provincial overseer, known from Elephantine,⁷⁷ which the petty rulers of Persis had adopted to display their (new) dignity as (vassal) potentates of Persis, without assuming regal authority. The meaning of the expression (< zy 'lhy' > *ī bayān* “of the Lords / (their) Majesties, still escapes us. However, the use of *bay(ān)* on the coinage of the late sub-Parthian / pre-Sasanian rulers of Persis – such as Šābuhr (son of Pābag) and Ardaxšahr (son of Pābag, and brother of Šābuhr) – as well as in Sasanian epigraphy, could be of bearing on its usage on Fratarakid coinage. When accompanying the name of (pre-)Sasanian rulers and kings, *bay* seems merely to mean “Majesty,” as we may observe on the coins of Šābuhr⁷⁸ and Ardaxšahr,⁷⁹ where the legends read:

Obverse: *bay Šābuhr / Ardaxšahr šāh* “(His) Majesty King Šābuhr / Ardaxšahr”

Reverse: *pus bay Pābag šāh* “son of (His) Majesty King Pābag”

Intriguing is also the use of the expression *pus Pārs* (< br prs >), which reminds us of a similar expression used by Dareios and Xerxes in their inscriptions,⁸⁰ that is: *Pārsa Pārsahayā puça Ariya Ariya ciça* “Persian, son of a Persian, Aryan, of

73 Shayegan (2011), p. 179.

74 Shayegan (2011), p. 179.

75 On the meaning of the title *fratarakā ī bayān*, see Shayegan (2005) [2009], p. 173–175. For an excellent review of prevalent interpretations of the title in scholarship, see Callieri, (2007), p. 128–132, and 145–146. Compare also the important conclusions of Panainio (2003), p. 283– with which (*difficile est dictu*) we disagree: “After all these general considerations I propose that it would be more prudent to assume that in the expressions *Frataraka ī bayān* ‘the governor (for the sake/for the account = in the name) of the Gods’ (if this is the ‘echt-persisch’ underlying ‘legend’) only the ancient gods of Pārs were meant and referred to.” Similarly, compare Skjærvø (1997) [2000], p. 102–103: “The meaning of *prtrk' zy 'lhy'* may therefore be: ‘ahead of/outstanding among gods > those of divine descent > kings’ or, conceivably, ‘the one (set) ahead (of others) of = by the gods,’ which would be reminiscent of Darius’ claim that ‘Ahuramazdā made me king, one king of (= among, over?) many.’” See also the remarks of Grenet (2003), in his review of Panainio.

76 Schmitt (2014), p. 177–178.

77 On the function of the *frataraka*- in the Achaemenid period, where the title is reported from the garrison of Elephantine, see Briant (2002), p. 342, 472. See also Wiesehöfer (1991), p. 305–309; also Tuplin (1987), p. 125–127.

78 Alram (1986), p. 185, legend types (a) and (b).

79 Alram and Gyselen (2003), p. 49–50, Legend 1; 93, 95.

80 Skjærvø (1997) [2000], p. 102.

Aryan stock.”⁸¹ Thus, it is conceivable that (τ) *bayān* on Fratarakid coinage was referring to the exalted (Achaemenid) rulers of the past, whose presence ought to have been ubiquitously felt by the *fratarakā* in Persis, and at Persepolis, but whose dynastic name they may no longer have known, thus, merely referring to them as the “Majesties” of the past, whose authority they nonetheless claimed. The iconography on the reverse of Fratarakid coins, showing, among others, the Persid ruler on a throne with a long scepter in hand (figure 1) emulating the imagery of the two treasury⁸² reliefs; or exhibiting a figure in posture of adoration in front of fire temples (figure 2)⁸³ – and later fire altars (with a winged symbol above them) (figures 1 and 3) – emulating the architecture of well known Achaemenid edifices, such as the *Ka'abe-ye Zardošt* at *Naqš-e Rostam* and the *Zendān-e Soleymān* at Pasargadae,⁸⁴ are further indices of a deliberate association with the vestiges of Achaemenid past.⁸⁵ However, the extent to which this *Rückbesinnung* and embrace of Achaemenid symbolism emanated out of a historical consciousness, or actual knowledge, of the Achaemenids, remains inconclusive.⁸⁶

Fig. 1:
Tetradrachm (obverse/reverse) of
the *frataraka* Baydād (Klose and
Müseler 2008, plate 3, 2/2)



Fig. 2:
Tetradrachm (obverse/reverse) of
the *frataraka* Baydād (Klose and
Müseler 2008, plate 3, 2/3a)



81 DNa 8–15; DSe 7–14; XPh 7–13.

82 On the treasury reliefs, see now Abdi (2010), p. 276–279.

83 We agree with De Jong (2003), p. 201 that this figure must *not* perform be that of the Persid ruler himself, depicted in his priestly function. For the political nature of the Fratarakid iconography, see Wiesehöfer (2011a), p. 115–116.

84 See Potts (2007), p. 296–297; Curtis (2010), p. 390.

85 See Wiesehöfer (2011a), p. 112; 115–116. Also with more examples Curtis (2010), p. 379–380, 390.

86 See also Canepa (2014), p. 67–68, on the Sasanian use of *Naqš-e Rostam* as a *lieu de mémoire*.



Fig. 3:
Drachm (reverse) of the *frataraka* Wādfradād (Klose and Müseler 2008, plate 6, 2/23)

Another piece of evidence from the rule of the *fratarakā* in Persis may provide further clarification on the presence of Achaemenid reception in (post-) Hellenistic Persis. It is commonly believed that the reign of the *frataraka* Wādfradād II could have coincided with the Arsakid ascendancy over Persis, and therefore Wādfradād II's rule ought to be placed in the immediate aftermath of the Arsakid conquest of Mesopotamia in April 141 BCE,⁸⁷ or possibly *after* the definitive defeat of Demetrios II by Miθrdāt I in summer of 138 BCE.⁸⁸ Wiesehöfer has argued that among the *fratarakā*, only Wahbarz and Wādfradād I may have been intermittently independent,⁸⁹ and has equated, in this following other scholars,⁹⁰ a certain Oborzoz (Ὀβόρζος), known from a passage of Polyainos, with the *fratarakā* Wahbarz.⁹¹ Therein, Oborzoz is said to have been in charge of 3,000 Greek military settlers, the *κατοίχοι*, whom he ordered to be executed suspecting them of instigating a rebellion.⁹² It is therefore consequent to surmise Oborzoz was a Seleukid appointee (since bestowed with the prerogative to command the *κατοίχοι*) before acquiring independence from the Seleukids.⁹³

In this context a drachm (figure 4a–b) – known only from two copies,⁹⁴ whose authenticity is being contested⁹⁵ – attributed to Wahbarz is worthy of our atten-

87 See Alram (1986), p. 162–163; Alram (1987b), p. 128; Wiesehöfer (1994), p. 113, 118, 129; Wiesehöfer (2007), p. 44–45; Wiesehöfer (2011a), p. 117.

88 See Shayegan (2011), p. 178–179.

89 See Wiesehöfer (2007b), p. 41, 43, 45; and Wiesehöfer (2011a), p. 111–112; see also Shayegan (2011), p. 169–170.

90 Already Justi (1895), p. 341; Hill 1922, p. clxvii; and Stiehl 1969, p. 376; Stiehl (1973), p. 354.

91 See Wiesehöfer (1994), p. 110; Wiesehöfer (2007), p. 39; see also Callieri (2007), p. 117.

92 Polyæn. 7.40

93 See Wiesehöfer (1994), p. 127; Wiesehöfer (2007b), p. 42; Wiesehöfer (2011a), p. 113; Wiesehöfer (2013), p. 722. Expressing some reserve as to whether Wahbarz may be equated with Polyainos' Oborzoz without additional evidence, compare Mittag (2006), p. 315, n. 84.

94 The first copy was published by Alram (1987a), p. 147, 150; plate 20.7; and the second specimen (from an unspecified private collection) showing a slightly different type in the obverse, but with identical reverse type and legend, was introduced by Bivar (1998), p. 39–40, fig. 26a/b (and fig. 25a/b for the first specimen). The two copies of the drachm have been more recently published by Klose and Müseler (2008), p. 27, figs. 17 and 18; 36, nos. 2/16a and 2/16b; and plate 6, no. 2/16a.

95 Already, Alram (1987a); and Alram *apud* Wiesehöfer (2013), p. 723. The presence of two copies of the same drachm (with slight variation on the obverse) speak *against* them being forgeries. See also the persuasive comments by Klose and Müseler (2008), p. 26–30, for considering the copies to be genuine. Among arguments they brought forth, are the striking similarities between the iconography of Wahbarz' prestige drachms and that of known Achaemenid seals, in particular: (1) one depicting an Achaemenid king (possibly Artaxerxes Ochos) striking with a spear a kneeling Egyptian enemy wearing the (*pschent*) Double-Crown (possibly Nectanebo II) – for a depiction, see Boardman (2000), p. 160, no. 5.6; and Briant (1997), p. 227, figures 12a/b; (2) another seal from the Oxus treasure (fifth century BCE), showing the great

tion.⁹⁶ Thereon, the *frataraka* is depicted in Achaemenid accoutrement finishing off a kneeling Greek foe.⁹⁷ Not only is the iconography unusual – albeit we may find precedents for it in Ancient Near Eastern, Persian(-inspired), and Hellenistic art, among others, in the depiction of the kneeling Persian warrior succumbing to the grip of a Greco-Macedonian soldier on the “Alexander Sarcophagus” of Sidon⁹⁸ – but so is also the legend. The Fratarakid drachm, whose legend – reported like those of other *fratarakā* coins on three sides – is unique, for it introduces a new title, not otherwise attested on Persid coinage, but for a tetradrachm also attributed to Wahbarz.⁹⁹ The name of the king <whbrz> appears on the left side, the sequence <wnt ZY> on the bottom, and the title <krny> on the right side.¹⁰⁰ The legend may be read as follows:

<whbrz wnt ZY krny> / *Wahbarz wānēd/wānād ī kāren!*

“Wahbarz was/may be victorious, (he) who (is) the commander [the *κράτορας*]”

Fig. 4a and b:
Drachm (obverse/reverse) of
Wahbarz, the *kāren* of Persis
(Klose and Müseler 2008, plate
6, 2/16a)



king striking with a spear, in a double panel, a kneeling Greek enemy once taken by the arm, and another time held by the neck – see Klose and Müseler (2008), p. 29, figure 21; Boardman (2000), p. 160, no. 5.5; Briant (1997), p. 228, figure 12e; and Dalton (1964), p. 31–32, no. 114, and plate xvi:114; (3) the iconography of a tomb relief of a certain [–]uwata in the Lykian city of Limyra under Achaemenid rule, depicting a warrior preparing to execute, sword in hand, a kneeling enemy, who has succumbed, which offers a striking similarity to the iconography of our *frataraka* prestige drachm – see Borchhardt and Pekridou-Gorecki (2012), p. 92–93, who qualify this type of “duel” as “Haarreiβergruppe”; for its depiction, see Borchhardt and Pekridou-Gorecki (2012), plates 27, 1–4, 28, 1–4.

96 See Alram (1987a), p. 147–155. See also Shayegan (2011), p. 171.

97 See discussion by Shayegan (2011), p. 170–177.

98 For a more recent discussion of the “Alexander Sarcophagus,” attributed to Dareios III’s satrap of Syria and Babylonia, Mazaios (μέγιστος παρὰ Δαρείω γενομένος, Plut., *Alex.* 39.6), who would later surrender Babylon to Alexander, see Heckel (2006), p. 385–396. For Mazaios, see Shayegan (2007) [2012], p. 110–111, no. 60; on the “Alexander Sarcophagus,” see also Scheffold 1968, 13–14, plates 19, 21–22, 24: “ein Grieche hat einen fliehenden Perser, der um Gnade flehend auf die Knie gestürzt ist, eingeholt, reißt mit der Linken sein Kinn zurück und stößt ihm mit der Rechten den Dolch in die Schulter”; and von Graeve 1970, 57, plates 34:2–35 (C5–6).

99 See Klose and Müseler (2008), p. 29–30, figs. 23–24; 35–36, 2/15, where the simplex form: <whwbrz krny> / *Wahbarz kāren!* occurs.

100 See Alram (1987a), p. 147–148.

If our reading of the legend is correct,¹⁰¹ then this prestige issue of Wahbarz could well have commemorated his killing of the Greek *κατοίκιοι*,¹⁰² and may unequivocally establish the identity of Wahbarz with Oborzoz. What is more, the exceptional use by Wahbarz of the title *kāren*, which undoubtedly continues the Old Persian title known as *κάρωνος*, instead of the usual *frataraka*, might have reflected the political expanse of Persis, which during Wahbarz' rule encompassed for a short duration the Characene.

Indeed, in view of the extraordinary powers invested in the office of the *κάρωνος*, enabling the officeholder to assume command over the military forces of several satrapies in Asia Minor,¹⁰³ one may posit that Wahbarz, the *frataraka* of Persis, may have adopted the title *kāren*, a reminder of the Achaemenid *κάρωνος*, upon expanding his rule over the territories of the Characene. Thus, by abiding by the subtle nuances of Achaemenid administrative titulatures, wherein the *frataraka* represented a subordinate governor (to the satrap), and the *κάρωνος*, in contrast, reflected the exalted position of one commanding over supra-satrapal/-provincial forces, Wahbarz may have been intent on indicating his control over more than one region or province, while refraining from adopting the royal title. Thus, the adoption by Wahbarz of the title *kāren* on his prestige mint may have indicated not only his triumph, as illustrated through the iconography, over the *κατοίκιοι*, whose defeat represented the beginning of Persid independence, but also the new dignity of the ruler of Persis, whose (military and political) power went beyond Persis to

101 The legend is <whbrz wnt ZY krny>, with <whbrz> standing obviously for the name Wahbarz; <wnt> representing the stem *wān-* “to win” with either a third singular present indicative ending *-ēd*, or a subjunctive ending *-ād*; and <ZY> serving as the relative particle *ī*, which can serve both as a relative coordinator between the head noun and the modifying adjective/noun, or a relative pronoun (as is usual in Middle Persian and the Old Persian relative coordinator, whence it derives (<*haya-*>). For the the legend, see Schmitt *apud* Alam (1987a), p. 148, n. 2, and 152, n. 21, who interprets <krny> as *kāren* or **kārān*, and suggests reading in <wnt> an admittedly unlikely Middle Persian derivation from Old Persian **vantā* “victor.” The word <wnt> can easily represent the third singular present indicative or subjunctive of the verb *wān-* “be victorious; win,” thus, *wānēd* or *wānād*, rather than a derivative of **vantā*. As to *Kāren* <krny>, which is attested in Sasanian inscriptions with the same spelling (and <k'lny>), as well as in Parthian Nisa documents as <kryn>, may derive from the hypocoristic **kārīna-*, see Schmitt (1983), p. 197–205; or from **kārā-na-* (with the “Führer-Suffix” **-no-*); see Haebler (1982), p. 81–90. Also Rix, based on comparative evidence (e.g., *tribus ~ tribūnus*), has suggested emending the suffixal form to **-hno-*. In our discussion, this presupposes a reconstructed form **kārā-Hna-*, which ought to have become **kārān* in western Middle Iranian; see Rix (1985), p. 76, followed by Schmitt (2002), p. 58, n. 48. Although the ambiguity of the Aramaic script may permit the reading **kārān* for <krny>, the absence of a form with an elongated pre-suffixal vowel in extant Manichaean documents, or New Persian, makes it difficult to verify. Thus, we have adopted in light of the later evidence the form *kāren* from a possible **kārā-na-*. On *kāren*/**kārān*, see further Schmitt (1972), p. 189–190; Mayrhofer (1973), p. 177, nos. 8.763 and 8.769; Schmitt (1998), p. 187, no. F30; Petit, (1983), p. 34–45; Testen (1991), p. 173–174; and Tavernier (2007), p. 228, n. 4.2.949. More recently Engels (2013), p. 60–62, whose foray into Middle Iranian philology and interpretation of Wahbarz' legend is not entirely *geglückt*.

102 See also Alam, (1987a), p. 149 and 153.

103 See Keen (1998), p. 88–95; and Klinkott (2005), p. 320–330.

encompass the Characene, notably through the expansion of Persid influence by Sagdodonacus.¹⁰⁴

Dārāyānids: King Ardaxšahr's Inscription

The Middle Persian inscription of a silver bowl, which Skjærvø originally read and ascribed to the post-Fratarakid rulers of the Persis¹⁰⁵ – whom we have come to call the *Dārāyānids* in a subsequent study¹⁰⁶ – is of great significance for the assessment of Persid history in Arsakid times, as well as the thorny issue of Achaemenid reception in post-Hellenistic Persis.¹⁰⁷

The text of the inscription reads as follows:

Transliteration:

'rthštr MLKA ah'yn d'rynkn BRE d'ryn MLKA š't hn
ZNE YNGDWN zI KSP s-20-20-10 whyhštr BRBYTA NPŠE

Transcription:

*Ardaxšahr šāh *ahīyān Dārāyānagān pus Dārāyān šāh šād hān*¹⁰⁸
ēn YNDGWN zarr asēm 50 statēr Wahīxšahr wispuhr xwēbaš

“May I, King Ardaxšahr, of the former descendants of Dārāyān [I], son of king Dārāyān [III], be happy!

This *hammered (bowl in) gold-and-silver (weighs) 50 staters
(It) belongs to prince Wahīxšahr.”

Several perplexing issues have been discussed in the past. One of them concerns the use of two patronymic forms in the first clause: *Dārāyānagān* and *Dārāyān*. As already recognized by Skjærvø *Dārāyānagān* ought “to mean something different than *pus Dārāyān* ‘son of Dārāyān,’”¹⁰⁹ which, by the time the inscription was written, was most likely used merely as a personal name.¹¹⁰ Whether *Dārāyānagān* referred to the descendants of earlier *Dārāyāns*, among whom presumably Dārāyān I, and beyond him, the Achaemenid king Dareios, again depends to some measure on our interpretation of the word **ahīyān*, which formally could be a head noun

104 See Shayegan (2011), p. 150–168.

105 Skjærvø (1997) [2000], p. 93–104.

106 Shayegan (2005) [2009].

107 Compare Callieri (2007), p. 131–132: “*Dārāyānagān*, par conséquent, doit avoir une autre signification. Skjærvø y voit un écho aux descendants du premier Dārāyān, Dārāyān I^{er} ou l’un des Darius achéménides. Cette hypothèse est extrêmement importante pour comprendre la relation entre ces souverains et les Achéménides, et la pleine conscience de leur héritage politique.” And again: “Dārāyān II passait pour un grand souverain selon la tradition perse, au point qu’il était confondu avec Dārāy I Dārāyān de la dynastie achéménide attesté par les texts zoroastriens et par la littérature épique. Cet élément renforce encore plus mon interprétation, selon laquelle ces rois avaient pleine conscience de la continuité de l’héritage perse, depuis les Achéménides jusqu’aux Sassanides.”

108 Skjærvø (1993) [2000], p. 93: reads: *Ardaxšahr šāh *brāda-y-in (AH'y-n) Dārāyānagān pus Dārāyān šāh šād hān* “May I be (> give) happiness to King Ardašahr, Our brother, a descendant of Dārāyān, son of King Dārāyān!”

109 See Skjærvø (1997) [2000], p. 94.

110 See Skjærvø (1997) [2000], p. 94.

in the expression **ahīyān Dārāyānagān* “of the earlier descendants of Dārāyān” – parallel to *pus Dārāyān* “son of Dareios.”

In either case, *Dārāyānagān* would have to be a *pro-patronymic*,¹¹¹ alluding to the lineage beyond the immediate father and son relation, which is expressed by the patronymic *Dārāyān*. Bearing in mind that in the Iranian epigraphic tradition, the forebears and ancestors, are invariably identified as predecessors from the third generation past, up to and including the (eponymous) founders of the dynasty, as we have established before,¹¹² the **ahīyān Dārāyānagān* ought to refer to ancestors of the first owner of the cup, namely, king Ardaxšahr’s forebears beginning with his grandfather, and possibly including other descendants of the first Dārāyān (I). Ardaxšahr’s grandfather, as the coinage of Ardaxšahr’s father Dārāyān (II) indicates, was king Wādfradād (*Dārāyān šāh, pus Wādfradād šāh*),¹¹³ whose relationship, however, with the first Dārāyān (I) is unknown; indeed, Wādfradād does not indicate his filiation on his coinage, which merely states *Wādfradād šāh*,¹¹⁴ although we may assume he was a direct descendent of the first Dārāyān (I). Thus, **ahīyān Dārāyānagān* ought to refer not only to Ardaxšahr’s grandfather, king Wādfradād, but possibly also to other descendants of the first Dārāyān (I), who did not rule as kings over Persis.¹¹⁵

Another important point, which again the comparison with other Iranian epigraphic corpora suggests, is the fact that genealogical constructions in Iranian inscriptions never go beyond the dynasty’s (eponymous) founder,¹¹⁶ hence the pro-patronymic *Dārāyānagān* ought to allude to the first Dārāyān (I), and probably *not* to any namesakes from the Achaemenid dynasty,¹¹⁷ although we may not altogether exclude this possibility. However, the choice of the patronymic *Dārāyān*, simultaneous to the reintroduction of the title of “king,” could be by itself be reminiscence of a conscious Achaemenid reception in Persis, which could have built on the experience of the earlier *fratarakā*.

What is more, if the first Dārāyān (I) is deemed to be a founding ancestor, then Wahīxšahr, Ardaxšahr, Dārāyān II, Wādfradād, and Dārāyān I ought not to be regarded as merely continuing the *fratarakā* dynasty, but as rulers of a new dynasty in its own right, whose eponymous founder might have been the first Dārāyān who, unlike his *fratarakā* predecessors, for the first time assumed the title *šāh* “king”¹¹⁸ as a vassal king of the Arsakids¹¹⁹ – following the accession of Frahāt II, the later

111 The *terminus* pro-patronymic (*Propatronymikon*) was coined by Schmitt 1972, p. 337–339, and may be briefly described as a “patronymic” indication transcending the son and father relation to designate a more remote ancestor: “das nicht mehr auf den Vater, sondern einen früheren Ahnen bezogene ‘Patronymikon’ wird zum ‘Propatronymikon’”; see Schmitt (2000), p. 20–21.

112 Shayegan (2004) [2008], p. 115–119.

113 Alram (1986), p. 173; Shayegan (2005) [2009], p. 170.

114 Alram (1986), p. 172.

115 Shayegan (2005) [2009], p. 171.

116 Shayegan (2004) [2008], p. 119; Shayegan (2011), p. 20.

117 Shayegan (2005) [2009], p. 171.

118 For other differentiating marks of the “kings” of Persis, beginning with Dārāyān I, such as the ductus of the legends on their coinage, see Skjærvø (1997) [2000], p. 102–103.

119 Shayegan, (2005) [2009], p. 173–175.

šar mātāti, in 25/26–30/31.i.133 BCE. This Persid dynasty, which was to last until the rise of the Sasanians in the first half of the third century CE, we may call the *Dārāyānids*.

Karanos among the Arsakids?

The early Arsakids used the Middle Iranian title *kāren*, written in Aramaic script, on some of the early issues of Arsakes I (figure 5a and b).



Fig. 5a and b:
Drachm (obverse/reverse) of Arsakes I, the
kāren? (S 3.1–2; 4.1)

Whereas there is little doubt that the Fratarakid *kāren* refers to the Old Persian **kārā-na-/*kāra-na-*, an impression that is supported by the iconography of Wahbarz’ special issue, the same may not be assumed *ipso facto* for the coins of Arsakes I, where the same word seems to occur (figure 5b).

The series with the presumed word *kāren* <krny> follows upon Arsakes I’s first issues that carry on the reverse the legend Ἀρσάκου αὐτοκράτορος¹²⁰ in two vertical lines framing a seated archer.¹²¹ The omission of αὐτοκράτωρ from the issues, wherein the work *kāren* occurred, has led some scholars to believe that the presumed title *kāren* was a substitution for αὐτοκράτωρ.¹²² Given the exalted position of the Achaemenid κάρανος, *kāren* would be an appropriate rendition of the Seleukid term αὐτοκράτωρ, as well as providing validation for the hypothesis that the early Arsakids had sought to establish ideological links with the Achaemenids.¹²³

Indeed, a comparison of the legends of the Persid and Arsakid issues on which *kāren* occurs seems to suggest that we are dealing with the same word (compare figs. 4b and 5b).

Nevertheless, their semantic range may not have been identical. The word αὐτοκράτωρ was translated into Parthian early on (even though a precise date might prove elusive), for which an exact calque, namely, *xwatāw* < *xʷa-tāvaya- “self-reli-

120 On the title *autokrator* on Arsakes’ coinage, see Olbrycht (2013) [2014], p. 63–65, who rightly derives its origin among the Parthians from its use by the Diadochoi: “it is evident that Arsakes’ use of the title *autokrator* derives from early Hellenistic tradition and the political context of the Diadochoi period when it denoted rulers with supreme overall authority.”

121 See Sellwood (1980), types 1–2; Alram (1986), p. 122–123; and Sarkhosh Curtis (2007), p. 8.

122 Compare more recently Sinisi (2012), p. 280, who erroneously states the Middle Iranian term *kāren* was “the Aramaic equivalent of *autokrator*”; see similarly Rezakhani (2013), p. 767.

123 See Olbrycht (2013) [2014], p. 68.

ant,” not otherwise attested in Old Iranian, was fabricated.¹²⁴ Although it is possible that the term $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\kappa\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\rho$ might also have been rendered by the title *kāren* – which basically signifies “leader of the people in arms/army” (*kāra-*) – the Arsakid creation of *xwatāw/wxatāw* to replicate the intrinsic meaning of $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\kappa\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\rho$, makes this assumption, at the very least, open to question, and forces us to ask whether *kāren* may indeed have been, in addition to the dynastic name Arsakes, merely a proper/family name of the mighty Parthian aristocratic or maybe regal family that prospered in the Arsakid and Sasanian realms.¹²⁵

If indeed, the terms *kāren* and $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\kappa\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\rho$ on early Arsakid coinage represented both *termini technici* referring, one to the Achaemenid *karanos*, and the other in emulation of Hellenistic practices ultimately to the Macedonian heritage, then we would have in kernel the same binary reference to the patrimony of the Achaemenid Cyrus, and Macedonian Alexander, we find in the later Arsakid period, under Artabān II.

ON ACHAEMENID REMINISCENCES

Achaemenid Reminiscences Among the Arsakids

There are certainly sundry indices that bear witness to Achaemenid reminiscences in the ideological constructs of the Arsakid dynasty. Among the more striking are two well-known reports attributed to Arrian’s *Parthica* that were captured by Photios and Synkellos respectively.

The first is a variation on the theme/legend of the Seven, that is, the narratives of Dareios and the six noblemen who killed the magus Gaumāta, or the two usurper *magi*,¹²⁶ as reflected in the oral traditions captured by early Greek authors, such as Dionysos of Miletos, Hellanikos of Lesbos, and Herodotos. According to Photios’ note: “Arsakes and Teridates were two brothers,” who were “descendants of Arsakes, son of Phriapites”; “these brothers [eventually] killed the satrap of their land, [a certain] Pherekles, appointed by King Antiochos, because of the satrap’s shameful act attempted on one of the brethren.” The brothers

124 See still Meillet 1911, 109–112: “On est donc conduit à se demander si les Parthes de l’époque arsacide n’auraient pas calqué sur le grec [$\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\kappa\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\rho$] un mot nouveau”; also Shayegan (1998), p. 32.

125 For the use of the proper name *kāren* on the Nisa Ostraca, see Schmitt (1998), p. 187, no. 30. See also the use of *kāren* in Sasanian inscriptions, such as *Pērōz Kāren* (ŠKZ, Pth., 23); *Gök Kāren* (ŠKZ, Pth., 24); *Ardaxšahr Kāren* (ŠKZ, Pth., 26), that is, “Pērōz (from the house of) Kāren,” “Gök (from the house of) Kāren,” and “Ardaxšahr (from the house of) Kāren.” Compare Olbrycht (2013) [2014], p. 68.

126 On the seven conspirators who plotted against the alleged magus Gaumāta – that is, Dareios and his six helpers, who in time would become the heads of the most powerful families within the empire – see Briant (1996), p. 119–127, 140–149. More recently, see Shayegan (2012), p. 127–138.

benefitted in this enterprise from the help of five accomplices (πέντε τὴν προᾶξιν ἀνακοινωσάμενοι).¹²⁷

Here, the eponymous founder Arsakes and his (fictive) brother Teridates,¹²⁸ together with their five helpers, are being depicted as leaders of an insurrection against the Seleukid satrap (called here Pherekles) of an undetermined land (ἡ χώρα),¹²⁹ which eventually would lead to Arsakid dominion in Parthia proper. Thus, the first reported step in this evolution seems to be the creation of an implicit association between the Arsakid house and the Achaemenids through the legend of the Seven. Thereupon, however, follows an explicit reference to Achaemenid descent, in the second note attributed to Arrian, which has been fortuitously preserved in Synkellos. Indeed, the latter mentions that the brothers Arsakes and Teridates, who were, on the one hand, *Macedonian* satraps under Antiochos Kallinikos, and on the other hand, descendants of the *Achaemenid* king Artaxerxes (II), eventually killed the commander (*eparchos*) of Persis, a certain Agathokles,¹³⁰ for the same reasons as described in Photios' narrative:

Ἀρσάκης τις καὶ Τηριδάτης ἀδελφοὶ τὸ γένος ἔλκοντες ἀπὸ τοῦ Περσῶν Ἀρταξέρξου ἐσατρούπευον Βακτρῶν ἐπὶ Ἀγαθοκλέους Μακεδόνοιο ἐπάρχου τῆς Περσικῆς.

“Arsakes and Teridates, two brothers who traced their lineage back to Artaxerxes, king of the Persians, ruled as satraps of the Baktrians when Agathokles of Macedonia was governor (eparch) of Persis.”

Synkellos 539; Mosshammer 1984, 343, ll. 7–9.

The theme of Arsakes, the eponym, being a Macedonian (or Seleukid) governor, rather than of Scythian descent, is not unique to Arrian's account (assuming Synkellos has faithfully transmitted its content), and it has been signaled before,¹³¹ Strabo had already reported it. Indeed, while ascribing Scythian origins to Parthians, Strabo nonetheless seems to have captured an alternative tradition, according to which Arsakes was originally a Baktrian or a Macedonian of Baktria who prompted Parthia to rebel:

127 Photius 58: Ἀρσάκης καὶ Τιριδάτης ἦσθη ἀδελφῶ Ἀρσακίδαί, τοῦ υἱοῦ Ἀρσάκου τοῦ Φριαπίτου ἀπόγονοι. Οὗτοι Φερεκλέα τὸν ὑπὸ Ἀντιόχου τοῦ βασιλέως (θεὸν αὐτὸν ἐπίκλην ὠνόμαζον), ἀλλ' οἱ γε Ἀρσακίδαί τὸν ὑπὸ Ἀντιόχου σατράπην αὐτῶν τῆς χώρας καταστάντα Φερεκλέα, ἐπεὶ τὸν ἕτερον τῶν ἀδελφῶν αἰσχροῦς ἐπέειρασε βιασάμενος, οὐκ ἐνεγκόντες τὴν ὕβριν ἀνεῖλόν τε τὸν ὑβρίσαντα, καὶ ἑτέροις πέντε τὴν προᾶξιν ἀνακοινωσάμενοι καὶ τὸ ἔθνος Μακεδόνων ἀπέστησαν, καὶ καθ' ἑαυτοῦς ἦρξαν, καὶ ἐπὶ μέγα δυνάμει ἤλασαν, ὡς καὶ Ῥωμαίοις ἀντιρρόπους μάχας θέσθαι, ἐνίστη δὲ καὶ μεθ' ἑαυτῶν τὴν νίκην ἔχοντας τοῦ πολέμου ἀπελθεῖν. See Henry (1959), I, [17a], 34–[17b], 5.

128 On Teridates, see already Wolski (1979), p. 67–74; Wolski (1993), p. 56 n. 7; and Wiesehöfer (1996), p. 131–132; and Dąbrowa (2012a), p. 169; also Dąbrowa (2012b), p. 27.

129 Bevan (1902) II, p. 286: “Of what province, however, Pherekles was satrap the abstract of Arrian given by Photius does not specify; we may presume he was really eparch or hyparch of the district in which Asaak was situated.”

130 See also Lerner (1999), p. 18–31.

131 See Wolski (1993), p. 55–57; and Wiesehöfer (1996), p. 130–132.

ἀπὸ τούτων δ' οὖν ἔλκειν φασι τὸ γένος τὸν Ἀρσάκην οἱ δὲ Βακτριανὸν λέγουσιν αὐτόν.

“On that account, then, some say Arsakes derives his lineage [from the Scythians], and others say he was a Baktrian.”

Strabo 11.9.3.

It is therefore possible that we may possess in the excerpts ascribed to Arrian's *Parthica* an unequivocal reference to Achaemenid forebears in the context of genealogical and ideological constructs, and furthermore that the reference to the Macedonian/Baktrian origins of the eponymous Arsakes might in kernel represent the binary nature of Arsakid legitimacy, that is, a reference both to the Seleukid/Macedonian *and* Achaemenid elements; a point we shall be discussing at length below.

For now, we shall just register that these accounts, being attributed to Arrian, thus dating, in the best case, to the second century of the common era might merely represent later elaboration on Arsakid genealogy and may by no means indicate that already the founder of the Arsakid house had consciously recourse to both Seleukid and Achaemenid elements in order to validate his right to rule as an upstart.

In the Kingdoms of Pontos and Commagene

Prior to any *explicit* evidence for an Arsakid “Achaemenid revival,” Mithridates VI Eupator was the first Iranian prince consciously to have emulated the Achaemenids, in parallel to his *imitatio Alexandri*, either as part of a political program, which aimed at recovering parts of the Achaemenid dominions, or a mere propaganda tool destined to secure the allegiance of his Iranian subjects to his cause. If so, he may have provided the Arsakids with a source of inspiration, if not a model for direct emulation. Indeed, the Arsakids by adopting the imperial title of “king of kings” through Babylonian agency stood in direct continuity with the great Achaemenids,¹³² although they may not yet have formulated the binary nature (Achaemenid and Seleukid) of their legitimacy. This could have been ultimately an impetus provided by Mithridates Eupator.

But, before discussing the case of Pontic “Persianism,” we shall first engage the Commagenian Achaemenid reception, which in our opinion shall shed light on Pontic ideological constructs. In the first century BCE, Antiochos I, son of Mithridates Kallinikos and the Seleukid princess Laodike, ruled over the Iranian and Hellenistic kingdom of Commagene. Antiochos I was responsible for the establishment of an intriguing form of Greco-Iranian religious idiosyncrasy,¹³³ which in its final

132 See Shayegan (2011), p. 42–44; 232–233; 394–409. The title of “king of kings” was first introduced by Miθrdāt II on Babylonian documents in 111 BCE, before its attestation on Arsakid coinage.

133 On the importance of the Iranian element in the Commagenian syncretism, as the end-point of an evolutionary process, whose beginnings suggests Antiochos I's cultic conception to have been solidly anchored in Greek conceptions – attested by (1) Antiochos I's stele (and inscription) at Sofraz Köy depicting him solely with Apollo Epēkoos; over syncretic forms (2:a) at the

shape exhibited an impressive pantheon boasting divinities, such as: Zeus-Oromasdes; Appollo-Mithra-Helios-Hermes; Artagnes [*Warθrayn*]-Herakles-Ares; and Commagene. Antiochos I is also to be credited for the promulgation of the new cult's *nomos*,¹³⁴ and the establishment, throughout the Commagene, of a network of major cultic spaces (*hierothēsia*) at Arsameia on the Euphrates, Arsameia on the Nymphaios and Nemrud Dağı, as well as more discrete *temenē*,¹³⁵ which served the celebration of the ancestors cult and/or the syncretized Irano-Hellenic divinities.

Of importance to us for the purposes of the present essay are the genealogical inscriptions, or fragments thereof, which were found on the site of the monumental terraces Antiochos I had built around a tumulus on the top of Nemrud Dağı, the highest mountain of the Antitaurus.¹³⁶ There, Antiochos, having erected on the eastern and western terraces colossal statues of the three Greco-Persian divinities he had fashioned, along with the goddess Commagene and his deified Self, furthermore set up two distinct rows of stelae on each of the terraces, with each single row

τέμενος sites of Zeugma and Samosata, where Zeus-Oromasdēs and Mithra-Helios-Apollo-Hermes are attested (at Zeugma, Apollo is depicted in the Greek fashion, nude, Crowther and Facella (2003), p. 65; and Crowther (2003), p. 66, as well as (2:b) at the ἱεροθέσιον of Arsameia on the Nymphaios, where we encounter the amalgamated Mithra-Helios-Apollo-Hermes shown in Iranian accouterment; (3) to the fully evolved syncretism of Nemrud Dağı – see Jacobs (2002a); also Crowther and Facella (2003), p. 62–65; compare also Messerschmidt (2011), p. 296–304; in particular, 302–304. Similarly, see Crowther and Facella (2003), p. 65; for other regional cults in the Commagene, see Schütte-Maischatz (2003). For Hittite parallels, still Börker-Klähn, especially 356–357. Arguing for the impact of Iranian traditions, among others by contrasting the tenor of Old Persian epigraphy with that of Commagenian inscriptions, see still Petroff (1998); and more recently the excellent pages of Panaino (2007).

134 On the *nomos* inscription at Nemrud Dağı, see Dörner and Young (1996), p. 207–217; on the remains of the *nomos* text from the temenos site at Samosata, see Crowther and Facella (2011); and Crowther and Facella (2003), p. 68–70; for the inscriptions of the *temenē* at Zeugma and Sofraz Köy, see Crowther and Facella (2003), p. 44–61, and 71–74; and Crowther (2003) (Zeugma); for the temenos site at Ancoz, see Wagner and Petzl (2003).

135 On the Commagenian ruler cult, and the distribution of the *hierothēsia* (ἱεροθέσια) and *temenē* (τέμενη), see Wiesehöfer (2012b), especially p. 46–47; and Wagner (1983); on Antiochos I's religious policy, and his binary (Greek/Persian) syncretistic religious system being not only a response to the particular power constellation, which ensued from the new order established by Pompeius in the East – with Armenia being reduced to a Roman vassal state, and the Commagene entangled between the Arsakid and Roman empires – but also as a means to introduce equilibrium into the relations of Macedonian and Persian constituencies in the Commagene itself, see Jacobs (2012c), especially p. 107. Also Mittag (2011), especially p. 150–160, whose exciting and careful analysis (among others of the terminology used for the distribution of honors for the gods, ancestors, and Antiochos I) show the limits of Antiochos I's dynastic cult, which although introducing the ruler into the sphere of the divine by making him a privileged interlocutor and partner of the gods, still refrains from equating him with the divine essence. In this, the Commagenian cult, although owing to Hellenistic precedents, nonetheless, distinguishes itself from them, mainly in its reluctance to cross over wholly into the divine sphere, in which one might be tempted to recognize the sway of the Iranian element.

136 On Nemrud Dağı, its topography, review of the *Forschungsgeschichte*, survey of past excavations, architecture, sculptures and epigraphic remains, see Sanders (1996); also Jacobs (2012a); Facella (2006), p. 261–270. On the topography and dispositions of cultic spaces in the Commagene, see Canepa (2014), p. 69–73.

projecting an *Ahnengalerie* on the maternal, as well as the paternal side.¹³⁷ Each stele represented a standing ancestor, and bore on the back a Greek inscription providing the titulary of Antiochos I and his ancestor's name and genealogy.¹³⁸

The maternal *Ahnenreihe*, on account of Antiochos I's mother, the Seleukid princess Laodike, was taken all the way back to Alexander the Great, and the paternal row to Dareios the Great. Antiochos I had forged a genealogy that would place as the founder of his house a certain Aroandas [I] (or Orontes), a Persian nobleman, who probably had served as satrap of Armenia and later Mysia under Artaxerxes II in the fourth century BCE,¹³⁹ and who by virtue of being the husband of Rhodogune, daughter of Artaxerxes II, represented the link between the Commagenian and Achaemenid dynasties. The two inscriptions dedicated to Orontes [I], the sixth in the row of Persian forebears, from both the West and East terraces, read as follows:

Orontes on the West Terrace	Orontes on the East Terrace
[β]ασιλεὺς μέγας Ἀντίοχος Θεὸς Δίκαιος Ἐπιφανής Φιλο- ρώμαιος καὶ Φιλέλλην ὁ ἐγ βασίλευσεν Μιθραδάτου Καλλι- νίκου καὶ βασιλίσσης Λαοδίκης Θεᾶς Φιλαδέλφου	[βασιλεὺς μέ]γας Ἀντίο[χο]ς [Θεὸς] Δί[καιο]ς Ἐπιφανής [Φιλορώμαιος κα]ὶ Φιλέ[λλη]ν [ὁ] ἐγ βασιλέωσ Μιθραδάτου Καλλινί[κου καὶ βα]σιλίσ[ση]ς Λαοδίκης Θεᾶς Φιλαδέ[λφου] <u>τῆς ἐγ βασιλέωσ Ἀντιό[χου]</u> <u>Ἐπιφανοῦσ Φιλομήτο[ρο]σ</u> <u>Καλλινίκου</u> Ἀροάνδην Ἀρτασοῦρα τὸν γαμήσαντα βασίλισσα[ν] [Ῥο]δ[ο]γούνην τὴν βασιλέωσ [Βα]σιλέωσ μεγά[λου Ἀρτα-] ξέρξου του κατ[ὶ Ἀρσάκου] Δυγατέρα ¹⁴⁰
Ἀροάνδην Ἀρτασοῦρα τὸν γαμήσαντα βασίλισσαν Ῥοδογούνην τὴν Ἀρταξέρξου Δυγατέρα ¹⁴⁰	Ἀροάνδην Ἀρτασοῦρα τὸν γαμήσαντα βασίλισσα[ν] [Ῥο]δ[ο]γούνην τὴν βασιλέωσ [Βα]σιλέωσ μεγά[λου Ἀρτα-] ξέρξου του κατ[ὶ Ἀρσάκου] Δυγατέρα ¹⁴¹

137 For a succinct review of the construction policy of Antiochos I (and Mithradates II), see Jacobs (2012a), p. 77–86; also Jacobs (2003), especially 120, who argues that Antiochos might have striven to lend a cultural identity to the nascent Commagenian polity on the Euphrates with the help of monumental sculptures within a region, where such tradition has been indigenous, and hence a predisposition for its receptivity was present.

138 For a discussion of (the epigraphic evidence on) the *Ahnengalerie* at Nemrud Dağ, see Messerschmidt (2012), p. 87–98; Facella (2006), p. 270–279; Facella (2009), p. 379–392; Dörner and Young (1996), p. 254–355; Dörner (1996), p. 361–377; Jacobs (2002b), especially 83–85, and 87, where the author rightly suggests that the *Ahnengalerie* was not originally part of Nemrud Dağ's holistic composition, but would acquire in time, in particular as it eventually encompassed contemporaneous family members, a more pronounced biographical dimension. On the women in the *Ahnengalerie*, especially on the maternal side, see Jacobs (2000), p. 297–306.

139 On this Orontes [I], see Facella (2006), p. 95–135; Facella (2009), p. 388–389; Dörner and Young (1996), p. 261–263; Dörner (1996), p. 364–366.

140 Dörner and Young (1996), p. 294. Also Facella (2006), p. 95–96; and Facella (2009), p. 388.

141 Dörner and Young (1996), p. 261. Also Facella (2006), p. 96; and Facella (2009), p. 388.

“The great King Antiochos,
God, the Righteous, the Manifest, friend
to Romans and Hellenes,¹⁴² son of
King Mithradatēs Kallinikos
(the Victorious), and Queen Laodikē,
Goddess, brother-loving,

Aroandas (Orontes), son of Artasyras,
who married Queen
Rhodogune, daughter of
Artaxerxes [II].”

“[The gr]eat [King] Antioch[os],
[God], the Right[eous], the Manifest,
[Friend to the Romans a]nd Hellenes,
[son of King Mithradatēs]
Kallinik[os] (the Victorious), and Q]uee[n]
Laodikē, Goddess, [brother-lo]ving,
who is the daughter of Antioch[os]
Epiphanēs Philomētōr (mother-loving)
Kallinikos,
Aroandas (Orontes), son of Artasyr[as],
[who] married Quee[n]
[Rho]dogune, daughter of the ki[ng of]
[k]ings, the Gre[at Arta]xerxes [II], who is
also Arsakēs].”

What at first glance is striking is that the royal forebear, Artaxerxes II, who in the Commagenian genealogical construct serves as a link to the Achaemenid house and Dareios I, also fulfills this very function for the early Arsakids. If Synkellos' aforesaid notice were to be trusted, then the ancestor to whom the brethren Arsakes and Teridates (Ἀρσάκης τις καὶ Τηριδάτης ἀδελφοὶ τὸ γένος ἔλκοντες ἀπὸ τοῦ Περσῶν Ἀρταξέρξου) referred, would be the selfsame Artaxerxes II. One possible reason why the Arsakids may have chosen Artaxerxes as their Achaemenid ancestor *par excellence* may have resided in the latter's given name being Arses (< **Aršan-*), whose hypocoristic Arsakes (< **Aršaka-*) happened to be the patronymic of the Arsakid house. Artaxerxes II is indeed attested in the *Astronomical Diaries*, either under his given name Arses as *Aršu šarru* “king Arses,”¹⁴³ or with the use of both his given and throne names: *[Ar]šu ša Artakšatsu šar mātāti šumšu nabû* “[Ar-]ses who is called Artaxerxes [II], king of the lands.”¹⁴⁴

Granted, Artaxerxes' preeminence in the Commagenian *Ahnenkult* owes to the *reported* marriage of his daughter Rhodogune with the eponymous Orontes, but if the reconstruction of the final lines in the inscription dedicated to Orontes [I] were to be substantiated: [Ῥο]δ[ο]γούνην τήν βασιλέως Βασιλέων μεγάλου Ἀρταξέρξου του καὶ Ἀρσάκου Θυγατέρα, “[Rho]dogune, daughter of the ki[ng of k]ings, the Gre[at Arta]xerxes [II], who is a[ls]o Arsakēs],” then we would have a formula known to us not only from Achaemenid Babylonia, as we have seen above, but also from the Mesopotamian literary tradition under Arsakid dominion.¹⁴⁵

142 For an excellent discussion of the evolving meaning of Φιλορῳμαῖος καὶ Φιλέλλην during the reigns of Antiochos I and Antiochos IV, as well as the reality of these conceptions in light of changing political exigencies, see Facella (2005), p. 87–103; also Facella (2010), especially, p. 182–186.

143 See AD 1, no. -384 lower edge 1[?]; no. -382 right edge 1–2; no. -381 A upper edge 1[?].

144 See Hunger and van der Spek (2006), no. -362 obv. 1, rev. 9'. This particular diary, recently dated by the authors to 29.xi.–28.xii.363 BCE (month ix of year 42 of Arses) was not originally included by Hunger in the edition of the *Astronomical Diaries*. On the names Arsakes and Arses, see Schmitt (2011), nos. 50 and 53.

145 See already Facella (2009), p. 387, n. 33.

Indeed, during the reigns of Gōdarz (*Gotarzes*), that is, in the first decades of the first century BCE, the *Astronomical Diaries* make use for the first time after the Achaemenid period of formulae that are reminiscent of Achaemenid practices, and, as we have argued elsewhere,¹⁴⁶ served the purpose of equating the neo-Iranian Arsakid empire with the Achaemenids:

<i>Given/Dynastic Names</i>		<i>Naming Formulae</i>
Artaxerxes II	– <i>Aršu šarru</i> “king Arses”	– [Ar]šu <u>ša</u> <i>Artakšatsu šar māṭāti šumšu nabû</i> “[Ar]ses <u>who is called</u> Artaxerxes [II], king of the lands”
Gotarzes (Gōdarz)/ Orodes (Urūd)	– <i>Aršakâ šarru</i> “king Arsakes”	– <i>Aršakâ šarru ša šumšu Gutarza</i> “Arsakes king <u>whose name is</u> (king) Gōdarz” – <i>Aršakâ /Aršakam (šarru/šar šarrāni) ša ittarridu Gutarzâ/Urudâ (šarru)</i> “Arsakes (king/king of kings) <u>who is called</u> (king) Gōdarz/Urūd”
Antiochos I of Commagene	–	– [Ῥο]δ[ο]γούνην τήν βασιλέως Βασιλέων μεγάλου Ἀρταξέρξου <u>του καὶ Ἀρσάκου</u> Θυγατέρα “[Rho]dogune, daughter of the ki[ng of k]ings, the Gre[at Arta]xerxes [II], <u>who is a[ls]o Arsakēs</u> ”

Thus, on the strength of this elusive token, it is possible guardedly to surmise that the use of a comparable formula in Commagene (βασιλέως Βασιλέων μεγάλου Ἀρταξέρξου του καὶ Ἀρσάκου) “ki[ng of k]ings, the Gre[at Arta]xerxes [II] who is a[ls]o Arsakēs”), if indeed this restoration of Orontes I’s stele proves tenable, may owe a debt to the impact of the Arsakid world, rather than being testament to the direct Commagenian reception of Mesopotamian or Achaemenid practices. Thus, if these parallels in the use of formulae from Achaemenid Mesopotamia, reintroduced by Babylonian scholars under early Arsakids, and possibly attested in Commagene, should prompt us to look for possible sources of influence, and the direction thereof, then it ought to be that of Arsakid Iran on Commagene in the restricted confines of this equation.

But could we expand this first conclusion to other ideological elaborations of the Orontids as well, and submit that their genealogical constructions, especially the binary reference to Dareios I and Alexander of Macedon – which in his *nomos* inscription at Nemrud Daği, Antiochos I so exquisitely calls “in so far as the ancient tale of the Persians and the Hellenes, the most fortunate root of my ancestry, has

146 Shayegan (2011), p. 291–292.

handed down [to us]”¹⁴⁷ – could have been directly influenced by Arsakids practices.

Let us have a glance at other epigraphic remains reporting on Antiochos I’s ancestors:

Dareios I on the West Terrace¹⁴⁸

βασιλεὺς μέγας Ἄντιοχος
Θεὸς Δίκαιος Ἐπιφανής
Φιλορώμιοι καὶ Φιλέλλην
ὁ ἐγ βασιλέως Μιθραδάτου
Καλλινίκου καὶ βασιλίσσης
Λαοδίκης Θεᾶς Φιλαδέλφου

βασιλέα βασιλέων μέγαν
Δαρείου τὸν Ὑστάσπου¹⁴⁹

Dareios I on the West Terrace

“The great King Antiochos,
God, the Righteous, the Manifest,
Friend to Romans and Hellenes,
son of King Mithradatēs
Kallinikos (the Victorious), and Queen
Laodikē, Goddess, Brother-loving.

King of Kings, the Great Dareios,
son of Hystaspes.”

Alexander I on the West Terrace

Βα[σιλεὺς μέγας] [Α]ντιοχος
[Θεὸς Δίκαιος Ἐπιφ]ανής [Φιλο-]
[ρώμιοι καὶ Φιλέ]λλη[ν] [ὁ ἐγ]
[βασιλέως Μιθραδάτου]
[Καλλινίκου καὶ βασι-]
[λίσσης Λαοδίκης Θεᾶς]
[Φιλαδέλφου τῆς ἐκ βασιλέ-]
[ως Ἄντιόχου Ἐπιφανοῦς Φιλο-]
[μήτορος Καλ]λιν[ίκου]
[βα]σιλέ[α] μέγ[αν Ἀλέ-]
ξανδρον τὸν [βασιλέ-]
ως Φιλίππου¹⁵⁰

Alexander I on the West Terrace

“The [great Ki]ng [A]ntiochos,
[God, the Righteous, the Manifest, Friend]
[to Romans and Hellenes, son of]
[King Mithradatēs]
[Kallinikos (the Victorious), and Queen]
[Laodikē, Goddess,]
[Brother-loving, daughter of King]
[Antiochos Epiphanes Philo-]
[mētōr (mother-loving) Kal]lin[ikos].
[The [Gre]at [Ki]ng [Ale]xander
(or: the King, the Great Alexander),¹⁵¹
son of [Kin]g Philippos.”

147 See Dörner and Young (1996), p. 208, N 28–31.

148 See also the severely damaged inscription dedicated to Xerxes (Dörner and Young (1996), p. 285; also Facella (2006), p. 88–89.

149 Dörner and Young (1996), p. 282; also Facella (2006), p. 87.

150 Dörner and Young (1996), p. 323.

151 On a discussion on how to translate Alexander’s title: [βα]σιλέ[α] μέγ[αν Ἀλέ]ξανδρον τὸν, namely as “the Great King Alexander,” or “King, the Great Alexander,” see Dörner and Young (1996), p. 324–325.

Noteworthy, at least judging from the extant source material, is the absence of Cyrus within the framework of Commagenian elaborations, whereas, as we have seen above, Cyrus is well anchored in the constructs of Pontic and Arsakid dynasts. The omission of Cyrus in Commagene is not surprising. The house of Commagene had established its legitimacy on the strength of its connection with the political order created by Dareios I and his six helpers (the Seven), who had eliminated in a daring coup-d'état Bardiya, son of Cyrus, the last scion of the Anšanite line in Persia.¹⁵² With Dareios I a different house was to govern over Persian affairs, and hence it does not astound that the satraps of the new order, either descendants of, or claiming to derive from, the Seven, having eventually become dynasts in their own right, would deem Dareios I the source of their legitimacy, and their association with the Seven's seizure of power as constitutive for their legitimacy.¹⁵³

In this light, it is the Pontic (and Arsakid) policy of including Cyrus that stands out and requires further explanation.¹⁵⁴ There are sundry reports of the Mithridatids of Pontos having behaved like their Commagenian counterparts by alluding to the story of Dareios and his six helpers. Indeed, Appian, while describing the origins of the house of Mithridates Eupator mentions a certain Mithridates [I], a scion of the Persian royal house as its founder, who would eventually *escape together with six horsemen* (ὁ δ' ἐξέφυγε σὺν ἰππεύσιν ἕξ) from his overlord Antigonos and in time establish his reign in Cappadocia.¹⁵⁵ There are further reports by Polybios¹⁵⁶ and Diodoros,¹⁵⁷ all testifying to the prevalence of the legend of the Seven, and consequently of Dareios, in Pontic ideological constructs. Thus, whence the allusion to Cyrus, when, and for what purpose? Since it appears that before Mithridates Eupator, the house of Pontos like other Irano-Hellenistic rulers legitimized sovereign power by attaching the dynastic eponym to Dareios I's line,¹⁵⁸ we have to locate the reason for the change of paradigm, from Dareios I to Cyrus, in the hegemonic

152 On more recent interpretations of Cyrus' Anšanite lineage, resulting from Elamite and Persian acculturation, in contrast to Dareios I's Achaemenid house, see the excellent articles of Waters (2004); Potts (2005); Henkelman (2011); for a different and intriguing view, compare Zournatzi, forthcoming.

153 See also Panitschek (1987), p. 80.

154 It is worthwhile to mention that According to Diodoros (31.19.1), Cappadocian rulers also seem to have derived their ancestry from the Seven and indirectly also from Cyrus – Ὅτι λέγουσιν ἑαυτοὺς οἱ τῆς Καππαδοκίας βασιλεῖς εἰς Κύρον ἀναφέρειν τὸ γένος τὸν ἐν Πέρσῃ διαβεβαιούνται δὲ καὶ τῶν ἑπτα Περσῶν τῶν τὸν μάγον ἐπανελομένων ἐνὸς ὑπάρχειν ἀπόγονοι “the kings of Cappadocia say that they take their ancestry back to Cyrus, and also maintain strongly that they are descendants of the seven Persians who took on the magus” – but, intriguingly their desire for anteriority to legitimize their rule in Cappadocia reaches back to the time preceding Cyrus and the Persian empire, for as Diodoros further recounts Cappadocians claim to be from the seed of Cyrus' aunt, Atossa, daughter of Cambyses, father of Cyrus the Great. Thus, although this genealogical construct provides indubitably anteriority, by bypassing and transcending the founder of the Persian empire, it fails to claim Cyrus as a direct ancestor.

155 App., *Mithr.* 9.

156 Polyb. 5.43.1–4.

157 Diod. 19.40.2.

158 See Panitschek (1987), p. 78: “Die überwiegende Mehrzahl der Pontos betreffenden Quellen

aspirations of Eupator during the Mithridatic wars. Indeed, Eupator, who in his opposition to Rome sought a source of emulation to sustain the imperial design of his house, could have regarded the heroic figure of Cyrus – whose presence would create symmetry with the figure of the world conqueror Alexander – as a more formidable Persian forebear, of more consequent bearing upon Mithridates' thrust to hegemonic grandeur in Asia Minor than Dareios I, who even in more remote antiquity was regarded as an administrator rather than an exalted victor.

It is thus possible that the binary structure of Pontic ideology (forged prior to 89 BCE), wherein Cyrus' prestige had eclipsed Dareios' pertinence, may have influenced the Arsakids, awaiting an opportune moment – when comparable pressures and *stimuli* in the Arsakid realm necessitated drawing back on the Cyrus symbolism – to express itself. As far as the extant documentation permits judgment, we find the first *explicit* use of Cyrus in Arsakid ideological elaborations on the occasion of Artabān II's design on Armenia in the first half of the first century of the common era.

In the Commagenian example, however, Cyrus seems an elusive presence, more in line with Irano-Hellenistic practices, and widely different from both Pontic and Arsakid precedents, from whom the Commagenian imperial projection sought to distinguish itself, and for which Dareios' *Vorbildwirkung* was more adequate. It is, however, not excluded that Arsakid practices may have impacted Commagene, if we were to take into account the use, in the inscription dedicated to the Orontid eponym in Nemrud Dağı, of Artaxerxes II's throne and given names, a practice reintroduced, after the Achaemenid period, on cuneiform documents of the Arsakid age, and attested for Gōdarz and Urūd I for the years 90–87/86 and 80/79 BCE respectively, thus a short period before the beginning of Antiochos I's reign.

Once More Among the Arsakids

We have to wait another few decades in order to find traces of a conscious ownership of the Achaemenid past by the Arsakids, this time in a letter addressed by the Parthian king Artabān (Aratabanos) II to the Roman emperor Tiberius.¹⁵⁹ This letter, reported by Tacitus, discusses how Artabān II, following the death of the Armenian king Artaxias in 35 CE, had placed his own son Aršak on the vacant throne of Armenia. It also mentions the Parthian king's hostile intentions towards Rome. Indeed, Artabān II seems to have been voicing his claim to Syria and Cilicia, by virtue of his ancestral rights, that is, on account of the Parthian kings being heirs both to the Achaemenid empire of Cyrus *and* the Macedonian empire of Alexander:

Is [Artabanus] metu Germanici fidus Romanis, aequabilis in suos, mox superbiam in nos, saevitiam in populares sumpsit, fretus bellis, quae secunda adversum circumiectas nationes

berichtet von einem engen Zusammenhang zwischen der Beseitigung des 'falschen Smerdis' durch die Sieben Perser und der Einsetzung des Ahns der Dynastie."

159 On the Arsakid "Achaemenid Program," see Panitschek (1990), p. 459–461; Wolski (1990a), 8–9; Wolski (1990b), 15; Wolski (1991), p. 53–55; Wolski (1993), p. 152–160; see also Dąbrowa (1983), p. 103–117, and Dąbrowa (2012b), 33–34; on Artabān II's letter, see Wiesehöfer (2005a), 120; Fowler (2005), p. 125–155; also Shayegan (2011), p. 41–331.

exercuerat, et senectutem Tiberii ut intermem despiciens avidusque Armeniae, cui defuncto rege Artaxia Arsaken liberorum suorum veterrimum inposuit, addita contumelia et missis, qui gazam a Vonone relictam in Syria Ciliciaque reposerent; simul veteres Persorum ac Macedonum terminos, seque invasurum possessa primum Cyro et post Alexandro per vaniloquentiam ac minas iaciebat.

“He [Artabanus], faithful to Romans (and) equitable to his own (subjects) while in fear of Germanicus, soon assumed (an attitude of) haughtiness toward us and (of) fierceness toward (his) people relying upon the wars that he had favorably carried out against surrounding nations and disdaining the old age of Tiberius as if defenseless, and longing eagerly for Armenia, installed the eldest of his sons, Arsakes, (on the throne of Armenia) after the death of its king, Artaxias, adding insult to injury by sending emissaries to claim back that, which was left behind by Vonones in Syria and Cilicia. At the same time, he threw vain talk and menaces with respect to the old boundaries of the Persians and the Macedonians and (saying) that he would seize what was held first by Cyrus and afterwards by Alexander.”

Tac. *Ann.* 6.31.

What is Striking about this double reference to the Achaemenid and Hellenistic forebears of the Arsakids, as a justification for claims over disputed territories against Rome, is its similarity to a well-known account by Justin reporting on the Pontic king Mithridates VI Eupator’s speech delivered to his people in arms on the eve of the first Mithridatic War against Rome in 89 BCE. Here, in order to galvanize his constituencies, both Iranian and Hellenic, Mithridates evokes his *maiores*, his ancestors, deriving his house in paternal line from the Achaemenid kings, and in maternal line from Alexander, as well as the founder of the Seleukid kingdom, Seleukos:

Se autem seu nobilitate illis conparetur clariorem illa conluvie convenarum esse qui paternos maiores suos a Cyro Darioque conditoribus Persici regni maternos a magno Alexandro ac Nicator Seleuko conditoribus imperii macedonici eferat.

“He [Mithridates] continued that if he was compared with them [the Romans] with respect to extraction, he was more illustrious than that collection of mixed people [the Romans], he, whose ancestors on his father’s side were from Cyrus and Darius, the founders of the Persian empire, and on his mother’s side, from Alexander the Great and Seleukos Nikator, the founders of the Macedonian empire.”

Just. 38.7.

The analogy between the accounts of Justin on Mithridates Eupator and of Tacitus on Artabān II is, in spite of minute differences, sufficiently evocative to warrant us querying whether Tacitus may have been drawing on Pompeius Trogus’ narrative, and, hence, whether the entire episode centered around the Arsakid king and his reference to the Achaemenid forebear ought to qualify as a literary *topos*, void of historical content; or whether there is some substance behind these similarities (whether conscious or accidental) after all? In order to determine the nature of these similarities, we have to draw upon yet another set of parallels and risk taxing our readers’ patience wholly.

In the third and fourth centuries of the common era, in the context of more aggressive campaigns against Rome led by the Sasanian emperors Ardaxšahr and Šābuhr I, and a century later by Šābuhr II, we encounter once more reports by con-

temporary Roman historians, among them Cassius Dio and Herodian, that explain Sasanian bellicosity in similar terms:¹⁶⁰

καὶ ἀπειλῶν ἀνακτῆσ-εσθαι πάντα ὡς καὶ προσήκοντά οἱ ἐκ προγόνων ὅσα ποτὲ οἱ πάλαι Πέρσαι μέχρι τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς θαλάσσης ἔσχον.

“He [Ardaxšahr I] (was) menacing to recover all that the ancient Persians had once held as far as the Greek Sea, on the grounds that all this belonged to him through his ancestors.”

Cass. Dio 80.3.4.

ad usque Strymona flumen et Macedonicos fines tenuisse maiores imperium meos, anti-quitates quoque vestrae testantur; haec me con-venit flagitare ... splen-dore virtutumque insigni-um serie, vetustis regibus antistantem.

“That my forefathers’ empire reached as far as the river Strymon and the boundaries of Macedonia even your own ancient records bear witness; these lands it is fitting that I [Šābuhr II] should demand, since ... I surpass the kings of old in magnificence and an array of conspicuous virtues.

Amm. Marc. 17.5.5.

In this context, it is noteworthy that Tacitus derives Artabān II’s territorial claims from both the Achaemenid and Macedonian empires, whose founders, Cyrus and Alexander, are explicitly mentioned. In contrast, Dio and Ammianus refer solely to the Achaemenid empire, describing its confines as the Greek Sea (μέχρι τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς θαλάσσης) and the boundaries of Macedonia (*Macedonicos fines*). The reports of Dio and Ammianus also concur in hinting at the rulers of the past without any precision, respectively: the ancient Persians (οἱ πάλαι Πέρσαι), who are subsequently qualified as Ardaxšahr’s forefathers (οἱ προγόνοι), and the ancestors (*maiores*) who are later identified as the kings of old (*vetusti reges*).

The fundamental difference between these accounts thus resides in the fact that in Tacitus’s narrative the Arsakid Artabān II legitimizes his claim over disputed Roman territories by associating himself with Alexander and the Macedonians, that is, the Seleukids, Alexander’s heirs in Iran, as well as with Cyrus and the Achaemenids, the representatives of “Iranism” proper. In contrast, in the reports of Dio, Herodian, and Ammianus about Ardaxšahr and Šābuhr II, the short-lived Macedonian and the following Seleukid empires are not mentioned. Thus, the absence of Alexander and his heirs in the accounts ascribed to the early Sasanians, and its presence within those pertaining to the Arsakids, may surprisingly be a means to validate the veracity of these assertions in spite of close parallels in structure and content among our classical texts.

Yet another piece of evidence could lend a helping hand to explain the dichotomy of the Hellenistic heritage in Arsakid and Sasanian Iran. Intriguingly, the divergence between the account of Tacitus and those of Dio/Herodian and Ammianus seems to mirror the contrast prevailing between the images Alexander as reflected in Middle Persian Zoroastrian writings,¹⁶¹ and Alexander in the Iranian national

160 On this, see Shayegan (2004) [2008].

161 See for example the Bundahišn 33.14, ed. Pakzad (2005): *pas andar xwadāyīh ī Dārāy ī Dārāyān *Aleksandar Kēsar az Hrōm dwārist ō Erānšahr āmad Dārāy ī šāh ōzad hamāg*

epic, the *Šāhnāme*,¹⁶² that is, the dichotomy between Alexander's negative image in the Zoroastrian tradition as opposed to his favorable portrayal in the national epic. Surely, Alexander's favorable reception in the *Šāhnāme* may be accounted for by the great popularity of the Alexander Romance in Sasanian Iran.¹⁶³ Nonetheless, for it to be incorporated into Iranian oral literature, we still have to assume that a favorable predisposition towards the assimilation of the Alexander Romance existed prior to the emergence of the Romance and its circulation in Iran.¹⁶⁴

This predisposition may have been due to the acceptance by the Arsakids of the double heritage of Alexander and the Seleukids, as well as that of Cyrus and the Achaemenids. The appropriation of Alexander and his subsequent association with the Achaemenids in Arsakid ideology could therefore be reflected not only in Tacitus' account, but also in the oral traditions captured by the *Šāhnāme*, which ought to have a Parthian kernel. Indeed, it seems that we may have to presume two co-existing traditions: a positive oral tradition, which, as Tacitus' account bears witness, could have been an Arsakid creation, and a later hostile written tradition that probably had cast a *damnatio memoriae* on Alexander under the early Sasanians.

Thus, the presence of a positive Alexander image in the *Šāhnāme*, which ultimately reflects his favorable image in the Arsakid period, in contrast to the hostile attitude of Zoroastrian writings in the Sasanian period, seems to mirror the difference between the account of Tacitus, in which the Arsakid Artabān II legitimizes his claim over disputed Roman territories by associating himself with both Alexander and Cyrus, and those of Dio(/Herodian) and Ammianus reporting on Ardaxšahr I and Šābuhr II, who exclusively mention their (Achaemenid) ancestors without any reference to the short-lived Macedonian and Seleukid empires.

Under the Sasanians

As we have seen above, the Sasanians under Ardaxšahr and Šābuhr II seem, at first glance, to have referred to the Achaemenids in order to justify their more aggressive forays into Roman territory. However, Sasanian epigraphic evidence of the third century does not substantiate an independent knowledge of the Achaemenid fore-

dūdag ī xwadāyān mēnōg-mardān ud paydāgān ud Ērānšahr abesthēnīd was marag ātaxš afsārd dēn ī māzdēsnañ Zand stad ō Hrōm frēstād Abestāg sōxt Ērānšahr pad 90 kōdag-xwadāy baxt, "Thereafter, during the reign of Dārāy son of Dārāy, Alexander the Caesar moved from Rome (and) came to Iran. (He) killed king Darius, destroyed all the families of the lords, spiritual men, and illustrious people of Iran. He extinguished numerous fires, seized the *Zand* (Exegesis) of the Mazdean religion and sent it to Rome, burnt the Avesta, (and) divided Iran among 90 house-rulers."

162 Khaleghi-Motlagh (1997), p. 562, ll. 415–419.

163 On Alexander reception in Pre- and early Islamic Iran, see Briant (2003a), p. 443–521; and now authoritatively Wiesehöfer (2011b), p. 124–128 (negative image), and 128–131 (positive image), especially 125–126. For the reason behind the positive appraisal of Alexander in Iran, see still Frye (1985), p. 187–188. For further literature, see Shayegan (2011), p. 295–307.

164 On the (reception of the) Alexander romance in Iran, see discussion in Shayegan (2011), p. 304–305, n. 866, with further literature.

bears. Indeed, in his *res geaste*, Šābuhr I, does mention his predecessors with the terms *pid* “father,” *niyāg* “grandfather” and *hasēnag/ahēnag* “ancestors,” but, as we have shown in prior publications, these three groups remain within the Sasanian dynastic frame and neither refer to historical (Achaemenid), or mythical (*Kayānid*) forebears:¹⁶⁵

*ud mardōhmag čē až Frōmāyān šahr až Anaryān pad āwār wāst andar Aryānšahr andar Pārs Pahlaw Xūzestān Asūrestān ud any šahr ō šahr kū amāh ud pidar ud niyāgān ud hasēnagān dastgerd būd oδ *nibāst*

“And the people who were from the Roman empire (We) led away from Anērān into Ērānšahr, (into) Persis, Parthia, Xūzestān, Asūrestān, and other various places where We, (Our) father, (Our) grandfathers and (Our) ancestors had properties, (and) there (We) settled (them).”

ŠKZ, MPth., 15–16.

Consequently, the *hasēnag/ahēnag* designated those members of the Sasanian family (*tōm/tōhm*) who ruled in Persis (as petty rulers) prior to the rise of the Sasanians to royal dignity, such as the patronym Sāsān, whose rank is attested in the inscription of Šābuhr at the *Ka‘abe-ye Zardošt*, as a *xwadāy/xwadāw* “lord,”¹⁶⁶ and the first member(s) of the Sasanian dynasty who held estates in some of the territories which under Ardaxšahr’s rule were later to constitute *Ērānšahr*.

Another striking example of the state of Achaemenid reception among the early Sasanians is provided by yet another inscription, carved on the north wall of the portico of Dareios’ *Tačara* palace at Persepolis. The inscription reports on the journey of prince Šābuhr (brother to the young king Šābuhr II) en route to assume his governorship over eastern provinces of the realm as the new king of the Sakas (*Sagānšāh*). While en route from Staxr to Sagestān, prince Šābuhr made a halt at Persepolis together with his coterie of noblemen and officials, and having made a celebration and ordered services for the gods, he prayed for his father (*pid*), ancestors (*niyāg*), his brother Šābuhr, the king of kings, himself, but also for the one who made this dwelling (*ōy-i-ž afrīn kerd kē ēn mān kerd* “and he prayed also for the one who made this dwelling”).

[1] *Māh Spanda[r]mad abar sāl II mazdēsn bay Šābuhr šāhān šāh Ērān* [2] *[ud] An-Ērān kē čīhr az yazdān. Pad ān jār ka Šābuhr Sagān šāh, Hind,* [3] *Sagestān ud Tūre[stān] tā drayā danb, pus mazdēsn bay Ōhrmazd šāhān šāh Ērān ud An-Ērān* [4] *kē čīhr az yazdān, az dar awē-šān bayān namāz burd, ud pad ēn rāh ī abar* [5] *Stāxr andar ō Sagestān, šūd ud pad kir-bagīh ēdar ō Sadstūn āmad, u-š* [6] *nān andar im xānag xward, u-š Warahrān ī Nox-Ōhrmazd, Sagestān handarz-bed,* [7] *ud Narsēh ī mōw ī Warāzān ud Wēn ī Rēw-Mīhrān ī Zrang šasab ud Narsēh ī dibīr* [8] *[ud] abārtg Pārs-zād ud Sag-zād ud Zran[g]agān ud frēstag [az] hamāg paygōsān [ud sālār] abāg* [9] *būd hēnd. U-š wuzurg šādīh kerd, u-š yazdān kerdagān framād kerdan, u-š* [10] *[p]idar ud niyāgān afrīn kerd, u-š Šābuhr šāhān šāh afrīn kerd, u-š xwēš* [11] *afrīn kerd, ōy-i-ž afrīn kerd kē ēn mān kerd. U-š* [12] *yazd yād [...]*

“[1] (In) the month Spandarmard, in the year 2 of His Mazdean Majesty Šābuhr, King of Kings of Iran, [2] and Non-Iran, whose origin (is) from the gods. At this time when Šābuhr the *Sagānšāh*, (King) of India, [3] Sagestān, and Tūrān up to the coast of the see, son of His Mazdean Majesty Ōhrmazd, King of Kings of Iran and Non-Iran, [4] whose origin (is) from

165 See Shayegan (2011), p. 14–29. See also Daryae (2016), p. 137.

166 ŠKZ, Pth., 20.

the gods, took leave from the court of His Majesty, and went on this path [5] from Staxr to Sagestān, and piously came hither, to Sadstūn (the hall with the hundred columns), he [6] ate bread in this dwelling and together with him were: Warahrān Nox-Ōhrmazd, the counsel of Sagestān, [7] and Narseh, the magus, (from the house of) Warāzān, and Wēn (from the house of) Rēw-Mīhrān, satrap of Drangiana, and Narseh, the scribe, [8] and other Persian and Sakian noblemen and Drangianians and heralds from all districts and leaders. [9] And he made a great celebration, and he ordered services for the gods, and he [10] prayed for his father and ancestors, Šābuhr, the king of kings, himself, [11] and also for the one who made this dwelling, and he [12] [...]

Inscription of Šābuhr, king of the Sakas at Persepolis – ŠPsI.

Several observations may be drawn from this inscription. First, the name of Persepolis (*Pārsā*) appears to be unknown to the Sasanians, who call it *Sadstūn* “(the hall with the) Hundred Columns,” inspired by the column bases extant in Dareios’ audience hall. The prince and his entourage were also unaware of the identity of the builder(s) of the Persepolis complex, since they refer to him as “the one who made this dwelling” (*oy ... kē ēn mān kerd*). Thirdly, the originator of *Sadstūn* is clearly not identical (in Sasanian conception of things) with the Sasanian forebears, for, although he is entailed in the prince’s prayer, he clearly is kept separate from them through the use of the enclitic coordination conjunction *-iz* “also”: *u-š [p]idar ud niyāgān āfrīn kerd, u-š Šābuhr šāhān šāh āfrīn kerd, u-š xwēš āfrīn kerd, ōy-iz, āfrīn kerd kē ēn mān kerd* “And he prayed for (his) father and ancestors, Šābuhr, the king of kings, himself, and also for the one who made this dwelling.”

Thus, if indeed the Iranian evidence does not corroborate the early Sasanians’ possessing a historical knowledge of the Achaemenids, ought we then to infer that our classical authors’ reports on occurrences of manifest Persianism were merely *interpretationes romanae*? To explore this possibility, we shall briefly review the conjectures and arguments favoring, and opposing, the idea of Persianism as part of Roman projections.

First, we are well informed of the phenomenon of Alexander reception in Rome and its potential bearing on Achaemenid reminiscences in Iran.¹⁶⁷ In brief, the Alexander emulation required the resuscitation of the Achaemenids: indeed, the equation of Rome with Macedon, or the Roman emperor with Alexander, was performed giving rise to the resurrection of Alexander’s former foes, as a means to complete the *imitatio* cycle.¹⁶⁸ Hence, the portrayal of the Sasanians as heirs to the Achaemenids could have existed merely as part of the Roman Alexander emulation that sought to bestow a perception of permanence, similar to the continuity of the Greco-Roman world, upon the history of Iran. It is telling that our two most trusted sources reporting on the Sasanians’ Achaemenid claims, Dio and Ammianus, were composed in the immediate aftermath of periods of intense *Alexandrophilia* (at least

167 On the *imitatio alexandri* phenomenon among the *virī magni* (Pompeius, Caesar, and Antonius) of the Republic, see Michel 1968, p. 35–135; for Caracalla and Alexander Severus, see Shayegan (2004), p. 293–302, with discussion of older literature. For a recent study on the question from the Republic to the Soldier Emperors, see Kühnen (2008). On Julian’s imitation, see Fox (1997), p. 239–352; compare Bringmann (2004), p. 169–70; and Rosen (2006), p. 360.

168 See Panitschek (1990), p. 471–72; also Shayegan (2004), p. 293–315; Shayegan (2004) [2008], 120; Shayegan (2011), p. 360–361.

in literary circles) in Rome, and both authors were in the close entourage of emperors of whom the *imitatio* is reported, namely, Alexander Severus and Julian. Thus, one may surmise that the claims by Ardaxšahr and Šābuhr II to former Achaemenid territories were in fact Roman constructs owing to the exigencies of the *imitatio*.

However, a number of elements in Ammianus' report on Šābuhr II's claim to Achaemenid territory, which is presented as a letter addressed to Constantius II, seem to reflect an Iranian tradition, as they exhibit similarities with expressions encountered in royal Iranian inscriptions, similarities that, as we have argued before, confer some measure of authenticity to Ammianus' report.¹⁶⁹ Although there is good reason to believe that the letter attributed to Šābuhr II is partly based upon genuine Iranian material, there is also good reason to presume that the limits allegedly vindicated by Šābuhr II, that is, the river Strymon and the boundaries of Macedonia (*ad usque Strymona flumen et Macedonicos fines*), were merely literary fabrication.¹⁷⁰ The only territories that Šābuhr II revendicated from Rome in his letter to Constantius were Mesopotamia and Armenia, which are the territories lost by his grandfather Narseh, a fact that is further corroborated by Constantius' response to Šābuhr II: *Mesopotamiam poscis ut tuam perindeque Armeniam* "you request Mesopotamia as your own, just as Armenia,"¹⁷¹ without any reference to the river Strymon and the boundaries of Macedonia.

Thus, we may posit that while the link between the Achaemenids and the early Sasanians was forged in order to complete the cycle of the *imitatio*, under Šābuhr II's, the Persians had already assimilated this originally Roman rationale of their own deeds and begun to use it against Rome to their own advantage. The military successes of Šābuhr II and his victories over the Romans, especially under Julian, may have strengthened the idea that the Persians were heirs to the Achaemenids, albeit not as a worthy Oriental adversary to be vanquished by a *novus Alexander* (as the *imitatio* would have called for), but another Xerxes forcing Athens into submission, or an Oriental aggressor reclaiming the empire that was his from old.¹⁷²

Another indicium, suggesting that under Šābuhr II the Sasanians began increasingly to identify with the Achaemenids, is provided by Julian and the *literati* of his entourage, who on a number of occurrences associate the Sasanians (and Šābuhr II) with the Parthians. That this was no gratuitous equalization ought to be assumed; it was an attempt at diminishing the prestige of the Sasanians by attaching them to an *ethnos* (Parthian), so often linked in the past with the Scythians,¹⁷³ the inhabitants of an *alter orbis* unworthy of conquest,¹⁷⁴ and hence portray them, in the best tradition established by Augustus, as plagued by *degeneratio*, and inferior to Rome.¹⁷⁵

169 See already Huyse (1993), p. 91–93; also Shayegan (2004) [2008], p. 121–122; and Shayegan (2011), p. 34–38.

170 See Kettenhofen (1984), p. 190; Huyse (1993), p. 92; Shayegan (2004) [2008], p. 122.

171 Amm. Marc. 17.5.11.

172 See Huyse (2002), p. 307.

173 On the Scythian origins of the Parthians, still Sonnabend (1986), p. 273–288; also Shayegan (2011), p. 335–336.

174 On the Augustan *diviso orbis*, see still Sonnabend (1986), p. 202–3; Wiesehöfer (2005a), 111–26; and Shayegan (2011), p. 334–336, 338–340, 355.

175 See Shayegan (2011), p. 361–370.

In a passage of Julian's *Second Oration*, the second panegyric dedicated to Constantius, this motive is expressly articulated:

Ἐνταῦθα κοσμεῖ τὴν στρατιὰν τὸν Περσικὸν πρόπον. διασώζουσι γὰρ καὶ ἀπομμοῦνται τὰ Περσικὰ οὐκ ἀξιούντες ἔμοι δοκεῖν Παρθυαῖοι νομίζεσθαι Πέρσαι δὲ εἶναι προσποιούμενοι. ταῦτά τοι καὶ στολῆ Μηδικῇ χαίρουσι. καὶ ἐς μάχας ἔρχονται ὁμοίως ἐκείνοις ὄπλοις τε ἀγαλλόμενοι τοιοῦτοις καὶ ἐσθήμασιν ἐπιχρῦσοις καὶ ἀλουργέσι. σοφίζονται δὲ ἐντεῦθεν τὸ μὴ δοκεῖν ἀφεστάναι Μακεδῶν ἀναλαβεῖν δὲ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχαίου βασιλείαν προσήκουσαν.

“Thereupon he [Sapores] arrayed the besieging army in the Persian fashion. For they keep up and imitate Persian customs, I suppose, because they do not wish to be considered Parthians, and so they pretend to be Persians. That is surely why they prefer the Median manner of dress. And when they march to battle they look like them, and take pride in wearing the same armor, and dress adorned with gold and purple. By this means they try to evade the truth and to make it appear they have not revolted from Macedon, but are merely resuming the empire that was theirs of old.”

Jul. Or. 2.62–67.

Indeed, by associating the neo-Persian power with the Arsakid realm, Julian's discourse clearly implies that the Sasanians ought to be regarded as subjects of Macedon, and by consequence, with Rome assuming the Seleukid mantle, *subjects of Rome*. What is more, it suggests that the Sasanian imitation of the Persians of old was merely an artifice aimed at concealing the dynasty's true (Parthian) origin, and a means to elude obedience to Rome. Thus, it seems that the identification of the Sasanians with the Arsakids was construed as a means to represent the former as *rebels* against Rome, whereas, the Sasanian emulation of the Achaemenids was perceived by Julian as a mere artifice for their claim of “resuming what was theirs of old.”¹⁷⁶

Thus, not only parallels between Šābuhr II's letter and Iranian inscriptions, but also the Roman predilection to associate (away from the Achaemenids) the Sasanians with their “lesser” Parthian (>Scythian) forebears, could have an alternate meaning, and may indicate the Sasanian awakening to, or appropriation of, their own past, by dint of Roman propaganda.

ON THE CONTINUANCE OF EPIGRAPHIC TRADITIONS

The Achaemenid and Sasanian Discursive Patterns

A close reading of both the Achaemenid inscription of Bisotun (sixth century BCE) and the Sasanian epigraphic traditions as reflected in the *res gestae* of Šābuhr I (third century CE) and the inscription of Narseh at *Paikuli* (early fourth century CE) reveals the continuity not only of common themes, formulae, and story patterns, but more intriguingly, common stratagems in tailoring the inscriptions' underlying message for specific audiences.

176 See Shayegan (2011), p. 362–363.

Indeed, sophisticated dialectics are at play between the inscriptions' compositional strategies and the variegated target audiences, whose intellectual makeup, in terms of political predisposition and/or mytho-epic affinities, the inscriptions must take into account, in order to ascertain the successful reception of their contents. On a synchronic level, this dialectics could mean that the political discourse of royal/central authorities may be either subject to multiple-compositions negotiating the mental sensibilities of different groups it targets; or may be directly composed for the benefit of a specific (aural) audience, whom the narrative deems a silent interlocutor, with disregard towards other audiences. On a diachronic level, that is, comparing and contrasting the discursive mechanisms to which both Achaemenid and Sasanian inscriptions had recourse, the presence of this dialectics could signify that Achaemenid traditions may have carried forth into the scribal traditions of the Sasanian empire in ways that still evade our comprehension.

The Bisotun Inscription and Classical Narratives: One Usurper – Two Identities versus Two Magian Brethren

Proceeding in chronological order, we shall first discuss the main features of the Bisotun narrative, before addressing our classical sources.

In the sixth century BCE, following the death of king Cambyses on his Egyptian campaign, the Persian heartland was the scene of an antique murder mystery, during which the Achaemenid throne was held/seized by one or several individual(s), about whose identity our sources provide conflicting information, before being eventually eliminated through an aristocratic coup-d'état fomented by Darius I.

Two different traditions report on the events following Cambyses' demise and Darius' accession. One is the Bisotun inscription itself, in which *one magus* (priest) called Gaumāta is depicted as the usurper who seized power by pretending to be the royal prince Bardiya, Cambyses' brother and heir:

Pasāva Ka^mb[ūjiya] avam Bardiya avāja yaθā Ka^mbūjiya Bardiya avāja kārahay[ā naiy] azdā abava taya Bardiya avajata. Pasāva Ka^mbūjiya Mudrāyam [ašiyav]a.

“Afterwards, Cambyses killed that Bardiya, when Cambyses killed Bardiya, it did not become known to the people that Bardiya was killed.”

DB 1.30–33.

Pa[sāva] aiva martiya maguš āha Gaumāta nāma hauv udapatatā hacā Paiš[i]yā[uv]ādā Arakadriš nāma kaufa hacā avadaša Viyaxanahayā mā[h]ayā XIV raucabiš θakatā āha yadiy udapatatā. Hauv karāhayā avaθā [a]durujiā adam Bardiya amiy haya Kurauš puça Ka^mbūjiyahayā br[ā]tā.

“Thereafter, there was *one* man, a magus, Gaumāta by name, he rose up from Paišiyāvāda, a mountain by name of Arakadri, from there, of the month of Viyaxna 14 days were past, when he rose up. He lied to the people thus: ‘I am Bardiya, son of Cyrus, brother of Cambyses.’”

DB 1.28–40.

Kašciy naiy adqršnauš cišciy θanstanaiy pariya Gaumātam tayam magum yātā adam arsam ... avathā adam hadā kannaibiš martiyabiš avam Gaumātam tayam magum avājanam utā tayaišaiy fratamā martiyā anušiya āhantā ... Mādaiy avadašim avājanam xšačamšim adam adinam vašnā Ahuramazdāha adam xšāyaθiya abavam Ahuramazdā xšačam manā frābara.

Nobody dared say anything about Gaumāta the magus, until I arrived ... then, I killed, together with a few men, that Gaumāta the magus and those men who were his foremost loyal followers ... in Media, there I killed him, the power I took (back) from him, by the favor of Ahuramazda I became king, Ahuramazda gave me the power.”

DB 1.48–61.

The other tradition are the reports collected, among others by Herodotus and Pompeius Trogus, as captured in the epitome of Justin, that attribute the usurpation of Cambyses throne to *two magi*, eventually eliminated by Dareios and his helpers. In the accounts of Herodotus and Justin, within each *magian* couple, we find one crown-bestower, Patizeithes in Herodotos, Oropastes in Justin; and one puppet-king, Smerdis and Mergis respectively, who due to their physical resemblance to Bardiya, could be substituted for the defunct prince.

The Oral Composition and the kāra-: Origin of the Greek Tradition(s)

As we have argued in extenso in a prior publication,¹⁷⁷ the divergence between the two narratives, that is, the one reflected in the Bisotun inscription and the traditions captured by the Greek authors, are in reality two different redactions targeting each a specific audience. The text of the Bisotun inscription, couched in the literary tradition of the Ancient Near East was targeting possibly a non-Iranian, Mesopotamian, audience, whereas the stories reflected in the writings of Herodotus, Aeschylus, and Hellanikos of Lesbos among others most likely represented the oral re-composition of the events by Dareios I's scribes. In doing so, the latter had recourse to Iranian epic themes, which were best suited to make the story of Bardiya's murder – without Dareios' role being revealed – believable to the larger Iranian population (*kāra-*) of the empire.

This distribution is borne out by the structure of the Bisotun inscription. Indeed, it decisively distinguishes between three discrete conceptions: the *dipi-*; the *dip-iciča-* (elamite *tuppi-me*), and the *haⁿdugā-*, as we may observe below:

177 Shayegan (2012).

<i>dipi-</i> “inscription”	<i>vaina-</i> “see” <i>niyapaiθa-</i> / <i>nipišta-</i> “wrote; written” <i>patiparsa-</i> “read” (<i>naiy/mā</i>) <i>vikan-</i> “(not) destroy” <i>paribara-</i> “preserve”
<i>haⁿdugā-</i> “report”	(<i>naiy</i>) <i>apagaudaya-</i> (<i>naiy</i>) <i>kārahayā θaha-</i> “(not) conceal, (not) reveal to the <i>kāra-</i> ” <i>xšnau-</i> “hear; listen”
* <i>dipiciça-</i> “transcript?”	<i>patišam kun-</i> “reproduce?” <i>ariyā utā pavastāyā utā carmā *grafta- ah-</i> “captured (recorded) in Aryan, as well as on clay and on parchment” <i>*niyapaiθiya- utā patiyafrathiya- paišiyā *mām</i> “written and read in my [= Dareios’] presence” <i>*frāstāya-</i> “send out”

Here, the the *physical* inscription itself is the *dipi-*, which not only can be read (*patiparsa-*), but also, as other passages indicate, is written (*ni-paiθa-/nipišta-*), may be seen (*vaina-*), and what is more may be destroyed (*vikan-*), and is need of being preserved (*paribara-*).

Aside from the *dipi-*, there is also a hitherto ignored *haⁿdugā-*, which unlike the *dipi-* may not be read or seen, but has to be reported, spoken of (*θaha-*). Clearly, it stands for the dissemination or oral retelling of Dareios’ narrative to an Iranian audience (*kāra-*). As we may observe in the following two passages:

θātiy Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya nūram θuvām varnavatām taya manā kartam avaθā kārahayā
θādiy mā apagaudaya yadiy imām handugām naiy apagaudayāhay kārahayā θāhay
Auramazdā θuvām dauštā biyā utātaiy taumā vasiy biyā utā dargam jīvā

“King Dareios says: now let what I have done convince you. Tell it thus to the people in arms, do not conceal it; if you were not to conceal this account from, and tell (it) to, the people in arms, (then) may Ahuramazdā be your friend, may you have a large progeny, and live long.”

DB 4.52–57.

θātiy Dārayavauš [xšāya]θiya yadiy imām handugām apagaudayāhay naiy θāhay [k]āra[hay]ā
Auramazdāta <i>y jatā biyā utātaiy taumā mā biyā

“King Dareios says: if you were to conceal this account from, and not tell (it) to, the people in arms, (then) may Ahuramazdā strike you, and may you not have any progeny.”

DB 4.57–59.

Dareios admonishes against concealing (*apagaudaya-*) his story, and encourages people to retell it. One may argue that the third term **dipiciça-*, and its Elamite counterpart *tuppi-me* are also bound to express a distinct concept.

What this latter nuance might be, ought to be inferred from the use of actions that are associated with the **dipiciça-* (or *tuppi-me*) in the famous paragraph 70 of the Old Persian variant, where we read:

*θātiy Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya vašnā Auramazdāha ima *dipi[c]i[çam] taya adam akunavam*
*patišam ariyā utā pavastāy[ā] utā carmā *gra[ftam] āha *pat[i]šam[c]i[y] [*nāmana]fam akuna-*
*vam *pa[t]i[ša]m *h[u]vādā[tam akuna]va[m] utā *niyapai[θ]i[ya u]tā patiyafrathiya paišiyā*

*mā[m] pasā[va] ima *dipi[ciça]m fr]āstāyā vi[s]padā antar dahayā[v]a kāra *hamā[t]ax-
šatā*

“Said Dareios the king: by the greatness of Ahuramazdā this transcript/copy that I reproduced (replicated), was captured (recorded) in Aryan, as well as on clay and on parchment. I (also) replicated (thereupon) my signature, and reproduced my genealogy. It was both written and read in my presence; afterwards, this transcript/copy I sent out everywhere in the lands, where the people in arms were applying themselves (in my service?).”¹⁷⁸

DB 4.88–92.

It appears from the above context that **dipiciça-* is what may be “captured (recorded)” on clay and parchment (*pavastā- utā carman-*), “written and read (loud) in the presence” of the king (*niyapaiθiya- utā patiyafraθiya-*), and be “sent out” (**frāstāya-*) everywhere in the lands (*vispadā aⁿtar dahayāva*). Clearly, this **dipiciça-* ought to be a mobile document, and as such distinct from the inscription itself (*dipi-*) and its oral rendition (*haⁿdugā-*). As the Elamite etymon *tuppi-* implies *tuppi-me* ought to be a written document, but one that could be duplicated from a *Vorlage*, and placed on different writing surfaces to be disseminated, but also one that could have required official authentication by dint of the king’s signature? (**nāmanāfa-*), and genealogy? (**huvādātām*), that were reproduced thereupon; in brief: a “transcript.”

In sum, the dissemination of the Bisotun narrative may have taken place on two levels: an oral Old Persian *variant* (*haⁿdugā-*) of the Bisotun inscription was circulated, and an Old Persian written transcript (**dipiciça-*) of the selfsame inscription, recorded on clay and parchment, sent to the four quarters of the empire. It was probably the oral *haⁿdugā-* that gave rise to the stories captured by our Greek sources, but since neither its content, nor that of the “other copy in Aryan,” are known to us, this remains merely an informed speculation.

178 The meaning of *ha^mtaxš-* (*ha^mtaxša-*) remains ambiguous in this passage. Traditionally, *ha^mtaxš-* is translated as “act in concert with; cooperate” (See Schmitt 2014, p. 253–253), and in view of several contexts, wherein *ha^mtaxš-* is accompanied by *ha^mkarta-* “concerted action” this translation seems judicious: *martiya haya hamtaxšataiy anudim [han]kartahayā avaθādīm paribarāmiy haya [v]ināθayatiy anudim vinastaha[yā] ava]θā parsāmiy*, “The man who applies himself, this one I reward according to his good action”, (the man) who does harm, him I chastise according to the harm (inflicted)” (DNb 16–18); and: *mart[i]ya haya [hamtax]šataiy anu[v] hankar]tahay[ā] avaθadi[m] par]ibarā[miy haya v]ināθayatiy [anudim vinastahayā] parsāmiy* “The man who applies himself I reward according to his good action”, (the man) who does harm, him I punish according to the harm (inflicted)” (XPI 17–21). The opposition in both passages of *ha^mtaxš-* to *vināθ-* (*vināθaya-*) “harm,” and *ha^mkarta-* to *vinasta-* “harm,” as already observed by Rossi (2003), p. 346–347, may warrant a more nuanced translation.

The Sasanian Inscriptions

The res gestae divi Saporis

Turning our intention to the Sasanian inscriptions, we may argue that in the composition of the more significant Sasanian royal inscriptions, that is, that of Šābuhr I on the *Ka'abe-ye Zardošt* at *Naqš-e Rostam* (the so-called *res gestae divi Saporis*),¹⁷⁹ and the inscription of King Narseh at *Paikuli*,¹⁸⁰ both from the third and early fourth centuries of the common era, two radically different discursive strategies were at work.

We shall as a working argument posit that the *res gestae divi Saporis* were primarily geared towards a non-Iranian audience, and in view of their content, that is, the three Persian and Roman wars and their respective outcomes, *also* targeting the Roman world. This means that the *res gestae* sought *also* to impact a Roman audience, which most likely was ill defined by the Sasanians, and of whose sensibilities and historical perceptions they had but a limited knowledge.

The style of Šābuhr I's inscription is sober, the narrative is kept to a minimum, merely a backbone of historical context for the three victorious campaigns of king Šābuhr I against the defeated Roman Caesars Gordianus, Philip the Arab, and Valerian is provided, the latter having to suffer the humiliating fate to be made captive by the Sasanians. Almost a third of the inscription consists of varied lists, mostly an enumeration of the empire's success in wresting western territories from Rome, as well as sundry *notitiae dignitatum*, establishing for all to behold the scale of the empire's administrative structure and the depth of its officials' ranks.

Several elements, both philological and iconographic, support our working hypothesis that Šābuhr's *res gestae*, and possibly accompanying reliefs, were composed having *also* a non-Iranian audience, possibly the Roman world, in mind, although this ought not to signify that Šābuhr I's victories were not fully exploited for indigenous consumption as well. They were indeed thrust upon the population of the Iranian heartland through a profusion of reliefs mainly in Persis (*Pārs*) that were a vivid reminder of the King's nimbus of invincibility.¹⁸¹ Before addressing the philological analysis of the inscriptions, we shall succinctly address other hints.

One intriguing element in addressing our present query is the iconography of the *Paris Cameo* (figure 6) depicting Šābuhr I's taking the Roman Caesar Valerian by hand (*pad dasgrab*, as the *res gestae* call it).¹⁸² What exactly this cameo is, escapes us; what we can surely state about it, however, is its nature as a propaganda

179 For Šābuhr I's inscription at *Naqš-e Rostam*, see the edition of Huyse (1990).

180 For the inscription of *Paikuli*, see the edition of Humbach and Skjærvø, (1978–1983); also the important emendations owing to the recent discovery of numerous inscribed blocks of stone belonging to the *Paikuli* monument by Cereti and Terribili (2014); see also Cereti and Terribili (2012) for a description of the Italian archeological campaign to *Paikuli* in 2012.

181 See similarly Canepa (2009), p. 56.

182 For the inventory of the Paris Cameo deposited in the *Cabinet de Médailles* (Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, inv. n° 1893) of the Bibliothèque Nationale, see Gyselen (2006), p. 203, n°. 145; compare also von Gall, (1990), p. 56–59, who regards Šābuhr's adversary on the Cameo to be emperor Jovian. See more recently Dignas and Winter (2007), p. 81–

piece illustrating what Persians might have perceived to be Roman aesthetics and art, although executed (possibly by Roman craftsmen) against a background of Iranian *art rupestre* and thematics, and most probably destined to be sent to the Roman empire for Roman consumption, possibly by elite recipients.¹⁸³ What it depicts is obviously the very theme of Šābuhr's *res gestae*, that is, the superiority of Persian arms over Rome, eventually leading to Valerianus' captivity by the king of kings.



Fig. 6: Cameo depicting Šābuhr's triumph over the Roman Caesar Valerian. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques inv. n° (1893).

A theme that Šābuhr I has depicted on reliefs in innumerable places (see figure 7) in Persis and Iran,¹⁸⁴ but his target audience seems from the beginning to have been *more* than the Iranian world, and the production of objects such as the *Paris Cameo* must have helped carry Šābuhr's worldview deep into Roman territory.

82. For a detailed discussion of the Cameo's iconography and intent, see Canepa (2009), p. 68–71, et 265, n. 52.

183 See Canepa (2009), p. 70, with whose assessment of the nature and function of the Cameo we are mostly in agreement: "Considering the silver plates' role in later diplomatic exchange and overtly hostile relations during the third century, it is indeed possible that the Sasanian court sent this gem to someone within the Roman empire as a not-so-friendly 'gift,' though a recipient in the Kušān east would be equally likely."

184 For a discussion of Šābuhr I's reliefs, see Meyer (1990). For other reliefs of Šābuhr depicting the vanquished Roman emperors at *Bišāpūr*, see Herrmann et Howell (1980), figure 1 (Bišāpūr III); and Herrmann, MacKenzie et Howell (1983), figure 2.

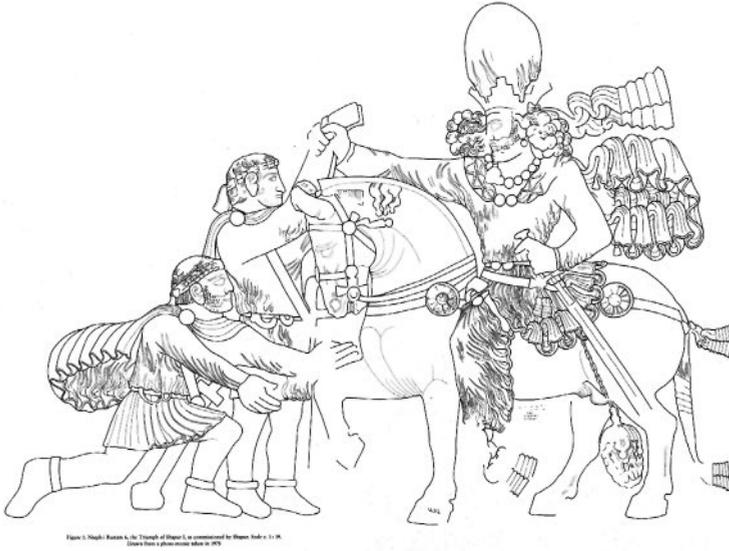


Fig. 7: Relief of Šābuhr I at *Naqš-e Rostam* (Herrmann 1989, Figure 1)

Narseh's Paikuli Inscription

How concerned the Iranian and Roman worlds were about their respective ideological representations, and keenly willing to address their indigenous and foreign audiences,¹⁸⁵ may be further observed by dint of another example.

Following the battle of Satala in Armenia (298 CE) between Narseh and Diocletian's Caesar, Galerius, the fate of the Persian imperial train, hung for some time in the balance, as Narseh's Queen – possibly Šābuhrduxtag (who is already attested in Šābuhr I's *res gesate* as the Queen of the Sakas, *Sagān bāmbišn*, when Narseh was the *Sagān šāh*);¹⁸⁶ or/and less likely a royal consort? Ἀρσανή, whose name is reported by John Malalas as the captive of Galerius¹⁸⁷ – and children fell into Roman captivity,¹⁸⁸ Narseh was forced to acquiesce to the unfavorable terms of the treaty of Nisibis, in order to produce their release.¹⁸⁹ Galerius celebrated his tri-

185 On how Sasanian coinage in the third century dynamically reacted to the iconographical projections of Roman coinage, by appropriating, to the extent possible, some of its motifs, in order to respond to, or diffuse, its propaganda tenets, see Gyselen (2010), p. 74–79.

186 ŠKZ Pth. 20–21: *Narseh Sagān šāh Šābuhrduxtag Sagān bāmbišn* “Narseh, king of the Saka, and Šābuhrduxtag, Queen of the Saka.”

187 The name Arsanē is reported by John Malalas (ἡ βασίλισσα τῶν Περσῶν Ἀρσανή); see Thurn (2000), p. 39.

188 On the wars of Narseh and Galerius, see Mosig-Walburg (2009), p. 90–155; and Weber (2012), p. 214–252, albeit occasionally too trusting of our classical sources. On the identity and captivity of Narseh's Queen and children, see Weber (2010a), p. 315–316; and Weber (2012), p. 271–273.

189 For the terms of the Nisibis treaty, see Blockley (1984), p. 28–34; Blockley (1992), p. 5–7; Winter (1988), p. 152–214; Winter and Dignas (2001), p. 48–51, 101–3, 144–55, 208–9.

umph over the Persians, by striking his famous medallion, where on the reverse the Sasanian queen and the imperial children are shown as supplicants, abjectly thrown to the ground, facing a mounted Galerius who is charging them with a lance.¹⁹⁰ That the medallion of Galerius has to be read in conjunction with the arch of Galerius (in reality a tetrapylon) in Thessaloniki, where Galerius held court has been recently persuasively argued.¹⁹¹

Both the monument and the medallion were attempts at projecting the spectacular victory of Galerius over Narseh on the Roman population, and by the same token effacing the loss of Roman prestige in the past – symbolized by Valerian’s captivity, which the *Paris Cameo* visualized. Whereas the monument of Thessaloniki fully developed, on multiple panels, the theme of Sasanian defeat,¹⁹² the medallion, as a compact mobile platform insured the transmission of Galerius’ underlying core message to the Sasanian realm.¹⁹³



Fig. 8:
Prestige Medallion of
Galerius, mounted, in
gallop, directing his lance
against a female supplicant
(Cohen 1888, vol. 7, 123,
n° 204)

That the Sasanians were fully cognizant of Galerius’ projection, and thus had espied of this “diplomatic” medium, is borne out by the response it prompted. Indeed, it is likely that Narseh, in reaction to Galerius’ medallion, may have ordered the carving of a new relief at *Naqš-e Rostam*, once the imperial family, notably, the Queen and Narseh’s children were ransomed for extensive territorial concessions that would sow the seeds of dissension between the two empires for decades to come. What is limned in Narseh’s relief at *Naqš-e Rostam*, beyond the imperial family’s safe return, is the restitution of the indented glory, and an attempt at minimizing Galerius’ projection of triumph onto the Roman *imperium* and beyond.

190 Aside from this medallion that Cohen (1888, vol. 7, 123, n° 204) describes in following terms: “Victoria Persica. Médaillon de Galère à cheval galopant à droite dirigeant sa lance contre une femme agenouillée, un jeune homme et un enfant debout, coiffés tous trois de bonnets phrygiens; sous les pieds du cheval deux captifs étendus,” there is yet another medallion (n° 205), on which the author comments without, however, reproducing the effigy of the reverse, and where, as it appears, both the female figure and the youth are represented in supplication: “Même revers, mais la femme et l’homme sont agenouillés.”

191 On the arch of Galerius in Thessaloniki, see Laubscher (1975); for the thematic structure of the reliefs, see Pond Rothman (1977); for a good review of the *problématique*, see Canepa (2009), p. 83–99.

192 See Laubscher (1975), in particular, p. 95–106.

193 See Canepa (2009), p. 98.

The most striking symbolism of this defiant recovery captured by Narseh's relief (Figure 6) are the new crown worn by Narseh,¹⁹⁴ the ring of rulership held in unison by the imperial couple,¹⁹⁵ and the presence of a little figure between them,¹⁹⁶ which may be emblematic for the restitution of the imperial child(ren); all themes that were addressed by the medallion before. The iconography of Narseh's relief has been extensively debated in recent (and not so recent) scholarship,¹⁹⁷ with some identifying the female figure holding together the ring of rulership with the goddess Anāhīd, and the entire scene as one of an investiture, wherein Narseh receives the ring of rulership by the hand of the goddess Anāhīd.¹⁹⁸ Although this matter may not be conclusively decided, the iconographical (and ideological) dialectics between the Galerius Medallion and Narseh's relief at *Naqš-e Rostam* makes it

194 As Alam has argued before, Narseh displays two different crown types on his coinage; the change of crown by a Sasanian ruler, could (but must not) occur in connection with a ruler resuming his reign in the wake of an eventually frustrated usurpation, or after captivity; see Alam (2008), p. 27; and Alam and Gyselen (2012), p. 281; also Schindel (2004), p. 70: "es [gab] keine verpflichtende Regelung über die Annahme einer neuen Krone". Narseh's crown displaying both loops and branches (Typ I: *Palmettenkrone*), which previously had been attributed to his later rule, has now been ascribed to the king's early rule; consequently, Narseh's second crown type (Typ II: *Lamellenkrone*), which does not sport the typical branches, has been reassigned to Narseh's later rule. Since the latter also matches the depiction of Narseh's crown at the *Naqš-e Rostam*, a case could be made that the events represented on the said relief pertained to the king's later rule. See Alam and Gyselen (2012), p. 280–281; and Alam (2010), p. 28; also Weber (2012), p. 279–281.

195 On the identification of the main figures of the relief of Narseh at *Naqš-e Rostam* as the Queen and the imperial youth, see persuasively Weber (2010a), p. 308–315 (with discussion of older literature), where (page 315) she concludes: "Die Rückkehr der in die Gefangenschaft geratenen Frau des Narseh (298) könnte bereits ein Anlaß für den Herrscher gegeben haben, nicht nur eine neue Kronenform zu wählen, sondern auch die nun wieder vereinte Familie zusammen mit dem Thronfolger Hormezd auf einem Relief zu verewigen; also Weber (2012), p. 273–284. More reticent, see Alam and Gyselen (2012), p. 286–287. Also see Overalet (2012), p. 314–315: "Narseh's representation at Naqsh-i Rustam VIII ... came to be seen as a divine investiture, rather than as it should be, a family scene with his wife and heir."

196 Already Schmitt 1970, 134, had recognized in the small figure Narseh's heir to throne (although mistakenly identifying the female likeness with the goddess Anahita: "The long wavy ribbon suspended from the headdress of the prince and his position, between the king and goddess and beneath the symbol of sovereignty, unquestionably mark him as heir to the throne, presumably the prince who in A. D. 302 succeeded his father as Hormizd II." See also Weber (2012), p. 277.

197 See Weber (2010a), 308–315, for a good overview of the *status questionis* and the older literature. Compare also the discussion by Farridnejad (2014), p. 453–460, which entails some of the same positions held in the older literature.

198 Compare Farridnejad (2014), p. 459–460, whose arguments, however, for identifying the female figure with the goddess Anāhīd does not persuade, especially since the discussion seems regretfully to ignore the propaganda war and campaign of images between the two empires, as well as underestimate the precipitous erosion of prestige, which the loss of the imperial train to Galerius must have inevitably provoked: "[es] ist kaum anzunehmen, dass die Wiedervereinigung der Familie ein so großer Anlass sein konnte in Form eines Reliefs verewigt zu werden. Vielmehr scheinen der Gesichtsverlust und noch wichtiger die Unterbrechung seines königlichen *xʷarənah-* durch die Krieges- und Friedensverhandlungsgeschehnisse ... der plausible Grund für eine wiederholte Investitur durch eine Gottheit zu sein"; Farridnejad (2014), p. 459–460.

likely we are treating the same thematics, and that Narseh on *Naqš-e Rostam* celebrates the restitution of his Queen and the imperial children, precisely in response to Galerius' war of images.¹⁹⁹



Fig. 9: Relief of Narseh at *Naqš-e Rostam* depicting the king, his queen, and their heir (Herrmann 1977, Figure 2)

But, if, indeed, the *res gestae* of Šābuhr were composed for a possible Roman audience, or were mostly geared towards it, what can we say about the inscription of Narseh at *Paikuli*. At the antipodes of Šābuhr's *res gestae* stands the inscription of Narseh at *Paikuli*. Narseh's narrative is the tale of a coup-d'état, that is, the seizure of power by a younger son of King Šābuhr I, namely, Narseh, king of Armenia (*Arminān šāh*) supported by a faction of the Iranian aristocracy, against his grand nephew, Warahrān III, and his main supporter, a certain Wahnām, as well as their nobiliary coterie.²⁰⁰

199 A *secundum comparandum* that has not been discussed in the present study, is the *Rag-e Bībr* Relief of Šābuhr I in today's Afghanistan, that is, at the uttermost reach of Sasanian power in Kušān territory. It represents the king in a hunt scene involving a rhinoceros, and a Kušān dignitary (possibly the Kušān king?) standing in front of Šābuhr I's mount, in a pose of obedience, similar to those, we encounter on royal reliefs of the king of kings in Persis, wherein Roman Caesars are shown in supplication. Frantz Grenet, describes the Kušān figure in the following terms: "We are tempted to interpret him as a Kushan noble or even a Kushan king whose submission is expressed by him [the king] helping in the hunt"; see Grenet; Lee; Martinez; and Ory (2007), p. 261. The scene is testimony – beyond the projection of Sasanian power on the far edges of the empire, and the incorporation of these territories into the empire's political prism and civilizational fabric, through the agency of a homogenizing royal art – to the individualizing effects of Sasanian royal ideology, which, towards greater expressiveness, could acquire local accents. In this case, Šābuhr I depicting himself as victor over a rhinoceros, that is, an animal equated with royal game in the Indian frontier region and beyond, hence allowed for Šābuhr I's alignment with Kušān royal practices; see Grenet; Lee; Martinez; Ory (2007), p. 260.

200 On the themes of Narseh's inscription, see Shayegan (2012); on the chronicle of events of Narseh's rule, see Weber and Wiesehöfer (2010); and Weber (2012).

It is clear that Narseh's audience for his *res gestae*, with him having just established his rule over Iran, is the domestic constituency, which Narseh time and again refers to as the *Pahlaw(ān) ud Pārs(ān)* "Parthian(s) and Persian(s)," or the *Pārsān kār* "the Persian people in arms,"²⁰¹ which *mutatis mutandis* is identical to the Old Persian formula used by Dareios in Bisotun, in order to refer to his partisans, that is, the *kāra pārsa ut[ā m]āda haya upā mām āha* "the Persian and Median people in arms that was with me."²⁰²

Paikuli's audience being the Iranian milieu – reflected in the use of Parthian and Middle Persian redactions *merely* – it appears that the narrative of Narseh's coup had to be couched in the mold of epic story patterns depicting the arrival of a *redresseur de torts* reestablishing a prior state of affairs, which had been disrupted by the illegitimate rule of (an) usurper(s), whom it behooved the rightful heir and king (here Narseh) to eliminate.²⁰³ Thus, in the case of *Paikuli* not only the nature of the event (coup-d'état), but also the targeted audience ("Parthians and Persians"/"Persian people in arms") are imposing their choice of a narrative on the inscription, which had to be accommodated, if the desired outcome, namely, the reception of Narseh's *own version* of the coup-d'état, was to be the successful.

What makes us think that Narseh's inscription was meant for an Iranian public, the *Pārsān kār*, the equivalent of the Old Persian *kāra-*, is among others, Narseh's uses of the *mythologem* of the two evil-doers, here the deposed king Warahrān and his right hand Wahnām, exactly like the two magian evil-doers in Herodotus whose account drew on the *haⁿdugā-*, itself tributary to the epic tradition, where evildoers often occur in a pair, or as Twins.²⁰⁴

In the following, I shall brush upon a few themes of this mythologem and draw attention to the parallelism between the *Paikuli* and the *haⁿdugā-* (that is, the oral narrative of the Bisotun inscription as captured by Herodotos and Justin), both addressing the indigenous Iranian people in arms (*kāra-/Pārsān kār*).

Indeed, according to the *Paikuli* inscription, following the death of the king of kings, Warahrān II²⁰⁵, a certain Wahnām, son of Tadrōs (Tatrus), who is depicted as a *villain* in league with Ahreman and the demons (*pad pušt ī Ahreman ud dēwān*), attached the diadem of rulership to the head of Warahrān II's son, Warahrān III, the king of Sakas, and *puppet-king*,²⁰⁶ without prior consultation with Narseh and the grandees of the empire:

201 See the following extract of the *Paikuli* inscription, containing one of the few passages, wherein the expression *Pārsān kār* is found: *ud Pārs ud (Pahlaw) [ud any kē?] Asōrestān pad pāhrag *ānānd ān hanzaman kūnēnd [ud] (gowēnd) [kū]: [... Sagān šāh [... agar? adūg] hād Pārsān kār framādan ud (šahr) [dāštan ...]*, "And the Persians and Parthians [and others who] were at the border watch-post of Asōrestan, those made a council [and] said [that]: "[...] the king of Sakas [... if?] he be able to govern the Persian army/people and [keep] the land [...]" NPI A12,04–A5–6,05.

202 DB 2.18–19.

203 Shayegan (2012), p. 109–138.

204 Shayegan (2012), p. 43–72.

205 On Warahrān II, see Weber (2009), p. 559–643.

206 On Warahrān III, see Weber (2010b), 353–394. See also the recent study of Gyselen, (2005)

(amā) Arminān šā[h] *ānām ud Armin pahr[ist hēm tā Warahrān šāhān šāh ī Warahrānagān pad Xō]zestān widerēd ud **Wahnām ī Tadrōsān [pad] xwēbēh drōžanīf (Path.) ud [pušt] ī Ahreman ud dēwān [pad Sagān šāh sar] dēhēm bandēd ud pad ān xīr nē amā a[fl]rāh kunēd ud nē (š)ahrōār(ān) wispuhrān āfrās [karēd] (Path.)**.

“And [We] were the king of the Armenians and lived in Armenia, [until Warahrān (II), the king of kings, son of Warahrān (I)], passed away in [Xō]zestān, and **Wahnām, son of Tadrōs, [through] his own falsehood and wih [the help] of Ahreman and the devils attached the Diadem [to the head of the king of Sakas],** and he did neither inform Us about that matter, nor did he inform the landholders and the princes.”

NPi, A3,02– A15,02.

Although the bestowal of the diadem, and its acceptance, are deemed an act of usurpation, performed by the *duo* Wahnām and Warahrān, and in spite of the latter being qualified in two contexts, wherein Wahnām (and his partisans) is (are) mentioned, either as a *wadgar* “evildoer” (against gods and men), or is correlated with the “one(s) who is/are bad” (*ōy kē wad*),²⁰⁷ he is nonetheless not directly accused of falsehood, and it is mostly his association with the crown-bestower Wahnām that delegitimizes his rule.

Wahnām, in contrast, remains the principal evil in this story: not only is he accused of being the instrument of the devil and demons, or on many occasions is called a “liar” *drōžan*, but he is also depicted as a crown-bestower working for his own stake, and desirous to seize the reins of power among others to bereave the peers and grandees of the empire of their estates, so he may redistribute them among his own partisans, the elusive Garamaeans.²⁰⁸ Moreover, and most importantly, he is represented seeking a different order² by creating new estates (*nawāg dastkerd*) out of his own possessions and those of the Garamaeans (*az xwēš tōm ud *Garamēgazān*) to be redistributed to a new aristocracy² who would oppose the enemies of the “king of Sakas,” his puppet-king (ēg Sagān šāh [*dušmenīn*]²) *wany kunān* “then I shall destroy the enemies of the king of Sakas”):

[*ud pas wispuhrān ud wuzurgān*] *ud ā(z)adān Pa(r)sān ud Pahla[w]ān *ābur(s)īd [hēnd kū an Wahnām ī Tadrōsān Warahrān] ī Sagān šāh dēhēm sar ba[n]dēm u-m šahr]-wxadāyīf ō wx-ēbēh QWMTE kāmīst ... ēstādan (Pth.) ud abar ēd (ādūg) [hēm kū wispuhrān] ud wuzurgān ud āzādān ōzānān u-šān xānag *Garamēgazān dahān ud az xwēš (tōm) ud *Garamēgazān kalānān ud āzādān nawāg (Pth.) dastkerd kunān. U-m ka xwēš dastkerd ōstīgān kerd hād (ēg Sagān) šāh [dušmenīn]² wany kunān.*

[2009], p. 29–36, on the iconographic representations of Sasanian crown princes in the third century CE, including Warahrān III.

207 *šāhān šāh pad kerbagīh az Armin ōrōn ō Ērānšahr ēw wihēzēd ud xwarrah ud šahr ud xwēš gā[h] ud padixšar ī niyāgān az yazdān padg[rīft az] wad[gar] ī yazdān ud] mardōm ēw [dārēd], “May the king of kings graciously move from Armenia hither to Ērānšahr. And (as for) the glory and the realm and His Own throne and honour, which (His) ancestors received from the gods, may (He) [take them back from?] the evil[doers of/against] gods and men”; NPi, B9,03–B3–4,04. *Ud Warahrān ī (Sagān) [Šāh] ud Wahnām ī Tadrōsān ōy kē wad ud ōy kē Wahnām hamsaxwan ud hayyār hēnd ...*, “and Warahrān, [king] of (Sakas), and Wahnām, son of Tatrūs, and Wahnām the bad ones and those who were Wahnām’s partisans and helpers ...”; NPi, C11,06–c3,04.*

208 See Shayegan (2012), p. 127. Also Weber (2012), p. 189; 191, n. 133; and Gyselen (1989), p. 49.

“And then the princes, grandees, nobles, the Persians and Parthians, were *informed [that: I Wahnām, son of Tadrōs], att[ached] the diadem (of kingship) to the head of the king of Sakas and sought ***decisively**²⁰⁹ **rulership over the realm for myself** ... stand, and of this I am capable, that (is), to kill the princes, grandees, and nobles, **and to give their possessions (estates) to the Garamaeans. And from/of my own family and the Garamaeans, I shall make new properties for the grandees and the nobles.** And when I have firmly established [my own household/property,] then the king of Sakas.”

NPi A12,03–A7,04.

Thus, what we may observe is how the theme of *two evil-doers* – which we had first encountered in Herodotos’ account in the garb of two *magi* brethren, and whose origin we ascribed to the oral version of Bisotun – resurfaced in the inscription of *Paikuli*, this time, however, in order to frame the story of Narseh’s own usurpation. Indeed, Narseh in need to justify his seizure of power to his domestic constituency, that is (once more), the “Persian people in arms” (*Pārsān kār*), had recourse to discursive elements and patterns that bespoke their epic imaginary, thus, precisely replicating the same practices, where of Dareios’ scribes made use in composing their *haⁿdugā-* for the Persian *kāra-* a millennium before.

Epigraphic Traditions: Preliminary Conclusions

The Bisotun narrative(s) was(/were) disseminated through a network of discrete transmissions, which, whilst complementary to each other, were nonetheless addressing different recipients, whose intellectual predispositions they espoused. Thus, aside from the inscription itself (*dippi-*), other, so-called “diplomatic” variants (*dipiciça-*) were sent out (**frāstāya-*) to Babylonia and Egypt; more striking still was the oral version of the story (*haⁿdugā-*), which had been entirely recast, or rather independently composed, for the use of an Iranian audience, that is, the Medo-Persian ethno-class.

This system of complementarities reminds us of the one, which among the Sasanians governed the relation between Šābuhr’s *res gestae* and Narseh’s *Paikuli*, and their radically divergent recipients, Rome in the first instance, and the “Persian people in arms” (*Pārsān kār*), in the second; as well as an array of “mobile” documents, such as Šābuhr’s Cameo and Medallion that were bound further to disseminate the content of the royal narrative(s) within the empire, or the enemy’s realm.

Indeed, the repartition of Dareios’ story between the inscription itself (*dippi-*) and its “diplomatic” variants (*dipiciça-*) one the one hand, *and* its oral rendition (*haⁿdugā-*) on the other hand, a distribution that is tributary to the disposition of the respective audiences, is *mutatis mutandis* identical to the one we noted, among the Sasanians, between Šābuhr’s *res gestae* and Narseh’s *Paikuli*, *and* their respective Roman and domestic audiences. Moreover, the *dipiciça-*, this highly ambulant document among the Achaemenids fulfilled in essence the same needs as Šābuhr’s Cameo and Medallion, these other mobile objects.

209 On the reading and meaning of QWMTE, see Cereti and Terribili (2014), p. 359.

In sum, the strategies, which under the Achaemenids regulated the king's relation with its virtual audiences, and allowed for the individualization of the royal discourse by negotiating the recipients' frame of mind, these strategies we find again at work among the Sasanians who clearly personalized their discourse for their targeted *audientiae*. We may thus conclude that, in spite of the Sasanians having little knowledge of their predecessors, *intangible* mechanisms, which are responsible for the design of discriminating discursive strategies, were either inherited, or reestablished themselves, when similar circumstances as in the past were recreated; whether they may be ascribed to the everlasting but indiscernible powers of cultural memory, we may not confirm, but merely posit.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the present paper, we have succinctly, and perforce inadequately, surveyed the manifold manifestations of *Persianism*, which we defined as the reception of things Achaemenid (in our case) in the (post-)Hellenistic and late antique periods within the Iranicate expanse. Several considerations were of moment to our query:

- (1) whether the reception of a past, bereft of historical substratum (in this case, the reality of the Achaemenid empire), could be regarded as *Persianism*; especially, in light of successor dynasts attributing Achaemenid vestiges to pan-Iranian heroic or mytho-epic figures. A case in point were the *fratarakā* and *Dārāyānids*, who consciously emulated the iconographic motifs of Achaemenid monuments and reliefs, whose propinquity they expressly sought, without us having the ability to determine the extent of their historical knowledge or nescience. Another example is certainly the case of the Sasanian prince Šābuhr (brother of young king Šābuhr II), who consciously placed on the portico of Dareios' *Tačara* palace at Persepolis an inscription, wherein he prayed among others for the well-being of the one who made this dwelling (*ōy-iz āfrīn kerd kē ēn mān kerd*), hence, rendering homage to *Sadstūn*'s builders, deemed possibly distant forebears, all the while being ignorant of their identity. It is evident that any allusion or pertinence to the Achaemenid past – as manifest in material culture, or inherited social and intellectual practices – however lacunary or fictitious its reception, ought to be included in the realm of *Persianism*.
- (2) Another vector in our examination pointed to the possible impact of *others* in permeating Iranian constituencies with an awareness of their Achaemenid past. These could be political and cultural forces of the wider Iranicate world, such as the kingdoms of Pontos and Commagene; scribal communities within the Iranian empires, such as Babylonian *Tempelgemeinden*; or again extraneous historiographical traditions, such as Roman narratives, which all may have had a better hold over past histories of the Iranian world, than its principal *Kulturträger*. All these agents would have impressed their *own* "cultural signature" on the historical consciousness of the Iranian people, and their contributions represented oblique, albeit dynamic, forms of *Persianism*.

- (3) The most intriguing and subtle manifestation of *Persianism* are those *intangible* traces of Achaemenid cultural practices that appear to have endured from Iranian antiquity to the Sasanian period and *beyond*. The discursive strategies we observed in the redaction and dissemination (of the content) of Iranian inscriptions across millennia are testimony to the endurance of cultural memory, which, despite its elusive nature, ought to be entailed in the discussion on *Persianism(s)*.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of ancient sources follow the format found in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd edn), with few exceptions that ought to be clear to the reader. In addition, the following abbreviations are used:

GENERAL

AD	<i>Astronomical Diaries</i> , ed. A. Sachs and H. Hunger.
AE	Achaemenid Elamite
ASN	American Numismatic Society
BADB	Beazley Archive Database (www.beazley.ox.ac.uk).
DB	Bisotūn Inscription of Darius I
DNa	Inscription A of Darius at Naqš-e Rostam
DS	Foundation Inscriptions of Darius I at Susa
DSe	Inscription E of Darius at Susa
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
MP	Middle Persian
NP	New Persian
OP	Old Persian
REB	<i>The Revised English Bible with the Apocrypha</i> (Oxford and Cambridge, 1989).
Sellwood	D. G. Sellwood, <i>An Introduction to the Coinage of Parthia</i> (2nd edn; London, 1980).
SNG	<i>Sylloge Numorum Graecorum</i>
XPh	“Daivā” Inscription of Xerxes I

REFERENCE WORKS

AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJPh	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AMI	<i>Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
ARC	<i>Archaeological Review from Cambridge</i>
BAI	<i>Bulletin of the Asia Institute</i>
BCH	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
CA	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CRAI	<i>Comptes Rendus d'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
CSSH	<i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>
CW	<i>Classical World</i>
DHA	<i>Dialogues d'histoire ancienne</i>
EA	<i>Epigraphica Anatolica</i>
G&R	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
HZ	<i>Historische Zeitschrift</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>

IJAIS	<i>Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān: The International Journal of Ancient Iranian Studies</i>
IrAnt	<i>Iranica Antiqua</i>
IstMitt	<i>Istanbuler Mitteilungen</i>
JA	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
JAJ	<i>Journal of Ancient Judaism</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JDAI	<i>Jahrbücher des deutschen archäologischen Instituts</i>
JFA	<i>Journal of Field Archaeology</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JMS	<i>Journal of Mithraic Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JPS	<i>Journal of Persianate Studies</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSAI	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSSEA	<i>Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities</i>
MDAI(A)	<i>Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung</i>
MDAI(K)	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Abteilung Kairo</i>
MHR	<i>Mediterranean Historical Review</i>
NZ	<i>Numismatische Zeitschrift</i>
PGDT	<i>Perspectives on Global Development and Technology</i>
RA	<i>Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale</i>
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RE	A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, W. Kroll eds., <i>Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (1893-).
REÁ	<i>Revue des Études Anciennes</i>
REÁrm	<i>Revue des Études Arméniennes</i>
REB	<i>The Revised English Bible with the Apocrypha</i> (Oxford and Cambridge, 1989).
REG	<i>Revue des Études Grecque</i>
REL	<i>Revue des Etudes Latines</i>
RIS	<i>Review of International Studies</i>
RN	<i>Revue Numismatique</i>
TMA	<i>Tijdschrift voor Mediterrane Archeologie</i>
TAPA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
UdA	O. Spengler, <i>Der Untergang des Abendlandes</i> (1918/1922).
YCS	<i>Yale Classical Studies</i>
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

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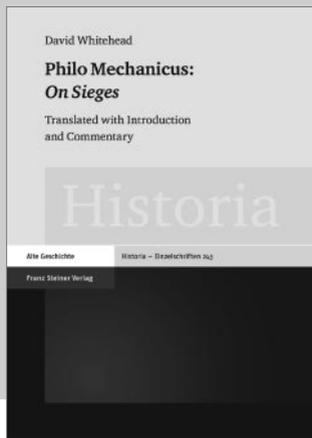
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THE EDITOR

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Towards the end of the second century BCE Philo of Byzantium, a.k.a. Philo Mechanicus, wrote what is held to be the first *Engineering Compendium*, in eight or nine parts. Three concern warfare, viewed theoretically: a technical treatise on catapult-design (*Belopoiika*), and two associated ones which survive only in (lengthy) epitome. United here under the title *On Sieges*, *Paraskeuastika* and *Poliorketika* address broader aspects of siege-warfare. First and primarily, withstanding a siege is the objective: cities must design and build towers, walls and gates in the most suitable way, stockpile and manage food and other strategic commodities, and resist a direct assault by men and machines. Then more briefly the perspective is reversed, with those who wish to conduct such an attack shown how to do so successfully.

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