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The Bīsotūn Inscription - A Jeopardy of Achaemenid History

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ABSTRACT

According to the currently favoured view among historians of the Persian Empire, the Bīsotūn Inscription is a deceitful piece of propaganda whose purpose was to resolve Darius's legitimacy problem. To this effect, Darius cobbles a family relation with Cyrus and fabricates the story of a magus who impersonates Smerdis, son of Cyrus, and usurps the throne. This view, however, contradicts not only the Bīsotūn Inscription but also the ancient Greek testimonies. This article examines the arguments historians have given for their position. Since all views of the two issues in question are necessarily interpretations of the relevant sources that rely on argumentation, reasons and inferences must stand up to critical scrutiny.

Keywords

Achaemenid history; Bīsotūn Inscription; Persian Empire; Darius; Cyrus; Herodotus.

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Introduction

The prevalent view of the Bīsotūn Inscription in contemporary histories of the Achaemenid Empire has two striking characteristics. The first one is that it contradicts the Bīsotūn Inscription and the classical sources regarding the rise of Darius on key points. There is no ancient testimony that supports the historian's reconstruction. Yet – this is the second characteristic – the view enjoys widespread approbation among historians and has become an orthodoxy.¹ It is hard to overstate the peculiarity of this conjuncture: the consensus of historians against the primary and secondary sources.² The rhetoric of unmasking (Darius as a mendacious opponent) is to some extent responsible for the lack of rigor in argumentation in the scholarship of the Bīsotūn Inscription.³ Whatever the cause of historians' confidence about their own account, it cannot go unchallenged, since after all it is held against the primary and secondary sources.⁴ It is very rare that we come across such a situation in historical studies. It could well be that the currently favoured view of the rise of Darius has the truth on its side. However, how does the historian arrive at his or her confidence? What is the basis of this shared certainty held in the face of the ancient testimony? There can be only one basis: argumentation – historical, linguistic and logical.⁵ The historian's reconstruction is as good as the reasons he adduces for it – for each single claim he advances. The burden that the reasoning must carry is all the greater as the account in question – I say it one more time – contradicts the ancient sources. Historical methodology requires historians to construct their narrative based on sources (with due critical diligence, of course), and not to set them aside, unless one has sound reasons for doing this. In this essay, I examine the main reasons put forward by historians of the Achaemenid Empire for their dismissal of the Bīsotūn account.

Before turning to our discussion, let me briefly set out the troublesome aspects of the contemporary scholarship of the Bīsotūn account. The first one is, of course, the failure to *examine* the data found in historical sources

– not to unmask Darius’s ‘subterfuge’ *ab initio*: the Bīsotūn account is ‘propaganda’, which means it is ‘pure fabrication’, a ‘tale’, ‘not a historical work’. From the beginning, the historian sets out to demonstrate *this*, and gives his or her own diametrically opposed reconstruction as the ‘fact’ of the matter.⁶ Episodes of Darius’s biography, such as his marriages, are then arranged and interpreted within the historian’s narrative frame. Second, while historians generally give credence to Herodotus’s report of various events and circumstances of the Persian Empire – if not in every detail⁷ – they discount his account of Darius’s seizure of power as simply ‘following’ the ‘official Persian tradition’. If behind the Bīsotūn Inscription stands a deliberate and systematic deception, as the prevalent view maintains, then any account that follows must be equally false.⁸ The circular methodology systemically discourages critical scrutiny and possible revision. It must be obvious that questioning the cogency of historians’ arguments against the veracity of the Bīsotūn account does not imply or necessitate that the latter truthfully reflects the circumstances of Darius’s seizure of power. The aim of this essay is not a reconstruction of those circumstances but a critical examination of the main contentions of the prevalent view of the Bīsotūn account. Nonetheless, our investigation does yield substantive results, which I set out in the concluding remarks of each section and summarize in the conclusion of the article.

Old Persian *duvitāparanam*

The hapax legomenon that occurs at DB 4 has become the object of controversy. Darius says ‘(altogether) nine, we are kings *duvitāparanam*’. The term is clearly an adverb that qualifies the manner of holding the kingship, whether in factual or ceremonial sense. Earlier scholarship interpreted it to mean something like ‘in two lines’, however it was linguistically analysed. Lecoq, for instance, still understands it in this meaning: ‘nous sommes des rois, neuf en deux lignées’ (Lecoq, 1997, p. 188). The translation of the Elamite equivalent of the locution is uncertain (Kuhrt, 2007, p. 152 note 4). Grillot-Susini *et al.* translate the phrase: ‘nous sommes rois par voie de succession (direct?)’ (Grillot-Susini, Herrenschildt and Malbran-Labat, 1993, p. 39). Most historians seem to have accepted Eva Tichy’s questionable analysis and translation of the OP term as ‘ein weiteres Mal und früher’, which she reduces to ‘nach wie vor’.⁹ They have thus provided their rejection of the ‘two royal branches’ thesis a linguistic justification. Schmitt translates the OP term ‘now as ever’, following Tichy (Schmitt, 1991, p. 49). The Babylonian version of the text is fairly clear: ‘neuf rois d’une famille éternelle’ (Lecoq, 1997, p. 188).¹⁰ Based on the Babylonian phrase and Tichy’s analysis, Rollinger concludes:

Eine Interpretation „in zwei Reihen“ erweist sich nicht nur als völlig spekulativ, sondern gar als haltlos und sollte eigentlich nicht mehr aufrecht erhalten werden. Die babylonische Version der Stelle zeigt auf jeden Fall – und diese ist die einzige, die wir im gegebenen

Zusammenhang sicher verstehen – ein deutlich anderes Bild.
(Rollinger, 1998, pp. 180-181)

However, the interpretation ‘in two lines’ does not rely on the meaning of the Old Persian term alone, as I argue below. Nor does the Babylonian parallel phrase settle the meaning of the Old Persian term. The Babylonian phrase is a royal convention that does *not* refer to linear succession at all. In his Babylonian Cylinder, Cyrus describes himself as ‘ewiger Same des Königtums’ after tracing back his lineage three generations (Schaudig, 2001, p. 555).¹¹ Clearly, three generations do not make an eternity. The usage of the notion in the Neo-Assyrian context develops from a particular (legitimizing) formula of the king’s origin that first appears in the inscriptions of the kings who are generally thought to be usurpers, such as Sargon II. In a Babylonian inscription, Esarhaddon describes himself as the ‘lasting seed of kingship, precious scion of Baltil’ (Tadmor, 1981, p. 28).¹² Whether the Babylonian scribes of the Cyrus Cylinder adopted the locution from the Neo-Assyrian repertoire of royal epithets is not certain. What is clear, however, is that the phrase ‘eternal bloom’ in the Babylonian version of the Bīsotūn Inscription is not a ‘translation’ of the Old Persian term.¹³ It rather reflects a Mesopotamian convention and as such says nothing about whether in the Bīsotūn account the kings were envisaged ‘in two lines’ or ‘in succession’.¹⁴ If the Old Persian term is coined to express the Mesopotamian locution ‘eternal seed of kingship’, it, too, must be understood to be a royal convention and thus devoid of descriptive content. Alternatively, it may be an authentic Old Persian term that describes the arrangement of the Achaemenid kingship in two branches, in which case it obviously applies only to the situation before the rise of Cyrus the Great. The second possibility is much more likely in my view, because I do not think that the term *duvitāparanam* can mean anything like ‘now as ever’ or ‘now as before’, and because the notion of ‘eternal seed of kingship’ belongs to the Mesopotamian tradition.¹⁵ One may also consider a third interpretation, warranted not only by the possible meaning of the OP term but also by the circumstance which Darius presumably aims to represent, namely ‘once again forward’, i.e., after Gaumāta’s interruption. In any case, Rollinger’s convergence of the locution ‘eternal seed of kingship’ with linear succession – as if the locution is a pompous exaggeration of a long dynastic line, and hence implies the latter – is untenable.¹⁶ Such an acceptance does not reflect the Mesopotamian usage at all. Rollinger needs a linguistic anchor for his claim that at DB 4 Darius has ‘a linear linkage’ (‘eine lineare Verknüpfung’) in mind, and presses the OP term into service.¹⁷

The Number Nine

Let me first explain why the thesis that the Achaemenids formed two royal branches from Teispes to Cyrus does not only depend on the meaning of *duvitāparanam*.¹⁸ Actually, the thesis can be more accurately formulated in the following way. In his statement at DB 4 about his royal predecessors,

Darius could not have envisaged the eight kings in a linear succession. Here is the relevant text:

DB 1) I am Darius, the great king, king of kings, king in Persia, king of the countries, the son of Hystaspes, the grandson of Arsames, an Achaemenid. DB 2) Proclaims Darius, the king: My father is Hystaspes; the father of Hystaspes is Arsames; the father of Arsames was Ariaramnes; the father of Ariaramnes was Teispes; the father of Teispes was Achaemenes. DB 3) Proclaims Darius, the king: for that reason we are called Achaemenids; from ancient times we are noblemen; from ancient times our family have been kings. DB 4) Proclaims Darius, the king: there were eight from my family who were previously kings; I am the ninth; nine (of us) *duvitāparanam* we are kings. (Schmitt, 1991, p. 49)¹⁹

We know from Darius himself (DSf 12-15) that when he took the throne both his father and grandfather were alive: ‘By the will of A^huramazdā, he who is my father, Hystaspes, and he who is my grandfather, Arsames – these two were *both* alive when A^huramazdā made me the king in this land’.²⁰ This obviously means that they could not have been kings before Darius’s accession. Darius acknowledges it and his audience knows it. Cyrus and Cambyses, ‘from his family’, ruled in Persia for around thirty years. The chronology of these two kings’ reigns relative to Darius’s was public knowledge.²¹ Given these facts, how could Darius assert that the eight members of his family have been kings ‘in succession’? Note that the historian’s claim is that at DB 4 Darius intends to give his audience to understand that both his father and grandfather are among the eight from his family who ‘are kings in succession’.²² DSf 12-15 all but shows that Darius could not have envisaged ‘a linear linkage’ of his line (at DB 2) with Cyrus and Cambyses (mentioned at DB 10 as belonging to his family) – irrespective of the veracity or falsity of his implicit claim of family relation with Cyrus.²³ Yet, Herodotus’s list of Xerxes’s royal forebears at *Histories* 7.11 is linear, which places Cyrus (if indeed Cyrus the Great is meant), whose daughter Darius marries, five generations back from him. However one cares to account for this²⁴, it demonstrates that the picture Rollinger draws of the ‘central intention and objective of the [Bīsotūn] Inscription’ (‘die zentrale Absicht sowie die Zielsetzung der Inschrift’), namely ‘eine lineare Verknüpfung der Ahnenreihe Kyros’ II und des Dareios zu einem Haus’, is questionable (Rollinger, 1998, p. 195). No ‘linear linkage’ can yield a sequence of the nine kings that is plausibly attributable to Darius. While Rollinger himself cannot construct a plausible sequence, he nonetheless ascribes to Darius the intention of linking his and Cyrus’s lines linearly, and makes this (imputed) intention the basis of his explanation of Herodotus’s picture of the Achaemenid kings’ lineage at *Histories* 7.11.²⁵

The number nine occurs in two contexts in Darius’s inscription at Bīsotūn. The first one is at DB 4 where he says he is the ninth from his family to be king. The second one is at DB 52 where Darius says he fought nineteen

battles and captured nine kings in his first regnal year (including one intercalated month).²⁶ Aside from these explicit mentions, at DB 21 Darius names the ‘lands’ (*dahyu-*) – which happen to be nine – that rebelled against him while he was in Babylon. These coincidences have given rise to speculations about the status of the number nine. Rollinger calls the number ‘ein für die Behistun-Inschrift charakteristisches Ordnungsprinzip’ (Rollinger, 1998, p. 186). Despite the pivotal role he gives the number in his account of Darius’s genealogy, Rollinger provides no argument for its plausibility in ‘Der Stammbaum’ or elsewhere, as far as I know.²⁷ He refers the reader to an article by Windfuhr where we are to find the ‘Bedeutung der Zahl 9’. The only passage in Windfuhr that may be understood to address the issue is the following:

The number 9 appears frequently, either directly mentioned, or implicit, in the organisation of events and locations. Its significance may be related to Darius’ claim to have been the 9th king. It may have been also motivated, at least in part, by the 9 prisoners depicted on the relief of Annubanini at Sar-i-Pol... And both may be informed by astrological or similar secret knowledge, such as the 7 planets [plus] the 2 lunar nodes. (Windfuhr, 1994, p. 270)

The number of counts in nine in the Bīsotūn Inscription is three, two explicit and one implicit. Windfuhr noncommittally mentions three possible grounds for the ‘frequent’ incidence of the counts in nine. According to the first, Darius may have turned the number of kings from his family into a principle of schematism.²⁸ This implies that if the kings from his family counted 5, for instance, there would have been only 5 lying kings to defeat and capture and 5 rebellious peoples to be subjugated. There is no escaping this implication. Is the historian willing to accept it? This challenge applies to any schematization of Darius’s account, whatever its grounds. In my view, the second possible explanation given by Windfuhr for the supposed schematism in nine borders on the preposterous. It means that Darius and/or his counsellors came across an ancient iconographic relief that depicted nine prisoners and a triumphant king (Anubanini of Lullubum), and decided that that particular number of prisoners must be the general principle of the representation of ‘events and locations’ in Darius’s inscription. The presumed cognitive process is simply unintelligible.²⁹ Is this the only way to account for iconographic similarities, which in any case are exaggerated precisely for the purposes of the thesis?³⁰ One cannot suggest an ‘explanation’ without elucidating how it is supposed to work *as* an explanation. Windfuhr’s final and seemingly ultimate ground for the supposed numeral schematism is in fact a ghost doctrine. It is inscrutable insofar as it remains unspecified: ‘astrological or similar secret knowledge’ per se is not an historical explanation. If it is understood as an astrological ennead comprising 7 ‘planets’ known to the ancient world plus the two lunar nodes, such a schema is found only in India, called the *navagraha* ‘nine seizers’, from the 4th or 5th century of the common era. Sometime after

Darius's reign, the Babylonian astral lore went to India, where the seven planets of the classical scheme became nine by the addition of the two pseudo-planets (lunar nodes) *Rāhu* and *Ketu*.³¹ 'This Indian variety of planetary lore may thus be considered a late and indigenous development of the pan-Eurasian astral lore' (Mak, 2018, p. 234). It is significant that the subsequent reception of the Indian pseudo-planets in Iranian astral speculations (probably in the 6th century under Khosrow I³²) did *not* include the *navagraha* scheme. Rather, the lunar nodes were added as 'dark sun' and 'dark moon', which allowed for the harmonization of the ancient scheme of 'seven planets' with the (Pahlavi) Zoroastrian conception of the planets (*gēgān* 'bandits') as hostile agents or forces.³³ No such astrological scheme as Windfuhr conjures existed when Darius and his counsellors composed the Bīsotūn account, and no such scheme is known to have ever existed in Iran.

These considerations aside, one should also question the strategy of appealing to astrology to explain the (supposed) numerical schematism of 'events and locations'. Astrology may be incredible for the modern mind in its premises, but it is comprehensible in its claims if those premises are granted. The claim that the planets and their relative positions are able to influence human life or terrestrial events can be intelligibly queried and examined. The answer would include an explicit schedule of their character as divine beings, and the mechanism by which that influence is supposed to happen. We must also keep in mind that the planetary determination of fate was differently conceived in different cultural contexts.³⁴ In other words, astrology in its cultural variations is amenable to historical knowledge. In what way could the number of the planets be understood to determine the number of the kings from Darius's family, of the lying kings who were defeated, and of the rebellious lands (when Darius was in Babylon)? Presumably the postulated determination was cognitively mediated, that is to say, it operated through its (mental) representation as a schematizing principle of 'events and locations'. Darius and his counsellors thought that the number nine, because it was the number of the planets, had certain power that somehow made possible the replication of the celestial order on earth and made Darius the terrestrial counterpart of the supreme god of the heavens. Sets of nine items (kings and rebellious lands) make history match the heavenly order, understood as the number of the planets. Surely, the 'magical' power of nine is nullified in the case of fraudulent counting. Besides, while the number of the 'planets' remains nine, the number of the kings or the rebellious lands changes. Would the terrestrial situation then cease to replicate the celestial order? Darius goes on to add two more 'lying kings' to his list, one of whom even receives iconographic representation. It is inconceivable that Darius, as soon as he became king, did not think or at least hope that he would have one or more legitimate successors. Is it reasonable to think that Darius could think that he would make his kingdom correspond to the divine realm by way of the number nine; or that he could think that his audience would be persuaded to accept that his reign represented the divine order because he made the 'kings from his family'

nine in number? Aside from the fact that the putative intention is *historically stranded*, it can hardly be denied that it is unintelligible once its premises and implications are articulated. It is simply conjured up for the benefit of a spurious theory (the numerical schematism of historical events). The appeal to ‘astrological or similar secret knowledge’ does not elucidate the theory; it is a mystification, an attempt to make the theory inscrutable.

I conclude this discussion of Windfuhr by repeating that any historian who ascribes any kind of schematism (of historical phenomena) to the Bīsotūn account has to accept its direct corollary: the destruction of our only contemporary source for the events surrounding Darius’s seizure of power.³⁵ If what is absolutely paramount is that the rebellious peoples count to nine, then any number of those related in Bīsotūn account could be fabrications or any number could have been left unrelated. If the number of kings from Darius’s family must be nine, then what is the basis for the historian’s guessing which kings were included in the list Darius had in mind, which ones were fabrications, and which ‘real’ kings were left out? Nevertheless, this is precisely what Rollinger attempts. Other historians have taken his account of Darius’s genealogy as the point of reference for their own discussion of the topic.³⁶ Rollinger maintains that Darius’s ‘short genealogy’ at DB 1 (‘Vater, Großvater und einen Ahnen’) is his ‘genuine genealogy’, since like that of Cyrus in the Cyrus Cylinder it follows the ‘model’ (‘Schema’) of the Assyrian annals. Darius’s genealogy at DB 2 is extended by two bogus members, Ariaramnes and Teispes. The latter, adopted from Cyrus’s genealogy, owes its place to Darius’s attempt to connect himself to Cyrus’s house and thus legitimate his kingship.³⁷ The former is simply invented in order to make the total number of ‘Achaemenid kings’ equal nine, since this is ‘ein für die Behistun-Inschrift charakteristisches Ordnungsprinzip’.³⁸

Es ist offensichtlich, daß im vorliegenden Zusammenhang keine historischen Verhältnisse wiedergegeben wurden. Entscheidend war die aus einem Legitimationsbedürfnis entsprungene Anknüpfung an die großen Vorgänger Kambyzes und Kyros. Damit schimmern als „historische Realität“ hinter dem großköniglichen Konstrukt zwei verschiedene und von einander unabhängige „Adelshäuser“ durch, zwischen denen – zumindest über eine männliche Linie – keine verwandtschaftlichen Bande bestanden haben dürften. Diese bestanden aus dem nicht-achaimenidischen Geschlecht der „Teispiden“, die unter Kyros II zu bedeutender Macht gelangten und in kürzester Zeit ein Weltreich aufbauen konnten. (Rollinger, 1998, p. 186)

According to Rollinger, a ‘theological-ideological program’ of legitimation lies behind Darius’s inscription at Bīsotūn. Indeed, Darius commissioned the invention of a new writing system as an integral part of that program in order to serve the ‘declaration and authoritative interpretation of the newly emerged rule’ (Rollinger, 1998, p. 187).³⁹

I should like to emphasize that my concern here is not whether Darius's genealogy at DB 4 is genuine; my purpose is to show that Rollinger's account is fundamentally flawed as to both its premises and inferences. He starts his construction with what he calls the 'short genealogy', which consists in a formula that gives the names of the three forebears of the king: 'the father, the grandfather and an ancestor'. Thus for Darius, Rollinger comes up with Hystaspes, Arsames and Achaemenes, which he claims are found at DB 1. This 'short genealogy' must be the 'genuine genealogy', because it conforms to the 'dreigliedrigen Filiation' model of the Assyrian annals. Cyrus's genealogy at his Babylonian Cylinder 'corroborates' the reception of this 'Assyrian and Babylonian tradition' by the Persian royal chancellery.⁴⁰ Now, this supposed Babylonian or Assyrian dynastic formula is spurious.⁴¹ Obviously, the formula could not have been used by the Neo-Babylonian kings.⁴² As for the Neo-Assyrian, or really Sargonid, kings, we have the following record.⁴³ Sargon and Sennacherib do not use any dynastic formula – for different reasons.⁴⁴ Esarhaddon uses three patterns: the 'son of Sennacherib', 14 times (two of these are fragmentary so may belong to one of the following categories); the 'son of Sennacherib... (grand)son of Sargon', 27 times; the 'son of Sennacherib... grandson of Sargon... descendant of Bēl-bāni, son of Adasi', 10 times (one of these is fragmentary and thus not absolutely certain). As Tadmor explains, the last pattern incorporates a specific non-dynastic legitimization claim that ascribes the king's 'origin' to the city of Aššur.⁴⁵ Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II are the 'precious scion of Baltil' or 'the seed of Baltil, city of wisdom' (Tadmor, 1981, p. 27). It is expanded by Esarhaddon in a dynastic fashion, as it were: he traces his kingship to Baltil, the most ancient part of the city of Aššur, and its putatively first king (Bēl-bāni), the postulated ancestor of all the Assyrian kings. Thus, Esarhaddon is the 'son of Sennacherib... the son of Sargon... the royal descendant of the eternal line of Bēl-bāni, son of Adasi, founder of kingship of Assyria, whose place of ultimate origin is Baltil' (Zincirli Stele). Ashurbanipal uses three patterns: the 'son of Esarhaddon', 4 times; the 'son of Esarhaddon... grandson of Sennacherib', 24 times; and the 'son of Esarhaddon... grandson of Sennacherib... descendant of Sargon', 5 times. Sîn-šarru-iškun uses the two-forebear pattern once, the three-forebear pattern once, and the four-forebear pattern 8 times (two cases are undecidable because of lacunae, but they definitely belong to one of these patterns).⁴⁶

This record speaks for itself. If we limited our scope to Ashurbanipal alone we would have to conclude that the 'normal' formula is the pattern that names two immediate forebears. When Ashurbanipal gives three forebears, it seems that he wants to go back to the king he considers to be the first of his line. This impression is confirmed if we bring into consideration Sîn-šarru-iškun's apparently favoured four-forebear pattern, which likewise counts back to Sargon II. Esarhaddon's innovative pattern was not really followed by his successors (except once by Šamaš-šuma-ukīn). Looking at his record, we may be tempted to conclude that here, too, the two-forebear

pattern is the ‘normal’ one, but this might not be so straightforward, since very likely it includes the equivalent of three-forebear and four-forebear patterns in Ashurbanipal and Sîn-šarru-iškun respectively. The relatively high incidence of one-forebear pattern in Esarhaddon seems to confirm the suspicion: as the number of direct forebears increases, the relative incidence of shorter patterns decreases. Overall, if one were to call the most frequent pattern tout court ‘normal’, it would have to be the two-forebear pattern.⁴⁷ Rollinger’s pattern of ‘Vater, Großvater und einen Ahnen’, as was allegedly inherited from the Assyrian tradition, does not exist. There is Ashurbanipal’s three-forebear pattern that counts up to Sargon II (father, grandfather, great-grandfather); and there is Esarhaddon’s Baltil formula. This latter is obviously rooted in an indigenous tradition that could hardly have appealed to a Persian king or recommended to him by Babylonian or Assyrian scholars. These considerations should free our account of Cyrus’s and Darius’s genealogies from an artificial and distorting factor. Neither of these kings followed or could have followed a normative Mesopotamian dynastic formula, because such a thing did not exist. Unless I have overlooked something significant, Rollinger’s three-member schema is a chimera.⁴⁸

Both the ‘three-member model’ (Rollinger’s point of departure) and the ‘organizing principle’ of the Bīsotūn Inscription, namely the number nine, have proven to be untenable premises. Nevertheless, it is on these that he constructs his list of the eight kings whom he maintains Darius acknowledged as his ‘legitimate’ predecessors at DB 4. As he attributes the list to Darius, the reasons he gives for including (or excluding) any name must also be reasons for Darius, i.e., we can reasonably assume that Darius could espouse them. Let us look at the list Rollinger ascribes to Darius. Included are Hystaspes, Arsames, and Achaemenes from Darius’s ‘genuine genealogy’, and Cyrus II and his successor Cambyses II.⁴⁹ (These latter are explicitly recognized as kings in the Bīsotūn account.) Teispes from Cyrus’s genealogy owes his place on the list of the eight to Darius’s ‘Program’ of manufacturing ‘eine gedankliche Verknüpfung’ with Cyrus’s house and thus a legitimating (dynastic) ground for his own kingship.⁵⁰ However, this ‘Privileg’ was not extended by Darius to Cyrus’s two other predecessors, Cyrus I and Cambyses I, since they could play no role in the ‘strategy of legitimation’.⁵¹ This still leaves two spots vacant. In order to make himself the ninth king Rollinger’s Darius fabricates a great-grandfather (Ariaramnes) and gives the remaining position to Bardiya.⁵²

Dareios konnte allerdings historische Vorgänge nicht beliebig manipulieren, wie er auch Kyros II und Kambyses II nicht als Könige ausblenden konnte (und wollte). Das gleiche galt für einen unmittelbar vorangehenden König, dessen Legitimität nicht vollkommen zu bestreiten war. Da Dareios weder Kyros I noch Kambyses I zu seinen königlichen Vorfahren zählte, bleibt als Kandidat für die letzte noch offene Position eines legitimen königlichen Ahnen lediglich Bardiya. Damit konnte aber schwerlich

der in der Behistun-Inschrift unter dem Pseudonym des ermordeten Bardiya agierende Gaumata gemeint sein, sondern nur der echte Bruder des Kambyses II, so daß selbst Dareios nicht umhin kam, ihn wenigstens indirekt in die königliche Genealogie einzureihen, ein Umstand, der uns auch aus einer anderen Quelle angedeutet wird.⁵³ Trifft diese Beobachtung zu, ist damit ein weiteres Indiz dafür gewonnen, Dareios als den eigentlichen Usurpator zu erkennen, zumal im Ablauf der Erzählung der Behistun-Inschrift ein legitimes Königtum des Bardiya nicht vorkommt. (Rollinger, 1998, p. 188)

‘Propaganda’ cannot wholly dispose of historical facts. Just as Cyrus II and Cambyes II, being present in the living memory, could not be written off the historical record, neither could Bardiya simply be passed over in silence. Thus, Darius could not avoid including him as one of his ‘legitimate royal ancestors’ and had to make a place for him in his ‘royal genealogy’ – ‘at least indirectly’. Rollinger asks us to accept the following scenario. Darius kills Bardiya, the last legitimate king of the ‘Teispid’ line, and usurps the kingship on the pretext and with the cover that the person who calls himself Bardiya is in reality a magus impostor named Gaumāta. He then sets up an effective campaign to cover up the troubling facts with his story, which turns out to be wholly successful, since all the secondary sources generally reproduce his version. Nonetheless, Darius feels obliged to count among his ‘legitimate royal ancestors’ the very same person he has killed and replaced and denounced as an impostor. How should one resolve this conundrum? What is the meaning of Darius’s unavoidable ‘acknowledgement’ of the real identity of the person he kills (i.e., Bardiya) that nonetheless remains unstated? For whom does the (supposed) secret inclusion of Bardiya among the unnamed ‘legitimate’ kings count? The elusive interlocutor cannot be the addressee of the Bīsotūn Inscription – future kings, but also perhaps present satrapal authorities and powerful local elements⁵⁴ – since these are told that the person with that name is in fact an impostor and that the real Bardiya was killed some years ago by Cambyes. The only possible addressee of such a private acknowledgement would be Darius himself. Is Darius’s private recognition of Bardiya the work of a guilty conscience? What purpose does such a secret recognition of the incognito victim serve? Even if his contemporaries somehow grasped the meaning of the diabolically obfuscating recognition, and understood that Darius was acknowledging that the person he murdered was Cyrus’s son Bardiya – would this not be a case of shooting oneself in the foot? Not only would it not perform any legitimating function, but would in fact undermine Darius’s entire ‘theological-ideological program’ and risk exposing *him* as a fraudster and usurper.⁵⁵ Rollinger maintains that Darius is constrained to count Bardiya among his legitimate predecessors by the contemporary knowledge of the facts – the same supposed facts that Darius vociferously denies in his inscription. It is amusing that Rollinger’s Darius counterfeits an ancestor (Ariaramnes) and entangles himself in the chicanery of an (oxymoronic) unstated acknowledgement of the person he kills as a legitimate king, while

he could have easily given the two remaining spots to the trouble-free and real Cyrus I and Cambyses I – to make the kings count nine in number.

The number nine haunts Rollinger's thinking about the Bīsotūn Inscription. In an article about the ancient Near Eastern background of the Bīsotūn relief he compares it with the relief of Anubanini at Sar-i-Pol-i-Zohāb and the relief of Iddi(n)-Sîn, now at the Israel Museum.

The similarities with Bisitun are striking. This not only applies to the king depicted in a triumphal gesture standing on a subjugated enemy still alive and the inaugurating divine power opposite him, but also to the row of prisoners who, together with the opponent lying at Anubanini's feet, precisely total 9 which matches exactly the number of foes at Bisitun. It appears without any question that this cannot be explained by mere chance. (Rollinger, 2016, p. 14)

Beyond the iconographic bounds already discussed between this relief [i.e., Iddi(n)-Sîn's] and the relief of Darius at Bisitun there are some further similarities that have to be highlighted. They are revealed only by the inscription. Iddi(n)-Sîn fights against a coalition of enemies... Iddi(n)-Sîn appears to claim world rule and he stylizes the fight against his foes as a rebellion of the world legitimately rules by him. This world is not conceptualized as "four parts", according to the traditional Mesopotamian way, but as "nine *kulšīr*" (i 14'). Thus Iddi(n)-Sîn presents himself as "heroic among the king(s), mighty king, king of Simurru and king of the nine *kulšīr*". Of course it is especially the number 9 which deserves attention. The rebellion appears to be subdued by a series of battles but one is singled out in a very peculiar manner.⁵⁶ Iddi(n)-Sîn does not claim to have smashed his enemies within a single year, but he proudly proclaims having destroyed a coalition of his opponents "in a single night". (Rollinger, 2016, pp. 19-20)⁵⁷

According to Rollinger, the 'models for all this are, evidently, the inscriptions of Naram-Sîn' (Rollinger, 2016, p. 20). However, the reassuring definiteness of this reference is illusory. Rollinger admits that although 'in some details and in the way the figures are modelled' there are 'connections', the 'composition, topic and message of the Bisitun monument are considerably different from Naram-Sîn's stela' (Rollinger, 2016, p. 11). The issue is not whether Darius's relief adopted a number of motifs from the relief of Anubanini or others similar to it – the trampling gesture⁵⁸, the divine vindication⁵⁹, and the arraying of the captive enemies. The problem is what Rollinger wants to conclude from the comparison and how he draws the conclusion. What he concludes from it is the account known from his earlier publications.

[R]elief and monument at Bisitun testify to a very specific strategy in dealing with a peculiar historical situation that characterized the

beginning of Darius's reign. Darius had just usurped the throne of the Teispid empire after a dangerous and bloody set of civil wars and was in urgent need to legitimize his newly established rule. Even now the Persian king's claim for legitimacy and divine approval remains visible and readable to everyone who approaches and sees the relief at Bisitun or who engages in reading its fascinating inscriptions. However, the overall strategy of legitimization and its specific meaning, the visual used, its historical background and the ideological patterns employed, only become apparent by placing the monument within its Ancient Near Eastern context. (Rollinger, 2016, p. 36)⁶⁰

The final sentence in the cited passage ('...only become apparent...') should thus be taken with a grain of salt. The 'overall strategy of legitimization and its specific meaning' turn out to be what Rollinger believes he already knows.⁶¹ At most, he can claim that the Near Eastern 'models' of Darius's relief corroborate his account of the Bīsotūn. These are of course two very different claims. But how does the fact of the adoption of these specific 'models' show the 'strategy of legitimization and its specific meaning' that Rollinger ascribes to the Bīsotūn? Darius (or his advisers) could well have designed different visual motifs to express their meaning. However, they generally imitated the motifs of, e.g., Anubanini's relief, and in particular, they followed the latter in the number of the prisoners arrayed before the king. Rollinger's claim is that Darius did this because the meaning he wanted to convey was specifically comparable with the meaning of Anubanini and ultimately that of Naram-Sin. Ostensibly, two relief compositions are being compared in order to ascertain the similarity of the *specific* meanings behind them. I emphasize 'specific' because the meaning envisaged by Rollinger is not simply what the shared composition appears to represent: the king's victory over his enemies and the divine approval of his kingship. One may reasonably assert that the meaning behind the composition is that military victory bespeaks divine sanction. Although extant reliefs with this composition are few, the suggested meaning is commonplace in the ancient Near Eastern context. It is understandable that the kings who owe their kingship to military victory would highlight this traditional meaning. One needs not appeal to a specific precedent; or if it so appears it is because that 'model' has become a conventional representation of the conception that military victory and divine approval imply one another. In this perspective, the relief motif is not a strategy of legitimation but the expression and celebration of legitimacy – *always after* the rule has been successfully established.⁶²

The specific meaning Rollinger has in mind, on the other hand, starts from the premise that Darius was a usurper who was in 'urgent need to legitimize his newly established rule'. To this end, Darius had to pretend that he 1) was the legitimate king (royal genealogy and divine authorization), 2) who was re-establishing the proper order against deceitful pretenders.⁶³ The ostensibly historical report of the wars of Darius's 'first year' is in fact a re-

presentation of the story of the ‘great rebellion’ consisting of nine battles in which Naram-Sin triumphed and thereby reasserted his kingship.⁶⁴ This is the specific meaning that Rollinger is after: ‘models for all this are, evidently, the inscriptions of Naram-Sîn’. And what is the putative evidence for the rolling transposition of meaning from the original model (Naram-Sin) through the proximate models (Iddi(n)-Sin and Anubanini) to Darius? The number of rebellious kings against Darius is ‘precisely’ the number of Anubanini’s prisoners (‘without any question... this cannot be explained by mere chance’). This is also the number of the *kuššī* (‘it is especially the number 9 which deserves attention’), in which Iddi(n)-Sin claims kingship against a rebellion that he crushes in ‘a single night’, and which is exactly the number of rebellions against Naram-Sin, which he quells in ‘one year’: that number is nine. The number nine reveals Darius’s strategy of ‘staging’ the ‘great rebellion’ (nine battles in one year – see below) at the Bīsotūn, which aims to obfuscate the illegitimacy of his kingship. Again, this is the meaning of Rollinger’s comparison. Darius’s reliance on the number nine (the ‘Ordnungsprinzip’ of the Bīsotūn), unavoidable in view of the ‘specific meaning’ he wants to convey, betrays his intention to deceive. Perhaps he was constrained: it was explained to him that if he wanted to represent himself as a latter day Naram-Sin, he must make the number nine the ‘organizing principle’ of his account, not only of the number of the rebel kings from the first year of his rule, but also the number of the ‘kings from his family’ – and Darius accepted this. As I explained above, there is nothing special about the number nine in the Bīsotūn account – or, at least, its putative special status remains to be demonstrated.⁶⁵ Nor will the arcane historical rehearsal have served any purpose: Darius plainly says that the pretenders were rebels against his legitimate kingship.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the iconographic similarities between Naram-Sin’s Victory Stele on the one hand and Anubanini’s and Iddi(n)-Sin’s and Darius’s reliefs on the other are not significant enough to indicate explicit borrowing, let alone shared meaning.⁶⁷ Thus, here, too, the number nine has to bear on its own the burden of Rollinger’s claim. Rollinger’s demonstration of Darius’s ‘strategy of legitimization’ in the Bīsotūn relief via comparison (ultimately) with Naram-Sin’s Victory Stele is of course a *petitio principii*, since the ‘specific meaning’ he ascribes to the Bīsotūn monument underlies the comparison. Let it also be mentioned that according to the Bīsotūn account, Darius and his generals did not fight nine but nineteen battles in ‘one and the same year’, presumably something singular and worthy of celebration and remembrance.⁶⁸

The inscription of the Akkadian king Naram-Sin (23rd century BCE) is extant in a Nippur copy. It relates his quelling of several rebellions after he became king. According to this text, Naram-Sin fought and triumphed in ‘nine battles in one year’. This inscription apparently gave rise to a royal-ideological motif that historians have termed the ‘great rebellion’.⁶⁹ The military episode became a theme of the literary-ideological discourse of ‘charismatic kingship’, in which the king was cast as a warrior steward of the supreme god, the latter’s terrestrial counterpart. The Akkadian king thus

took over the role of the divine warrior Ningirsu (later called Ninurta), who relentlessly fought the forces of chaos on behalf of Enlil. The replacement found iconographic representation in the Stele of Sargon, in which the king is depicted with attributes that in the Stele of the Vultures still belonged to the god.⁷⁰ Pongratz-Leisten has argued that the combat myth and particularly the Ninurta myth structures all the cuneiform literature centered on the king, including of course the Assyrian royal inscriptions. The basic plotline comprises ‘the pacification of the world (= military account + hunting account) in order to demonstrate the king’s legitimacy and his merit, which permit him to restore or build the temples and to take care of the cult (= building account). Having acted successfully in both respects, the king is entitled to record his deeds in writing as a message to posterity and the gods (blessing and curse formulas)’ (Pongratz-Leisten, 2015, p. 291).⁷¹ The king had to earn the right to represent his military achievements in inscriptions by fulfilling the traditional expectations placed on the royal office. Perhaps this explains why the royal inscriptions (e.g., so-called annals) of the first year often were actually produced toward the end of the reign, and included (military) events from the later years of the reign. Accordingly, the conventional ‘first year (*palû*)’ events were not dated.⁷² In Tadmor’s view, the emphasis on the ‘first year’ in royal inscriptions as the frame for the Assyrian king’s demonstration of his fulfilment of the expectations of the royal office goes back to Tukulti-Ninurta I (13th century BCE). However, he argues, this timeframe was adopted from the literary tradition of Naram-Sin, which subsequently became a convention of royal inscriptions. ‘It would seem that the intention of the author of the Assyrian royal inscription, to lay emphasis on the heroic character of the kings, as manifested in his deeds, called for the concentration of the king’s military prowess within the literary convention of one single year’ (Tadmor, 1981, p. 17). In the Babylonian literary tradition, e.g., King List (A and B) or the Dynastic Chronicle, the term *palû* (*bala*) designated something like a dynasty such as that of Babylon or Isin (Beaulieu, 2017, pp. 12-13, p. 16). Tukulti-Ninurta I’s use of the term to designate his ‘first year’ (*palû mahrû*) shows its ideological investment. It is not a simple calendrical year but a period whose content must respond to the ‘heroic’ expectations of the royal office. Even if the use of the ‘first year’ frame (for the representation of the king’s achievements and hence his vindication) ultimately goes back to the inscription of Naram-Sin’s victory ‘in nine battles in one year’ (Tadmor, 1981, p. 16), it is clear that the latter is completely absorbed in the former, so much so that Naram-Sin’s ‘one year’, even if it might have had a factual basis, becomes, via its epic elaboration, Tukulti-Ninurta I’s ‘first *palû*’ with all its royal-ideological investment. Moreover, the heroic *topos* of the ‘first *palû*’, insofar as it pragmatically and thematically overlapped with the apparently routine royal boast of ‘being the first to have done’ something, was quite flexible both as to time frame and content. The military feat could be accomplished in time-spans of ‘one day’ or even ‘one third of a day’ (Tadmor, 1981, p. 18). The royal (heroic) feat could be the building or restoring of a temple, for instance, as we find in Esarhaddon’s Babylon Inscription or Ashurbanipal’s Harran Tablets (Tadmor, 1981, pp. 22-23).

The pragmatic and thematic overlap of the convention of the ‘first *palû*’ with the royal boast of having been the first to accomplish something (such as building royal gardens by Ashurnasirpal II or irrigation systems by Sennacherib), or being exceptionally accomplished in something (such as Sennacherib’s boasting about his metallurgical skills or Ashurbanipal about his scribal and scholarly abilities) should not be underestimated.⁷³ The categories in which the king has to demonstrate his accomplishments are naturally rooted in the (Assyrian or Babylonian) tradition, and so is the expectation of the excellence of the king in those categories.⁷⁴ However, the king’s boast is also a corollary of his position as such, and to this extent cannot be reduced to the specifically Assyrian conception of kingship, even if it evolved in this matrix. The evidence of the formality of the boast is available even from the Mesopotamian record. In his inscription at Ebabbar in Sippar, Nabonidus boasts: ‘I dug 18 cubits deep, and the foundation of Narām-Sîn, son of Sargon, that for 3200 years no [predecessor] king of mine had seen’ (Da Riva, 2008, p. 27). The boast of performing an unprecedented feat must have become a royal convention. Beyond this conventionalization threshold, king’s self-aggrandizing speech directly proceeds from his position as such, however it may be modulated in different cultures and endowed with specific meanings.⁷⁵ Perhaps we should put it like this: once the image of the king is elaborated, it absorbs its own history as a set of accumulated features that henceforth accrues to the position as such. The use of conventional representations or clichés does not necessarily indicate conscious citation of specific historical instances. The historian cannot rely on such usages to conclude activation of particular meanings without further ado.⁷⁶

Let me conclude this section. Historians are convinced that the account Darius gives of his seizure of power is a deceitful cover up. They find the story of Gaumāta’s pretending to be Bardiya in particular difficult to accept.⁷⁷ They thus read the Bīsotūn Inscription as an apology of a usurper with a serious legitimation deficit. Anything in Darius’s account that in their estimation constitutes a legitimacy claim is to be understood as legitimating propaganda and hence false. Darius’s genealogy falls within this purview, especially that it is suspiciously vague. With his genealogy, Darius *must* be making a dynastic claim (cf. Wiesehöfer, 1978, p. 212). This attribution of intention is explicit in Rollinger’s construction. Since the imputed intention (and hence deception) is not directly demonstrable, the historian makes the detour of showing the artificiality of Darius’s account and, in the event, his claim of being the ninth king from his family. If this is shown, the historian maintains, the dynastic claim (ascribed to Darius) falls through. The case requires that Darius arranged the eight kings who preceded him in a schema of linear succession, or rather, that he intended those kings to be so envisaged by his audience. The amalgamation of Darius’s implicit claim of family relation with Cyrus on the one hand and the intention ascribed to Darius of projecting a linear schema of his royal predecessors on the other creates formidable problems for the historian. It is unavoidable, however, because what is being debunked and denied is after all Darius’s (supposed)

pretention to dynastic legitimation.⁷⁸ The historian's fulcrum for showing the artificiality of Darius's genealogy is the number of the kings which coincidentally happens to be the number of the 'lying kings' that he defeats during the first year of his rule: nine. If it is shown that this number as such is significant on some ground or other and is thus the bearer of a meaning that could justify its assignment as a schematizing principle, the artificiality and hence falsity of Darius's account is demonstrated.

I argued that Rollinger's search for the number's significance *and* his attempt to demonstrate its relevance to Darius's account (as the 'organizing principle') end in failure. Darius never claims to have a dynastic right to kingship. His father, who is still alive, has never been a king. Darius is not king because his father was a king; he is king by the favour of A^huramazdā, as he says again and again. He says that kingship belongs to his family. However, clearly he cannot establish the legitimacy of his own kingship on that basis in the face of many other candidates, including his father and grandfather. An appeal to the principle of dynastic legitimation would undermine Darius's claim to kingship, while both his grandfather and father are alive. At the same time, a (patrilineal) family relation with Cyrus is not enough to give Darius a dynastic right to the throne. What would Darius stand to gain by fabricating a family relation with Cyrus?⁷⁹ These simple considerations show the misguided nature of historians' efforts in proving the mendacity of Darius's supposed pretention to dynastic legitimation.⁸⁰ Rollinger's Darius claims a dynastic right to the throne, but since he is also required to link himself to Cyrus, he becomes a mental contortionist.⁸¹ There is no reason to discount Darius's statement that he was the 'ninth king from his family'. Unless one can show why Darius should lie about this, it stands.

Darius's marriages

Another occasion for the historian's rejection of Darius's kinship with Cyrus is Darius's marriages with three women from the latter's family reported by Herodotus at *Histories* 3.88.

Darius's first marriages were made among the Persians: the two daughters of Cyrus, Atossa and Artystone, of whom Atossa had been married to Cambyses, her brother and then the magus; but Artystone was a virgin. He also married the daughter of Cyrus' son, Smerdis, called Parmys, and Otanes' daughter, who had unmasked the magus.

These marriages show, according to the historian, that Darius was attempting to make himself a member of Cyrus's house or incorporate the latter into his own (constructed) line.⁸² The lack of dynastic right to the throne was a cause of concern and indeed anxiety for the usurper king, which is why 'despite a constant harping on his family's right to rule, and thus his own, Darius is consistently vague about whence, precisely, this right derives' (Kuhrt, 2007, p. 137).⁸³ Historians have not hesitated to treat

the marriages reported by Herodotus as historical facts. One may suppose they are justified in this, since Atossa and Artystone are named in Persepolis documents in contexts that suggest they were royal persons.⁸⁴ Note that the Persepolis evidence underwrites the named women's royal status, but not necessarily their marriage to Darius. The admission of the report in Herodotus is in part conditioned on the acknowledgement of the customary nature of such a take-over of royal women. This custom justifies the historian's confidence in the report.⁸⁵ Herodotus (*Histories* 3.68) reports that the 'magus', too, married and co-habited with all the wives of Cambyses. The new king takes possession of the previous king's domain, which included his harem. One may reasonably think that when the succession is not normal – and obviously, such is the case with Darius's accession – the possession of the royal women becomes particularly important as the sign of continuity. At issue here is a general point about the circumstance of a troubled succession and what it may especially require, namely marriage with royal women, and *not* genealogical anxiety, which the historian ascribes to Darius.⁸⁶ Does the circumstance that Bardiya/Gaumāta marries Cambyses's wives expose *him* as an impostor (and thus in need of dynastic legitimation) in the historian's eye? The *same* custom is invoked by Briant to explain Darius's marriage to Phaidymie, Otanes' daughter. 'As for his marriage to the daughter of Otanes, it seems risky to see it as much of a concession to Otanes; this union is based on the custom whereby a new king took the wives of his predecessor(s)' (Briant, 2002, p. 132). Nonetheless, historians (Briant, Kuhrt, and others) maintain that Darius contracted these marriages *in order to* forge a link with Cyrus's house and *thereby* assert his dynastic legitimacy. 'Most important was his marriage of his predecessors' wives and female kin, which bound his line firmly to the family of Cyrus's' (Kuhrt, 2007, p. 138). If the appropriation of harem by the new king is admitted as customary, particularly in the case of a troubled succession, how does the historian know that Darius's purpose in his marriages was to connect himself with Cyrus's house and fabricate the needful genealogical credential? 'What the matrimonial policy of Darius actually reveals is concern for dynastic continuity – however false... It is clear that Darius systematically applied a policy that... allowed him to link himself fictitiously to the family line of Cyrus' (Briant, 2002, p. 132).⁸⁷

I stress that what is being questioned is not whether the circumstances of Darius's accession to the throne did not make the marriage with royal women important or even imperative (cf. Briant, 2002, p. 102). The historian's claim is not this. Rather, he argues that Darius married the royal women for the specific purpose of connecting himself with Cyrus's house, so that he can pretend that he is a member of the royal family. Since Darius claims he belongs to the same family as Cyrus, and since he is not specific about where he and his direct line fit in the royal genealogy⁸⁸, it must be that his claim is not based on (patrilineal) descent but acquired through some other way, which makes it inadmissible in explicit terms. This argument is a *petitio principii*. Darius's marriage with the three women from Cyrus's family does not reveal Darius's consciousness of his lack of patrilineal

relation with the latter, and hence his legitimacy problem. The historian starts from the imputed consciousness and interprets the marriages within that frame. Rollinger finds in Herodotus a reflection of Darius's (supposed) anxiety about his lack of genealogical qualification.

Daß Herodot sich der "Lücke" zwischen den Regierungen Kyros' II bzw. Kambyses' II und Dareios sehr wohl bewußt war, zeigt schon die Tatsache, daß allein diese durch *drei* Frauengestalten geschlossen wird. So sind die Ehefrauen des Dareios, Atossa und Artystone, Töchter Kyros' II, während Parmys als Tochter des Kyrossohnes Smerdis figuriert. Dürfte es auch einigermaßen wahrscheinlich sein, daß die von Kandaules bis Xerxes reichende durchgehende Herrscherlinie ihre Existenz weniger der historischen Realität als vielmehr der Gestaltungskraft Herodots verdankt, so können andererseits die ehelichen Verbindungen des Dareios mit den Töchtern Kyros'hauses durchaus historische Realität beanspruchen, auch wenn diese Ehebande durch keine Parallelquellen zu bestätigen sind. Gerade unter der Prämisse einer Usurpation des Dareios werden die Bestrebungen mehrfacher ehelicher Verbindung mit dem vorhergehenden großen Herrscherhaus plausibel. (Rollinger, 1998, pp. 192-93)

The reasons given by the historian for accepting Herodotus's account of Darius's marriages with the three women are astonishing. Herodotus's report is admitted because Darius had a dynastic legitimacy problem and the only way he could solve (or cover) this was to marry women from Cyrus's house; hence, the report must describe historical facts. It is not the veracity of the report that is at issue here but the reason given by the historian for accepting it as veridical.⁸⁹ It is not clear to me why Rollinger thinks that Herodotus was aware of the 'gap' between Darius and Cyrus or Cambyses⁹⁰. Rollinger's idea of the way this awareness manifested itself cannot be described in any other terms than bizarre: Herodotus understood the 'gap' to have been so wide that no less than *three* women from Cyrus's house could bridge it – the emphasis is not mine. One wonders, finally, whether the marriage with the three women is a historical fact reported by Herodotus, or reflects his consciousness of the wideness of the gap and what was required to bridge it – thus an inference.

Waters believes he has found the requisite link with Cyrus's house implied by Darius's vague claim in Cyrus's marriage to Cassandane, who according to Herodotus was the daughter of Pharnaspes from the Achaemenid clan. This makes Cambyses an Achaemenid by blood. 'The marriage of Cyrus and the Achaemenid Cassandane', Waters says, 'lends a measure of credence to Darius's genealogical claims in the Bisitun Inscription' (Waters, 2004, p. 97). Darius's (supposed) dynastic pretension prompts the historian to search for a link by marriage between him and Cyrus who is not an Achaemenid. 'Cassandane's kin-relationship with Darius, if there was one, is nowhere elucidated. Even if she was a distant cousin, however, her

descent from Achaemenes would have been good enough for Darius. It is upon this relationship that Darius staked his claim to kinship with Cambyses and, by extension, with Cyrus' (Waters, 2004, p. 97). Waters himself notes that Herodotus's genealogy of Otanes as Pharnaspes' son (*Histories* III.68) is contradicted by the Bīsotūn Inscription (DB 68) which names Thukhra as his father. If Herodotus could be confused about Otanes' genealogy, why could he not be about Cassandane's?⁹¹ Waters looks past this difficulty and accepts an Achaemenid lineage for Cassandane, admits Herodotus's report of her marriage to Cyrus, and confidently turns it into Darius's grounds ('good enough') for claiming kinship with Cyrus. The source-critical indulgence extended to Herodotus is apparently motivated by a hermeneutic charity toward Darius: it gives 'a measure of credence' to his genealogical claims. However charitable the interpretation may be, it is beside the point, since DB 3 *amāxam tau^hmā* 'our family' could only mean patrilineal family. Both Darius and his audience knew this.⁹² Either both Darius and Cyrus descended from the same Teispes; or Darius lied to *this* effect. His statement at DB 3-4 is not a shamefaced intimation that he was related to Cyrus through the latter's marriage to 'a distant cousin'.

Henkelman sits on the fence, so to say, regarding the issue. He maintains, rightly, in my mind, that Darius does not need to legitimate his kingship by fabricating a family relation with Cyrus. The actual possession of kingship (political stability on the back of military ascendancy) is sufficient.⁹³ Henkelman might have added: Darius also believed he enjoyed the approval and support of his god, signalled by his victories. This appears to be the celebratory message of the Bīsotūn Inscription. Where does this leave Darius's claim of being from the same family as Cyrus? 'Darius himself does not hesitate to claim', writes Henkelman, 'that he was of the same family as Cyrus the Great and his son Cambyses and the ninth in a succession of kings' (Henkelman, 2011, p. 578). In fact, however, they were not from the same patrilineal line – says Henkelman. Darius merely took advantage of the semantic capaciousness of the terms *xšāyaθiya*- 'king or ruler' and *tau^hmā*- 'extended family or ruling family' in his self-presentation.⁹⁴ Each of these terms accommodates a range of references. Darius was 'a member of the ruling elite of the Persians' – but not from the 'Teispid' royal family. 'My family' in his discourse means the 'ruling elite', which includes the royal family in the strict sense.⁹⁵ His forebears were *xšāyaθiya*- in the sense of belonging to the 'ruling elite'. Thus, Darius can meaningfully say he is the ninth from his family to be king. This compromise solution will not do, however. Barring the improbable coincidence that Darius and Cyrus each had a Teispes as a forebear, and, furthermore, that the two Teispes happened to be contemporaries⁹⁶, the presence of Teispes in the list of Darius's direct forebears at DB 2 can mean *either* that Darius and Cyrus belonged to two branches of the Achaemenid clan, *or* that Darius lied. Darius's claim must be settled by a determination regarding Teispes – not accommodated by means of an indulgent (and questionable) semantics of *xšāyaθiya*- and *tau^hmā*-. The latter solution is illusory. If, as Henkelman himself maintains, Darius does not need the

‘well-crafted lie’ of linking himself to Cyrus’s family, what is Teispes doing in the list of Darius’s direct forebears? How does Henkelman account for it? Is he prepared to admit two contemporary Teispes? What becomes of the thesis of a ‘Teispid family’?⁹⁷ In any case, the question of Darius’s motivation for taking advantage of the permissive semantics of the two terms in order to give the impression that he and Cyrus belong to the same patrilineal family remains unanswered.

The death of Cambyses

The Bīsotūn account gives no precise date for Cambyses’s death. A number of historians have interpreted this as a tell-tale sign that Darius’s narrative is a self-exonerating fabrication.⁹⁸ They have not explained *how* the vagueness of the date of Cambyses’s death reveals what they purport it does, namely that the person whom Darius kills is Bardiya, the son of Cyrus; or, in any case, how it could have served Darius’s purpose – ‘anxious to appear to be a legitimate king’ (Briant, 2002, p. 100). It could be that in their view the vagueness indicates that Cambyses died before Bardiya’s formal accession on July 1, 522, which makes the succession ‘normal’ (i.e., legitimate), and this somehow shows that it was Bardiya and not a magus impostor who became king on that day. Aside from the fact that the two consecutive inferences are *non-sequiturs*, the whole issue is a red herring. The question to be asked is whether lying about the timing of Cambyses’s death could have accomplished anything for Darius. If the person killed on September 29 was Bardiya, what would have been important is that Darius kills the person who is king of the Persian Empire, not only *de facto* but also by dynastic right. Whether Bardiya declared himself king before or after Cambyses’s death, or even that he had rebelled against Cambyses, would have made no difference to Darius’s case.⁹⁹ If the person killed on September 29 was not Bardiya but an impostor, as Darius claims, what is decisive is the fact that Gaumāta was a usurper (as of March 11); the relative dates of the formal accession of Gaumāta (July 1) and Cambyses’s death are irrelevant.¹⁰⁰ The significance of the ‘vagueness’ of the date of Cambyses’s death must be assessed *within* the perspective of Darius’s account, not because we assume that his account is true, but because the whole point is to see how the ‘vagueness’ could have contributed to *that* account, i.e., to its alleged legitimating function. Note that the relative dates at issue (for, e.g., Briant or Kuhrt) had no bearing on the perceived legitimacy of the king whom Darius killed – whoever he was. ‘Barziya’ was recognized as king in Babylonian documents already in April; it is unlikely that he was recognized in Babylonia as king without being perceived as the king of Persia. Evidently, people did not wait until July to recognize ‘Barziya’ as king (Zawadzki, 1994, pp. 138-139). Historians of the Persian Empire seem to have an anachronistic and somewhat fantastic conception of legitimacy. The effective ruler is the legitimate ruler. In DNa 4, Darius says he was chosen by A^huramazdā in order to put an end to the tumult that raged on earth (*imām būmim yaudatim*). The establishment of order, represented as the fulfilment of the divine will, is the ruler’s title to legitimacy. The

‘vagueness’ of the date of Cambyses’s death in the Bīsotūn account reveals nothing about the historical reality of Gaumāta, one way or another.¹⁰¹

Source criticism

Historians are present in their accounts not just as reflective observers but also as judges. No matter how hard they try, it is not possible to eliminate the latter aspect, and with it comes preconceptions and (invested) interests. Historians must take responsibility for the history they construct.¹⁰² They judge the credibility and probity of the sources they use, admitting some, qualifying some, rejecting others. It is important that these judgments are consistent and do not overreach what the sources reasonably allow.

Unfortunately, in this respect, too, many historians of the Achaemenid Empire do not stand up to the test in their handling of the sources related to Darius’s seizure of power. In a note on method, Briant says: ‘Once the propagandistic distortions of the new king have been carefully bracketed, his version is far more useful than Herodotus’s’ (Briant, 2002, p. 114). The problem is that the criterion used for the ‘bracketing’ is the historian’s own version of the events. Thus, his decision as to what to admit and what to reject of the sources is determined by the plotline he has framed – on grounds that are questionable. What, then, checks the historian’s account? On what grounds, for instance, Herodotus’s story at *Histories* 3.65 about Cambyses’s deathbed exhortation to the Persians (‘chiefly those Achaemenids that are here, not to suffer the sovereignty to fall again into Median hands’) is acknowledged by Briant and thus incorporated into *his* account?

[A]fter the death of Cambyses, Darius already held a well-established position that allowed him to take command of certain contingents that he would later call “the Persian and Median army that was with me” (DB §25). This hypothesis implies that Darius had planned his violent coup well in advance, at least from the time of the death of Cambyses several months earlier. Perhaps he was among the Achaemenids at Cambyses’ deathbed who heard the suffering king exhort them to do battle with the usurper (III.65).

Briant’s history requires that Darius plans his ‘violent coup well in advance’, and the story told by Herodotus serves the purpose of providing the occasion. It is admitted because it is usable within the narrative. What about the implications of acknowledging the episode? Herodotus’s dying Cambyses exhorts the Achaemenids in particular to take the kingship back *from the Medes*. This feature of the related episode is left out by Briant, but it is centrally important to Herodotus’s account. What may well be the contribution of Herodotus’s imagination (i.e., the deathbed exhortation) becomes part of Briant’s history, albeit in a significantly modified version, since that history rules out the fall of kingship into the Medes’ hands.¹⁰³ On the other hand, Briant’s account could use Cambyses’s exhortation to the Achaemenids, so he allows it. Further, the question remains what makes for

the special status of the Achaemenids in Cambyses's estimation. It creates problems not only for Briant's view of the 'reality of what it meant to be "Achaemenid"' ¹⁰⁴, but also for his view that Cambyses was not an Achaemenid. In any case, it is clear, I think, that the only source-critical criterion for admitting one feature of Herodotus's story and not the other is Briant's own 'hypothesis'.

According to the classical sources, the person Darius kills is an impostor and not the real Bardiya. ¹⁰⁵ Whether this consensus is not the result of Darius's 'propaganda' is not at issue here – I repeat that the inference from the consensus to the supposed program of Darius's chancellery is a fallacy of affirming the consequent. Pompeius Trogus (in Justin 1.9.9-14) dates the killing of Bardiya after Cambyses's death – by a magus called Cometes at the behest of Cambyses.

When the magus heard the news [of Cambyses' death], he hastened to carry out his task before the announcement of the king's death spread. He killed Mergis, who was next in line to the throne, and substituted his brother, Oropastes, who in face and figure bore a strong resemblance to Mergis. As no one suspected a trick, Oropates became king in place of Mergis. The secret was even safer because among the Persians, the person of the king was hidden in order to impress his majesty. Then, in order to curry favour with the people, the magi lifted military and tribute obligations for three years, in order to consolidate, through indulgence and largesse, a kingship obtained by fraud. ¹⁰⁶

Cometes's action appears strange in this account. He knowingly kills the person who is by right the new king. The only thing that makes it understandable is what Trogus goes on to relate, namely that Cometes wants the throne for himself. Being able to substitute his own brother for the dead king's brother 'who was next in line to the throne' virtually guarantees the success of his plan. Trogus then recalls the (supposed) Achaemenid court protocol concerning access to the Persian king (presumably) to make sense of the fact that the intrigue goes unnoticed. This story agrees in essential points with the other classical sources. Apparently Trogus found the report of the substitution reliable, which he could have read in Herodotus or other sources, and sought to explain its success by appealing to court protocol and tax and tribute concessions. The substitution theme is also found in Ctesias, but the details of the story are different. In his version, Bardiya (or Tanyoxarkes) is killed five years before Cambyses's death. ¹⁰⁷ Both Trogus's explanation and Ctesias's dramatization of the substitution of a magus perhaps indicate that they tried to make intelligible a tradition they found difficult to accept. Given that all the sources share the substitution theme, the historian must take it seriously rather than dismiss it. However, this is what historians have generally done.

In my view, the first question the historian must pose is whether a magus could be in a position to carry out the alleged action.¹⁰⁸ The Babylonian version of the Bīsotūn Inscription glosses the supposed impostor as ‘a magus from the land of the Medes’ (DB Bab. 11). Herodotus refers to him as a Mede in a related speech (*Hist.* 3.73). In the *Laws* (3.695b) and the Seventh Letter (7.332b), Plato describes him as a Median eunuch. We know that eunuchs could attain high positions in the Achaemenid court. This can perhaps explain why Plato makes the usurper a eunuch. In other words, Plato thought that he was a high-ranking court administrator. The term ‘magus’ is notoriously ambiguous in Herodotus, who describes the Magi as one of the Median tribes at *Histories* 1.101. Therefore, his description of the usurper magus as a Mede may well be his own gloss. In the Old Persian version of the Bīsotūn Inscription Darius does not say that Gaumāta was a Mede but insistently describes him as a magus. Even if the impostor of Darius’s account was a Mede, this was clearly incidental to what was decisive in Darius’s view.¹⁰⁹ Yet, as far as I know, there has been no methodical attempt by modern historians to ask the question raised above; a question that is both natural and fundamental for their interpretation.¹¹⁰ Boyce maintains that the term designated ‘a member of the hereditary priesthood, without ethnic implications’. A magus did not necessarily pursue a religious career, or even if he did, he could simultaneously rise in the imperial administration, civil and military, to high offices, as Tansar and Kirdēr did in the Sasanian Empire.¹¹¹ According to Bickerman, Darius’s description of pseudo-Smerdis as a magus is a malicious slur taking advantage of the magi’s fearful reputation for sorcery. Darius activates the fairy tale of a diabolical figure, ‘popular from China to Iceland’¹¹², who could assume different shapes, and in particular the appearance of a king, like Asmodeus who ruled instead of Solomon.

It was the similarity between the Gaumata story and the fairy tales that insured its general acceptance. People will believe anything they are told, provided the tale agrees with their mental outlook. The tale of Gaumata fulfilled this condition perfectly. In spite of its clumsiness it corresponded to an instinctive wish of man expressed in a widely diffused group of folk tales: by impersonating another a resourceful man can get anything he wants... the condition of man in this sublunary world is such that the land of illusions is the only one worth living in. Self-estrangement is the antidote to man’s misery and weakness. So he enjoys tales about Asmodeus, Gaumata, and other successful doubles... Now we understand why the man who successfully impersonated Bardiya was “Gaumata who was a magus”. Only a wizard could be the perfect double of Cambyses’ brother, and the Median magi were the acknowledged wizards in Darius’ Persia.¹¹³

Bickerman’s appeal to the ‘condition of man’ to account for the attestation of the magus (Gaumāta) in the sources shows his certainty about its fairy-tale nature. Here, philosophical anthropology replaces Rollinger’s

‘theologico-ideological program’ in explaining the ‘official Persian tradition’ of a magus impersonating Bardiya. Of course, Bickerman’s critical reflection must be assumed *in situ* to bear not simply on the mental frailty of man in general but on Herodotus’s judgment in particular, who is none the less followed for the most part by all modern historians of the Persian Empire.¹¹⁴ I mentioned this fact at the beginning and have had occasions to demonstrate it in a number of cases that were pertinent to our discussion: one must provide good reasons to impugn convergent ancient testimonies.¹¹⁵ Aside from this problem, the *relevance* of the fairy tale ‘double’ for explaining the Gaumāta episode pivotally depends on the image of the magi as ‘dreaded sorcerers’ among contemporary Persians (Bickerman and Tadmor, 1978, p. 256).¹¹⁶ This image is a later Greek product. The term ‘magus’ does not appear to have had such a meaning in the 6th century BCE Persia.¹¹⁷ Apparently, the magi could have important administrative positions at the Achaemenid court. If so, one is forced to consider the possibility that Darius’s Gaumāta is not a fairy-tale figure but a historical reality – and critically examine the issue *from this perspective*. Almost four decades ago, Bivar pointed to the office of the ‘master of the court’ and connected it to Herodotus’s Patizeithēs, the magus who placed his brother Smerdis on the Persian throne (*Histories* 3.61). Before leaving for Egypt, Cambyses appointed Patizeithēs as the *epítropos tōn oikion* ‘steward of the household’ (*Histories* 3.63). The historical reality of the office in question seems secure – referred to in the bilingual Stele of Serapeitis as *rb trbš* ‘master of the house’. The Greek equivalent term *epítropos* ‘steward’ used by Herodotus to describe Patizeithēs appears with the same meaning and reference (Parthian and Middle Persian *framadār*) in Shāpūr’s inscription at Ka’ba-ye Zardošt.¹¹⁸ The *epítropos* would have presumably been able to control the commerce with the royal court.

One significant way in which the accounts of Herodotus and Trogus differ from that of Darius is that in the former, two persons are responsible for the palace revolt against Cambyses. How should one resolve this discrepancy? Shayegan has suggested an ingenious solution whose merit, among others, is that it takes seriously and tries to account for the actual data, including the figure of Gaumāta.¹¹⁹ In brief, Shayegan’s theory is that there were in fact two persons behind the revolt: the magus Gaumāta and Cyrus’s younger son Bardiya. In Darius’s account, the name of the latter is suppressed, while in those of Herodotus and Trogus, the duality of the actors is preserved owing to the distinct ‘functions’ in which the two magi are cast, namely as the ‘kingmaker’ and the ‘puppet king’. On the other hand, the names given in each of the two sources contains the identity of only one of the historical pair, since the attested names in each account duplicate the names of Bardiya and Gaumāta with their titles, respectively, ‘viceroy’ and ‘supported by Ahura’. We thus find the pair in Herodotus under the names Smerdis and Patizeithēs (from postulated OP **pati-xšāyaθiya-* ‘viceroy’) and in Trogus under Cometes and Oropastes (from postulated OP **ahura-upasta-* ‘supported by Ahura’).¹²⁰ The mechanism that allows Darius to converge the two historical personalities is the ritual of ‘substitute king’ in

which a substitute formally takes the place of the king in order to draw to himself a mortal threat revealed by an omen. Once it is deemed that the danger is passed, the substitute king is killed (Shayegan, 2012, pp. 34-41). Shayegan accepts the historical reality of Gaumāta contrary to other historians who maintain that this figure was simply Darius's fabrication. Thus, Shayegan does not need to explain why the bogus figure was made to be a magus, which adds another risky layer to the account. Note that he implicitly accepts that a magus could be so highly placed in the Achaemenid court as to be cast as a 'kingmaker'.

Clever as Shayegan's theory is, it is in my view problematic. Let us start with 'Darius's literary subterfuge, which was intended to mask the reality of his own coup d'état against Bardiya and Gaumāta' (Shayegan, 2012, p. 41). The pertinence of the ritual of 'substitute king' to the Bisotūn story of the impersonation of Bardiya by Gaumāta is not demonstrated by Shayegan, in part because the *modus operandi* of the ritual form is unclear in his account. Apparently, the 'substitute king' ritual does not simply facilitate the reception of Darius's construction by providing a traditional matrix for it. Instead, the ritual is meant by Shayegan to account for the form in which Darius produces his deception. In other words, Shayegan claims that Darius constructed the story of impersonation of the king by a magus on the model of the 'substitute king' ritual. However, why does one need to postulate such a complex process? Are the other 'lying kings' (for example, Vahyazdāta) who impersonated royal personae to be explained likewise? Bickerman and Zawadski (and perhaps others) maintain that Darius took the idea of royal impersonation from the subsequent rebellions and retrospectively cast Bardiya in the same mould.¹²¹ This appears to be a simpler explanation and hence the one to be preferred – if one is convinced that it was indeed Bardiya who was removed – especially since the relevance of the ritual is not at all clear. In the ritual, the substitute protects the king against an omen, the king lives and the substitute is killed once the supposed danger is passed; in Darius's 'literary subterfuge', the king Cambyses kills his brother as the result of an omen and replaces him with a 'friendly substitute', who after Cambyses's death becomes king. The structures are clearly different. The only feature they share is that the respective processes are set in motion by an omen. Nevertheless, even this supposed parallelism is questionable, since its role in Darius's account is simply 'presumed' (Shayegan, 2012, p. 41).

As I mentioned, Shayegan combines the accounts of Herodotus and Trogus, both of which 'must have kept the memory of two "usurpers"', in order to identify *two* actors behind the court uprising of March 522 BCE, namely Bardiya and Gaumāta. Although each pair of names contained in the two sources designates only one of the historical pair, the distinct functions of the two magi in each testimony, namely, 'kingmaker' and 'puppet king', have preserved the 'memory of two "usurpers"' by 'prevent[ing] the reduction of two *personae* into one' (Shayegan, 2012, pp. 32-33).¹²² It is not clear from Shayegan's account whether the two 'functions' are only literary

or describe the real relation between Gaumāta and Bardiya. This question makes a difference in the relation we are to envisage between the postulated historical reality and the two classical testimonies. If the two functions are only literary, the testimonies can also go back to a version of Darius's account, rather than indicate the 'historicity' of Bardiya and Gaumāta. Each of the testimonies has preserved one aspect of Darius's Gaumāta/Bardiya and has duplicated it in accordance with the literary *topos* Shayegan invokes. In this case, what justifies postulating the 'historicity' of two personalities? On the other hand, if the 'kingmaker' and the 'puppet king' in fact reflect an underlying historical relation between Gaumāta and Bardiya, it is difficult to explain why Herodotus and Trogus have each dropped one of the historical persons and then duplicated the other by hypostatizing his title. In my view, these are serious objections to Shayegan's reconstruction. There are also linguistic problems with his understanding of the two 'titles'. The name Oropastes, which is generally accepted to be the Greek reflex of OP **ahura-upasta-* 'supported by Ahura', can hardly designate a 'religious title', despite Shayegan's view. It is a straightforward theophoric name. For Herodotus's Patizeithēs Shayegan relies on Kellens's analysis of *xšāyaθiya-* for establishing an underlying OP term **pati-xšāyaθiya-*, which, again following Kellens's interpretation of the semantics of OP *xšāyaθiya-*¹²³, Shayegan translates as 'viceroy'. He then argues that this term could only refer to a 'regent' who was 'of royal blood' and thus 'a legitimate heir', i.e., in case the king dies during a campaign. Werba has shown the problems with Kellens's analysis of the OP word.¹²⁴ The pertinence of Werba's problematization of Kellens's analysis is that it makes inadmissible the semantic convergence of the alleged **pati-xšāyaθiya-* with the attested OP verb *pati-xšaya-* 'rule over' (a land or a group).¹²⁵ One cannot rely on the meaning of the latter to interpret the former to mean 'viceroy' as Shayegan does.¹²⁶ The underlying OP term **pāti-xšāyaθa-* suggested by Werba means something like 'protector of rulership'. The person in that office protects the king's rulership. It is possible to understand the function suggested by Werba's etymology of Patizeithēs in the light of historical data concerning the *epitropos* 'steward' of the household (mentioned above). Relying on Herodotus's description of Patizeithēs's role as 'in charge of the household' (*Histories* 3.61) or the 'steward of the household' (*Histories* 3.63; 65), West (2007, p. 411) suggests that it is in fact an office title which Herodotus mistook for a proper name, thus doubling the single magus (Darius's Gaumāta) into a pair of magi.¹²⁷ This of course does not explain why Herodotus makes the pair brothers.

Conclusion

I would like to draw the reader's attention once more to the following question. Do the explanations the historians give of the impostor magus of the ancient sources stand up to critical scrutiny? In particular, in what possible ways could one explain the fact that the accounts of Darius and Herodotus agree that the person Darius dispossessed was not Bardiya? Since historians *ab initio* deny the historical reality of the impersonation and thus

preclude the reference to it as the explanation of the agreement, they are obliged to come up with alternative grounds. Whether or not they explicitly address this source-critical issue, the tenability of their accounts of Darius's accession to the throne depends on it. I should like to emphasize this point. Above, I considered three different explanations for the agreement of Herodotus with the Bīsotūn account: Rollinger's 'Program', Bickerman's fairy-tale figure of the (evil) double, and Shayegan's appeal to folkloric and ritual figures. It is not difficult to show that historians who have not explicitly addressed the issue must maintain a version of Rollinger's explanation, since they all accept his interpretative frame, namely that the Bīsotūn account is propaganda meant to cover over the legitimacy problem of a usurper. This is why I dealt with Rollinger at some length. I explained why his account is questionable. Recall that according to this account the central objective of Darius's propaganda is to link himself to Cyrus's line, that is to say, Darius is supposed to claim a dynastic legitimacy. The explanations of Darius's genealogy, his marriages, and the significance of the number nine as a schematizing principle that we find in contemporary histories of the Achaemenid empire aim to prove 1) that Darius lacked dynastic legitimacy, 2) that this constituted an unavoidable and pressing problem for him, and 3) that he successfully addressed it by his programmatic propaganda. I pointed out that Darius claims no dynastic right to the throne. He acknowledges that both his father and grandfather were alive when he became king (by the favor of A^huramazdā). An appeal to that right would in fact have undermined the legitimacy of his kingship. Military ascendancy secured his rule, in which he saw and invited others to see his divine election, and hence his legitimacy. Herodotus (*Histories* 3.84-87) relates the curious story of the equestrian lottery for the kingship among the six of the seven Persian noblemen who kill pseudo-Smerdis.¹²⁸ Is this a genuine event? Perhaps it is, or something like it. What is important for our purposes is that historians of the Achaemenid Empire accept it, and appeal to it in their proof that Darius did not belong to the royal house and thus was dynastically illegitimate. The appeal is of course unnecessary. Their acceptance of the episode, however, raises an important source-critical question. It shows that Herodotus *knew* that Darius did *not* have a dynastic right to the throne.

Did the 'official Persian tradition' of Darius's seizure of kingship that historians see behind Herodotus's account include the lottery episode?¹²⁹ The response can only be in the negative, since it contradicts the very purpose of positing such an official tradition. For indeed, how could an 'official tradition' that should enshrine Darius's dynastic right to the throne have him win the kingship in a lottery? The least we are obliged to admit is that Herodotus must have had access to alternative sources about Darius's seizure of power: the one that conveyed Darius's legitimating 'propaganda' and others that included the lottery story or the story of Intaphernes (Vindafarna).¹³⁰ The existence of these sources casts serious doubt on the supposed absolute efficacy of the 'official Persian tradition', since after all it

fails to eliminate alternative accounts in which, significantly, Darius had no self-evident, let alone dynastic, right to the throne. Equally important is what it implies concerning the nature of Herodotus's relation to the Bīsotūn account. Despite historians' assumption, Herodotus could not have simply (i.e., mindlessly) 'followed' Darius. Minimally, Herodotus had to choose between the 'official' account postulated by historians, in which Darius is king by dynastic right ('in succession') and, say, the account in which Darius had to vie with others in a (rigged) lottery for the kingship. Is it reasonable to assume that Herodotus, having accepted that Darius did not accede to the throne by dynastic right, *also* accepted lock, stock, and barrel the 'programmatically' account whose sole 'objective' was the legitimization of Darius's dynastic right and which featured the story of royal impersonation by a magus *for this purpose*?¹³¹ Is it not reasonable to expect that having been alerted to the ideological nature of the 'official Persian tradition' – thanks to alternative accounts of Darius's status – Herodotus would have been all the more reluctant to accept an episode (the impersonation of Cyrus's son by a magus) that is additionally extraordinary in itself? The modern historian has in effect answered this question by the credence he has given to Herodotus's report of the events and institutions of the Achaemenid Empire.¹³²

In conclusion, I would briefly recall the positive results of our critical examination. First, we saw that there is no reason to dismiss Darius's claim that he is the 'ninth king from his family'. Of course, one must allow that the actual reference of the Old Persian word *xšāyaθiya-* 'king' changed following Cyrus's creation of the Persian empire. Who were these nine kings? From the Bīsotūn account, we can name three with certainty, since these are designated as king: Cyrus, Cambyses and Darius. Students of the Achaemenid history generally go further and name the other six on the basis of Cyrus's and Darius's genealogical lists (respectively, in the Cyrus Cylinder and the Bīsotūn Inscription). These two lists can be plausibly combined *only* in the form of two royal lines issuing from Teispes and lasting until Cyrus's conquest. I emphasize that the 'two branches' scheme is based on *our assumption* that we must be able to name the nine kings using the two lists. Second, the question of the historical reality of the magus Gaumāta is yet to be settled. Historians have generally dismissed the Bīsotūn account as a deception, ostensibly because of the incredibility of the length of time that the supposed impostor managed to keep his real identity secret. Their judgment, however, has not observed the due process of historical investigation. One must first know the relevant aspects of the Achaemenid court structure and in particular the status and functions of the magi in the court. Incredulosity is not an adequate ground for discounting the testimony of the sources, especially if it avails itself of biased depictions of the circumstances in question.¹³³ The failure to investigate the issue properly is in part due to the premise shared by many historians that Darius was *obliged to fabricate* a dynastic legitimacy for himself, and so he did. They interpret the Bīsotūn account in this perspective as a propagandistic artifice of self-legitimation. I argued that this perspective is blinkered by an

unrealistic conception of legitimacy. In effect, one cannot identify the *target* of the putative ‘propaganda’. Darius’s claim to legitimacy is rather to be sought in his pretension to divine election demonstrated by his military victories, which is a commonplace of the ancient Near East. Finally, according to historians, classical authors fell victim to Darius’s subterfuge and generally followed his deceitful picture of his seizure of power. Their premise, however, that Herodotus and others had access to only one tradition (i.e., the ‘official Persian tradition’) cannot be maintained. As far as I know, only Shayegan has genuinely tried to *explain* the actual testimonies we find in the secondary sources. I do not think his explanation by way of the literary form of ‘kingmaker and puppet king’ really works. Nonetheless, his direction is right: the preconception that these testimonies were moulded at a distance, as it were, by Darius and thus unworthy of genuine examination must be abandoned.

Notes

¹ In Frye, 1984, pp. 99-102, Richard Frye briefly presents some of the arguments for and against the veracity of Darius’s account, and seems to lean toward the latter; but in Frye, 2003, he adopts the prevalent view: ‘A simple explanation of the anomalies mentioned above would have Darius an usurper, who needed the legitimacy of belonging to the family of Cyrus, beloved by the Persians... Darius spread his version of events leading to his accession far and wide, and, having attached his family to that of Cyrus, proclaimed the importance of Achaemenes, either solely his ancestor, or a fabrication’ (Frye, 2003, pp. 112-113). Wiesehöfer (1978; 2001, pp. 13-21) accepts the historical reality of Gaumāta. It is surprising that the scholars who take the opposite view virtually ignore Wiesehöfer’s (1978) account that in important respects bears on their dismissal of the veracity of Darius’s Gaumāta episode. For a brief discussion of the issues concerning the Gaumāta episode, see Tuplin, 2005, pp. 231-232. Wiesehöfer (1978, p. 201ff; 2006) rejects Darius’s claim of (patrilineal) family relation with Cyrus. For a defence of Darius’s account of his genealogy, see Vallat, 1997; 2011; esp. Jacobs, 2011.

² Stephanie West has made a similar observation on at least two occasions. Cf. West and West, 1991, p. 177, note 10: ‘Most scholars who have written on this subject in the last thirty years have followed the view of Olmstead (and before him Beloch) that the pseudo-Smerdis was a fabrication, devised and disseminated to justify Darius’s usurpation. This rejection of comparatively solid ancient testimony may be thought high-handed’. See also Bivar, 1997, p. 348.

³ Cf. Lincoln, 2007, pp. 3-4. Pointing out the importance of the ‘dynastic principle’ and ‘royal genealogy’, Lincoln writes: ‘We have seen, for instance, how Darius invented the Achaemenian line as an instrument through which he attached himself to Cyrus’s family’ (Lincoln, 2007, p. 33). If ‘having seen’ implies demonstration by argument, no such thing has even been attempted. Lincoln simply makes the same claim in Lincoln, 2007, pp. 3-4, where he qualifies it as an ‘impression’. The impression becomes the truth by dint of stating it. A particularly complacent treatment is Llewellyn-Jones, 2017, pp. 69-70.

⁴ There is nothing unparalleled in the components of Darius's account: royal fratricide, court coup d'état, or royal impersonation. As far as I can see, the only problem with the Gaumāta episode, which requires careful consideration, is the length of time (four years or so) during which the impostor carries the identity of Bardiya, Cyrus's son. It is indeed implausible that the substitution could have remained a secret for so long *in the way* conveyed, say, by Ctesias. We should like to know *in concrete terms* what is meant by the substitution remaining a secret. Gershevitch's (1979) uncritical acceptance of Ctesias's account is problematic. Schiena's attempt (2008) to defend Gershevitch's reconstruction of the events is in my view unconvincing. Bickerman and Tadmor (1978, p. 246) reject the claim as incredible. But a simple assertion of incredulousness does not suffice. Such a standpoint would be tantamount to the abortion of historical scholarship. See West, 2007, p. 407: 'A heavy burden of proof must lie with those who question the testimony of the two principal witnesses [i.e., Bīsotūn Inscription and Herodotus], particularly since the currently favoured reconstruction of events highly increases the risk run by Darius and his associates'.

⁵ Cf. Grabbe, 2004, p. 268: 'The agreement between Herodotus with the Behistun inscription is not independent confirmation, however, but *only shows* that his sources gave the "official" version' (my italics). The inference is logically invalid. It commits the fallacy of affirming the consequent.

⁶ 'When, with good reason, the modern historian casts doubt on the reality of the execution of Bardiya, the entire structure collapses like a house of cards... we must now entertain the hypothesis, these days generally accepted, of a deception devised by Darius himself' (Briant, 2002, p. 101). Cf. Olmstead, 1948, pp. 107-110; Dandamaev, 1976, pp. 108-127, pp. 140-144; Boyce, 1982, pp. 78-82; Briant, 2002, pp. 97-138. The phrase 'not a historical work' is Bickerman's. See Bickerman and Tadmor, 1978, p. 239. Cf. Zawadzki, 1994, p. 130: 'In my opinion, almost all accounts concerning Gaumata were invented by Darius in order to refute the odious burden of killing his own cousin'. The presumed social psychology is highly improbable. For a discussion of the relevant issues and their treatment in the 20th century scholarship, see Dandamaev, 1989, pp. 83-94. The problem that seems to be decisive for Dandamaev in his rejection of Darius's account is the length of time (at least 4 years; in Ctesias, 5 years) during which the alleged murder of Bardiya on Cambyses's order must have been 'kept secret'. See Dandamaev, 1989, pp. 88-90. As I mentioned, one must first investigate what concrete circumstance 'keeping secret' designates. Ctesias accounts for the success in keeping the murder secret by the uncanny resemblance of the magus (Spendadates) with the crown prince (Tanyoxarkes). The resemblance motif appears to be a rationalization or an attempt at explanation on the part of ancient historians. Cf. Pirart, 2002, pp. 145-146.

⁷ And very often also in detail, however extraordinary the detail appears. One example is the story about Darius's winning the kingship by lottery. See Bickerman and Tadmor 1978, p. 243; Kuhrt, 2007, p. 159 note 5.

⁸ See Rollinger, 1998, pp. 195-196. Cf. Shayegan, 2012, pp. 89-96 on the relation between Darius's version of his seizure of power and those in various ancient sources. 'Although the impact of oral literature on the redaction of the Bisotun itself remains elusive, the effects thereof on the oral tradition of the Bisotun narrative, which is referred to as the *haⁿdugā*- in the inscription, are the more apparent. It is this oral (re-)composition of the Bisotun story for the consumption of an Iranian *audience* that was captured by Greek historiography' (Shayegan, 2012, p. 93). As I will argue, Shayegan's demonstration of the 'impact of oral literature' via folkloric and ritual figures recoverable from classical accounts is doubtful. The implications of Vogelsang's observation about the timing of Vahyazdāta's revolt under

the name of Bardiya must be taken into account in the consideration of the issue. Vogelsang argues that the perception ('a strong rumor') that Bardiya was an impostor was already formed and spread during his reign independently of Darius's intervention. See Vogelsang, 1998, pp. 202-206. Similarly Tuplin, 2005, p. 232. This problematizes Darius's authorship of the impersonation theme.

⁹ See Tichy 1983, 230-231; Ahmadi 2014, 44-47.

¹⁰ The Babylonian phrase in transcription reads: '9 šarrāni ša zēru dārū anīni'. Rollinger (1998, p. 180 note 134) translates the Babylonian phrase: 'Neun Könige eines ewigen Geschlechtes sind wir'.

¹¹ For the Babylonian text, see Schaudig 2019. I discuss the topic in the following section.

¹² See further my discussion below. For a concise account of Esarhaddon's career, see Leichty, 1995.

¹³ Cf. Jacobs, 2012, pp. 103-104; Shayegan, 2012, pp. 88-90.

¹⁴ Kent, Kuhrt, Briant, Brosius, and Henkelman translate the OP term 'in succession'. See Kent, 1953, p. 119; Kuhrt, 2007, p. 141; Briant, 2002, p. 110; Brosius, 2000, p. 30; Henkelman, 2011, p. 578.

¹⁵ Lincoln (2007, p. 4) contends that 'it most properly means "now as before," which stresses the continuity of this royal lineage while also faintly suggesting its restoration to power after some disruption'. He does not explain how the alleged 'proper meaning' can be derived from the OP compound (comprising of an adverb qualifying an adjective, in the accusative and used adverbially). In effect, Lincoln reads his theory into the OP term, which is then fielded as the champion for his theory. 'The impression that Teispes has been appropriated and made to serve Darius's purpose (i.e., connecting his lineage to Cyrus's while subordinating the latter to the former) is reinforced by an extraordinary word... Old Persian *duvitāparanam*, a word that is deliberately ambiguous' (Lincoln, 2007, p. 4). What is the basis for the judgment that the OP term is 'deliberately ambiguous'? See Ahmadi, 2014, pp. 42-50.

¹⁶ See Rollinger, 1998, p. 180: 'Demgegenüber präsentieren sich altorientalische Herrschaftsgenealogien vielmehr als „lineare Kette“, die zudem häufig den Anspruch der „Ewigkeit“ erheben. Eine (reale oder postulierte) Eingliederung in dieses System erfolgt stets „lineare“ und nie „parallel“. Diese Beobachtung erscheint umso bedeutender, als sich gerade für die Behistun-Inschrift das Vorbild altorientalischer Königsinschriften und Herrschaftslegitimationen namhaft machen läßt'. The Sumero-Babylonian King List is a literary tradition that traces the sequence of Sumero-Babylonian dynasties to their origin in the divine institution of kingship. Different cities (dynasties) in turn exercise legitimate kingship, starting with Eridu. Once the mythic beginnings yield to recorded history, the simultaneously ruling cities are linearized. Obviously, the (possible) simultaneity of dynasties is not an issue for the (mythic) antediluvian period. See Beaulieu, 2017, pp. 10-15. On the Assyrian King List see Pongratz-Leisten, 2015, pp. 135-141; on the divine institution of kingship see Pongratz-Leisten, 2015, pp. 205-210. The locution 'of eternal seed of kingship' that we find in a number of Assyrian royal inscriptions, particularly Esarhaddon, is not at all related to the King-List literary tradition.

¹⁷ The ascription of intention to Darius of insinuating a 'linear linkage' with Cyrus's house is indispensable for Rollinger's thesis, since otherwise it falls on the objection that the simple clan relationship does not establish dynastic right of succession (so Jacobs).

¹⁸ Note that the assumption that the eight kings of DB 4 are to be identified on the basis of the list at DB 2 and that of the Cyrus Cylinder is accepted by all student of Achaemenid history – at least as a working hypothesis.

¹⁹ Tuplin (2005, p. 230) says that at DB 4 ‘Darius is speaking in symbolic terms, perhaps because he is lying, perhaps because he thinks in such terms’. I fail to see what Tuplin means by ‘speaking in symbolic terms’ or what he has in mind in describing DB 4 as a ‘symbolic statement’.

²⁰ The emphasis on ‘both’ is in Darius’s statement. The same thing is said by Xerxes at XPf 19-25, who even more emphatically underscores the dynastic anomaly of Darius’s accession: *utā vištāspa utā aršāma ubā ajīvatom a’ciy* ‘Hystaspes as well as Asames *both* were alive then’, etc.

²¹ Cf. Jacobs, 2011, pp. 645-646. ‘Gemeinhin unterstellt man nämlich, dass sich der Name des im Kyroszylinder genannten Urgroßvaters von Kyros dem Großen und der des in der Bīsūtūn-Inschrift figurierenden Ururgroßvaters von Dareios I. auf dieselbe Person beziehen und dass Dareios hier den Anknüpfungspunkt an die Kyroslinie sah. Unter dieser Voraussetzung aber stellt sich im Falle, dass Dareios jene Verwandtschaft fingiert hätte, um so pointierter die „Kardinalfrage ...“, was sich Dareios I. und seine Thronfolger denn von ihren verschiedenen genealogischen Manipulationen an Wirkung versprechen konnten. Viel war das bestimmt nicht. Alle jene Personen, die räumlichen und intellektuellen Zugang zu den irreführenden Inschriften hatten, wußten es als Würdenträger bei Hofe sowieso besser und waren vermutlich auch über den ganzen Vorgang und das zugrundeliegende Konzept informiert“ (Jacobs, 2011, p. 645). The text cited by Jacobs is from Nagel.

²² Rollinger’s Darius is circumspect enough to consider and accommodate the presumed contemporary knowledge of the status of his forebears when he presents his lineage. ‘Gerade weil viele Zeitgenossen wußten, daß Hystaspes, Arsames und Ariaramnes keine Könige waren, konnte Dareios sie auch nicht expressis verbis als solche bezeichnen’ (Rollinger, 1998, p. 183). See also Rollinger, 1998, p. 179. But the same Darius does not consider that given his explicit list at DB 2, a ‘linear linkage’ of his family with that of Cyrus (‘eine lineare Verknüpfung der Ahnenreihe Kyros’ II und des Dareios zu einem Haus’), which is in Rollinger’s view the ‘central intention as well as the objective of the [Bīsūtūn] Inscription’ (‘die zentrale Absicht sowie die Zielsetzung der Inschrift’), would make Hystaspes, Darius’s father, Cyrus’s predecessor, according to Rollinger’s schema (1998, p. 209). Would this not offend against the contemporary knowledge? Rollinger’s Darius acknowledges that his direct forebears *were not* royal, and *at the same time* insinuates that they *were* – but prior to Cyrus, formidable chronological difficulties notwithstanding. There are other problems in Rollinger’s account. He adduces supposed evidence in support of his position that are themselves tendentious interpretations. Here are two examples. He invokes Herodotus’s ‘Erzähltechnik’ to explain ‘warum die Identifikation Kyros’ II als Achaimenide in den Historien eine derart marginale Rolle spielt’ (Rollinger, 1998, p. 193), that is to say, as opposed to Darius’s and Xerxes’s. The putative explicandum does not exist. In *Histories* 1.209 Darius is described as the son of the Achaemenid Hystaspes; in *Histories* 7.11 Xerxes traces his lineage back to Achaemenes; and in *Histories* 3.75 Prexaspes is said to trace Cyrus’s lineage from Achaemenes. These are the only passages in the *Histories* where any of these kings are described as Achaemenid: each only once. Rollinger hedges his claim by introducing the accommodating notion of ‘Erzähltechnik’. The second example: Rollinger rules out Arsames’s and Ariaramnes’s kingship along with Hystaspes’s. ‘Bestreitet man die Existenz eines realen Königtums des Hystaspes, ist mit ähnlichen Argumenten auch der königliche Rang der anderen Vorfahren zu vereinen. Andererseits zeigt die Textanalyse der Behistun-Inschrift deutlich, daß die Ahnen des Dareios als Einheit zu betrachten sind. Umstand verbietet das Herauslösen eines einzelnen Mitglieds aus dieser Kette, da dies deren

Intentionen entgegenläuft' (Rollinger, 1998, p. 182). At DB 2 Darius traces his lineage to Achaemenes; none of the named forebears, including Teispes, is designated as king. In what sense do Hystaspes, Arsames and Ariaramnes form 'a unit'? How does (or indeed could) a 'text-analysis' of the Bīsotūn Inscription 'clearly show' this? How is one to establish that the 'intentions' of the Bīsotūn Inscription 'forbid the removal of a single member of this chain'? The postulated 'unit' is not a datum; it is a claim that requires justification. Rollinger's appeal to 'text-analysis' and the variably interpretable 'intentions' of the Bīsotūn Inscription are, again, rhetorical devices for hedging his claim.

²³ Cf. Briant, 2002, p. 110: 'despite Herodotus (VII.11), the theory of two Persian kingdoms will not stand. Certainly, if this theory were accepted, we cannot see who the eight kings to precede Darius might have been; he is careful not to name them!' Because 'we cannot see who the eight kings' are – and Darius is responsible for this – Herodotus's 'theory of two Persian kingdoms will not stand'. I cannot follow the reasoning.

²⁴ Cf. Rollinger, 1998, pp. 186-187, pp. 189-190; Ahmadi, 2014, pp. 54-56; Jacobs, 2011, pp. 653-657. Jacobs bases his interpretation of the Bīsotūn genealogy at DB 2 on Xerxes' genealogy at *Histories* 7.11. He explains the absence of the names Cyrus, Cambyses, Teispes from Darius's list by 'haplography'. Cyrus the Great would then be Cyrus III. His argument is not convincing, however. It supposes rather implausible circumstances regarding the process of inscription. In any case, the omission of these names can hardly be described as haplography.

²⁵ For Rollinger's schema of the preceding eight kings that he ascribes to Darius (i.e., Darius has this in mind at DB 4), see the diagram in Rollinger, 1998, p. 209. 'Wie bereits in der Behistun-Inschrift angelegt, stellt der herodoteische Stammbaum eine lineare Verknüpfung des in Kyros-Zylinder greifbaren Stammbaums des Dareios dar. Andererseits wird durch die anschauliche Präsentation einer Genealogie, verknüpft mit der konkreten Nennung von einzelnen Personen, eine Interpretation des in der Behistun-Inschrift entworfenen Programmes geboten. Dabei werden die zentrale Absicht sowie die Zielsetzung der Inschrift beibehalten, nämlich eine lineare Verknüpfung der Ahnenreihe Kyros' II und des Dareios zu einem Haus, deren Bündelung in einem gemeinsamen als Achaemenes bezeichneten Ahnen sowie deren Verzahnung über einen Teispes als Zwischenglied zu bieten. Herodots Text wird auf diese Weise zu einem entscheidenden Schlüssel zum Verständnis eines in der Behistun-Inschrift lediglich verklausuliert auftretenden Programmes' (Rollinger, 1998, p. 195).

²⁶ The chronology of the battles with their dates is given in Kuhrt, 2007, pp. 140-41. Cf. Pirart, 2002, p. 127.

²⁷ Rollinger appeals to the 'number nine' as an explanatory ground wherever he discusses the Bīsotūn Inscription. See, for instance, Rollinger, 2014, p. 156.

²⁸ Note that this explanation is diagonally at odds with what Rollinger does with the number, namely as the schematizing principle that underlies Darius's count of kings. In Rollinger, the number explains the count, which is thus exposed as artificial.

²⁹ Although the so-called 'cognitive' approach to religion and tradition has its problems, its central demand to give an account of the cognitive processes underlying the beliefs and attitudes that the scholar or historian ascribes to alien cultures or systems of thought is right and salutary. See, for example, Boyer, 1990.

³⁰ See my discussion of Rollinger's view of the topic below.

³¹ See Pingree, 1963, pp. 231-240. For a discussion of the sources on the relation between the Achaemenid Empire and India, see Vogelsang, 1990.

³² Cf. Henning, 1942, p. 245.

³³ '[T]he sun and moon were removed from the category of planetary bodies; their two demonic opponents replaced them. These are referred to in *Bundahišn*, chap. 5.4, p. 49.13-15 (depicting the polarity of good and evil throughout the cosmos) as Dark (i.e., presumably "eclipsed") Sun and Dark Moon (cf. *Škand-gumānīg wizār* 4.46). These hostile entities which intercept the light of the luminaries are the head and tail of the dragon Gōčīhr' (Brunner, 1987). See also Panaino, 2015b, p. 252: 'we also find some innovations, as in the case of the lunar knots, located in Gemini and Sagittarius, which were known but not used in Classical astrology. The two knots were inserted among the planets by Sasanian astrologers, following an Indian pattern (probably of the 5th century CE), where the two invisible demons of the eclipses, Rāhu and Ketu, were considered as additional planets, which then became nine (*navagraha*- 'the nine planets'). For this reason, we find in the Pahlavi world horoscope a 'black sun' (*mīhr ī tamīg*) and a 'black moon' (*māh ī tamīg*), duplicates of the two Indian "false" planets, which were considered as two dark astral bodies that occulted the sun and the moon, producing the phenomenon of eclipses'. On the negative classification of the planets in the Zoroastrian Pahlavi literature, see Panaino, 2015a, pp. 238-240.

³⁴ See, for instance, Koch-Westenholz, 1995, pp. 97-151; for the Mesopotamian use of astronomy and astrology in divination and omen, see Hunger and Pingree, 1999, pp. 5-31. Astrological reports were routinely used at Neo-Assyrian court for decisions about state policy. See Mak, 2018, pp. 234-244, for a short exposition of the *navagraha* scheme in Hindu and Buddhist astrological lore; Culianu, 1983, pp. 48-54, has an account of the Late Antique conception of the passage of the soul through planetary spheres.

³⁵ Cf. Vogelsang, 1986, pp. 129-130. 'It appears as if the author(s) of the Bisutun text came to this number [i.e., nineteen] by simply counting the battles which were reported previously' (Vogelsang, 1986, p. 130).

³⁶ See for example Waters, 2014, p. 65; Kuhrt, 2007, p. 152 note 4. Cf. Briant, 2001, p. 82.

³⁷ Rollinger, 1998, p. 185: 'Der auch im Kyros-Zylinder angegebene Teispes verdankt diese Position wohl nur dem Bemühen, eine gedankliche Verknüpfung mit der Ahnenreihe Kyros' II und somit eine verwandtschaftlich legitimierende Verbindung mit dem mächtigen Vorgänger herzustellen'.

³⁸ Rollinger, 1998, p. 186: 'Die unmittelbar daran anschließende „Aufstockung“ der eigenen Ahnenreihe um einen Ariaramnes verrät ein für die Behistun-Inschrift charakteristisches Ordnungsprinzip, das gerade der Zahl 9 einen wichtigen Stellenwert beimisst. Erst dadurch konnte dieses Prinzip auf das königliche Amt und den „Zielpunkt“ Dareios übertragen werden... Setzt man die Historizität der von Dareios aufgelisteten Ahnengalerie voraus, so bleibt es unverständlich, warum Kyros I und Kambyzes I im Gegensatz zu deren Vorgänger Teispes nicht zu den legitimen königlichen Vorgängern hinzugezählt wurden'. The last sentence shows to what extent Rollinger has convinced himself that Darius had a 'linear schema' in mind at DB 4: it is only on this condition that Darius's presentation of his lineage at DB 2 becomes 'incomprehensible'.

³⁹ Note the implausibility of this conception. While he is engaged in 'protracted wars', Darius thinks about the creation of a new special script for his native language. He commissions this task, presumably once he feels his position is secured, and it is urgently undertaken by the end of 519 BCE (according to Huyse, 1999, p. 56) but probably as early as 520 (so Schmitt, 1991, p. 18) or even by the end of 521 (so Dandamaev, 1976, pp. 72-75, *apud* Diakanoff, 1970, pp. 103-104 note 16). For what purpose? For the 'declaration and authoritative interpretation of the newly formed power', that is to say, as the requisite tool of the 'Great King's program' of legitimation. Thus, a script is invented to address the urgent need – *a script that ex hypothesi no one could read*. The usurper Darius's urgent

need of legitimation ('impatient to justify his seizure of power in his own language'!) is the *explicit premise* of Huyse's account of the formation of the Old Persian script. See Huyse, 1999, p. 54. For a concise account of the Bīstūn monument, see Luschei and Schmitt, 1989. For the genesis of the OP script, cf. Diakonoff, 1970; Lecoq, 1974; Herrenschildt, 1990, pp. 37-46; for illuminating discussions of the relevant questions concerning DB 70, see Lecoq, 1974, pp. 66-86; Herrenschildt, 1989; Tuplin, 2005, pp. 224-227. It is very unlikely if not impossible that the OP writing system was invented at the behest of Darius. The reconstructed OP term *dipiciθra-* at DB 70 does not mean 'script' or anything like that but 'text', as its Elamite equivalent *tuppime* makes clear. See Dandamaev, 1976, pp. 23-25; Diakonoff, 1970, p. 99; Lecoq, 1974, pp. 67-69; Vallat, 2011, pp. 264-268; Tavernier, 2007. Nonetheless, the idea of Darius's invention of the OP script constitutes an important component of Rollinger's thesis concerning Darius's 'program' of legitimation – the problematic nature of the thesis notwithstanding. In my view, Lecoq's arguments for the opinion that the OP writing system predates Darius are generally convincing. See Lecoq, 1974, pp. 36-63. Diakonoff and Herrenschildt argue for a similar position. See Diakonoff, 1970, pp. 105-115, pp. 120-124; Herrenschildt, 1990, p. 46, pp. 51-52. As for the genuineness of Cyrus's inscriptions at Pasargadae, Lecoq's conclusion is sound: 'il n'y a aucune raison de douter que Cyrus soit bien l'auteur de ces inscriptions. Puisque aucun argument linguistique, paléographique, historique, etc., ne peut infirmer ce jugement, il faut admettre le fait objectif de l'existence de ces textes, au nom du fondateur de l'empire perse' (1974, p. 56). Cf. Diakonoff, 1970, pp. 100-103; Tavernier, 2013, pp. 644-650, esp. p. 649.

⁴⁰ As a general proposition, the influence of Babylonian and especially Assyrian royal ideology on the Achaemenids is true enough. In other words, the Persian Empire must be understood in its historical context. But the acknowledgment of such an 'influence' should not be allowed to prejudice the outcome of the investigation of specific topics. Scholarly consensus is no assurance of the probity of a thesis. The 'conquest' model of the Israelite settlement in Palestine, writes Grabbe (2007, p. 101), 'is now only of historical interest, but it should alert scholars to the fact that vociferous adherence by large numbers of academics is no guarantee that a particular theory will stand the test of time'.

⁴¹ Cf. Kuhrt, 1983, pp. 92-93. I made this mistake in Ahmadi 2014, which was due to my ignorance of Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian history.

⁴² See Da Riva, 2008; Jursa, 2014.

⁴³ The counts are based on <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/corpus/> and Luckenbill, 1927. The medium (cylinder, prism, tablet, stela, brick, knob, vase, etc.) is understandably a factor in the distribution of the patterns, but this has no bearing on my argument.

⁴⁴ See Tadmor 1981, pp. 26-28.

⁴⁵ The Baltil origination claim was used by Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II who were apparently usurpers.

⁴⁶ In three of his (extant) inscriptions Šamaš-šuma-ukīn, Ashurbanipal's brother and the viceroy of Babylonia for around 27 years, gives his genealogy. In B.6.33.3, he says, he is the son of Esarhaddon, grandson of Sennacherib, and brother of Ashurbanipal. In B.6.33.4 he is the son of Esarhaddon, brother of Ashurbanipal, grandson of Sennacherib, descendant of Sargon, and 'enduring royal lineage of Bēl-bāni, son of Adasi, scion of Baltil (Aššur)'. In B.6.33.6 he is the son of Esarhaddon, grandson of Sennacherib, and descendant of Sargon; the text is broken off after this. See Frame, 2015, pp. 248-259. Not many inscriptions are extant from Aššur-etel-ilāni, Ashurbanipal's son and successor. In one he gives his genealogy: 'son of Ashurbanipal... (grand)son of Esarhaddon'. See Luckenbill 1927, p. 408.

⁴⁷ Cf. Harmatta, 1974; Tadmor, 1981, p. 25; Root, 1979, p. 38: 'the literary style of the entire edict [of the Cyrus Cylinder] is archaistic and is modeled *specifically* on the style of Ashurbanipal's inscriptions at Babylon'. Ashurbanipal's genealogies of his Babylon inscriptions are in the two-forebear pattern. See Luckenbill, 1927, pp. 369-373.

⁴⁸ The general prevalence of two-forebear pattern should probably be explained on the basis of the scope of intergenerational human society which normally embraces three generations. If this is accepted as a plausible supposition, it may be suggested that as far as Cyrus was concerned Teispes, his great-grandfather, was the first Persian king of Anšan. In other words, the list given in the Cyrus Cylinder is of Cyrus's forebears who carried the title 'king of Anšan'. As for Darius's 'short genealogy', it reflects the (natural) two-forebear pattern plus Darius's clan appellation: he is the 'son of Hystaspes, the grandson of Arsames, an Achaemenid' (DB 1). Being an Achaemenid is emphasized because it is important to him. Cf. Tuplin, 2005, pp. 226-227.

⁴⁹ Rollinger maintains that in reality none of Darius's forebears was king, and that the contemporaries knew this, and that Darius knew that these contemporaries knew, *which is why* (according to Rollinger) in his list at DB 2 Darius did not describe any of them as king. But when it comes to the anonymous eight kings at DB 4, the same Darius, according to Rollinger, counts those same forebears among the kings 'from his family'. What is the point of this secret counting? If both Darius and his audience knew that none of them was king, and this public knowledge was acknowledged by Darius at DB 2, what is the basis for Rollinger to include them in Darius's eight kings at DB 4? *How* does Rollinger know that Darius included *them* among the eight 'legitimate' kings? See his diagram in Rollinger, 1998, p. 209.

⁵⁰ Rollinger, 1998, p. 185: 'Der auch im Kyros-Zylinder angegebene Teispes verdankt diese Position wohl nur dem Bemühen, eine gedankliche Verknüpfung mit der Ahnenreihe Kyros' II und somit eine verwandtschaftlich legitimierende Verbindung mit dem mächtigen Vorgänger herzustellen.' Cf. Bruno Jacobs' judicious discussion of this thesis in Jacobs, 2011, pp. 644-648. Jacobs argues that Darius' presumed fabrication of kin relation with Cyrus would have served no purpose and that the circumstances would not have allowed it. He highlights the fact that Darius mentions the family relation only in passing, which must have been distant (although patrilineal) and thus useless for the purposes of legitimation (in the face of many other male members of the family, particularly Darius' father and grandfather). The disentanglement of the two issues is the necessary condition of an adequate examination of each, what most historians have failed to observe.

⁵¹ Rollinger, 1998, p. 187: 'Ein ähnliches Privileg wurde den Ahnen Kyros' II allerdings nicht zugestanden, die für die legitimierende Konstruktion eines autorisierten Königtums mit Ausnahme des Stammvaters Teispes auch keine Rolle spielten.'

⁵² Rollinger, 1998, p. 186: 'Erst dadurch konnte dieses Prinzip auf das königliche Amt und den „Zielpunkt“ Dareios übertragen werden'.

⁵³ The 'other source' is *The Persians* 765-86 where Aeschylus' Darius lists the Median and Persian kings down to himself. Darius becomes king after Maraphis, apparently in the face of Artaphrenēs. The relevant text is 773-75: 'Cyrus' son was fourth to direct the host. Mardus ruled fifth, a disgrace to his country and the throne of old' (cited from Kuhrt, 2007, p. 159). Kuhrt comments: 'Interestingly, there is no suggestion here that Bardiya was regarded as an impostor, simply a disgraceful king'. Similarly, Dandamaev, 1989, p. 91. The fourth king is described as Cyrus's son. Why does Aeschylus not describe Mardus as Cyrus's son? Since he has so described Cambyses (without even naming him), one expects that he would have similarly described Mardus: Cyrus's second son, ruled fifth, etc. The fact of the matter is that Aeschylus does not describe Mardus as Cyrus's son. If the passage is to be considered as evidence in the case, the onus is on the historian to show that

Aeschylus thought Mardus was Cyrus's son. The passage says that Mardus was a Persian king who followed Cyrus's son, was disgraceful, and was ousted by Artaphrenēs and Darius and their associates. On Maraphis and Artaphrenēs of the passage, see West and West, 1991, pp. 186-188. In any case, let us not forget that Babylonian documents knew the person who rebelled against and replaced Cambyse by the name Barziya (Bardiya). This does not at all contradict Darius's account. Cf. Tuplin, 2005, pp. 231-232.

⁵⁴ The Bīsotūn text seems to be the only Achaemenid inscription that had a pragmatic function. I agree with Jacobs that the addressee of Darius's inscriptions were primarily the future kings. See Jacobs, 2010, p. 110; Jacobs, 2012, pp. 104-105. Generally speaking, Achaemenid monumental inscriptions displayed and celebrated the king's power. Cf. Stolper, 2005.

⁵⁵ See Rollinger, 1998, p. 187. Rollinger himself says as much: 'Trifft diese Beobachtung zu, ist damit ein weiteres Indiz dafür gewonnen, Dareios als den eigentlichen Usurpator zu erkennen' (Rollinger, 1998, p. 188).

⁵⁶ Rollinger does not specify what the 'very peculiar manner' is.

⁵⁷ Cf. Root, 1979, p. 201, and note 55 on the same page where she mentions Nylander's suggestion that the choice of the number nine by Darius and Anubanini could be 'a reflection of the magical significance which the number nine held in the ancient Near East'. Cf. Nylander, 1969, p. 79: 'It is presumably sheer chance, though it looks otherwise, that the conquered in both cases are nine in number, an ancient magical number in these countries'. I have already dealt with this kind of suggestions above.

⁵⁸ Cf. Root, 1979, pp. 199-201. She describes the motif as a 'symbolic gesture of supremacy' that is 'universally understood'.

⁵⁹ Cf. Root, 1979, pp. 212-213.

⁶⁰ Add to this: 'It is important to stress that what we are dealing with here are conscious strategies of conveying the claim to rule the world through a specific visual vocabulary exhibiting the king's competence and performance' (Rollinger, 2016, p. 33).

⁶¹ See, for instance, Rollinger, 1998, pp. 189-190.

⁶² Cf. Jacobs, 2011, p. 643: 'Dieser Hinweis auf die Adressaten [i.e., DB 64-65] soll davor warnen, in den genannten Denkmälern ein unverzichtbares Instrument des Dareios zur Herrschaftssicherung zu sehen und ihre Interpretation entsprechend zu befrachten. Es scheint vielmehr so, dass es sich bei jenen Texten um Aufzeichnungen für die höfische Umgebung, vor allem aber um eine Selbstglorifizierung zur Sicherung des eigenen Ruhmes bei den Amtsnachfolgern handelt, nicht aber um Instrumente zur meinungspolitischen Einflussnahme auf die Reichsbevölkerung und zur Verteidigung der eigenen Macht. Diese war, als die Inschriften in Pasargadaï gesetzt wurden, vermutlich bereits weitgehend gesichert. Wenn dem so ist, verliert die Frage nach Lüge oder Wahrheit erheblich von jener Brisanz, die ihr aus dem politischen Selbstbehauptungskampf scheinbar erwuchs'. Cf. Herrenschmidt, 1990, p. 51.

⁶³ Cf. Kuhrt, 2007, p. 138.

⁶⁴ Cf. Kosmin, 2019, p. 237. It is not clear to me what Kosmin's position is regarding the facticity or otherwise of Darius's report at Bisotūn, particularly the dates. Cf. Bikerman and Tadmor, 1978, pp. 240-241.

⁶⁵ Some scholars maintain that it is an Indo-European heritage. In Indo-European myth, the numbers three and nine appear to signify completeness. In the Prose Edda, for instance, every set (i.e., of children, siblings, steps, levels, nights, attempts, travelers, etc.) counts either three or nine items, both of which mean that the set is full. (The one exception is the twelve berserkers of King Hrolf.) A similar situation obtains in the Völuspá. Number nine

has the same significance in Greek myth (Hesiod and Homer), e.g., there were nine Muses. But here it is also evident that it is not the ninth (in a series) that is privileged but the tenth. Greeks lay siege to Troy for nine years and in the tenth sack the city; Odysseus is adrift for nine days until on the tenth the native land becomes visible; Niobe is allowed to collect the bodies of his dead children on the tenth day, and so on. Set members otherwise unspecified are equivalent. Completion of a series implies its termination. If Darius did have the imputed mythicizing intention, he went about implementing it clumsily. What he wanted to do was to make himself the tenth king. There is no privilege in being number nine according to the Indo-European mythic tradition. The mythic motif simply cannot serve the purpose. Nonetheless, scholars persist in appealing to it in their accounts of the circumstances of Darius's rise to power, and thus make myth.

⁶⁶ Note that Rollinger does not say Darius used a conventional figure to declare: 'I crushed the great rebellion against my legitimate rule, the way Naram-Sin did'. Rollinger presupposes Darius's legitimation requirement and hence his intention to deceive by way of an historical rehearsal ('strategy of legitimization'), which Rollinger claims to discover – thanks to the treacherous number nine. Cf. Root, 1979, pp. 190-191: 'I am inclined to suppose that the text was written before the relief was planned... It remained for the planners of the sculpture to create an illumination of the text which would on various levels enhance the power of the Behistun message and encapsulate in style and composition the essential messages of the text. The *idea* came first'. '[T]he scene is meant to encapsulate into one vision Darius's successful suppression of several specific revolts against his authority' (ibid., 194). See also Schmitt, 1991, pp. 18-20; Tuplin, 2005, pp. 218-227.

⁶⁷ Cf. Root, 1979, p. 198-200; Root, 2000, pp. 23-24, on the relation of Darius's relief to that of Anubanini; Nylander, 1969, pp. 76-77.

⁶⁸ See DB 52, 53, 56, 57, 59, 62. In my view, the insistence on the conventional 'one year' frame shows the weight Darius places on his military achievements as the indication of the divine sanction of his kingship. Cf. Tuplin, 2005, p. 234. Windfuhr's reduction of the number of the battles and the number of the provinces to nine is ad hoc and unconvincing. See Windfuhr, 1994, pp. 271-272.

⁶⁹ Cf. Tinney 1995.

⁷⁰ Pongratz-Leisten, 2015, pp. 79-87: 'By the time of Sargon's grandson Narām-Sîn, the transition is complete: the image of kingship becomes that of the "eternal" warrior, and on his famous *Victory Stele* Narām-Sîn is so completely identified with the role of the warrior god Ningirsu that he is represented as superhuman in size and in command of both life and death... The imagery depicting the king mastering unknown territory is a new element in royal iconography... The gesture of the warrior god Ningirsu, whose power over the enemies in his net on Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures* manifests the glorious outcome of the battle, is replaced in the Victory Stele by the king shown in the heroic action of trampling over the defeated enemy... The image of the ideal king combines a variety of elements that all contribute to the sacralization of kingship: the perfect body... victorious action... in the wilderness of the mountains... the horned crown, which signals the divine status of the king... The Victory Stele thus serves as a visual expression of the new conception of kingship... Because the royal inscriptions of the kings of Akkad were studied and copied by Old Babylonian scribes, they became part of a supra-regional cultural heritage... This monarchic template shaped the ideologies of the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and even later empires in a process of *translatio imperii*, reinforcing the place of combat as the primary strategy of empire-building. Once this paradigm took hold, all subsequent rebellions against the king could be and were regarded as infringements of the boundaries of the empire and, correspondingly, as disruptions of and rebellions against the

cosmic order'. Beaulieu, too, maintains the paradigmatic status of the Akkadian royal ideology for all the subsequent Near Eastern empires, including the Persian Empire. He also emphasizes that the actual events do not appear to have been as grandiose as they were depicted in the literary version, 'which embellished the facts in epic fashion.' See Beaulieu, 2017, pp. 46-49. 'As it entered the realm of myth the great rebellion became a topos, and many subsequent rulers... who faced similar insurgencies at the onset of their reigns left inscriptions commemorating their victories in terms borrowed directly or obliquely from the scribal tradition about Naram-Sin, the last adherent of this convention being the Persian king Darius I' (Beaulieu, 2017, p. 47).

⁷¹ 'In ideological terms, the king's access and loyalty to tradition identified him as the guarantor of the cosmic order and as the legitimate occupant of the office of kingship. Moreover, the king gained authority in the present by actively participating in the cosmic order and reiterating cultural meaning by undertaking actions that befitted the royal office. His authority was primarily based on his adherence to mythological paradigms and to his fictitious role as Ninurta... Through to the Sargonid period, Assyrian kings fulfilled certain conventions by *presencing* their achievements in textual record: by demonstrating their successful performance of the actions associated with the combat myth, kings asserted that they had met the expectations that came with the royal office. The same approach is apparent in the visual medium of the royal stele...[she gives a few examples]... these steles are largely standardized and do not depict any features that suggest an individualized representation of history' (Pongratz-Leisten, 2015, pp. 291-293).

⁷² See Tadmor, 1981, pp. 18-25. 'In the further development of Assyrian historical writing in the 10th.-9th. centuries, the chronistic convention became firmly entrenched, and thus the literary format of the annals was fixed. In the annals of Adad-nirari II and [Ashurnasirpal] II, and the early annals of Shalmaneser III, the account of every one but the first year was dated according to the corresponding *līmu* and, beginning with Shalmaneser III's year sixteen, only according to the *palū*' (Tadmor, 1981, p. 19). Dating is an important index of historiographic accuracy.

⁷³ For the examples mentioned, see Pongratz-Leisten, 2015, pp. 278-286. Here is Ashurbanipal's inscription (cited from Parpola, 1999, p. 21): 'I learned the craft of the sage Adapa, the hidden secrets of the entire scribal profession. I observed the portents of heaven and earth. I was praised in the meetings of scholars, arguing with expert diviners about the liver, the mirror of heaven. I can solve complicated, elusive mathematical problems. I have read sophisticated texts in obscure Sumerian and in Akkadian difficult to comprehend, and have studied inscriptions on stone from the time before the flood with elite companions'.

⁷⁴ Nebuchadnezzar in his inscription as Wadi Brissa says: 'What no former king had done (I did): I cut off high mountains, and I opened passes (into the mountains); I established a road for the cedars... (47-49)' (Da Riva, 2008, p. 13).

⁷⁵ See, for instance, the boast of the last Middle Elamite king Hutelutuš-Inšušinak in Herrenschmidt, 1990, p. 57.

⁷⁶ Cf. Root, 2000, p. 21.

⁷⁷ See for instance Bickerman and Tadmor, 1978, pp. 246-248; Briant, 2002, pp. 101-105; Dandamaev, 1989, p. 91; Kuhrt, 2007, p. 137; Brosius, 2000, p. 31.

⁷⁸ Note the sequence: 1) Darius is illegitimate; 2) a king requires dynastic legitimation; thus, 3) Darius must claim and fabricate a dynastic entitlement, albeit in an underhanded way. That Darius must make such a claim is not based on the facts of the case but derives from the logic of the construction. This logic is explicit in Rollinger and taken for granted in his likeminded colleagues.

⁷⁹ Cf. Waters, 2014, p. 65: ‘There is a general consensus in modern scholarship that it was Darius who was the usurper, who, once victorious, created the Achaemenid dynasty *post eventum*, as one component of rationalizing his legitimacy’. Similarly Pirart, 2002, p. 148. It seems to me that historians who adopt this perspective on the Bīsotūn account never raise the question of the target of the mendacious ‘propaganda’ they ascribe to Darius. Given the supposed objective (e.g., linking his family with Cyrus’s line), the target could only be powerful and highly placed Persians, for what did it matter to other peoples of the empire whether their new master was of the same blood as their previous master? On the other hand, how plausible is it to suppose that the exponents of Persian establishment did not know that the Achaemenids and the ‘Teispids’ were two different families, if in fact they were, and that they could be deceived into believing that they were one and the same by ‘propaganda’?

⁸⁰ Cf. Henkelman, 2011, pp. 578-579: ‘the legitimacy of his reign was evidently not defined by a well-crafted lie, but simply by his successful bid for the throne, as well as by the subsequent military and political victories that secured his control’. He states the obvious – but in the context of the historiography of the Persian Empire it none the less stands out. This perspective makes it all the more puzzling what need in Henkelman’s view Darius’s attempt to link his and Cyrus’s families serves, since Henkelman thinks that Darius and Cyrus were from two different families. See Henkelman, 2011, p. 596 note 60. Cf. Jacobs, 2011, pp. 644-649; Jacobs, 2014, pp. 346-347; West, 2007, pp. 414-415.

⁸¹ Cf. Briant, 2002, p. 110.

⁸² Kuhrt, 2007, p. 138: ‘as part of the formulation of the new Persian royal identity, kingship was presented as having been in essence restored, returned to the bosom of Persia’s ancient kingly family, when, in fact, this notion of a clearly defined royal line only begins with Darius himself. Darius consolidated this claim by several means. Most important was his marriage of his predecessors’ wives and female kin, which bound his line to the family of Cyrus’. Cf. Pirart, 2002, pp. 148-149. Darius’s claim that Cyrus belongs to his family is grounded in his marriages with the women of the latter’s house, according to Pirart. By these marriages, Darius ‘transforms Cyrus and Cambyses into Achaemenids’. ‘Si ceci n’est pas conforme à la réalité, ce pouvait donc être conforme à une certaine vérité: celle du celui qui a vaincu. Il ne s’agirait donc pas à proprement parler d’un mensonge dans l’esprit de l’époque. Le mensonge de Darius se convertit en vérité du fait d’une alliance par le sang que la victoire sur les rebelles permet d’entériner tandis que le mensonge des rebelles est établi par leur défaite’. It is not clear to me whether the casuistry is meant to be understood as pertaining to Pirart’s ‘role as the defense attorney of Darius’ (this is how he describes his role in the article, p. 147, for example) or as Darius’s thinking about the ‘truth’ of his consanguinity with Cyrus, and if the latter, whether it is meant to be conveyed to the audience of his inscription.

⁸³ Note the phrase ‘harping on his family’s right to rule’. In fact, Darius mentions his being from a royal family twice, once in the context of his genealogy and once in the account of his seizure of power. See also Rollinger, 1998, p. 183: ‘Bereits diese Konstruktion [i.e., Darius’s genealogy at DB 2] offenbart einen als schmerzlich empfundenen Mangel in der Präsentation des Herrschaftsanspruches durch Dareios, der offensichtlich nach einer Kompensation verlangte’.

⁸⁴ See Henkelman, 2010, pp. 698-703; Stolper, 2019, pp. 450-56.

⁸⁵ Cf. Jacobs, 2011, pp. 644-645.

⁸⁶ Cf. Kuhrt, 2007, p. 167 note 1: ‘The female establishment of one king automatically became the responsibility of his successor. This could include sexual relations with a

predecessor's wives, although in the case of Bardiya and, subsequently, Darius I, the take-over of royal women was closely linked to the need to underpin their precarious hold on power'. Since Kuhrt maintains that the person who was deposed by Darius was Bardiya, Cyrus's son, there could not have been in this case a question of forging a (dynastic) family link at issue, which, according to her (see note 82 above), constitutes Darius's motivation and intention.

⁸⁷ Similarly Dandamaev, 1989, p. 108; Olmstead, 1938, pp. 396-397.

⁸⁸ Cf. Jacobs, 2011, p. 646: 'Gehen wir tatsächlich davon aus, dass der Ururgroßvater des Dareios und der Ururgroßvater des Kambyses ein und dieselbe Person waren, so war der neue Herrscher mit dem unstreitig legitimen König Kambyses also über eine verwandtschaftliche Brücke verbunden, die jeweils vier Generationen in der Vergangenheit lag. Für eine so entfernte Verwandtschaft hält unser Sprachschatz keinen Begriff bereit. Und nahezu jeder Leser dieses Beitrags hat zahlreiche Verwandte dieses Grades, von denen er niemals gehört hat. Auch dies macht die Annahme, Dareios I. habe die Verwandtschaft mit Kyros fingiert, höchst unwahrscheinlich'.

⁸⁹ Cf. Waters, 2014, p. 65, who accepts Rollinger's view.

⁹⁰ Herodotus certainly considered Cyrus to be an Achaemenid. See, for example, *Histories* I.125; III.75.

⁹¹ Cf. Henkelman, 2011, p. 596 note 61: 'I think it is rather hazardous to build an entire argument on Herodotus's statement that Cassandane, the wife of Cyrus the Great, was a daughter of Pharnaspes the Achaemenid... Doing so implies that Herodotus had accurate knowledge of Cyrus' family situation'.

⁹² The 'lying kings' whose dynastic pretensions are stated in the Bīsotūn Inscription naturally claimed patrilineal descent from a king. Cf. Jacobs, 2011, p. 645.

⁹³ See Henkelman, 2011, pp. 578-579. Jacobs raises the pertinent issue of the possible grounds of Darius's success in assuming the leadership of the Persian army returning from Egypt. See Jacobs, 2011, pp. 647-648.

⁹⁴ On the Old Persian term, see Kellens, 2007, pp. 434-459; Werba 2010, with a concise discussion of previous scholarship.

⁹⁵ Henkelman does not set out how his semantic accommodation of Darius's claim actually works. In my view, it does not work, even if we go along with his range for each of the terms. I fudge it so I can proceed with my argument. I find the idea that the 'ruling elite' could be understood to form a 'family' particularly unconvincing.

⁹⁶ Wieschöfer, 1978, pp. 211-212, allows this. I do not understand his reason for doing so: 'Es bleibt zu klären, wie Dareios' Ahnentafel zustande kam. Herodot liefert den entscheidenden Hinweis: Bei ihm nennt Xerxes nur jeweils einen Träger der Namen Kyros und Kambyses, aber zwei des Namens Teispes. Die bisher gültige und auch von Dareios so gemeinte Ahnentafel geht jedoch gerade vom Gegenteil aus, nämlich der Tatsache, daß es nur einen Teispes und mehrere Träger des Namen Kyros und Kambyses gegeben hat. Die doppelte Ansetzung des Namens Teispes bei Herodot zeigt, daß der Teispes des Kyros-Zylinders und der Teispes der Bīsotūn-Inschrift nicht als ein und dieselbe Person aufzufassen sind'. Why does the presence of two Teispes on Herodotus's list 'show' the Teispes of Cyrus Cylinder and the Teispes of Bīsotūn Inscription were different persons? See Ahmadi, 2014, for a discussion of Herodotus's list.

⁹⁷ See Henkelman, 2011, p. 596, note 60: 'I should stress that I do agree with Potts' insistence that the Teispids (or Sešbesids) should be seen as a dynasty in its own right'. Potts's insistence is enough of an argument? Cf. Jacobs, 2011, pp. 648-649. Henkelman's view (2010, p. 703) that Darius 'neutralised' the 'potential risk' that Irtaštuna (Herodotus's Artystone) represented by marrying her but 'recognised' her as the 'head of the Teispid

branch of the royal family' as the 'most plausible reason why she was granted control over the estate at Matanaan' is hard to grasp. As I argue above, the existence of a 'Teispid branch' by Henkelman's own light is without a secure foundation. Based on Irtaštuna's control over an estate and her son's status, Henkelman makes her the leading figure of 'Teispid affairs' in court. The idea of a recognized 'Teispid' interest or faction in Darius's court is implausible considering its premises and implications, even if one were to grant the existence of a 'Teispid family' in the sense that Henkelman understands this designation.

⁹⁸ See, for example, Kuhrt, 2007, p. 137; Briant, 2002, p. 99.

⁹⁹ Since Darius does not admit this scenario, it must be considered irrelevant for our present purposes. I only mention it to show that even this will not make the relative dates consequential.

¹⁰⁰ Darius views Gaumāta as one of the 'lying kings'. See DB 52. Cf. Vogelsang, 1986, pp. 129-131.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Tuplin, 2005, p. 234.

¹⁰² See Machinist, 2003; Veyne, 1984, pp. 3-30. According to Potts, Darius's seizure of power was a 'Persian coup d'état which replaced the Anshanite, Teispid family of Cyrus with the Persian line of Achaemenes' (Potts, 2005, p. 17). Potts's Anšan is a 'predominantly ethnically Elamite' polity which is 'linguistically and culturally Elamite'. According to the available archeological data, the city of Anšan did not make it into the first millennium; at best, it had been reduced to a small town. See Miroschedji, 1985, pp. 291-92; 1990, pp. 61-72; 2003, pp. 34-36; Stronach, 2003, pp. 250-251; Alvarez-Mon, 2012, p. 754. A 'city' which by the light of contemporary archeology no longer existed was in Potts's view 'linguistically and culturally Elamite'. And how does one know the latter now, even if one shares Potts's hope that the 'city' might still emerge through future excavations? On the status of Anšan in the Cyrus Cylinder cf. Henkelman, 2011, pp. 610-611. Potts's emotional attachment to his subject matter (Elam) and hence his inclination to stand by it, as it were, is to some extent understandable, but then the danger is that history blurs into fantasy. See Potts's explanation of the scanty reference to Anšan in the Persepolis archive in Potts, 2011, p. 41. The hometown of the Elamite Cyrus fell into disfavor *after* the 'Persian coup d'état'. 'Anšan in the Achaemenid period was no longer a city with an important hinterland' (Potts, 2011, p. 41, my italics). Cf. Henkelman, 2011, pp. 580-581: 'there has been, in recent years, a renewed tendency to differentiate sharply between Darius and Cyrus... While I believe that much new ground has been covered in this debate [i.e., about Persian identity and ethnicity], and many refreshingly new perspectives have been proposed, I do feel uneasy about the apparent tendency to portray Cyrus and his dynasty as more "Elamite" in comparison to the more "Persian" Darius. Though I have contributed my share to a model that describes the rise of Persia, Persians and Persian culture in the context of Elam, Elamites and Elamite culture, I do not think that the contrast between the two rulers, as I just formulated it, is warranted'. See also Henkelman, 2008, pp. 47-49, pp. 55-57.

¹⁰³ Cf. Vogelsang, 1998. However one might judge Vogelsang's making the (supposed) Media-Persia conflict the frame for interpreting the events of 522 BCE in the Persian empire, one cannot ignore the rivalry, or however one cares to describe the relation. It is persistently present in the ancient testimony. If, as it is generally maintained, classical accounts of the rise of Darius ultimately go back to an 'official Persian tradition' (the phrase is Dandamaev's), the rivalry with the Medes must have been a prominent feature of that tradition. Dandamaev is dismissive of the issue, probably because it is at odds with his own interpretive frame, namely the conflict between Persian (and Median) 'tribal nobility' and commoners. See Dandamaev, 1989, pp. 103-131. Briant (2002, pp. 103-106), too,

downplays the issue, apparently on similar grounds. West (2007, p. 415) relies on Graf (1984) to suggest that Darius's kingship marks a shift from 'Median to Persian predominance'. Graf cites and briefly discusses Greek, Biblical, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian evidence on the usage of 'Median' vis-à-vis 'Persian' for the Achaemenid kings or realm and concludes (1984, p. 28) that 'the primary and ancillary evidence points to the representation of Cyrus and his immediate successors as Median kings'. Incidentally, the plural 'successors' is puzzling since Graf maintains that Darius ushers in the Persian ascendancy. Darius's emphatic assertion of his Persian lineage certainly requires explanation; and it is perhaps reasonable to argue that the assertion must have been against what Darius perceived to be unacceptable Median (or Elamite) political influence. But the material Graf cites does not warrant his conclusion; foreign observers did not designate Cyrus and Cambyses as 'Median', and Darius and his successors as 'Persian'. In particular, the chronological distribution of the respective designations for the Achaemenid Empire in the classical and Hellenistic testimonies does not at all reflect 'a shift, in the Achaemenid state, from Median to Persian predominance' with the 'reign of Darius'.

¹⁰⁴ 'It is not because he was Achaemenid (in the clan sense) that Darius achieved power; it was his accession to royalty that allowed him to redefine the reality of what it meant to be "Achaemenid"' (Briant, 2002, p. 111). Darius never claims that his being an Achaemenid entitles him to kingship. If he had made *this* the ground of his legitimacy, the kingship would have gone to his father or grandfather.

¹⁰⁵ See Shayegan 2012, pp. 4-26, for the sources. Note that according to Herodotus (*Histories* 3.68), the impostor Smerdis does not emerge from the citadel or summon Persian nobles lest he is recognized, which rouses Otanes's suspicion.

¹⁰⁶ Cited from Kuhrt, 2007, p. 165. The relevant texts of classical and late antique sources are cited and discussed in Shayegan, 2012, pp. 4-20, and compared in pp. 23-26. Shayegan (2012, pp. 21-23) also cites from the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel* a passage that recounts the usurpation of Cyrus's throne by a 'Gemath the magus' and his elimination by a group of Persian nobles. Gemath's reign lasts six months (which matches the period Babylonian documents use Bardiya's name for dating in 522), followed by Darius's. The Syriac text is dated to the first half of the 7th century CE.

¹⁰⁷ See Kuhrt, 2007, pp. 163-64 for Ctesias's text. Kuhrt (2007, p. 137) says of the secondary sources that, apart from Herodotus, 'all place Bardiya's reign as beginning *after* Cambyses' death'. This statement ignores, e.g., Strabo 15.3.24. In any case, Kuhrt accepts this detail of the respective stories of Ctesias and Justin but rejects the substitution theme. What is the basis for the double treatment? The scenario of consummate fraud requires untroubled transition to the impostor. Ctesias and Justin clearly stage the fraud as a dramatic motif. An unbiased reader would ascribe the unproblematic transition to the art of storytelling rather than to the knowledge of historical facts.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Herodotus, *Histories* 3.61. See Boyce, 1982, pp. 84-85, for a discussion of the topic.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Tuplin, 2005, p. 220.

¹¹⁰ We do not learn anything about this topic from the monumental volume Jacobs and Rollinger, 2010. As far as I can see the single serious objection one can raise against the Bīsoṭūn account of Gaumāta is the length of time (some 4 years) during which the (supposed) magus manages to keep his real identity from becoming publicly known, e.g., outside the court. In order to form a reasonable judgment about this issue one must know whether a magus could possibly be in the requisite position.

¹¹¹ See Boyce, 1982, pp. 84-86. This phenomenon is also found in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and is understandable enough: ancient priests and ritual experts constituted the learned class. Contrary to Boyce, Vogelsang maintains that the magi were strongly identified with

the Medes, which is why they were disliked by the Persians, which in turn explains why Darius insists on describing Bardiya as a magus. See also Vogelsang, 1998, pp. 211-212. 'The magoi were thus outsiders in Persian society, firstly because they were closely linked to the Medes who lived far to the north-west and were the former masters of the Persians, and secondly, because of their learning and profession' (Vogelsang, 1998, p. 212). Cf. Tuplin, 2005, p. 232. Historical data, however, do not bear out the alleged Persian hostility toward the magi. Moreover, Vogelsang's thesis of a general ethnic animosity between Medes and Persians is in my view untenable and misleading. The rivalry must be rather placed in the perspective of political domination.

¹¹² He gives only one example (from Jewish wisdom literature) of the allegedly worldwide theme.

¹¹³ Bickerman and Tadmor, 1978, pp. 248-249.

¹¹⁴ The modern historian of the ancient world is dependent on ancient sources. Cf. Bivar, 1997, p. 348: 'The fundamental principle in ancient history is that we must write it from ancient sources. If we conclude these sources are spurious, then we have no information. We are not entitled to reject the sources, and re-write from speculation'. On Herodotus's use of arguments and various types of reasoning (analogy for example), see Thomas, 2001, pp. 168-269.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Grabbe, 2004, pp. 120-21.

¹¹⁶ 'We may believe that the Median Magi were both priests and soothsayers in their own country. But they were only wizards in Achaemenid Persia... They may have been priests of Ahuramazda in Media, but Persia was not Media. In Persia, they could only be wizards' (Bickerman and Tadmor, 1978, pp. 259-60). The certainty is astonishing. On the magus in the Persepolis archive cf. Henkelman, 2008, pp. 246-53; on the development of the Greek usage of 'magus' cf. Ahmadi, 2015, pp. 242-280, with further references.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Henkelman, 2008, p. 249 note 544: 'My suggestion is that *makuš*, unlike other qualifications (e.g., *lan-lirira*), was a real title (not a designation). It may have been a term referring to a broad scope of (possible) professional activities and therefore frequently in need of additional qualification... *makuš* is clearly different from *šatin*, which does, apparently, never require additional qualification and must have been well-defined'. In classical sources (*Histories* 1.107, 1.120, 1.132, 7.19, 7.37, 7.43, 7.113, 7.191; *Cyropaedia* 4.5.14, 8.1.23; *Alcibiades* 1.122a; Strabo 15.1.68, 15.3.13-15; *Life of Artaxerxes* 3.3; Diog. Laert. *Lives* I.8 referring to Aristotle) a magus of the Achaemenid period is a wise man and diviner and generally adept of the traditional lore who can officiate sacrifices for various purposes, but can also be adviser to the king and royal educator.

¹¹⁸ See Bivar, 1997, p. 349. Following Hinz, Bivar suggests that the 'master of the court' controlled the access to the inner royal court. See also Marquart, 1905, p. 145.

¹¹⁹ Incidentally, this consideration shows that the relation of the classical authors' accounts of the episode to Darius's was more complicated than many historians of the Persian Empire apparently assume.

¹²⁰ See Shayegan, 2012, pp. 27-33.

¹²¹ See Bickerman and Tadmor, 1978, p. 246; Zawadzki, 1994, p. 130. Cf. Pirart, 2002, p. 146: 'Le mage, dans la grande inscription de Bisotūn, est comptabilisé comme un premier rebelle ou meneur de rébellion : pour usurper le trône, il adopte la même tactique que les huit autres rebelles: tous prétendent appartenir à une famille royale prestigieuse'. Darius's story of Gaumāta impersonating Bardiya is a 'mensonge' which 'tient plus de la correction ou retouche esthétique des faits que du forfait pendable fruit d'une intention particulière, instrumentale' (Pirart, 2002, p. 147). Surely, one could have done a better job of pleading Darius's case.

¹²² ‘The testimonies of Herodotus and Pompeius Trogus, ascribing to two protagonists the “usurpation” of Cambyses’ throne, may be a reflection of Bardiya’s and Gaumāta’s historicity – a historicity suggested both by the extraction of two different personages from Herodotus’ and Pompeius Trogus’ records, and by the duality of functions within each couple’ (Shayegan, 2012, p. 32).

¹²³ See Kellens, 2007, pp. 446-459.

¹²⁴ See Werba, 2010, pp. 270-275, esp. p. 273.

¹²⁵ Kellens derives *xšāyaθiya-* from the present participle of $\sqrt{x\bar{s}ā}$ ‘rule’.

¹²⁶ See Shayegan, 2012, pp. 27-28 note 2. Pirart (2002, pp. 144-145) gives for Patiziethēs and Oropastes, respectively, **pati+ciθra-* ‘substitut’ or ‘sosie’ and **ahura+pasti* ‘pion du roi’. Pirart’s explanation of the former is particularly unconvincing. The postulated underlying OP is said to mean ‘de qui les caractéristiques constituent une répétition’. “Cela tendrait à montrer que Patizéithēs et l’homonyme de Smerdis, dans un premier temps, ne constituaient qu’un seul et même personnage. Lorsque le mage est double, c’est donc comme le fruit de la mécompréhension d’une épithète iranienne, dont on a fait alors un anthroponyme. On serait passé du ‘sosie de ¹Smerdis’ à ‘Sosie et ²Smerdis’ et de ‘Cométès homme de main (de Cambyse)’ à ‘Cométès et Homme-de-main’.” The phrase ‘substitute of Smerdis’ can hardly be an ‘epithet’ of a Smerdis, but could describe an impersonator of Smerdis. See Pirart, 2002, p. 147.

¹²⁷ West endorses Marquart’s reconstruction (1905, p. 145) of the name Patizeithēs as OP **pati-chšajah-wiθ-a* ‘master of the household’. For the supposed participial compound one would rather expect **pati-xšayant-viθ-* ‘ruling over the household’, as the Avestan equivalent **pati-xšajaṭ-wis-a* posited by Marquart shows. The form of *-xšajaṭ-* remains problematic, however, and it is not clear how to analyze *-chšajah-* starting from *-xšayant-*.

¹²⁸ The relevant text is cited in Kuhrt, 2007, p. 172.

¹²⁹ Cf. Grabbe, 2004, pp. 121-22.

¹³⁰ If Aeschylus’ Artaphrenes refers to the same person, as scholars maintain, the existence of such alternative traditions finds further corroboration. Cf. Kuhrt, 2007, p. 159; West and West, 1991, pp. 187-188.

¹³¹ Cf. Rollinger, 1998, p. 187: ‘Das auf diese Weise entworfene Programm umfaßte als zentralen Aspekt die Absicht, die Vorgänger des Dareios durch ein verwandtschaftliches Konstrukt ebenfalls zu Achaimeniden zu erklären und dadurch die Legitimität der Herrschaft zu untermauern’.

¹³² Cf. Tuplin, 2005, p. 239; Thomas, 2001; Cartledge and Greenwood, 2002; Flower, 2006; Luraghi, 2006; Hornblower, 2002.

¹³³ For instance this one by Llewellyn-Jones, 2017, p. 69: ‘The one detail that makes Darius’s account (followed by Herodotus a century later) particularly suspect – almost farcical – is his claim that Gaumata looked exactly like Bardiya, to such an extent that even his harem of wives could not tell him apart from the murdered prince’.

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