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مقدمه

با تقدیم احترام به خوانندگان و پژوهشگران محترم، نشریه تصمیم دارد تعدادی از پژوهشهای مرتبط که در داخل کشور به نشر نرسیده است را بدینوسیله در اختیار دوستداران بگذارد .

ظهور شاهنشاهی ایران باستان^۱یانوش هارماتا^۲ترجمه: منصور حمداللهزاده^۳

دوفصلنامه علمی تخصصی مطالعات ایران کهن - شماره اول، سال دوم، بهار و تابستان ۱۴۰۱

پایه گذاری شاهنشاهی ایران باستان بدون شک حلقه مهمی در جهان باستان بوده است، که برای اولین بار در تاریخ بشریت اتفاق افتاد و قلمرو عظیمی از لیبی تا پامیر، از سودان تا سیر دریا توسط یک شاهنشاهی در یک وحدت نسبی گنجانده شد، که عملاً خلاصه ای تاریخی از نتایج بدست آمده توسط دولت های خاور نزدیک پیشین در زمینه های اجتماعی-اقتصادی، فنی و فرهنگی که با دو قرن عمر خود تأثیر بسزایی در توسعه تاریخی بیشتر داشته است. اگرچه اهمیت تاریخی شاهنشاهی ایران باستان از دیرباز برای تحقیقات تاریخی آشکار بود، اما مشکل ساختار اجتماعی-اقتصادی آن تا آخرین زمان ها به طرز شگفت انگیزی روشن نشده بود. چند سال پیش در محافل علمی هنوز این عقیده عمومی وجود داشت که امپراتوری ایران قدیم یک دولت برده دار بوده و بخش عمده ای از جمعیت آن را بردگان تشکیل می دهند. این نظریه از سوی دانشمندان برجسته ای از سال ۱۹۶۱ ارائه شده است. در چندین سخنرانی و انتشارات و به ویژه در مطالعه خود با عنوان «مشکل برده داری در شاهنشاهی ایران باستان» سعی کردم نشان دهم که برداشت تاریخی فوق مبتنی بر تفسیری نادرست از اصطلاحات اجتماعی پارسی باستان-ایلامی است. منابع بابلی، آرامی و یونانی و اینکه روابط تولیدی در شاهنشاهی ایران باستان منعکس کننده شرایط شکل گیری اجتماعی برده دار نیست، بلکه بیانگر شرایط شیوه تولید آسیایی است. از آن زمان این عقیده مقبولیت نسبتاً عام پیدا کرد و امروزه به نظر می رسد که تردیدی وجود ندارد که در شاهنشاهی ایران باستان، در کنار مردمان عقب مانده کوچکتر که هنوز در جامعه قبیله ای و دولت-شهرهای یونانی برده دار زندگی می کردند، بزرگترین بخش از جمعیت تولیدکنندگان نیمه آزاد بودند که در "زمین سلطنتی" زندگی می کردند.

^۱ - این مقاله ترجمه و بازنشری است از:

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^۲ - János Harmatta

^۳ - دکتری تاریخ - ایران قبل از اسلام - مدرس دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی

J. HARMATTA

THE RISE OF THE OLD PERSIAN EMPIRE CYRUS THE GREAT

I

The foundation of the Old Persian Empire was undoubtedly an important link in the development of the ancient world. It happened for the first time in the history of humanity that the huge territory stretching from Libya to the Pamir, from Sudan to the Syr Darya was incorporated into a relative unity by an empire, which was practically a historical summing up of the results achieved by the earlier Near Eastern states in social-economic, technical and cultural fields, and which with its two centuries long existence exerted a significant influence on the further historical development. Although the historical importance of the Old Persian Empire was obvious since long time to historical research, the problem of its social-economic structure remained surprisingly unclarified up to the latest times. A few years ago in scientific circles it was still a generally spread opinion that the Old Persian Empire was a slave-holding state, and the major part of its population consisted of slaves. In contrast to this opinion, represented by such eminent scientists like for example I. M. D'yakonov, F. Altheim, M. A. Dandamaev, W. B. Henning, I. Gershevitch, Yu. B. Yusifov, W. Hinz and I. Aliev,¹ as from 1961 in several lectures and publications, and especially in my study entitled «The Problem of Slavery in the Old Persian Empire»² I tried to show that the above mentioned historical conception is based on an erroneous interpretation of the social terminology of the Old Persian, Elamite, Babylonian, Aramaic and Greek sources, and that the relations of production in the Old Persian Empire do not reflect the conditions of the slave-holding social formation, but they represent the conditions of the Asiatic mode of production. Since then this opinion has found a rather general acceptance, and today it seems already to be doubtless that in the Old Persian Empire, beside the backward smaller

¹ I. M. D'YAKONOV: VDI 1959/4. 70 foll., F. ALTHEIM—R. STEHL: Die aramäische Sprache unter den Achämeniden. Frankfurt am Main. 170 foll., M. A. DANDAMAYEV: Foreign Slaves on the Estates of the Achaemenid Kings and Their Nobles. Moscow 1960., I. GERSHEVITCH: AM NS 2 (1951) 139 foll. with interpretations by W. B. HENNING, YU. B. YUSIFOV: VDI 1961/4. 32 foll., W. HINZ: ZDMG 110 (1961) 247, I. ALIYEV: История Мидии. I. Baku 1960. 281.

² Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte der Alten Welt. I. Alter Orient und Griechenland. Berlin 1964. 3 foll.

peoples living still in tribal society and the slave-holding Greek city-states, the largest part of the population were half-free producers living on the "royal land".

If in the clarification of the social-economic structure of the Old Persian Empire, for which we have a fairly rich stock of sources, historical research could step ahead only in recent years, then it is not at all striking that in the investigation of the historical circumstances of its rise an even greater backwardness can be observed. The reason for this is partly the fact that the sources (especially the Greek and Babylonian sources) are rather scanty and one-sided. Thus, taking a look at the historical literature of the last few decades, we can state that since the thorough study of F. H. Weißbach published on Cyrus in 1924³ there has been hardly any progress. Investigation has stuck up in the clarification of the single events and chronology, and almost completely disregarded the internal historical motives of the development of the Old Persian Empire and the appearance of Cyrus. In fact it did not even raise this question.⁴ Just therefore, if we want to promote historical research, then we must examine in the first place, what were the historical circumstances of the rise of the Old Persian Empire, what factors rendered its development possible or necessary and in what it differed, from the viewpoint of historical development, from the earlier Iranian state, the Median Empire.

The rise of the Old Persian Empire is closely connected with the name of Cyrus the Great (or II), and essentially it coincides with his reign lasting from 558 to 529 B.C., inasmuch as the process of its coming into existence can be regarded in many respects as closed down with the death of Cyrus, which took place in 529, that is 2500 years ago. The problems of this period comprising nearly three decades were divided in the earlier historical investigations as follows: 1. the origin of Cyrus, 2. his uprising and victory over the Medes, 3. his campaign against Lydia, 4. the conquest of Eastern Iran, 5. occupation of Babylon and Mesopotamia, 6. struggle against the nomads of Northern Iran.

II

Among these groups of questions the problems of the origin of Cyrus, his uprising and his victory over the Medes deserve special attention. It can be stated from the sources written in cuneiform script with doubtless surety that Cyrus was the great-grandson of *Cišpiš*, «the great king, king of Anšan», from whom through the other branch of the Achaemenides also Darius descended.⁵ The father of *Cišpiš*, *Haxāmaniš* was the founder of the dynasty, who

³ F. H. WEISSBACH: „Kyros". PWRE SpBd. IV. Stuttgart 1924. 1128 foll.

⁴ Cf. e.g. A. T. OLMSTEAD: The History of the Persian Empire. Chicago 1948. 34 foll.

⁵ Cyrus, Cyl. 1. 25 (F. H. WEISSBACH: Die Keilschriften der Achämeniden. Leipzig 1911. 4-5).

was obviously the first to adopt the title of a king. These data of the Old Persian inscriptions and the clay cylinder of Cyrus are supported by the fragment of an inscription of Aššurbānapli, which mentions in 639 the grandfather of Cyrus of a similar name, «Kuraš, the king of the country Parsumaš».⁶ Thus Cyrus came of an old ruling dynasty, which could found its kingdom about 700 B.C., about the same time as the ruling dynasty of the Medes. The Greek sources, first of all the report of Herodotus (I. 107 ff.) also confirm this result inasmuch as they mention Cambyses as the father of Cyrus, and they also mention Cišpiš-Teispes as the son of Haxāmaniš-Achaemenes (Herodotus VII. 11). Otherwise, however, the legend of origin of Cyrus told by Herodotus does not call Cambyses a king, nor does it mention that he would have been member of an old royal dynasty. This peculiar interpretation of the legend of origin of Cyrus is easily understood, inasmuch as deemed on the basis of the names and the word *spaka* 'dog' occurring in the legend, it was of Median origin, and the whole was inspired by Median aspect: according to it Cyrus was the grandson of the last Median king and ascended the throne with the help of the Medes. This presentation obviously glosses over the events from Median view point and keeps silent about the fact that the dynasty of the Achaemenids was at least as old as that of the Median Deiocids. Of course, that much can be true from the legend that Cyrus stood in some sort of family relations with the overthrown Median royal family. According to Ctesias. Cyrus married the daughter of the last Median king. This is a step that can be observed in numerous cases in connection with the coming to power of new dynasties.⁷

Thus the origin of Cyrus can be clarified fairly well from historical view point. If in this respect still various hypotheses were raised in historical research,⁸ the reason for it can be looked for mainly in the circumstance that the names of Cyrus and his predecessors, Cambyses and Teispes, create a strange impression among the names of the Achaemenian rulers. In fact they could not be explained from Iranian and thus they can easily induce anybody to the conclusion that they are of foreign, non-Iranian, origin. In this present state of investigation the thorough examination of the names of Cyrus, Cambyses and Teispes is, therefore, an actual task.

The name of Cyrus (Old Persian *Kuruš*) was recently discussed by W. Eilers in detail in a very thorough study. In this he convincingly pointed out that none of the explanations given so far is acceptable.⁹ Eilers himself could not find or point out such an Iranian word either, from which the name

⁶ Cf. E. F. WEIDNER: Afo 7 (1931—1932) 1 foll.

⁷ On some such cases cf. J. HARMATTA: Acta Ant. Hung. 17 (1969) 404 foll.

⁸ See H. ZIMMER: Altindisches Leben. Berlin 1879. 102, F. C. ANDREAS: Verhandlungen des XIII. Internationalen Orientalistenkongresses 1902 in Leiden. 1904. 93 foll., etc.

⁹ W. EILERS: Kyros. BzN 15 (1964) 180—236.

Kuruš could be explained. However, that much could at any rate be rendered likely by him that the name *Kuruš* is connected with the Old Indian name *Kuru-* and that this connection is parallel with the correspondence of the Old Persian *Kambūjiya-* (name of the father of Cyrus) and the Old Indian name *Kamboja-*. This helplessness of investigation in connection with the explanation of the name *Kuruš* is on the whole surprising, because in the Iranian languages there exists a well-known root, from which it can be explained satisfactorily.¹⁰ This is the root **kur-* 'be born', the continuation and developments of which can be pointed out from Old Iranian, as well as from Middle Iranian and from New Iranian. From Old Iranian we can quote the Seythian name **Kula-xšaya-* 'young king'. From Middle Iranian we can refer to the following data: Saka *kula-* 'kinsman', Sogdian *wkur, wk'wr* 'kinsman', Bactrian or Hephthalite *kula-* in the name *Mihirakula-* 'Mihira's begotten', Pahlavi *kwlk, kwlg* 'young of animal'. In New Iranian we find the following continuations of the root: Ossetic *igurun* 'be born', Kurdish *kurr, kur*, New Persian *korre* 'young of horse etc.'¹¹ The quoted data testify the earlier existence of the verbal root *kur-* on the one hand and of the three nominal derivatives **kuru-*, **kura-*, **kurnaka-*, on the other hand. As regards the way of formation the most archaic of these is **kuru-*,¹² while the forms **kura-* and **kurnaka-* were formed with formative syllables still productive in Old Iranian and partly in Middle Iranian.

Accordingly, the meaning of the name *Kuru-* could be 'young, child, youth', and can reflect an aspect similar to the Seythian name **Kula-xšaya-* 'young king'. In the myth of origin of the Seythians and also in the name **Kula-xšaya-* the matriarchal aspect of ultimogeniture is reflected, and thus it is not impossible that the name *Kuru-* is the remnant of earlier matriarchate also with the Persians. Semantically the people's name *Kuru-* 'young' can best be explained by referring to the Seythian legend of origin, according to which the Seythians regarded themselves as the youngest people in the world.

III

Similarly to the name *Kuru-*, the name *Kambūjiya-*, name of the father and elder son of Cyrus, also withstands to the attempts of explanation. This was also discussed in detail recently by W. Eilers.¹³ He pointed out the unsatisfactory character of the explanations given so far, however, without being

¹⁰ As it was already pointed out by V. I. АБАУЕВ: К ЭТИМОЛОГИИ ДРЕВНЕПЕРСИДСКИХ ИМЕН *Kuruš, Kambūjiya, Cišpiš*. Этимология 1965. Moscow 1967. 286 foll. The interpretations by Abayev of the names *Kambūjiya* and *Cišpiš* are, however, unacceptable.

¹¹ For the Middle and New Iranian data see H. W. BAILEY: JRAS 1953. 114 foll., I. GERSHEVITCH: BSOAS 14 (1952) 493 foll., H. W. BAILEY: TPhS 1953. 39. Cf. also Ossetic *kur* 'bull-calf'.

¹² On the suffix *-u-* cf. J. WACKERNAGEL—A. DEBRUNNER: Altindische Grammatik. II/2. Göttingen 1954. 463 foll.

¹³ W. EILERS: BzN 15 (1964) 210—213.

able to give a better one. At any rate he deems to be doubtless that this name is in connection with the Old Indian tribal and country name *Kamboja*-. He also sees it well that this relation between the two names would demand that the Old Persian form should be reconstructed as **Kambaujiya*-. However, on account of the Greek transliteration (*au* = ypsilon, *j* = sigma?) he holds also this problematical. But the Greek transliteration does not mean an insuperable difficulty. Also in the Greek transliteration of *Zranka*- sigma corresponds to the *z*, and in the Greek transliteration of *haumavarga*- the sound group *ava* is rendered by ypsilon. If, however, we start out from the forms **kambaujya*-, **kambauja*-, then not only the analysis *kam-bauja*-, *kam-baujya*- of these is possible, but we can also regard these as compounds consisting of the elements *kamb-auja*-, *kamb-aujya*-. In this case we get as first element the word **kamb*- (eventually **kamba*-) 'little, small', and as second component the word **aujah*- 'strength'. Thus the meaning of the whole compound will be 'of small strength, weak'. It is a question, whether a personal name of this kind can be presumed in the stock of Old Persian names, but it can be easily understood as an apotropaic name. In this case, of course, it has still to be regarded as the survival of an archaic custom of giving names, and that it could really be that, is shown by the circumstance that after Cambyses II it was no longer used by the Achaemenids.

The people's name *kambauja*- 'weak, powerless' belongs to the category of people's names expressing negative valuation, and as such, it cannot be, of course, the name of the *kamboja*-s used by themselves, but can originate from one of their hostile neighbours. This is supported also by the circumstance that in Iranian and Greek sources no trace of the people's name *kambauja*- can be found, although if it has been the name of the people used by itself, then it ought to have spread in a broader circle. From the aforesaid it follows that in spite of the linguistic identity we cannot presume any historical relation between the personal name *Kambaujya*- and the people's name *kambauja*-. Even otherwise a relation of such character could be presumed at the most in the case of Cambyses II, when as a result of the conquests of Cyrus the East Iranian tribes adjacent to the Indian territory also came within the horizon or under the rule of the Achaemenids. However, about 640 B.C., at the time of the birth of Cambyses I, this could hardly be the case.¹⁴

Linguistic research is even more helpless in connection with the name *Višpiš* (*ca-i-ša-pa-i-ša*) or *Caišpiš*. This can be the only explanation for the fact that even excellent scientists looked in it for the Hurrian name of god *Tešup*, or the Urartian name of god *Teišeba* and it was brought into connection

¹⁴ It is a vicious circle if on the basis of the names *Kuruš* and *Kambujiya* F. HERZFELD: *The Persian Empire*. Wiesbaden 1968. 346 supposes that the Medes (!) had extended their domination over the Indus countries before 640 B. C.

even with the Cimmerian name *Te-uš-pa-a*.¹⁵ The psychological basis of these attempts was concisely summed up by W. Eilers in his statement that the name *Cišpiš* «sich schwerlich arisch begreifen läßt». ¹⁶ In fact the form of the name can clearly be analysed from Indo-Iranian. Let us start out first from the reading *Cišpiš*. This can without any difficulty be regarded as the nomen agentis with the archaic suffix *-i-* of a reduplicated verbal root **čišp-*. The basic verbal root itself can be presumed in the form **čap-*. For the definition of its meaning we have a foothold in the Sogdian word *cp'yš* 'leader' (<**čapiš-*) and the Saka word *cev-* < **čāpaya-* 'hold and convey'.¹⁷ Accordingly we can assign the meaning 'leader' to the name *Cišpi-*. If on the basis of the Greek transcriptions the form *Caišpiš* would turn out to be correct, then we can start out from the nomen agentis **čišpa-* formed from the reduplicated verbal root **čišp-*, from which the name *Caišpi-* was formed with the suffix *-i-* and *vṛddhi*. The meaning could be also in this case 'leader' or 'descendant of leader, leader-like'.

We have, therefore, no reason whatever to doubt that the names *Kuru-*, *Kambaujya-* and *Cišpi-* are of Iranian origin. Thus we can disregard all those historical theories according to which the Achaemenides were of non-Iranian origin. It can, however, not escape our attention that these three names, and among them especially *Cišpi-*, point towards Eastern Iran, and perhaps they can be regarded rather as Eastern Iranian names than as Western Iranian ones. This is exactly the explanation for the fact that up to now these were held non-Iranian names, because the majority of scholars took into consideration only the Western Iranian linguistic material. If the peculiar Eastern Iranian character of the names *Kuru-*, *Kambaujya-* and *Cišpi-* is not only the result of the incomplete knowledge of the Western Iranian languages, what cannot be completely excluded, inasmuch as we know only a fragmentary part even of the Old Persian vocabulary, then we can eventually presume that the Achaemenids were a clan of Eastern Iranian origin, which migrated into the territory of **Pārsva* in the course of the 8th century B.C. and very soon obtained a leading role there, so that about 700 B.C. Haxāmaniš could already take up the title of a «king». This assumption would well explain the archaic character of the names *Kuru-*, *Kambaujya-* and *Cišpi-*, and the peculiar aspect of name giving manifested in them. In the course of the 7th century B.C., however, the Achaemenids started already to take up Western Iranian names, and later on they gradually gave up the use of the names *Kuru-*, *Kambaujya-* and *Cišpi-*. Thus their origin and historical role could, in certain extent, be compared to those of the Arsacids, whose clan was also of Eastern Iranian origin and gradually assumed power over Western Iran.

¹⁵ W. EILERS: BzN 15 (1964) 205 sk.

¹⁶ W. EILERS: BzN 15 (1964) 205.

¹⁷ Regarding these see H. W. BAILEY: TPhS 1953. 155.

IV

The second important problem is the historical background of the uprising of Cyrus and of his victory over the Medes, *i.e.* of the foundation of his empire. To clarify this problem, the examination of the following questions seems to be necessary: 1. the social and economic structure of the Median Empire, its state organization, 2. the social and economic structure and state organization of the Persian kingdom before Cyrus the Great, 3. the internal and external situation of the Median state at the time of the uprising of Cyrus, 4. the relation to the Median state of the social and economic structure and state organisation of the Old Persian Empire organized by Cyrus the Great. The difficulty of these questions is well shown by the fact that earlier research did not arrive even at their formulation or their raising. Thus only I. Aliyev's attempt¹⁸ deserves attention, who relying on the report of Herodotus at least drew our attention to the circumstance that sharp contrasts between Astyages, the last Median king, and the Median aristocracy were existing, inasmuch as the latter strived for the decentralisation of the state, while the ruler strived to strengthen the central power. I. M. D'yakonov also made an attempt for the drawing up of the social and economic conditions of the Median state. In this, however, he relied upon later sources, thus on the PTT and as a result of this he could not arrive at a correct conclusion either.¹⁹

From the aforesaid it follows that the question is of fundamental importance, what sources can be used. First of all, of course, the contemporary Assyrian and Babylonian sources are to be taken into account. These, however, furnish only a few data for the problems raised. In the second place we can use the later Greek data, but only with great carefulness and on the basis of comparison with other sources, because we can always reckon with the possibility that they project the conditions of a later period and the Old Persian Empire to the period of the Median state. Finally, valuable data can be furnished by the informations of Median reference preserved in the Old Persian inscriptions and other contemporary cuneiform or Aramaic sources, if it can be verified that they go back to the period of the existence of the Median state. This means that not all terms to be regarded as of Median origin, occurring in Old Persian or Elamite inscriptions, can be used for the reconstruction of the conditions of the Median state, because in those cases, when an Old Persian and Median phrase is used parallelly, it is possible that the Median terms was brought about after the pattern of the Old Persian ones.

Let us start first with the Assyro-Babylonian sources. In the times preceding the foundation of the Median Empire, the Assyrian sources denote the

¹⁸ I. ALIYEV: История Мидии. I. 248 foll. and especially 251.

¹⁹ J. M. D'YAKONOV: История Мидии. Moscow - Leningrad 1956. 323 foll.

Median princes with the phrase *EN.ER*, which is the exact translation of Median **vis-pati*-.²⁰ This shows that with the Medes already before the rise of the Median kingdom a very strong tribal aristocracy had developed. Later both the Median and the Persian rulers were equally given the title «king» (*LUGAL*), and we also know that the Median king also has allied or vassal kings.²¹ The clay cylinder of Cyrus the Great after the foundation of the Old Persian Empire gives the title «great king, king of Anšan» to the previous Persian kings up to *Cišpiš* inclusive.²² This obviously corresponds to the elements of the later Old Persian royal titles *xšāyathiya vazraka xšāyathiya Pārsaiy*. Finally, the Babylonian chronicle reports that «the army of Ištumeḡu (Astyages) revolted against him and capturing him with their hands delivered him to Cyrus».²³

From these laconic reports we can state undoubtedly that much that the Median state consisted of vassal kingdoms (one of these was the Persian kingdom), that the Median tribal aristocracy was very strong, and that in the decisive moment of the struggle between Cyrus and Astyages the Median army relying on the aristocracy revolted and went over to Cyrus. Now let us compare this picture with the data of the Greek sources, first of all with those of Herodotus.

V

According to the narrative of Herodotus the Median state comes into existence amidst the confusions (*harpage* and *anomie*) of the dissolution of the tribal society and Deiokes elected as the first king, very soon brings about a developed state organization, *viz.* he builds a capital, concentrates the population, surrounds himself with body-guards and does not communicate personally with his subjects. Every case has to be referred to him in writing, in the whole country spies (*kataskopoi*) and informers (*katēkooi*) watch the people. Under the later Median rulers the organization of the army comes into existence, *viz.* the branches of lancers, archers and cavalry-men are separated from each other and are used as independent units of troops in tactics. There appears the office of the major-domo in the royal court, and the child Cyrus playing king, after Median pattern, divides the troop of his playmates to craftsmen, warriors, door-keepers, couriers, the «eyes of the king». It also becomes clear that in the Median society there is a distinguished, respected layer (*dokimoi*), who are called «first» by the king in his court. Exactly these are the ones, who later on turn away from Astyages first. The characteristic

²⁰ Cf. E. HERZFELD: *Zoroaster and His World*. I. Princeton 1947. 116 foll.

²¹ Cf. S. LANGDON: *Neubabylonische Königsinschriften*. Leipzig 1912. 220 (inscription no. 1 of Nabūna'id, I. 27). Cf. also I. M. Д'ЯКОНОВ: *История Мидии*. 336.

²² F. H. WEISSBACH: *Die Keilinschriften der Achämeniden*. Leipzig 1911. 4.

²³ *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*.² Ed. by J. B. PRITCHARD. Princeton 1955. 305.

element of the Median court etiquette was the proskynesis, and that of jurisdiction was interrogation by torture.²⁴

In the case of the data of Herodotus, of course, it is possible that they reflect already the contemporary conditions of the Old Persian Empire to a certain extent. In fact, the picture given above by the scanty data is fairly near to that one, which can be reconstructed from the reports of Herodotus regarding the Old Persian Empire. Partly this is exactly the reason, why in historical investigation we meet frequently with such assumption, according to which the social and economic structure and state organization of the Old Persian Empire did not differ at all from those of the Median Empire. The evidence of the data of Median reference preserved in the Old Persian inscriptions and other contemporary cuneiform sources, and Aramaic documents become in this point of decisive importance.²⁵ The terminology to be regarded of Median origin on the basis of phonetic criteria²⁶ from the viewpoint of subjects can be grouped as follows:

1. ruling class: *xšāyaθiya-* 'king', *xšāyaθiya xšāyaθiyānām* 'king of kings', *xšāyaθiya vazraka* 'great king', **vis-puθra-* 'royal prince', **vāis(a)-puθra-* 'aristocrat', **āzāta-* 'nobleman, freeman', *farnah-* 'royal splendor', *pati-zbay-* 'to proclaim'.
2. state organization: **pati-xšāyaθiya-* 'majordomo', **hazahra-pati-* 'chiliarch', **sata-pati-* 'centurion', **dasa-pati-* 'decurion', **pasca-dasapati-* 'vice-decurion', **ganza-* 'store', **ganza-bara-* 'store-keeper', *vispa-zana-* 'being from each tribe', *paru-zana-* 'being from many tribes'.
3. army: *spāθmaida-* 'mobilized army, army in camp', *waspa-* 'having good horse'.
4. religion: *magu-* 'magus', *zūra-kara-* 'evil-doer', *asmān-* 'sky'.
5. administration of justice: *ufrastam pīs-* 'punish'.
6. craft (architecture): *asan-* 'stone', *kāsaka-* 'semi-precious stone'.

Let us examine now the historical lessons of this terminology of Median origin by comparing it partly with the Greek data and partly with the characteristic Old Persian terminology. The adoption of the royal titles points to the circumstance that the position of the Median king and the character of

²⁴ On the *proskynesis* see F. ALTHEIM: *Proskynesis. Paideia* 1950/5. 307 foll.

²⁵ Regarding these cf. R. G. KENT: *Old Persian. Grammar. Texts. Lexicon.*² New Haven 1953. 8, W. BRANDENSTEIN - M. MAYRHOFER: *Handbuch des Altpersischen.* Wiesbaden 1964. 12 foll., E. BENVENISTE: *Titres et nomes propres en iranien ancien.* Paris 1966. 25 foll., M. MAYRHOFER: *Die Rekonstruktion des Medischen.* Graz - Wien - Köln 1968.

²⁶ The attempt by I. GERSHEVITCH: *TPhS* 1964. 1 foll. to cancel a part of the phonetic criteria considered Median, cannot be regarded as convincing, cf. M. MAYRHOFER: *Die Rekonstruktion des Medischen.* 8 foll. Concerning the Median character of the data quoted in the followings see the scholarly literature cited in note 25.

the Median kingdom differed so much from those of the Old Persian kingdom that after the overthrow of the Median Empire Cyrus did not keep the old Persian royal title. In a characteristic way Median **xšāyathya-* made its way even into the title *xšāyathiya Pārsaiy* «king in Pārsa», although the original title of the Persian kings could have remained, since it is doubtless that before Cyrus the Great, already Cišpiš, Cyrus I and Cambyses I had also worn the title of a king, which, however, could hardly be *xšāyathiya-*. We can perhaps think of the word *xšāya-* as the Old Persian royal title, which in the name *Xšayāršan-* occurs in Persian also later on.²⁷ It is interesting on the other hand that the phrases **māna-pašnī-* 'queen' (as a matter of fact 'lady of the house') and **duxči-* 'lady' are characteristically Persian. This shows that originally the Achaemenids had their own characteristic Persian ruler's terminology, which was of a rather archaic character, and on the basis of the above mentioned two words essentially it corresponded still to the conditions of clan or tribal society. This is in harmony with those Greek data, which regard the social differentiation of the Persians in the period of Cyrus to be still much smaller than that of the Medes.

The lesson of the words *vis-puθra-* and *vāisa-puθra-*, as well as *āzāta-* corresponds to this fact, inasmuch as these show that the social position of the great aristocratic clans and families took already a much more definite shape with the Medes than with the Persians, and the class of the freemen was already clearly separated, evidently first of all from the class of the half-free. If we interpret the data of Herodotus correctly, than the title *frutama-* «first»²⁸ too was already known in the Median royal court. Thus, as a whole, the data discussed point to the circumstance that the class differences of the Median society in the period of Cyrus were considerably greater than those of the Persians.

The number of adopted Median terms is strikingly high also in the field of state organization. This shows that the Median Empire had a highly developed bureaucratic organization, which later on was adopted also by the Achaemenids. In this respect becomes important the report of Herodotus, according to which the system of *kataskopoi* and *katēkooi* was introduced in Media already by Deïokes. These two Greek terms very likely render the Median words **spasaka-* and **gaušaka-*. It is noteworthy that besides the *kataskopoi* the «eye of the king» appears as a separate office, in which we can see the

²⁷ Thus explained by R. G. KENT: Old Persian.² 182 and W. BRANDENSTEIN-M. MAYRHOFER: Handbuch des Altpersischen. 126. Recently W. EILERS: BzN 15 (1964) 181, note 1 supposes a form **xšāyat-* (i.e. a participle with the suffix *-nt-*) as the first part of the compound. This presumption is possible but it cannot be regarded as necessary because according to the testimony of Avestan a participle of the type *xšāya-* could also occur as the first member of compounds, see J. DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN: Les composés de l'Avesta. Liège—Paris 1936. 198 foll. The question cannot be decided on the basis of the Old Persian alone and the Avestan evidence permits both explanations.

²⁸ On this title cf. W. EILERS: ZfA 17/51 (1955) 225 foll

equivalent of Median **patyaxša-*. Thus we must reckon with several categories of observers and supervisors. This explains the fact that already W. Eilers could point out several such terms,²⁹ which from the semantic viewpoint belong to this circle. Among these, however, the «eye of the king» could be denoted only by the term **patyaxša-*, and this was the name of a high office. Beside him, however, the **spasaka-s* acted in large numbers, also in the villages. According to the testimony of the PFT -- at least in the Old Persian Empire -- there were also economic controllers, who bore the denomination *ti-ti-yakaš* < **didāyaka-* 'inspector'. Much later, even in the Parthian documents of Nisa, the derivation **wpydyt* < Old Iranian **upa-dita-* of the verb *dāy-* 'to see' is used for economic supervision. The Iranian (eventually Median) prototyps of the other occupations or offices mentioned by Herodotus can also be pointed out, viz.: masons -- **rāza-*, spear-bearer -- **rštibara-*, door-keeper -- **dāra-pāna-*, messengers -- **azdākara-*. The report of Herodotus regarding the administration in writing of the Median royal court is interesting and deserves further investigation. Here the question can be raised, what script or written language was used by the Medes.³⁰ It is not worth while to enter into conjectures, but at any rate it can hardly be doubted that the state administration used some kind of a written language.

Unlike the state organization, the number of the Median phrases relating to the army is strikingly small in Old Persian. According to Herodotus the division of the army into branches of service was the innovation of the Medes. Thus we could expect that the denominations of these were adopted also by the Persians. Among the three branches of service, *arštibara-* 'spear-bearer' and *θanuvaniya-* 'archer' could be also Median, but *asābara-* 'cavalry-man' is clearly of Old Persian origin. The phrases *ušabāri-* 'camel-borne', *vaçabāra-* 'axe-bearer', **varçabāra-* 'shield-bearer',³¹ *maθišta-* 'general' are similarly of Old Persian origin, while *pasti-* 'foot soldier' could also be of Median origin, but this cannot be proved. It is especially significant that the Median word *spāda-* 'army' was not adopted by Old Persian, but instead of this the word *kāra-* remained in use, which seems to be a more archaic phrase (cf. Pashto *kōr* 'house, family', Kurdish *kār* 'family'). All this shows that the organization of the Persian army was either independent from the Median one, or in comparison to the Median army organization Cyrus introduced such significant

²⁹ W. EILERS: *Iranische Beamtennamen in der keilschriftlichen Überlieferung*. I. Leipzig 1940. 23, 26, 119 foll.

³⁰ As it is well-known, according to the assumption of many scholars the Old Persian cuneiform writing is of Median origin, cf. recently I. M. D'YAKONOV: *The Origin of the 'Old Persian' Writing System and the Ancient Oriental Epigraphic and Annalistic Traditions*. W. B. Henning Memorial Volume. 98 foll. For the opposite view cf. recently W. HINZ: *Neue Wege im Altpersischen*. Göttingen 1970. 1 fol.

³¹ See J. HARMATTA: *Ant. Tan.* 11 (1964) 24. The objections by F. ALTHEIM—R. STIEHL: *Geschichte der Araber*. II. Frankfurt am Main 1965. 566 are based on simple misunderstandings.

changes and innovations, which rendered the Old Persian army and tactics higher developed than those of the Medes and made the adoption of the Median military terms unnecessary. One important term seems to be of Median origin, viz. *spāθmaida-* 'mobilized army or army in camp'. This could be adopted by Old Persian, when the Persian kings still as vassals had to join the Median «mobilized army», i.e. it was a special Median bearing of taking the field by the Persian army.

The terms adopted in the field of religion are in harmony with the report of Herodotus on the important role of the Magi in the Median royal court, while the Median material background of the term *ufrastam p̄rs-* is well illustrated by the interrogation by torture of the herdsman Mitrادات. All this underlines in a plastic way the difference of the social and economic structure and state administration of the Median Empire and the Persian kingdom before Cyrus the Great. However, it still does not give a reply on the reasons of the fall of the Median Empire and the characteristics of the internal structure of the Old Persian Empire. Was the fall of the Deiocid dynasty really caused by the accidental disunion of the Median aristocracy, and did the Old Persian Empire not at all differ from the previous Median state?

VI

For the answer of this question we must still examine a passage of the Bisitun inscription. This is the much disputed text, in which Darius compares his own measures with those of Gaumāta, the Magus, viz.:

DB I 64–65 *adam : niyačārayam : kārahya : abicariš : gaiθāmcā : māniyamcā :*

Old Persian *viθabišacā*³²

Elamite *UDU-taš a-ak ZÍZ a-ak ∇ kur-taš a-ak ▷ UL.ĪI¹² ʾmar-ri¹-ú-ma ap pi-li-ia*³³

«I entrusted to the military people the fields and the live-stock and the domestic people and whatever (in the fields) is the property of the royal house»

The social and economic policy of the Old Persian ruler and that of the Magus are put in a sharp contrast. Darius undoubtedly restored the state of affairs which had existed during Cyrus and Cambyses, while in the case of the Magus

³² I hope to give a detailed explanation of this passage elsewhere. Old Persian *v¹θabišarā* 'property of the royal house' can be interpreted as consisting of *viθ-* 'royal house' and *abi-ša-* 'property'. Old Persian *iša-* (< **išsa-*) compares with Avestan *āēša-* 'Habe, Eigentum' (< **aišsa-*) in the same manner as Avestan *iš-* 'Wunsch' does with Avestan *āēša-* 'Suchen'.

³³ I quote the Elamite text on the basis of the reading by G. G. CAMERON: JCS 14 (1960) 63. Instead of the reading *ʾmar-ri-i¹p-ma*, however, recommended by him, it seems to be more correct to read the form *ʾmar-ri¹-ú-ma*.

we can think that with his measures he tried to restore the conditions before Cyrus and Cambyses. It is at any rate doubtless that Gaumāta separated himself from the public just like the Median rulers did. It is also quite sure that the term *niyaçārayam* is Old Persian, and not of Median origin. Thus it renders likely the Persian origin of one of the institutions of decisive importance in the Old Persian Empire. The major part of land was royal property in the Old Persian Empire. This condition arose as a result of the conquests of Cyrus. The social and economic policy of the Old Persian rulers was that part of the «royal land» was under their direct administration, but a considerable part of it (the *bāga-s*, estates) was entrusted to the Persian and Median military aristocracy -- the technical term of this is the verb *ni-çāraya*³⁴ --, against certain obligations and payment of tax. The accessories of these estates were the cultivated fields, the live-stock, the working domestic people and in general everything, what on them was property of the royal house. This is the explanation for this much disputed passage of the Bisitun inscription.

Gaumāta obviously wanted to abolish this system, which made the military aristocracy interested in the conquests and rule of the Achaemenids and wanted to return to that state organization, which was represented by the Median Empire, and in which a centrally directed bureaucratic state organization managed the «royal land». This was to be realized in a smaller state like Media, but it closed the possibility of development and of getting rich from the aristocracy, and thus in final conclusion it opposed the Median aristocracy to the dynasty of the Deiocids, and brought about the fall of the Median state. This way was possible for Cyrus to overthrow the Median state and to establish the Old Persian Empire. The Median aristocracy was ready to line up behind the warlike Persian king, who with the conquest of waste territories and with the development of the new social and economic organization insured for it unprecedented possibilities.

Thus, in final conclusion, we can state that, besides the personal prominence and other personal circumstances, the fall of the Median state and the rise of the Old Persian Empire were brought about in a decisive way by the fact that the policy of the Deiocids led to a deadlock, from which the way out was found by Cyrus the Great and the other Achaemenian rulers, who succeeded to create the highest developed ancient form of government based on the Asiatic mode of production, which later on not only existed for two centuries, but became the basis for the rise and development of the later Hellenistic, and then the Arsacid and Sasanian states.³⁵

Budapest.

³⁴ As it was correctly recognized already by E. HERZFELD: *Altpersische Inschriften*. Berlin 1938. 51 foll.

³⁵ [Additional note. — On the Median elements in Old Persian see recently M. MAYRHOFER: *Neuere Forschungen zum Altpersischen*. *Donum Indogermanicum*. Festgabe für Anton Scherer zum 70 Geburtstag. Heidelberg 1971. 46—50.]

ظهور و سقوط مادها^۱

ماریو لیورانی^۲

منصور حمداالله‌زاده^۳

دوفصلنامه علمی تخصصی مطالعات ایران کهن - شماره اول، سال دوم، بهار و تابستان ۱۴۰۱

پیش از کشف باستان‌شناسی کاخ‌های سلطنتی آشور و بایگانی‌های خط میخی، در اواسط قرن نوزدهم، تاریخ تمدن‌های خاور نزدیک در دوره قبل از امپراتوری هخامنشی تنها بر اساس منابع کلاسیک و کتاب مقدس بود. مادها نیز مانند آشوری‌ها و بابلی‌ها از اطلاعات موجود در آثار هرودوت و مورخان بعدی شناخته می‌شدند که هیچ اطلاع مستقیمی از آن مردمان و امپراتوری‌ها نداشتند، اما اطلاعاتی را در محافل علمی خود امپراتوری هخامنشی جمع‌آوری می‌کردند. این اطلاعات نه مستقیم بود و نه همسن و سال و نه حتی بر اساس اسناد آرشیوی یا تاریخی معتبر. جای تعجب نیست که شواهد تازه‌ای که از اکتشافات باستان‌شناسی قرن گذشته به دست می‌آید -- چه در آشور و چه در بابل --- منجر به ارزیابی مجدد کامل تاریخ آن کشورها شده است. اگر اکنون تاریخ آشور و کلد را که پیش از اواسط قرن نوزدهم نوشته شده است، با تاریخ کنونی مقایسه کنیم، باید اعتراف کنیم که اصلاً به یکدیگر شباهت ندارند. به عبارت دیگر: اطلاعاتی که در اختیار هرودوت و وارثان او بود، هیچ اعتباری نداشت و اکنون برای بازسازی تاریخ نگاری یونانی و نه تاریخ آشوری یا بابلی استفاده می‌شود.

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THE RISE AND FALL OF MEDIA

Mario Liverani

1. The image of Media in the classical sources

Before the archaeological discovery of the Assyrian royal palaces and cuneiform archives, in the mid 19th century, the history of the Near Eastern civilizations in the period before the Achaemenid Empire was based on the classical and biblical sources only. The Medes, like the Assyrians and the Babylonians were known from information contained in the works of Herodotus and of later historians, who had no direct knowledge on those peoples and empires, but collected information in the learned circles of the Achaemenid empire itself. This information was neither direct nor coeval, nor even based on sound archival or historical materials. No wonder that the fresh evidence coming from the archaeological discoveries of the past century —both in Assyria and in Babylonia— resulted in a complete reassessment of the history of those countries. If we compare now the histories of Assyria and Chaldea written before the mid 19th century, with those current nowadays, we have to admit that they do not resemble each other at all. In other terms: the information available to Herodotus and to his heirs had no reliability, and is now used in order to reconstruct Greek historiography and not Assyrian or Babylonian history.¹

Quite different has been the fate of Media, probably because —differently from Assyria and Babylonia— no Median archive has been recovered. But this is just an explanation, not a justification thereof. Even if no Median source has been discovered so far, the information contained in the Assyrian and Babylonian sources is available and quite relevant. Nevertheless, if we compare the histories of Media written in the 19th century (e.g. Rawlinson 1871-73, II, 371-431) with those current nowadays (e.g. Diakonoff 1985a), we find that they keep a great deal of mutual resemblance — to the point that modern archaeological and textual discoveries seem to have provided a rather limited impact. It should be clear that the current reconstructions of the history of Media, based as they are on the classical information, run the risk of being so distant from historical reality as the pre-modern reconstructions of Assyrian and Babylonian histories are now assumed (and proved) to have been.

Obviously the classical information, indirect and later, could have been easily influenced by distorting factors pertaining both to the nature of the information itself and to the historiographic conceptions obtaining in the Greek world. In my opinion, the basic distortions are two, one related to the political structure of the Median state, and the other related to the time of its burgeoning. Among more specific

1. Cf. e.g. Baumgartner 1950; Drews 1970; Kuhrt 1982; Zawadzki 1984; McQueen 1978; lastly Rollinger 1993 (with extensive bibliography). Cf. also, more in general, Drews 1973.

(but relevant) points, the relationship of the Median and the Persian empire can also have been a factor of major distortion, since the information basically came from Persian circles.

As for the period during which the Medes flourished, the choice was basically dictated by the theory of the succession of empires (Kratz 1991; Wiesehöfer forthc.). Empires, being by their very nature "universal", had to follow one another in time. And since the Medes were known to have destroyed the Assyrian empire, and to have been vanquished by Cyrus the founder of the Persian empire, the choice was apparently obvious. In terms of our chronology, a Median empire could have been located only in the period between 612 (destruction of Nineveh) and 550 (victory of Cyrus over Astyages).

For similar reasons, Media was assumed by Greek historians to have the political and administrative structure of an "empire", even a "universal empire". We get the impression that the state structure of the Medes was derived by the (sound and contemporary) knowledge of the structure of the Persian state.² Of course we cannot pretend that the Greek historians (nor their informants, at that) could reconstruct a process in which the Medes occupied a stage different from that of Persia: they had no information about that, and the basic idea of an "Oriental" empire was modelled on the Persian case, considered as paradigmatic. Consequently, the victory of Cyrus over Astyages was the sufficient event that caused the *translatio imperii* from Ecbatana to Pasargadae, and the inheritance of the imperial structure by the new dynasty. Now that we do have information on the formative process involving the Median polities, we still continue to figure out the Median state on the model of the following structure (*i.e.*, the Achaemenid empire), while we should figure out it on the model of the previous structures (*i.e.*, the Zagros chiefdoms in their way to statehood).

In the last years, the doubt has been advanced, notably by Heleene Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1988), whether the Median empire did really exist; and the doubt has also been advanced, namely by Peyton Helm (1981),³ whether Herodotus' account on the origins and development of the Median royal dynasty is a reliable account, still to be used as a guide-line for our historical reconstruction, or it is rather a patchwork of folk-tales whose value is rather political (as "foundation legends" of the Median state) than properly historical. The present paper intends to elaborate on former doubts and critical approaches in order to formulate an explicit alternative model.⁴ My indebtedness to the seminal paper by Heleene Sancisi-Weerdenburg is quite evident, yet I think the alternative model can be formulated in a more precise and extreme way.

2. The impact of the archaeological discoveries

Modern archaeological activity in the core area of ancient Media (*i.e.*, the area between Kermanshah and Hamadan) has been especially intensive and fruitful in the years 1960s and 1970s, when the excavations of Godin Tepe, Nush-i Jan, Baba Jan have been carried out.⁵ In the adjacent area of ancient Mannea the excavation of Hasanlu and a short operation at Ziyiye have been as well productive. The capital city of Media, Ecbatana/Hamadan, would obviously be the key-site for our problem, but the

2. Cf. Briant 1984a, 98; 1996, 36 on the court manners of the Medes reconstructed on the Persian model, the only ones to be known to Herodotus. The very same use of the term "Medes" in order to refer to "Persians" (Tuplin 1994) resulted from and contributed to their mutual identification.

3. Cf. also Brown 1988. The criticism by Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1994 seems unconvincing to me.

4. The critical views are rejected—in a confused yet symptomatic way—e.g. by Muscarella 1994.

5. Briant 1984a, 78-80, 84 is rather minimalist on the impact of the archaeological discoveries in Media.

ancient settlement excavated so far⁶ seems to belong to the Sasanian period, and a "Median" level is still to be localized.

Now, the basic result of such archaeological activity, for the period which is relevant here (namely, the second quarter of the first millennium BC), is that the Median sites underwent a notable burgeoning during the late 8th and the 7th centuries, but were dismissed during the first half of the 6th century, that is exactly when the assumed Median empire should have reached the peak of its development.

The evidence from Nush-i Jan, excavated by David Stronach and Michael Roaf, is the most clear (Stronach 1969; Stronach – Roaf 1973; 1978). The phase Nush-i Jan I is dated to the period ca. 750 to 600 BC. The excavators were able to articulate the sequence of the various buildings: the "Central Building" (an "imposing Fire Temple") was built at the beginning of the phase, well inside the 8th century, while the "Fort" and the Western Building (with its columned hall) were added during the 7th century. These public buildings were subsequently abandoned, and in the first half of the 6th century the mound was occupied by squatters. In advancing an explanation for the abandonment, the excavators underscore that the archaeological evidence is not in agreement with what expected from the historical sources — of course the classical sources. In their first report they write that "both the collapse of Assyria and the gradual erosion of Scythian power may have led to the desertion of a number of strongholds, at least where these lay near the heart of Media's extensive territory" (Stronach 1969, 16). And in their second report they write that "the various buildings appear to have been abandoned in different ways during the period when Median power was still in the ascendant" (Stronach – Roaf 1973, 138). They did not notice, however, that the archaeological data, so badly fitting the classical sources, are on the contrary in perfect agreement with the ancient Mesopotamian sources.

Level II of Godin Tepe, excavated and published by T. Cuyler Young and Louis Levine (1969; 1974), tell us a similar story: one of a progressive growth of public buildings (first the columned hall, then a first row of storerooms, to be eventually complemented by a second row and by fortified towers) during phases 1 to 4, to be followed by "peaceful abandonment" and "squatter occupation" during phase 5.⁷

In their second report the excavators do not dare to provide any (as much approximate) date, but it is evident how similar the architectural structures of Godin II are to Nush-i Jan I, and how similar the sequence of public buildings and squatter occupation is. Elsewhere one of the excavators supports the mid 8th century as the beginning of Godin II and stresses the striking similarities with Nush-i Jan. As to the correspondence of archaeological and historical chronology, a statement by Roaf and Stronach is worth quoting: "A similar [*i.e.*, to Nush-i Jan] sequence occurred at Godin Tepe, where the steady growth of the first monumental concept was followed all too soon by neglect and some sort of peaceful abandonment" (Stronach – Roaf 1973, 138).

Again a similar story is told by the results of the excavations at Baba Jan (Goff 1968; 1969; 1970; 1977; 1978), although the excavator supports a higher chronology with the burgeoning phase III (Manor, Painted Chamber, etc.) in the 9th-8th centuries and the squatter occupation in the 7th — but mostly for historical reasons (assumed Assyrian and Scythian raids). In any case, the first half of the 6th century (be it coincident with, or subsequent to the squatter occupation) seems to be one of complete abandonment.

6. Cf. Sarraf in this volume. The author seems to suggest a Median date for the buildings he excavated, but the radiocarbon datings and the urbanistic layout point to the Sasanian period.

7. Cf. Gopnik in this volume: 7th century "manor"; squatters occupation from mid-6th to early 5th century; abandonment due to "the centralization of power by an expanding Median state".

Since parallels between Baba Jan II and Hasanlu III B-A seem to provide a strong reference point for chronology, it must be underscored that Hasanlu III B and Ziwiyeh "parallel one another in time and that both end in the late 7th century" (according to Robert Dyson 1965, 207), while Hasanlu III A is a period of clear decay corresponding to the 6th century. Therefore the archaeological developments in Mannea seem to have been quite the same as in Media: burgeoning settlements with public buildings in the second half of the 8th century and through the entire 7th century, followed by a period of squatting in the first half of the 6th century.⁸

Such a picture is not fitting at all into the current reconstruction of a Median empire as based on the classical historians, while it is much better fitting into the history of Media as based on ancient Assyrian and Babylonian sources.

3. The impact of the Assyrian and Babylonian texts

The corpus of Assyrian royal inscriptions, dating from Shalmaneser III to Esarhaddon (ca. 850-670 BC) contains by far the largest set of historical data about the Medes. Their value as strictly contemporary records of the growth of the Median polities has been recognized since the start, and their information has been repeatedly framed into a coherent narrative (cf. e.g. Diakonoff 1985a; Cuyler Young 1988).

This narrative has a scarce—if any at all—resemblance to the narrative of Herodotus on the beginning of the Median state. The Zagros chiefs attested in Assyrian records and identified with Herodotus' predecessors of Cyaxares (the Mannean Daiukku, the Kassite Kaštaritu) are neither Median nor relatives (cf. Labat 1961; Lanfranchi 1990, 95-108). Therefore the Assyrian information has been used for its own value, and the Herodotean one has mostly been discarded—when dealing with the period before Cyaxares—as an unreliable patchwork of oral sagas assembled by the later Median royal family in order to better validate her power. The basic point is that in the Assyrian texts the Medes appear as a loose set of tribes, presenting no special features as compared to other Zagros tribes, lead by local chiefs and devoid of political unity or even coordination. It is possible to sketch their way from loose tribes to secondary state formations, but nothing hints at the existence of a royal dynasty whose authority had been accepted by the various tribes.

The assumed unification has been therefore pushed down in the time of Ashurbanipal (ca. 670-630) or his successors (ca. 630-615), but this has been made possible by the absence of Assyrian (or other contemporary) records, an absence that has left the field "free" to an acceptance of the Herodotean account which has proved to be unreliable when contemporary sources are indeed available.

Still different is the case for the following period (ca. 615-550 BC): the Babylonian chronicles contain two important pieces of information, that are in accordance with the story narrated by Herodotus: in 614-610 the Medes under the united leadership of Cyaxares (Umakištar) destroyed the Assyrian capital cities (Grayson 1975, 94); in 550 the Median army, again under the united leadership of Astyages (Ištumegu), deserted in front of the Persian king Cyrus, and the Median capital city Ecbatana was plundered (Grayson 1975, 106). The beginning and end of an independent Median kingdom are therefore explicitly recorded; yet the nature of such a kingdom is not necessarily the same as described by Herodotus as a true and proper empire foreshadowing the Persian empire.

8. Cf. also the valuable review by Brown 1990, as usual influenced by the traditional historical view (612-550 = "imperial period"; abandonment of the manors due to centralization in Ecbatana, etc.).

On the contrary the Babylonian sources for the period ca. 610 to 550 BC do not support such a view. On the one hand, the Babylonian documents keep a sensational silence on a kingdom assumed to share one thousand miles of common border with the Chaldean territory. On the other hand, the few times the Medes are mentioned they are described as an irregular destructive force, culprit for plundering not only the Assyrian cities but the Babylonian cities as well (Nabonidus stela in Schaudig 2001, 514-529). It seems as if the role of the Medes had been to carry out the “dirty job” of the destruction, leaving to Babylonia the more honourable role of reconstruction and political continuity.

On the common basis of the archaeological and textual sources — that we have just sketched in a few words, because already well known — we can now try to suggest a coherent development for Median history in the two centuries ca. 750 to 550 BC.

4. First phase, ca. 750-670: tribes, pastoralism and trade

The first phase, ca. 750-670 BC is already correctly described in current literature, based on Assyrian inscriptions only, and needs no special clarification (cf. Radner in this volume). The Medes were a set of tribes, with local chiefs (called *bēl āli*, “city-lord”, in the Assyrian sources; cf. Lanfranchi in this volume) and no unitary political structures — but for those dictated by common ethnicity (hence the summarizing term of Medes, *Madāyu* in the Assyrian sources) and by common ecological setting and economic resources (rather similar, however, to the other Zagros peoples and polities).

They had “towns”, probably small fortified settlements of the kind that has been archaeologically recovered at Nush-i Jan I, at Baba Jan II I-3, at Godin Tepe II: the “fortified manors” (to use Clare Goff’s term) of local chiefs (or “khans”, to use Cuyler Young’s term, but we could less anachronistically use the definition of “city-lords” that the Assyrians refer to them), with forts and store-houses (as in Godin Tepe and Nush-i Jan), cultic buildings (the “Fire temple” of Nush-i Jan) and ceremonial buildings (the “columned halls” of Nush-i Jan and Baba Jan). The common people were not living inside these manors, nor even necessarily adjacent to them, as far as we know; we can assume that they lived in small villages or pastoral camps.

The basic economic resource was pastoralism, as descriptions of Assyrian booty and tribute confirm. But we have to underscore that sheep-and-goats transhumant pastoralism could sustain the miserable tribes of the Zagros (as it did through the course of millennia), but cannot explain the concentration of wealth that is the reason for the existence of the fortified manors with their mixture of economic treasuring, of armed force, of lordly ceremony. A first factor for economic development was the breeding of such valuable breeds as horses (to be used in warfare) and Bactrian camels (to be used as pack-animals in trade). Proximity to the Assyrian empire (but also to the Urartian, Elamite, and Babylonian states) made the breeding of these valuable animals quite rewarding. Such proximity made also convenient an activity of the warlike Median tribes as auxiliary forces for the imperial armies, as we shall see for the following phase.⁹

But the most important economic factor was the strategic location of the Medes along the main trade route (the so-called Khorasan road) linking Mesopotamia to Central Asia. This factor differentiated the fortunes of the Medes from those of the adjacent and similar peoples of Mannea in the northern Zagros and of Ellipi in the southern Zagros. Although Mannea and Ellipi were more advanced toward statehood than the “remote Medes”, nevertheless the topographical position of the

9. According to Lanfranchi (in this volume) the competition between Assyria and Urartu (in the northern Zagros) or Elam (in the southern Zagros) on the control on the human resources is the main reason for the Assyrian intervention — much more than control on the trade routes.

Medes submitted them to a different kind of interference. The control of the "gate" of the Iranian plateau, the road from Kermanshah to Hamadan, was a major target for Assyria, and the very reason why the Assyrian armies tried to penetrate inside the plateau exactly along such a road and not in more northerly and southerly areas.

Under Sargon II (in the two last decades of the 8th century) the Assyrian presence in Media reached its culmination. Sargon tried to establish a direct administrative control in those far-away regions, according to the provincial system which had already been established in more close and easily accessible lands. The Assyrian governors, however, coexisted with the local city-lords: probably the former had to control the long-distance trade and the collection of tribute, while the latter remained in power for the local affairs (Lanfranchi in this volume). The attempt was unsuccessful on the long run, but it brought about the foundation of Assyrian "cities" in Media, to serve as an economic and ideological reference point for the local people, and as a model for more strictly patterned administrative and political organizations.

It seems clear that the proximity to a great and aggressive empire, namely Assyria, was the basic factor for the transition of the poor pastoral tribes of the Zagros into rich and powerful chiefdoms engaged in war and trade activities, and attracted by the alien model of the lowlands states (Brown 1986). It seems also possible that the specific location of the Medes, as opposed to other peoples of similar starting conditions, could have made this process more effective in their case.

5. Second phase, ca. 670-610: the "secondary states" in function

After Sargon II, Assyria had to renounce to base her control over Media upon the presence of fixed structures (governors' residencies, garrisons, fiscal collectors, etc.), but did not renounce to keep some kind of control. The retreat of Assyria, however, left the space free for the establishment (or re-establishment) of Median secondary states, that could profit of the enduring relationships in running the trade, in providing specialized warriors, and in selling horses. Towards the end of the reign of Esarhaddon the famous treaties (*adê*) are the most detailed set of documents dealing with such relationships. It is obvious that the presence of Median body-guards inside the Assyrian palaces had a sensible effect on reshaping the organization of Median warfare according to more advanced techniques (Liverani 1995; Lanfranchi 1998).

Yet the Esarhaddon treaties are also an important reference point for the assumed existence of an unified Median state. Until 672 the Medes are still divided into many chiefdoms, lead by "city-lords", with no common strategy (some of them allied to Assyria, the others her enemies), even fighting the ones against the others. Nothing could make us to predict that these tribes would become soon a unified state.

But did they really become a unified state? The current reasoning is that the course toward the unified state must have taken place in the period from 670 to 615 because we know that in 614 Media was lead by a common king, namely Cyaxares, and we know from Herodotus that Cyaxares started his reign around 625, with no Assyrian sources to contradict such a "fact". It is true that Herodotus' information about the previous kings and the previous periods have turned out to be unreliable, but in the case of Cyaxares his existence and his role in the fall of Nineveh are proved by the Babylonian chronicle so that also the other information (about his chronology and about his status as king of a unitary state) can be taken for granted as well.

This is just a possibility, a reasonable hypothesis, but not an ascertained fact. The Assyrian sources do not provide any hint for that, nor do the archaeological sources: the 7th century developments at Jush-i Jan and Godin Tepe do not imply any change in the function of those centres — from being the centers of local khans to being the administrative cells of a united state, they rather imply continuity. So the entire reasoning is based on Cyaxares, with the two possibilities both open, either that he was

the king of a unitary Median state already before the fall of Nineveh, or that he was just appointed as a common leader for the unusual task of pulling down the Assyrian empire, and later on he could profit of his success in order to keep some kind of leadership widely accepted by the other local chiefs of the Median tribes.

6. Third phase, ca. 610-550: loose chiefdoms or “pastoral empire”?

Our third phase, from the fall of Nineveh to the victory of Cyrus over Astyages, is the one which is in need of a complete rethinking and new formulation. The archaeological evidence tells us that toward the end of the 7th century (exactly at the fall of the Assyrian empire) the fortified manors and ceremonial centres of Media were dismissed, not because of destruction but because of peaceful abandonment. In the meantime the Medes exit from written sources, to be mentioned again on the occasion of Cyrus' conquest of Ecbatana. The term “dark age” for the period 610-550 seems quite appropriate.¹⁰

The Babylonian account of Median intervention against Assyria —as already anticipated— is one of blame for their destructive power, in the long-standing Mesopotamian view of the peoples of the mountains threatening the cities of the lowlands (Liverani 2001). The idea that the two victors (Babylonia and Media) shared the territory of the Assyrian empire is completely wrong. The Medes assumed the dirty job of destruction, while the Babylonians assumed the role of the restorers. Almost the entire territory of Assyria was inherited by Babylonia, the Medes being left with the Zagros that Assyria had already lost beforehand.

Also the two episodes narrated by the chronicle of the fall of Nineveh and by the Nabonīdus chronicle deserve a reading which goes in the same direction. On the occasion of the fall of Nineveh we are told that the Medes, after the slaughter and sack of the city, went back to their land, while the Babylonian army continued the military operations. We get the impression of a people interested in destruction and booty, but not in territorial gains or even in a rationally planned military strategy, and we suspect that the leader of the Median army, Cyaxares, did not have sufficient authority to keep his troops fighting after the enthusiastic moment of storming.

The doubt becomes a certainty on the occasion of the confrontation of Astyages and Cyrus: the Median leader collected an army in order to attack the Persian king, but the army deserted — perhaps because not sharing the motivations for the attack, but in any case revealing that the authority of Astyages was rather loose and dependant on the free will of his troops and obviously of their local leaders.

It seems clear that the Babylonian information on Media can be read as reference to a state (not to say an empire) only if we read it on the guidelines of the classical sources. But if we are able to forget for a moment such a pre-conceived opinion, the Babylonian sources can much better describe the image of a destructive and untamable force with a rather loose unifying leadership.

The same holds true, to a notable extent, also for the other positive information we have about Media in the period of its assumed hegemony, namely the expedition against Lydia. Also in this case we have the story of a long distance expedition, that got no positive issue because the army (after a

10. Roaf (in this volume) correctly describes the documentary vacuum, but seems rather puzzled in drawing conclusions, convinced as he is that Media was a formal state, with monumental buildings, administration, royal court, etc. Cf. already his position in Roaf 1995, 62: “From this date [585] on the Medes ruled a vast empire stretching from central Turkey to some unidentified region in north-eastern Iran and beyond. Yet almost nothing is known of this period.”

first victory on the battlefield) decided to retreat, in this case frightened by the famous eclipse, and proved unable to take a political advantage from its military power. It is commonly assumed that a military operation in central Anatolia must imply a Median territorial control on the entire area stretching from Ecbatana to the Halys.¹¹ This is not necessarily the case, once again it is just the result of assuming an imperial model for granted.¹² A well known Nabonidus inscription describes the Median coalition as “the *ummān-manda*” plus “the kings going at his sides” (Schaudig 2001, 417). A famous passage in Jer. 51, 27-28 describes a loose coalition of Urartians, Mannans and Scythians under the leadership of “the kings [in the plural!] of Media” as a possible threat against Babylon, most probably on the model of the recent action against Nineveh.¹³ The same coalition under the same leadership could have been active in central Anatolia (at the western borders of Urartu) without implying a previous Median conquest of Urartu that remains completely devoid of any textual basis. Even in the classical sources, notably in Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, we have a king of Armenia,¹⁴ a king of Cappadocia,¹⁵ and of course a king of Cilicia,¹⁶ and Median hegemony is based on alliances with other highlands polities, rather than on territorial control.¹⁷

The Biblical sources for the period between the fall of Nineveh and the fall of Babylon have been rather neglected in recent decades.¹⁸ In the passage in Jer. 51, 11, the prophet hopes that the “kings” of Media will attack and destroy Babylon:

Yahweh has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, because his purpose concerning Babylon is to destroy it.¹⁹

The use of the plural implies that the Medes were led by tribal chiefs, and it is interesting to note that the Greek version of the LXX will correct the plural into singular, obviously influenced by the Greek notion of a unitary Median state. The anti-Babylonian tribal coalition of the Iranian peoples is described in more detail in the passage Jer. 51:27:

Prepare the nations for war against her, summon against her the kingdoms, Urartians, Mannans, Scythians; appoint a recruiting-officer against her, bring up horses like bristling locusts! Prepare

11. At this point I have to say that I see no reason to attribute to the Medes (and not to a local kingdom) the site of Kerkenes Dağ, as strongly asserted by Summers 1997; 2000.

12. Cf. also Rollinger in this volume (Media as “some kind of ‘tribal confederacy’ lacking political stability” and about the Medio-Lydia war and assumed border). Cf. already —among others— Briant 1984b, 40-41.

13. It is interesting to notice that the Mannans, who were pro-Assyrians during the events of 614-612, became part of the Median confederation during the 6th century.

14. *Cyr.* III.2.1 – 43: the king of Armenia continues to reign even under Cyrus.

15. *Cyr.* IV.2.31. The site of Kerkenes Dağ (cf. fn. 11 above) could well be the capital city of such kingdom of Cappadocia, the heir of Tabal.

16. In the Nerglissar Chronicle (557, well after Cyaxares’ war against Lydia, 585) *Ḫumē* is part of the Babylonian empire, Pirindu is independent, and there is no mention of a Median presence in the area.

17. Cf. especially Petit 1990, 28-30: Median system of alliances vs. Cyrus’ institution of provinces and governors.

18. Among earlier studies, cf. especially Smith 1944 (on the period 556-538 BC); cf. his p. 32 on the Medes as a tribal league.

19. I follow (here and in the following passages) the translation of *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Oxford 1991, with minor corrections.

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the nations for war against her: the kings of the Medes, with their governors and deputies, and every land under their dominion!²⁰

Also in this case, the LXX version will correct "the kings" into "the king".

Also Jer. 25, 25-26, foredooming for all the nations a fate similar to that of Jerusalem, just conquered and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, describes the political condition of the highlands in terms of a plurality of loose statehoods:

All the kings of the Cimmerians,²¹ all the kings of Elam, all the kings of the Medes, all the kings of the North, far and near, one after another.

Is this a fair description of a "Median Empire"?²²

We have hardly to remember, at this point, that although literacy had been present in the area of Media during the period of Assyrian penetration, it completely disappeared during the period of the assumed Median hegemony, ca. 610-550.²³ Not only public buildings, but also written administration (the two most obvious markers of statehood) are completely missing in the period of the assumed Median empire.

The interpretation for such an apparently "puzzling" and "contradictory" state of affairs is quite clear and coherent. The "secondary states" of the Medes had grown up at the periphery of the Assyrian empire and largely in function of the Assyrian empire. On the one hand the Zagros tribes had suffered, since time immemorial, from the repeated attacks by the lowland empire of Assyria, bringing about destruction and robberies. But on the other hand the proximity of the empire generated a notable development in their military and political apparatus, a development of their economy in function of trade and of production of strategically valuable items. The Zagros polities were true and proper "secondary" states in the sense that their very existence was dependent on relationships with the empire. Once the exasperated tribes decided to put an end to the aggressive empire, in the same time they put an end to their own political formations and reverted to the stage of tribal pastoralism.

At this point we can go back to the information provided by Herodotus and by Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, in order to read them with this new model in mind. And we find that the stories told by the classical historians speak about features which are distinctive of chiefdoms and not of states: warfare and hunting, hospitality and gift-exchange, inter-marriage and alliance, cruelty and revenge, chivalry and bravery, banquets and conspicuous consumption. And we can figure out the fabulous Ecbatana as something like an enlarged example of those "lordly manors" with whom archaeology has made us familiar. Cyaxares and Astyages were not emperors on the model of the following Persian empire, but just a line of authoritative "chiefs". They got a special prestige (but not an absolute power) from having been the leading family on the occasion of the great national enterprise of pulling down the "empire of evil" that had so long oppressed and exploited the Zagros pastoral tribes.²⁴

20. The passage makes use of Babylonian terminology (*tpsr* = *tupšarru*, *phh* = *pāhatu*, *sgn* = *šaknu*) in order to define the Median state officials.

21. The text has *zmry* (*hapax*), the emendation *gmry* seems obvious.

22. On the date and historical context of the passage cf. Diakonoff 2000.

23. This point has already been made by Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1988, 198. That the Old Persian script must have had a Median model is just another pre-conceived idea based on the classical view.

24. The "model" for the Median hegemony could be framed into the concept of "shadow empires" suggested for Central Asian nomadic imperial confederacies by Barfield 2001, 33-38.

7. Media or Elam at the roots of the Persian empire?

It is commonly taken for granted, on the score of the classical sources, that the Achaemenid empire was built upon a direct inheritance of the Median empire. Cyrus' victory over Astyages is assumed to have handed over to Cyrus an already built empire, stretching from the border of Lydia to central Asia (including Bactria? on the problem of pre-Achaemenid Bactria cf. Briant 1984b). In a sense, the extent of the assumed Median empire has been deduced from the extent of Cyrus' empire (deducting his eventual annexation of Babylonia and Lydia), as if no other explanation could be possible.²⁵

Now, it is a symptomatic case that when the Bisutun inscription was being deciphered, once ascertained that one version was Old Persian and the second was Babylonian, the third enigmatic and undeciphered version was assumed to be Median! This was a reasonable hypothesis, since Bisutun is located in Media and Media was assumed to lie at the basis of the Persian empire. Later on it became sure that the third version was Elamite, that no Median writing system had ever existed,²⁶ and that Elamite remained the administrative language for the Persian archives. This fact is a symptomatic parallel to the fact that the classical sources seem to have attributed to Media a role that in reality belonged to Elam instead.

Obviously, the very geographical location of the core of Persia is identical with the core of Elam. The capital city of Elam, Anšan (at Tall-i Malyan), is a few miles away from Pasargadae and Persepolis and the area left "empty" after the decline of Anšan (cf. de Miroshedji 1985; 1990a; Amiet 1992; Potts 1999, 288-307) was revitalized by the new Persian dynasty. This dynasty was quite independent already in mid-seventh century, when Cyrus I sent an embassy to Ashurbanipal after his conquest of Susiana (cf. lastly Rollinger 1999, 118-121). The idea that Persia had been a "vassal" of Media rests on later classical sources only, and seems rather improbable (Rollinger 1999, 127-135).

Persia is the heir of Elam, not of Media.²⁷ Elam had a long tradition in statehood, in centralized administration, in written records kept in formal archives. Elam had also a long tradition as centre of large coalitions of peoples and states on the Iranian plateau, as centre of a network of relationships with the surrounding areas, not only with Susiana (these relationships being the best known because of the archaeological selection of our information) but also with regions in central, northern, and eastern Iran. Persia inherited the Elamite state organization and administration (cf. Briant 1984b, 92-96; Potts 1999, 306-307), and inherited the Elamite network of relationships, not a quite improbable network centred on the poor and illiterate pastoral tribes of the central Zagros.

In the Greek reconstruction of the sequence of empires, Media was given a role that belonged to Elam. The Greeks—and especially the Ionians of Asia—were well aware of the role of Media since Cyaxares' foray against Lydia, and could have received information through the Lydian channel. They were, on the contrary, completely ignorant about Elamite power and Elamite history, so that Elam was excluded from their sequence of empires and from their reconstruction of the genesis of the Persian empire.

To make a more peculiar case, the famous topos of the Medes as "luxury-loving" as opposed to the frugal and energetic Persians (a topos endowed with relevant moral values in Greek historiography)

25. Högemann 1992, 75, 83-85 describes a territorial empire divided into satrapies (the very same satrapies of the Achaemenid empire).

26. The same holds true for the attempt to find out tablets with Median texts in the Assyrian archives—an attempt that goes on since Sayce 1890 (cf. now Hinz 1986) and until Radner 1999a. By the way, Radner's archive belongs to the period 661-614 and the building was destroyed by a huge fire in 614.

27. It is hardly necessary to remind that Cyrus' title (in his Babylonian "Cylinder", cf. Schaudig 2001, 551-556) is "king of Anšan", certainly not "king of Media"!

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does not fit at all with the Medes as known from Assyrian and Babylonian sources — both the “fierce” Medes (*Madāyu dannūti*) of the military *élites*, or the pastoralists of the common populace. On the contrary the topos fits the Elamites much better, and could even go back to Assyrian literary traditions. Just think of the Elamites at the Halule battle, as described and ridiculed by Sennacherib:

Their (= *i.e.* the Elamites) nobles ... who stood on silver chariots, were bedecked with golden ornaments, wore golden daggers, had their fingers bound with golden rings ... they let their dung go into their chariots, they ran off alone, and fled to their land (Luckenbill 1924, 89).

Yet the role of Media inside the Persian empire remains quite peculiar, at least according to the classical sources (the Old Persian royal inscriptions are more ambiguous on this point),²⁸ and we have to look for an adequate explanation thereof. If the explanation cannot have recourse to the state administration, we can suspect that some reasons did exist in the field of religious and social ideologies.

8. The “revolution” and its ideology

An unbiased evaluation of the extant data leads us to believe that in the period from 610 and 550 BC the tradition of “empires” was preserved by Chaldean Babylonia and by Anšan/Persia, while the Zagros area under Median hegemony reverted to a stage of tribal chiefdoms, with no literacy and no administrative tools, the forts and ceremonial buildings of the previous period being dismissed as no longer in line with a new social and political order.

The turning point from a process towards statehood to a process of re-tribalization is clearly the destruction of the Assyrian empire. On the motivations of such turning point we have no explicit data, but we can advance some hypotheses. It seems clear to me that the Median *élites* living in the “manors” along the trade routes could have been happy with their relationships to Assyria, providing them with additional wealth and power — while the pastoralists living in the highland villages and hamlets could have suffered most of the negative effects of the repeated attacks by the warlike and aggressive empire of the Mesopotamian plains. We can suspect some difference in strategies, or at least in feelings, in the various social groups inside the Median people, and we have to assume that at some point the strategy of reaction and vengeance got the upper hand on the strategy of interaction and profit.

The enraged fury of the mountaineers that annihilated the Assyrian empire left space to fifty years of freedom on the Zagros highlands. Such a “revolution” could have left some traces in the Iranian traditions, and I will repeat here a suggestion that I have already advanced on the occasion of another conference (Liverani 2001, 374-377), by introducing in our debate the foundation legend of the Kurdish people, celebrated every year in their Nowruz (New Year) festival. As well known, the modern Kurds pretend to be descendants of the ancient Medes.

The legend says that there was once a despotic and “satanic” king, Zohak by name, suffering from two tumours (in the shape of snakes) on his shoulders, and used to treat them with the daily application of two children’s brains. The vizier in charge of the affair took pity on the children and let them (actually one out of two, every day) fly to the mountains, providing the king with a sheep brain instead. On the mountains, the children increased in number and gave origin to the Kurdish people.

28. In the Bisutun inscription (I quote from Kent 1953), Darius uses many times the expression “both in Persia and in Media and in the other provinces” (§§ 10, 11, 12, 14, etc.), but when listing his countries Persia is followed always by Elam (§§ 6, 21, 52), not by Media.

Down in the city, Zohak continued his tyrannic rule, until a smith, Kawa by name, exasperated by the execution of his nine sons by the tyrant, decided not to tolerate any longer, and to react. He hoisted his working apron like a flag, summoned from the mountains the escaped children, and all together they attacked the royal palace, put fire on it, and killed the tyrant in its ruins. This happened on March 21, which is the date of the Nowruz, in 612 BC, which is the date of the Median entrance into history, by their destruction of Nineveh.

The historical background of such a foundation legend is highly problematic, of course, since the identification of Medes and Kurds seems more literary than popular, and the precise dating of the event to 612 BC must depend on modern rediscovery of the Babylonian chronicle on the fall of Nineveh (which has been published in 1923). Moreover, the story is just a variant of a well-known chapter in the Persian national epos, as made famous by Firdausi's *Shahnameh*, relating the despotic reign of the monster Zohak (Dahhak) and his defeat by Faridun (Yarshater 1983, 426-429). Yet the story of Zohak and the escaped children is already connected with the origin of the Kurds at least since Mas'udi historical work, written in 943. The most detailed treatment of the "foundation legend" of the Kurds is then recorded in the *Sharafnameh*, a Persian epic of the late 16th century, well before any modern knowledge about the Median destruction of the Assyrian empire.²⁹

Above all, the Kurdish legend is able to evoke the secular struggle between city and highlands, between empire and mountain tribes, the mountaineers' desire for revolt and vengeance against the oppressive rule of the imperial palace, the persistent dream about a spring during which the oppressed people will finally come down from their refuges, punish the tyrant and proclaim freedom. Such might have been the feelings of the Median tribes when they descended from the mountains in order to fight against the "empire of evil". On the other hand, it is not impossible that a decisive event like the destruction of the Assyrian empire left some traces in the Iranian legendary corpus.

A final question could be asked at this point, even though the answer is not easy at all. The question is: was the enraged, destructive action of the mountain tribes against the "empire of evil" connected to—or motivated by—some early stage of Mazdean religious ideology,³⁰ or even to the very start of Zoroaster's preaching? This is hard to say, in the lack of appropriate records; but it could explain why the role of the Medes was acknowledged as quite peculiar by the later Achaemenid rulers. And the traditional (or "low") dates for Zoroaster's "revelation" either 300 or 258 years before the collapse of the Persian empire in 330 BC (lastly Gnoli 2000) would take us to a date in 630 or in 588 BC, i.e. slightly before or slightly after the destruction of the Assyrian empire. In the first case Zoroaster's religious revolution could have been a cause, in the second case an issue, of the socio-political upheaval. In any case it is a remarkable fact that two lines of research completely unconnected to each other—one based on later Iranian and Classical traditions, one based on contemporary Assyrian sources—both arrive at fixing a pivotal and "revolutionary" period in Iranian history in the period ca. 620-550, the period of the Median hegemony and of Zoroaster's life (618-541 is the final choice by Gnoli 2000, 165).

29. Edited by Charmoy 1868, 16-17 (Mas'udi version of the legend), 32-33 and 343-345 (comments on the *Sharafnameh* version); 1870, 25-27 and 208-209 (translation of the pertinent passage).

30. The social (we could say "populistic") aspects of Mazdean ideology are not denied by Gnoli 1980, 187 and 228, although considered as a side aspect of a "revolution" that was basically religious and ethical.

THE RISE AND FALL OF MEDIA

Mario Liverani

1. The image of Media in the classical sources

Before the archaeological discovery of the Assyrian royal palaces and cuneiform archives, in the mid 19th century, the history of the Near Eastern civilizations in the period before the Achaemenid Empire was based on the classical and biblical sources only. The Medes, like the Assyrians and the Babylonians were known from information contained in the works of Herodotus and of later historians, who had no direct knowledge on those peoples and empires, but collected information in the learned circles of the Achaemenid empire itself. This information was neither direct nor coeval, nor even based on sound archival or historical materials. No wonder that the fresh evidence coming from the archaeological discoveries of the past century —both in Assyria and in Babylonia— resulted in a complete reassessment of the history of those countries. If we compare now the histories of Assyria and Chaldea written before the mid 19th century, with those current nowadays, we have to admit that they do not resemble each other at all. In other terms: the information available to Herodotus and to his heirs had no reliability, and is now used in order to reconstruct Greek historiography and not Assyrian or Babylonian history.

یادداشت‌هایی در باره مادها و پادشاهی شان^۱

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چکیده

انتشار کتاب تداوم امپراتوری: آشور، ماد و پارس توسط رولینگر و روآف در ۲۰۰۳ میلادی از تمرکز مجدد بر دیدگاه سنتی شاهنشاهی ماد در تاریخ باستان خاور نزدیک خبر می‌داد. نویسندگان این کتاب، جایگاه مرکزی را که مادها به‌طور سنتی در پژوهش‌های اخیر به‌عنوان یک جزء جدایی‌ناپذیر در تداوم شاهنشاهی‌های باستانی خاور نزدیک از نوآشوری تا ایرانی داشته‌اند، بازبینی می‌کند. شواهد مربوط به کتاب مقدس و هرودوت برای تاریخ دوره حساس، اما ناشناخته، حدود ۶۵۰ تا ۵۵۰ پ.م. دیدگاه سنتی شاهنشاهی مادها، که عمدتاً به روایت هرودوت از سلسله تأسیس شده توسط دیوکس (۹۶۱-۱۰۷) وابسته است، بازبینی برداشت‌های یونانی، اغلب کلیشه‌ای، از شاهنشاهی ایرانی هخامنشی در اوج آن است به عبارت دیگر، برای یونانیان که در قرن پنجم و چهارم می‌زیستند، این بازسازی گذشته، بر اساس درکی از معاصر بود.

^۱ - این مقاله ترجمه و بازنشریست از :

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NOTES ON THE MEDES AND THEIR "EMPIRE"
FROM JER 25:25 TO HDT 1.134*

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The 2003 publication of *Continuity of Empire (?): Assyria, Media, Persia* (ed. G. Lanfranchi, M. Roaf, and R. Rollinger) heralds a renewed focus on the traditional view of the Median Empire in ancient Near Eastern history. The contributions to that volume revisit the central place that the Medes have traditionally held in modern scholarship as an integral component in a continuum of ancient Near Eastern empires from the Neo-Assyrian to the Persian. From that volume's impetus, here are offered observations on some relevant biblical and Herodotean evidence for the history of the critical, yet poorly understood, period c. 650-550 BCE—from the denouement of the Assyrian Empire to the rise of the Persian Empire under Cyrus, i.e., the apparent zenith of Median power. The traditional view of the Median Empire, dependent primarily upon Herodotus' account of the dynasty founded by Deioces (1.96-107), is a retrojection of Greek conceptions, often stereotypical, of the Achaemenid Persian Empire at its height. In other words, for Greeks writing in the fifth and fourth centuries, it was reconstruction of the past based on a (mis)understanding of the contemporary.

Mario Liverani's contribution to *Continuity of Empire* highlights the use of the plural "kings" of the Medes in Jer 25:25, 51:11, and 51:27-28 in the historical context of the late seventh and early sixth centuries.¹ In

* It is my pleasure to offer these brief notes in a volume honoring my esteemed teacher, Prof. Barry Eichler. This paper is a significantly modified version of a presentation given at the conference in Barry's honor, "Tablet and Torah: Mesopotamia and the Biblical World," in March 2009.

¹ Liverani, "Rise and Fall of Media." Note especially his remarks (8-9) on the switch to the singular "king" in the Septuagint (influenced by Greek historiography); the translation followed herein is that of the NRSV, available via several online resources. Compare Tuplin, "Medes in Media," 234-35. Note also Diakonoff, "The Near East on the Eve of Achaemenian Rule," 223-30, though Diakonoff's focus is different from that of Liverani and that presented here. The rhetorical and stylized language of these passages must be acknowledged.

conjunction with the Assyrian and Babylonian evidence these passages provide a comprehensible depiction of the geopolitical situation across northern Iran: a plurality of kings, rather than one singular king, ruling a unified, centralized, organizational empire. In an inscription of Nabonidus from the Eḫullul temple in Sippar, for example, the king of the *umman-manda* (i.e., the Medes) is accompanied by additional “kings going at his side” (LUGAL.MES *alik idišu*).² This description fits well with other evidence describing the Medes of this period and will be revisited below.

In Assyrian sources there are, with two potential exceptions, no named Median kings. The first Mede attested by name, a certain Ḫanaširuka, occurs in an inscription dated c. 820 (reign of Šamši-Adad V). Ḫanaširuka is associated with a royal city, Sagbita, from which it may be extrapolated that he was a king, though he is not explicitly labeled as such.³ The other prospective exception is manifest in an inscribed bronze plaque attributed to a certain Šilisuḫ. There are a number of problems with this intriguing inscription: its reading, its interpretation, its provenience, its date, and thus its historical context.⁴ It was found near Hamadan; based on internal evidence, Diakonoff (followed by Radner) associates it with Bit-Ištar, the ruler of which is labeled a city-lord in the royal inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon.

The Šilisuḫ plaque contains reference to a king (obv. 2 and 8), though it is not evident that the king mentioned in the inscription is the Šilisuḫ who apparently commissioned it. The word “king” does not accompany Šilisuḫ’s name as a title. Unless one assumes that the king referenced is the Assyrian king, an assumption that would lead to other questions, it is unclear to whom else it could refer. The assumption that Šilisuḫ was an authority figure seems straightforward enough, but he

² Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 416–17 i 7–29 (l. 25 for LUGAL.MES *alik idišu*). For the use of the pejorative *umman-manda*, see Reade, “Why Did the Medes Invade Assyria?” 153 and Rollinger, “The Western Expansion,” 297–305. Note also Zawadzki, *The Fall of Assyria and Median-Babylonian Relations*, chapter VI.

³ Grayson, *RIMA 3*, 185–86 A.0.103.1 iii 27–36; Radner, “Assyrian View,” 41. Whether or not Ḫanaširuka was considered a king by the Assyrians, it is impossible to determine whether Assyrian labels matched Median usage.

⁴ The superabundance of qualifications in this section reflects the uncertain interpretation of this inscription, which is treated only in brief here. See for discussion Radner, “Median Sanctuary,” 119–30. The inscription was (re-)published by Diakonoff, “Cuneiform Charter,” 51–59; see Diakonoff’s comments on the original find (and publication) by E. Herzfeld, with references. Note also Muscarella, *Bronze and Iron*, 238–40.

is otherwise unattested and thus his position cannot be corroborated. Locating Bit-Istar—if that is the correct attribution—in Median territory and, by extension, assuming that Šilisruḥ (king or not) was also Median is a sensible, but certainly not ineluctable, progression.⁵ Radner also notes a city-lord of Bit-Istar named Burburazu during Sargon II's reign. If Burburazu is correctly identified as a Kassite name and if the name reflects its bearer's ethnicity, its etymology testifies to the apparently not uncommon (nor surprising) phenomenon of city lords of varying ethnicities in the Zagros region.⁶

Appellatives of the Medes vary, and it is not clear what defines particular groups of people as Median. The Assyrians generally and consistently, however, label Medes as living in settlements ruled by *bēl alāni* ("city lords"). There are dozens of these city lords in the Zagros region mentioned in the extant documentation from Tiglath-pileser III's and Sargon II's reigns.⁷ In the case of the Median *bēl alāni* in the eighth and seventh centuries, their official position appears to be on par with tributary kings in the Assyrian organizational structure, as evinced, *inter alia*, by their occurrence in *adē*-agreements. A key component observed with the title *bēl alāni* is its hereditary, i.e., dynastic, nature. This ought to be considered when modeling the confluence of Median power in conjunction with the overthrow of Assyria and its aftermath in northern Iran. The coalescence of broader authoritative power presumably had its origins in the interpersonal relationships among these Median *bēl alāni*.

The transition from a collection of independent (at least from each other) Median city-lords to the force arrayed against Assyria in the 610s

⁵ Radner, "Median Sanctuary," 122–23 asserts that the name Šilisruḥ is neither Indo-European nor Semitic and that the "king" in this inscription is Šilisruḥ. Note Diakonoff, "Cuneiform Charter," 61: "We suppose that Šilisruḥ is a name belonging to an aboriginal language, perhaps akin to Elamite."

⁶ For Burburazu, see Radner, "Median Sanctuary," 123 and R. Schmitt (*PNA* 1/2, 353). Another example of this phenomenon is Humbareš, the city lord of Median Naḥsimarti (see Radner, "Assyrian View," 60). That an Elamite—inferred from the apparently Elamite name (see *PNA* 2/1, 478)—held a position of authority in a Median area poses many questions about Assyrian administration and Median-Elamite connections, if this instance is not simply anomalous.

⁷ See especially Lanfranchi, "Assyrian Expansion," 87–89, 94–96, and 112–16 on *bēl alāni* (especially 95 for its shifting use over time in the Neo-Assyrian period) and Radner, "Assyrian View," 49–50. Use and alteration of labels in these cases and others in the Neo-Assyrian period is a topic far beyond the scope of this paper and one in need of attention.

under Umakištar/Cyaxeres remains unclear. Liverani has argued that the traditional view, so heavily influenced by Herodotus and the Greek tradition, is not only skewed but wholly inaccurate.⁸ In Liverani's view there was no transition per se—i.e., an evolution from city lords to regional rulers (or kings) in some sort of hierarchical rubric—but simply a short-term unification under a primary Median king to strike at a vulnerable Assyria in the 610s and, thereafter, a rapid return to the status quo as pertained during the eighth and early seventh centuries.

Yet such a reconstruction does not allow for a Median entity that appears to have been a major force in the late seventh and early sixth centuries through the rise of Cyrus. The deconstruction of the Median "Empire" has yet to be reconciled not only with the Medes' prominent role in Assyria's downfall but also with their function as a significant power on Babylonia's eastern frontier well into the sixth century—considered as such in both Babylonian and Greek sources—as well as the Medes' distinctive positions in the military and administration of the Persian Empire subsequently. It is one thing to attribute Median involvement in Assyria's overthrow to a short-term coalition of Median (and other Iranian?) kings; it is another to extrapolate from such a coalition to a significant force—however labeled, even if many now would hesitate to term it an "empire"⁹—that appears to have played a major role in the ancient Near Eastern calculus of power for at least sixty years before Cyrus' conquest. There is much that remains opaque, both in the interpretation of the extant source material itself and in its application to historical reconstruction.

To approach this question from another perspective, one must also consider the Persians' geographically proximate forerunners in Elam.

⁸ See Liverani, "Rise and Fall of Media," 9 for just such an assessment, with which he concludes: "Once the exasperated tribes decided to put an end to the aggressive [i.e., Assyrian] empire, in the same time they put an end to their own political formations and reverted to the stage of tribal pastoralism." Note Radner, "Assyrian View," 61–62 on the significance of the lack of extant references to the Medes in documentation from the reign of Ashurbanipal; see also Lanfranchi, "Assyrian Expansion," 116–17, and Reade, "Why Did the Medes Invade Assyria?"

⁹ Rollinger's emphasis, "The Western Expansion," 296–305, on the Medes' stereotypical place in Nabonidus' inscriptions is appropriate; note also Jursa, "Observations on the Problem of the 'Median Empire,'" 169–79. For a classic treatment on defining empire, see Doyle's perspective on informal vs. formal and annexation vs. control, *Empires*, 30–47 (esp. 32). Note also Parker, *The Mechanics of Empire*, esp. 8–13 and 253–60 on such questions with regard to Assyria's northern frontier.

Our knowledge of Elam at this period is also fraught with uncertainties. No less than six (at a minimalist counting) kings and rulers may be identified circa 650–550 BCE; their relationships, chronology, and extent of rule are all poorly understood, if at all traceable. Anchoring these individuals in a historical framework, within a wider rubric termed "Elamite-Persian ethnogenesis" or the like, has proven a frustrating task, despite its clear import for understanding the Persians' rise.¹⁰ That Jer 25:25's "kings of Elam" (emphasis on the plural) describes the geo-political situation in southwestern Iran well enough does not mean, of course, that the passage's corollary "kings of the Medes" for northern Iran is necessarily accurate.¹¹ But when greater primacy is given to the Near Eastern sources than to the Greek, it strikes a more consistent chord.

Cyrus' conquest of Astyages and the Medes is, again, known to us mainly from Herodotus and the Greek tradition. How does one correlate Cyrus' conquests of the Medes, the Lydians, the Babylonians, and, further, much of the rest of the Near East as well as tracts of south central

¹⁰ As a geo-political term, "Elam" in this period is essentially indeterminate and is applied herein mainly as a cultural and geographic term. For an excellent overview and discussion of the relevant issues, see Henkelman, *Other Gods*, chapter 1, with references. Note also the contributions to Alvarez-Mon and Garrison, eds., *Elam and Persia*. This rough accounting does not include the seemingly innumerable tribal groups of varying ethnicities in these areas; see the remarks of Henkelman, *Other Gods*, 36–37.

One example of such groups is the Martenians (¹⁷*mar-te-na-a*) of ABL 879 obv. 3 and 9, whom one is tempted to connect with Herodotus' Persian tribe, the Mardians (1.125). Such facile etymological bridges are always to be approached warily, of course, and this is no exception—not least among the difficulties is the geographic assignment of these groups. See Briant, *History of the Persian Empire*, 728–29 for discussion of the Mardians in classical sources and also Briant, *État et pasteurs*, 61–62, as well as Weissbach, "Μάρδοι," 1647–51 and Kaletsch, "Mardoï," 876. To illustrate the problem of etymologically based links—independent of the attendant, historical questions—note the attested *Martenoi* of the Arabian desert (Grohmann, "Martenoi," 2000).

¹¹ To recall the rhetorical character of some of these passages, cf. Jer 49:38, where the singular "king of Elam" is used, but in conjunction with plural "officials" (so the NRSV translation); contrast, e.g., May and Metzger (eds.), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha*, 981, which translates "princes" for *sārīm*. It is difficult to ascertain what significance, if any, such interchange may imply with respect to biblical (or, at least, Jeremiah's) perspective on Elam. See, e.g., Holladay, *Jeremiah I*, 387–89. I thank Prof. Clyde C. Smith for sharing his insights on this passage.

Asia?¹² The ancient Near Eastern sources (primarily Babylonian royal inscriptions and chronicles) present their own obstacles, but they offer critical chronology and perspective to balance the Greek tradition. What resounds through the sources, in varying degrees, is the prominent place afforded to the Medes both during Cyrus' conquests (e.g., Mazares and Harpagus in Asia Minor; Hdt 1.156-177) and during the flourishing empire, in context of the Achaemenid military and administration (e.g., the Medes' prominent place alongside the Persians on the Apadana reliefs).

The majority weight of *Continuity of Empire* may thus be said to have stripped the Medes of much of their "empire," though contrarian voices therein still maintain a case, especially for that nebulous but critical period under discussion here.¹³ Herodotus needs revisiting in this context, especially his description of Median rule at 1.134.3:

Ἐπὶ δὲ Μήδων ἀρχόντων καὶ ἦρχε τὰ ἔθνηα ἀλλήλων,
 συναπάντων μὲν Μήδοι καὶ τῶν ἄγγιστα οἰκούντων σφίσι,
 οὗτοι δὲ αὖ τῶν ἑμιούρων, οἱ δὲ μάλα τῶν ἐχομένων,
 κατὰ τὸν αὐτῶν δὴ λόγον καὶ οἱ Πέρσαι τιμῶσι.
 προέβαινε γὰρ δὴ τὸ ἔθνος ἄρχων τε καὶ ἐπιτροπεύων.

When the Medes held dominion, likewise¹⁴ did the nations rule each other. The Medes ruled all together and (directly) those living nearest; and these, further, ruled their neighbors and so again, in turn, they theirs, according to the very same principle whereby the Persians esteem others. So indeed it proceeded, each nation both ruling and governing (its neighbor).

¹² Only the conquest of Babylon may be firmly dated, i.e., October, 539. The conquest of Astyages may be dated to 553 or 550, with the latter (based on the Chronicle) typically given greater credence. The date of the conquest of Lydia may, formally, be considered wide open; a date in the 540s (though no longer 547/546) is typically applied. See Briant, *History of the Persian Empire*, 35-38 and Kuhrt, *Persian Empire* 1, 53 n. 5 (and all her chap. 3 for text excerpts, discussion, and references). With regard to the Lydian conquest in particular note also Stronach, "Campaign of Cyrus the Great," 163-73 and Kollinger, "The Median 'Empire,'" 51-65.

¹³ Roaf, "The Median Dark Age" and Stronach, "Independent Media"; cf. Genito, "Archaeology of the Median Period," 317-26.

¹⁴ This "likewise" (or perhaps better, "similarly"—rendering Greek καὶ here) refers to the immediately preceding, parallel point, i.e., how the Persians valued peoples relative to how far removed from the Persians they lived. Greek text from the online Thesaurus Linguae Graecae.

Despite the compressed Greek—and the acknowledged problems with its translation and interpretation (especially the last sentence¹⁵)—Herodotus' depiction contains possibilities for reconciling the Medes' prominence during and after the fall of Assyria with their previously thin record. If one leaves aside the search for a formal, organizational structure of a Median "empire," since one seems unlikely to be found, a more productive approach converges upon questions of influence or authority, and the exercise thereof.¹⁶

Envisaging Median "domination" via a system of hierarchical, informal (but de facto) rule provides a model with which to work. Ctesias' *Persica*, the extant parts of which exhibit no shortage of interpretive difficulties,¹⁷ supports such a perspective. Ctesias presupposes a close relationship between the Medes and northeastern Iran; Cyrus' victory over Astyages resulted in the subsequent submission of the Hyrcanians, Parthians, Scythians, and Bactrians, who were subject to Astyages previously.¹⁸ If this report has any basis in historical reality, it provides a rubric for expansion of Persian authority into northeastern

¹⁵ See in particular Tuplin, "Medes in Media," 227–28 and 243–45 for discussion of this passage and its problems. Tuplin argues that the last nine words (προέβαινε γὰρ δὴ τὸ ἔθνος ἄρχον τε καὶ ἐπιτροπέου) "should either be obelised or deleted as a gloss" (*ibid.*, 245). My translation follows the sense of How and Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus*, 116, taking ἔθνος ("people, nation") as distributive; they translate: "each nation took its place in order as ruler and administrator"; similarly Liddell-Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, προβάινω 1470 mng. 3. The verb προέβαινε is here rendered impersonally.

¹⁶ Tuplin, "Medes in Media," 234 and 242–43 argues for use of the word "domination" rather than "empire" or "hegemony" or the like. Note also Vogelsang, *Rise and Organisation of the Achaemenid Empire*, esp. 177. Accepting, even with all appropriate caveats, Herodotus' description here does not necessitate endorsement of his story of the foundation of Deioeces' power (1.96–107), whatever historical elements may be couched within. Those difficulties, including the infamous Scythian interlude, have been treated extensively elsewhere; see, e.g., Kuhrt, *Persian Empire* 1, chap. 2 for discussion and references.

¹⁷ For text and commentary, see Lenfant, *Ctésias de Cnide*, and note Lanfranchi's remarks, "Assyrian Expansion," 118.

¹⁸ Lenfant, *Ctésias de Cnide*, 108–9 (text) and Ixi (discussion) with notes; Ctesias uses the more generic term *archōn* ("ruler"). See also Briant, *L'Asie centrale*, chapter 3 and Vogelsang, *Rise and Organisation of the Achaemenid Empire*, 210–11. The voluntary submission of these regions may be seen as parallel to those of the Trans-Jordan regions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire as relayed in the Cyrus Cylinder (lines 28–30; Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 553 and 556); see Briant, *L'Asie centrale*, 36.

Iran. By extension, it offers specific (and expected) names that one may associate with Herodotus' generic description of Median power at 1.134.3, as quoted above.

Based simply on brief passages in Herodotus and Ctesias, it may be precipitous to assume that Median authority extended to such points eastward. But, at the risk of unwarranted conflation of the source material, one may suggest that the rulers of the Hyrcanian, Parthian, Scythian, and/or Bactrian *ethnea* (to use the Greek term) were the "kings going at his side"—of the king of the *umman-manda* in Nabonidus' Sippar Cylinder—i.e., those who rode in support of, and presumably at the behest of, the Median king. The plurality of kings mentioned in Jeremiah ("kings of the Medes") fits such a reconstruction: Median domination over multiple, neighboring peoples, each of whom owed allegiance, directly or indirectly to a Median overlord, chief, or king, however the Median ruler styled himself.

It must be emphasized that there is no record, and it should not be presumed, that the Median kings ever used the title "king of kings."¹⁹ However, the relationships described in Babylonian and Greek sources imply subordination to a Median ruler, regardless of which specific titles are applied. The phenomenon as it related to a period of Median primacy finds echoes in classical sources via acknowledgment of other kings, for example, of Armenia, Cappadocia, and Cilicia.²⁰ One does not need to attribute a "Cyrus-sized" king to conceptualize the phenomenon at work nor does one need to insist upon consistency of specific titulary in the varied source material.

The testimony for multiple kings of the Medes—in Jer 25:25 and other passages, biblical or otherwise—may be accepted at face value, if with qualification. In conjunction, Herodotus' description of Median dominion at 1.134.3 is more credible than his account of Deioces' dynasty. The evidence from Ctesias discussed above may also be read in support of a Median king holding authority over other regions without the structure of an organizational empire. Such a construct preserves Median reputation as a major power and concurrently explains why the trap-

¹⁹ I demur from the question of the Median origin, let alone use, of that title, regardless of purported etymological indications from Old Persian royal inscriptions; see Tuplin, "Medes in Media," 230–31 with references. Note Seux, *Épithètes royales akkadiennes et sumériennes*, 318–20 for the long history of the title *šar šarrāni* in Akkadian texts.

²⁰ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 3.1.31; 3.2.1–43; and 4.2.31. See Liverani, "Rise and Fall of Media," 8 and note also Petit, *Satrapes et satrapies*, 20–66 and Radner, "Assyrian View," 49–50 for the phenomenon in Neo-Assyrian times (e.g., kings in Cilicia and Cyprus).

pings of a centralized empire have not been found. For reasons that we may only speculate, the Medes did not (or could not) impose a centralized, bureaucratic structure on their dominion. That throws into greater relief the achievements of Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius in having done so with the Persian Empire, and it confirms the opinions expressed so forcefully in many contributions to *Continuity of Empire*: that continuity in the workings of empire into the Persian period should be sought mainly via the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Elamites.

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چکیده

این مقاله نور تازه‌ای بر این پرسش داغ می‌افکند که کوروش در سال ۵۴۷ قبل از میلاد به کدام کشور حمله کرد، بنابراین یک بار دیگر با نام شکسته رویدادنامه نبونعید مواجه می‌شویم. قرائت نشانه(ها) بسیار تحت تأثیر منابع کلاسیک متأخر بوده است که شکست کروزوس را در برابر کوروش در حدود سال ۵۴۷ قبل از میلاد نشان می‌دهد. یک نظریه، بیان می‌کند که هیچ قرائت قابل اعتمادی را نمی‌توان با قطعیت مطلق استنباط کرد. به جای قرار دادن مبداء تاریخ برای آناتولی و پارس-چیش‌پیش، منحصراً بر روی این شواهد مبهم، رویکرد جدیدی به این موضوع آزردهنده پیشنهاد می‌شود. در نهایت در این مقاله به این نتیجه می‌رسیم که منطقه اورارتو قانع‌کننده‌ترین فرضیه تاکنون را به تصویر می‌کشد.

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ONCE MORE THE NABONIDUS CHRONICLE (BM 35382) AND CYRUS' CAMPAIGN IN 547 BC

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Abstract

This paper sheds new light on the hotly debated question of which country Cyrus attacked in 547 BC, therefore dealing once more with the broken toponym of the Nabonidus Chronicle obv. ii 16. The reading of the sign(s) has been highly influenced by later classical sources, which place Croesus' defeat against Cyrus somewhere around the corresponding year 547 BC. A collation has made it clear that no reliable reading can be inferred with absolute certainty. Instead of placing a cornerstone of Anatolian and early Persian-Teispid history exclusively on this ambiguous evidence, a new approach to this vexed topic is suggested. The contextualisation of the whole text passage leads to the conclusion that the region of Urartu depicts the most convincing hypothesis so far.

Introduction

After more than 100 years of intense debate on how to interpret the partly broken toponym in line obv. ii 16 of the so-called Nabonidus Chronicle (BM 35382), some very recent publications claim to have finally solved the problem by being able to definitely 'read' and identify the country that was the object of Cyrus' campaign in Nabonidus' ninth year, i.e. 547 BC. Since the debate and the various 'identifications' of the toponym have considerable repercussions on the question of how to reconstruct Anatolian and early Persian-Teispid history in the middle and second half of the 6th century BC, it is of utmost importance to clarify what we definitely know and what we do not know with certainty, to highlight the borderline between 'reading' and 'interpreting' and to make apparent the premises of our reconstructions. Moreover, it is also salient to demonstrate how possible solutions of the vexed problem could be achieved, thus putting the debate on much more substantial and promising ground. This paper will illustrate that any assumed 'definite' reading of the crucial passage is driven by presuppositions that trace back to chronological speculations of much later classical sources. Whereas earlier contributions appear to have been conscious of this connection, more recent articles seem to be fairly ignorant about this interdependency, hence confounding 'fact' and 'claim', 'proof' and 'hypothesis'.

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This paper will proceed in three steps. In the first section we will focus on the basis of the entire discussion, i.e. the classical chronographic tradition and the immanent problems related to how classical scholars achieved a date for Cyrus' campaign against Croesus. In the second section we will present an overview of the history of the various 'decipherments' of the broken toponym of the Nabonidus Chronicle obv. ii 16. In the third and last section we will suggest a solution on how to interpret the broken toponym that is not primarily based on 'reading' but on contextualising the relevant passage of the Nabonidus Chronicle.

The Nabonidus Chronicle and the Classical Chronographic Tradition: How the Ancients Dated Cyrus' Campaign against Croesus

For over 100 years, the correct reading of the broken toponym in line obv. ii 16 of the Nabonidus Chronicle has remained the subject of a lively and not yet adequately resolved debate.¹ The cuneiform tablet reports events under Nabonidus (556–539 BC), the last Neo-Babylonian king, and the early years of Cyrus' reign (ca. 559–530 BC), but was written nearly 200 years thereafter in Hellenistic times.² For Nabonidus' ninth year, i.e. 547 BC, Grayson offered the following reading and translation:

15: ... *ina*ⁱⁱⁱ *Nisanni*^m *Ku-naš*^{šar} *šar*^{kur} *Par-su ummāni-šú id-ke-e-[m]a*
 16: *šap-la-an*^{uru} *Ar-ba-šil*^{id} *Idiqlat i-bir-ma ina*ⁱⁱⁱ *Aiiari ana*^{kur} *Lu'-u(d-di(?)) ...*†
 17: *šarra-šú iduk bu-šá-a-šú il-qi šu-lit šá nam-ni-šú <<AŠ>> lu ú-še-lí [...]*³

15: In the month Nisan Cyrus (II), king of Parsu, mustered his army and
 16: crossed the Tigris below Arbail. In the month Iyyar [he marched] to Ly[di]a†.
 17: He defeated its king, took its possessions, (and) stationed his own garrison (there) [...].⁴

In the appendix Grayson stated that he had collated the original tablet once more and therefore changed the reading of the toponym into ^{kur} *Lu!-ú!?!-[du? il-lí]k⁵*. This is – not very surprisingly – exactly the Babylonian writing of the toponym (*Lu-ú-du*) that became apparent in Grayson's times, whereas earlier interpretations based their 'readings' on the Assyrian way of writing the name of the Anatolian land

¹ An overview of the enormous amount of literature can be found in Cargill 1977; Rollinger 1993, 188–97; 2008, 56–57; Kokkinos 2009b, 1–2; Räthel 2015. Amélie Kuhrt also commented on this issue: Kuhrt 1988, 120, n. 62.

² Waerzeggers 2015, 96, 115–16.

³ Akkadian text according to Grayson 1975, 107.

⁴ English translation according to Grayson 1975, 107.

⁵ Grayson 1975, 282.

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(*Lu-ud-du*) that was well known from the very beginning of the debate.⁶ However, Grayson discloses the fact that the 'traces are ambiguous' and argues further that 'such a reading is suggested by historical probability rather than any clear indication from the traces'. Reflecting on this matter it is crucial to show why the connection with Lydia was suggested in the first place. For that very reason those written sources which contain a date for Cyrus' victory over Croesus, have to be put under scrutiny. Hence, not only the above quoted text passage of the Nabonidus Chronicle will be discussed but also the Greek chronographic tradition.

Herodotus, one of the earliest and in any case most substantial Greek sources for Croesus' defeat, details the story of Croesus and informs about Cyrus the Great's conquest of Lydia with its capital Sardis. When exactly Herodotus (1. 86. 1) thought this to have happened, remains unclear.⁷ To be precise, Herodotus offers an elaborate relative chronology for the Mermnad dynasty of the Lydian kings, providing the length of each of the five Lydian kings' reigns from Gyges to Croesus.⁸ But he does not clarify the date of Croesus' defeat and thus the end of the Lydian dynasty any further. Even though numerous connections with primary sources of the Neo-Assyrian empire and Egypt exist,⁹ no sound absolute chronology can be established. The case of Gyges in the Neo-Assyrian sources gives an illustrating example: Prism A (ii 111–120) of Ashurbanipal's (669–631/27 BC) annals¹⁰ refers to Gyges' death though without providing a precise date. Therefore, the date of this text can only offer a *terminus ante quem*, namely before 645 or 643 BC.¹¹ Assuming that the other references to Gyges in Prism B (ii 86b–iii 4) and F (F ii 10–20) imply that Gyges was still alive then, these texts in turn provide a *terminus post quem*. Consequently, Gyges must have died between 645/3 BC and 649/8 BC¹² or 646/5 BC.¹³ For the sake of convenience modern scholars assume a date of about 645 BC for Gyges'

⁶ Bagg 2007, 158; Zadok 1985, 213; cf. also below n. 61.

⁷ Bichler 2004, 213.

⁸ Herodotus 1. 15. 1 (Gyges reigned 38 years); 1. 16. 1 (Ardys 49 years, Sadyattes 12 years); 1. 25. 1 (Alyattes 57 years); 1. 86. 1 (Croesus 14 years).

⁹ For example, Payne and Wintjes 2016, 120–21.

¹⁰ For an up-to-date transliteration and English translation, see the website of the RINAP project: <<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/rinap5/corpus>>.

¹¹ These dates can be inferred from the mention of the *limmu* official Šamaš-dānīnani. As the *limmu* list of the Neo-Assyrian empire only stretches from 910 until 649 BC (Millard 1994), there is some uncertainty about the precise date of Šamaš-dānīnani's office. A discussion of the exact date can be found in Cogan and Tadmor 1981, 230; Reade and Walker 1982, 120–22; Fuchs 2010, 421 (with the suggestions 644, 643 or 642 BC).

¹² Texts of the version B either name the *limmu* official Bēšunu or Aḫu-ilāya, which according to Millard (1994, 54, 62, 91) means 649 and 648 BC respectively.

¹³ Texts of Prism F all name the official Nabū-šar-aḫḫēšu, who has been assigned either to the year 646 or 645 BC: Aynard 1957, 12–15; Fuchs 2010, 421.

death.¹⁴ Using Herodotus' information about the length of the reign of the other four Mermnad kings (132 years) the dynasty would have ended – at least in theory – in 513 BC! An apparently impossible result, as Cyrus only lived until 530 BC.¹⁵ Herodotus' numbers for the reigns of the Mermnad kings are obviously too high and have therefore been regarded critically concerning their historical value. These numbers are understood at least partially as constructs by Herodotus himself or his source(s).¹⁶ For that very reason, a combination of Herodotus' relative chronology of the Lydian kings together with the mentioned Lydian kings in primary Akkadian and Egyptian sources cannot form a methodologically sound basis for the absolute chronology of the Mermnad dynasty.¹⁷ New research on the Lydian coins of Croesus and his father Alyattes has opened the possibility to use archaeological contexts to date both regents according to the pottery chronology. As a result, new dates have been proposed, which assign Alyattes' reign a range from about 635 BC until shortly after 585 BC and date Croesus' ascension to the Lydian throne already in the 580s BC.¹⁸

Modern consensus on the date 547 BC for Croesus' defeat relies exclusively on Greek chronographic tradition¹⁹ that sets the event between 548 and 545 BC. The very fragmentary state of preservation poses a serious challenge when dealing with these texts.²⁰ The *Chronikōi Kanónes*²¹ of the Christian author Eusebius (3rd/4th century AD) serve as a sort of collecting basin for the otherwise lost chronographic works, but characteristically even his text from the early 4th century AD has not survived in its original Greek form. Two important transcripts above all offer, however, an important insight, namely the Latin copy of Jerome from the second half of the 4th century AD²² and the Armenian manuscript tradition from the 5th century AD.²³ Originally, Eusebius' Chronicle comprised two

¹⁴ *Contra* Kalaitzoglou 2008, 53–63.

¹⁵ Hinz 1983.

¹⁶ Busolt 1895, 458; Strasburger 1956, 143; Fehling 1985, 93–97; Ivantchik 1993, 109–11; Parker 1997, 63; Bichler 2004, 213; Haider 2004; Brehm 2013, 96; van Dongen 2013, 49; Wallace 2016, 169–72.

¹⁷ *Contra* Kalaitzoglou 2008, 41–65.

¹⁸ Dale 2015; Wallace 2016.

¹⁹ The most comprehensive study about ancient Greek chronography is still Mosshammer 1979. More recent contributions are Möller 1996; 2001; 2004a; 2004b; 2005; 2006; Panchenko 2000; Taylor 2000; Köiv 2001; Christesen 2007; Feeney 2007; Kokkinos 2009a; 2009b; 2013.

²⁰ Mosshammer 1979, 97.

²¹ For the Chronicle of Eusebius, see Mosshammer 1979, 29–83; Croke 1982; Adler 1992; Burgess 1999, 21–109; Burgess and Kulikowski 2013, 119–26.

²² Helm 1956 is to be regarded as the standard edition.

²³ Karst's German translation from 1911 is still the best available means of access even though he does not provide the original Armenian text but only its German translation. Dating the Armenian manuscript tradition in the 5th century AD now seems to prevail (Christesen and Martirosova-Torlonè

books. In the first, *Chronographia*, different lists of officials and kings were displayed separately and consecutively.²⁴ In the second book Eusebius synchronised the various lists of kings (*fila regnorum*) in table form and noted the historical events and persons in the according line, also named *spatium historicum*. There Eusebius placed the battle between Croesus and Cyrus right next to the row, where he listed the Olympiads, the years after Abraham and the reigns of various kings. Jerome²⁵ lists this entry in Ol. 58.1 (548/7 BC) and in the Armenian text tradition²⁶ the entry appears between Ol. 58.3 (AA 1470 / 546/5 BC) and Ol. 58.4 (AA 1471 / 545/4 BC). The minor difference of one year for the date of the fall of Sardis can be explained by the copying process of the manuscripts. A misplacement of the historical event by a single line would have had the consequence of shifting the date by a whole year. This also applies to the placement of the first Olympiad in the different text traditions of Eusebius: Jerome placed it 1241 years after Abraham (AA 1241), the Armenian version 1240 years thereafter (AA 1240).²⁷

Moreover, the dates provided by ancient Greek chronography are usually expressed with eponymous dates, such as the Attic archons and the Roman consuls, or with Olympiads in reference to the Olympic Games every fourth year in classical antiquity. Additionally, ancient authors and chronographers frequently relied on giving a time interval between a reference point, which could be the present or an episode in the historical or mythical past, and the event at hand. For better understanding, the dating method applied by ancient authors is normally rendered in BC/AD dates. The concept of eponymous dating obviously differs greatly from the modern comprehension of time and implies some challenges concerning absolute chronology. Ancient authors could, for example, name the same eponymous official for a given year, but nevertheless adduce differing time intervals between corresponding dates. This paradoxical situation is probably best known from the diverging chronologies of Varro (1st century BC) and Livy (1st century BC/AD) for the Roman past.²⁸ Thus, the inherent method of ancient chronography means that

2006, 45–48; Drost-Abgarjan 2006, 261), even though Karst (1911, XI–XII, LIV) proposed a significantly later date in the 8th century AD. A more recently made manuscript find has made a new edition essential, and this is currently in preparation (Drost-Abgarjan 2006).

²⁴ Codex pages in ancient Greek from the first book, hitherto preserved only in the Armenian text tradition, have become known in recent years. An edition of these pages is underway: Grusková 2013.

²⁵ Helm 1956, 103b^b.

²⁶ Karst 1911, 189.

²⁷ Moshammer 1979, 80. For admittedly practical reasons, this one year difference has been ignored in the conversion into BC dates above, as it would seem impractical not to equate Ol. 1.1 with 776 BC. The reference to the years after Abraham is given in addition to avoid any confusion.

²⁸ Cornell 1995, 401–02.

a variation of a couple of years for the same historical event in different texts is to be expected. This applies even more so for the Greek Archaic period (ca. 800–500 BC), where ancient and modern scholars alike have difficulties providing a comprehensive chronology.²⁹

Besides Eusebius three further chronographic texts mention the date when Cyrus conquered the Lydian empire and its capital city Sardis, which shall be discussed briefly in chronological order.³⁰ The author of the Chronicle of Paros (3rd century BC), also called the Parian marble, applied the method of counting down the years until the Athenian (and Parian) archon of the year 264 BC. Additionally he named the Athenian archon to date each of the entries. In line A 42 the text mentions Croesus' defeat, but the interval is unfortunately broken off and a secure reconstruction has proven to be impossible.³¹ The only safe conclusion is that the author puts this event before Darius' seizure of power in 520/19 or 519/8 BC³² in line A 44, as the preceding line A 43 does not preserve the interval either. In the question of a precise date this inscription is, therefore, not helpful.

Apollodorus³³ (2nd century BC) seems to have used the date 547/6 or 546/5 BC, as can be inferred from the following information. According to him (*FGH* 244 F 28 *apud* Diogenes Laertius 1. 37–38), as Diogenes of Laertius (3rd century AD) reports, Thales of Milet was born in Ol. 35.1 (640/39 BC) and died in the 58th Olympiad (548/7–545/4 BC) at the age of 78 years. The relevant information concerns the additional detail that Thales was a contemporary of Croesus, whom he advised to cross the Halys river by diverting its course. Hence, the date of Thales' death is used to date the end of Croesus' reign, which ended not long after Croesus decided to cross the Halys. However, as is common in

²⁹ A notorious example of the difficulties connected with the chronology of the Greek Archaic period are the highly diverging dates for Pheidon of Argos in antiquity, which translate as belonging to a range from the 9th to the early 6th century BC: Köiv 2000; 2001.

³⁰ In the following, only the most crucial chronographic texts are treated and especially those which in our opinion can provide clues towards determining an absolute date. See however the more sceptical view of Tuplin: 'The essential point to grasp is that the only surviving text from this tradition to give a precise date for the fall of Sardis (Jerome's version of Eusebius' Chronicle) puts it in Olympiad 58.1 = 548/7 and that all other statements about Greek chronographers' views on the matter are the result of speculative attempts to make sense of numerically and substantively conflicting data' (Tuplin 2010, commentary *BNJ* 691 F 1).

³¹ For the year 541/40 BC, see the highly influential, but rather problematic, supplement by Jacoby (1904a, 13, 171).

³² The name of the Athenian archon of this line is not preserved. As the *Marmor Parium* applies inclusive and exclusive counting methods (Jacoby 1904b, 82–84; Rotstein 2016, 2), it remains unclear which exact year has to be assumed here.

³³ For Apollodorus' chronicle, see Jacoby 1902; Pfäffer 1968, 253–57; Dorandi 1982; Montanari 1996; Christesen 2007, 13; Feeney 2007, 19–20; Burgess and Kulikowski 2013, 87–88.

chronographic texts, the maths does not add up with the aforementioned numbers.³⁴ In order to maintain the information about the death of Thales in the 58th Olympiad and the old age of supposed 78 years, Thales' year of birth must be assumed not to have fallen in Ol. 35.1 (640/39 BC) but in Ol. 39.1 (624/3 BC).³⁵ Depending on whether one applies inclusive or exclusive reckoning³⁶ Apollodorus appears to imply a date of 547/6 (Ol. 58.2) or 546/5 BC (Ol. 58.3) for the fall of Sardis.

The *Chronicon Romanum*³⁷ is a miniature chronicle inscribed on limestone under the reign of the emperor Tiberius (AD 14–37). In analogy to the *Marmor Parium*, this text reports events from the Roman and Greek past with intervals. Its starting point AD 15/16, however, is not directly explained in the preserved part, but has to be inferred from the information about Sulla's military campaigns.³⁸ The chronicle mentions the start³⁹ and end of Croesus' reign⁴⁰ alike, but in both lines the numbers of the interval are missing. Fortunately, the Getty table,⁴¹ which is also called the Vasek Polak Chronicle, is better preserved. Scholars assume that the same workshop produced both miniature chronicles, as they exhibit strong parallels.⁴² Thus, one hypothesises that the intervals of the Getty table refer to the same starting point in AD 15/16. Given this assumption, the 561 years from Croesus' defeat until the 'present'⁴³ imply a date 546/5 BC for the end of Croesus' reign. Sextus Julius Africanus (2nd/3rd century AD) placed the end of Croesus' reign in the 58th Olympiad (548/7–545/4 BC).⁴⁴

³⁴ In many chronographic lists the numbers appear faulty, for example those in the classical tradition about the Assyrian kings; Rollinger 2011, 323, n. 44.

³⁵ Mosshammer 1979, 256–57; Kokkinos 2009b, 3–4.

³⁶ Hellenistic chronographers used both inclusive and exclusive reckoning, but no theoretical treatise has survived. In general, only additional information provides insight which of the two methods is the most likely in each case.

³⁷ For the *Chronicon Romanum*, see IG XIV 1297 = FGH I BNJ 252 (the parallel text of the Getty table was unknown to Jacoby but is included in *Brill's New Jacoby*); Burgess and Kulikowski 2013, 309–10 (English translation); Rotstein 2016, 59–60 (Greek text with English translation). General information about the *Tabulae Iliacae* is provided by Squire 2011.

³⁸ Jahn 1873, 79.

³⁹ BNJ 252 F 3.

⁴⁰ BNJ 252 F 6.

⁴¹ BNJ 252; Burstein 1984; SEG 33 802; Rotstein 2016, 61–62 (Greek text with English translation).

⁴² Burstein 1984, 157.

⁴³ BNJ 252 F 6a.

⁴⁴ Wallraff 2007, 182–85.

Table 1: Overview of the Greek chronographic tradition for the fall of Sardis.

Author	Date for Croesus' defeat
<i>Marmor Parium</i> (3rd century BC)	interval is broken off
Apollodorus (2nd century BC)	547/6 or 546/5 BC ⁴⁵
Getty table (1st century AD)	546/5 BC = 561 years until 'present' (AD 15/16)
Sextus Julius Africanus (2nd/3rd century AD)	548/7–545/4 BC
Jerome (4th century AD)	548/7 BC
Armenian tradition of Eusebius (5th century AD)	between 546/5 BC and 545/4 BC

Despite Herodotus being the closest in time to the historical event, he – contrary to later chronographers – did not provide an exact date. This aligns well with the general picture that, with the introduction of Olympiad dating, the chronology of 6th century BC Greece was only afterwards established with (pseudo-)precision.⁴⁶ As authors of the 5th and 4th century BC did not use such precise absolute dates, an exact chronology was established *post festum* by applying chronographic methods such as synchronisations as well as the *acme* and generation principle.⁴⁷ Therefore, it appears very likely that later authors created a precise date relying on Herodotus without having any additional primary information!⁴⁸ Worth mentioning is the fact that later chronographers provide a shorter time span for the Mermnad dynasty by roughly 20 years than Herodotus does.⁴⁹ This constitutes an interesting instance, because Hellenistic chronographers tend to provide higher dates for the Archaic period than their precursors.⁵⁰ Summing up the evidence of ancient Greek chronography for Croesus' defeat, it becomes obvious that, in Hellenistic times (and not earlier), there was some consensus around the traditional date 547/6 BC. However, we should not be persuaded solely by the neat accuracy of this precise date but rather see it as a result of the chronographic context with the necessary caution regarding its historical value.

Complementary to earlier discussions about the date of Croesus' defeat, modern scholars can also refer to archaeological research in the city of Sardis. There archaeologists have excavated a destruction layer with findings of military equipment and skeletons of soldiers killed in action, which they relate to the military campaign of

⁴⁵ Assuming that the death of Thales is to be synchronised with Croesus' defeat and that the confusion with the numbers can be sufficiently resolved.

⁴⁶ For the difficulties involved, see Shaw 2003.

⁴⁷ Fehling 1985. However, see Gehrke 1990, who argues for a possible higher reliability of later chronographic sources.

⁴⁸ Bichler 2004, 213, n. 23.

⁴⁹ An overview of the different sources with the reign lengths can be found in Kaletsch 1958, 2.

⁵⁰ For examples in the Parian marble, see Kellner 2017, 82–83.

Cyrus the Great against Croesus.⁵¹ According to archaeological methodology, the pottery sherds cannot point to an exact year for this event but rather provide a *terminus post quem*. Applying the conventional chronology,⁵² most Greek pottery of this destruction layer dates from around the middle of the 6th century BC and not a single piece belongs to a time after the 540s BC. No red-figure vases at all were found.⁵³ Hence, archaeology can only place the destruction roughly in (or shortly after) the decade of the 540s BC.⁵⁴

The Broken Toponym of the Nabonidus Chronicle obv. ii 16: A History of the Various 'Decipherments' and 'Readings', or How Modern Scholars Interpreted the Passage

Given the uncertainties of the chronology of Archaic Greece even in the 6th century BC,⁵⁵ scholars have pinned their hopes on possible cuneiform sources to precisely date Cyrus' victory over Croesus. Already shortly after the arrival of the Nabonidus Chronicle at the British Museum in 1879 Assyriologists were engaged with the content of the damaged line on the obverse ii 16 and the historical implications of its interpretation. The whole discussion focusses on the reading of the very fragmentary toponym, the target of Cyrus' military campaign in Nabonidus' ninth year (547 BC). Only the first sign – or depending on different opinions the first two signs – of the country's name is still visible on the tablet. Theophilus Pinches,⁵⁶ one of the first scholars to deal with the text, read IŠ,⁵⁷ without, however, attempting to restore the country's name. Immediately thereafter Floigl was the first to suggest the weighty connection with Sardis, trying to substantiate the Greek chronographic date 547 BC. He referred to the then usual reading Isparda for Sardis in the Bisutun inscription of Darius.⁵⁸ To our knowledge Floigl did not collate the tablet, but he exclusively relied on the reading suggested previously by Pinches,

⁵¹ Greenewalt 1992; 1997; Cahill 2010. Snodgrass (1983; 1985) terms the seemingly unproblematic combination of historical and archaeological sources 'positivist fallacy' and hence calls for caution in this regard.

⁵² For a theoretical consideration of a lower absolute chronology for the Greek pottery, which Francis and Vickers have suggested, see Cahill and Kroll 2005, 602–03.

⁵³ For an overview of the Greek pottery in connection with the destruction layer, see Greenewalt 1992, 254–55, n. 15; Cahill and Kroll 2005, 599–604, 607, 607, 611. For the imported Greek pottery in Sardis in general, see Schaeffer *et al.* 1997.

⁵⁴ Cahill and Kroll 2005, 605; Greenewalt 2010, 11, 18, 24.

⁵⁵ For example, Ehrhardt 1992.

⁵⁶ Pinches 1882, 142, 159 (he had given the lecture in 1880).

⁵⁷ The indexes of the cuneiform signs were slightly different at this time. For this reason Pinches actually named the sign IŠ, which is nowadays read as IŠ or IŠ.

⁵⁸ Floigl 1881, 125, n. 1.

who did not make the connection with Lydia and Sardis. In 1894 Hagen published a new edition of the Nabonidus Chronicle, where he frankly stated that the country's name was damaged. In a footnote, he brought forward the suggested reading SU.⁵⁹ A little later, in 1898, Lehmann-Haupt⁶⁰ started a new attempt to verify Lydia as the aim of Cyrus' military campaign in 547 BC. After reading Hagen's edition Lehmann-Haupt asked the curator of the cuneiform collection in the British Museum, Theophilus Pinches, whether the fragmentary sign could be linked with Lydia. Lehmann-Haupt assumed the country's name to have been written *Lu-ud-di* according to Neo-Assyrian standards that were just drawn from already published inscriptions of Ashurbanipal.⁶¹ Pinches passed the information to Lehmann-Haupt that after having checked the relevant signs multiple times, he could read LU with certainty. Moreover, he now claimed even to be able to distinguish a further sign, i.e. a very fragmentary UD. Thus, only after knowing what should have been read, the desired evidence was finally found! Lehmann-Haupt⁶² expressed his view in a handful of articles, which led to the establishment of the *opinio communis* in scholarship that Croesus' reign ended in 547 BC and that this was now definitely proven by a Babylonian Chronicle.

Before continuing the discussion of the text passage in question, two important points should be underlined. First of all, the different readings suggested by various scholars exhibit clearly how difficult it is to read the fragmentary sign with certainty. Second, the reconstructions of the country's name are deeply intertwined with the information gained from Greek sources and the interpretation of the historical context.

The reading LU of the sign at the damaged end of line obv. ii 16 of the Nabonidus Chronicle was never entirely undisputed: already in 1915 Hüsing⁶³ launched the possibility that Cyrus' military campaign targeted Urartu and hence opted for the reading Ū⁶⁴ of the damaged sign. In *Babylonian Historical Texts Relating to the Capture and Downfall of Babylon* (1924) Smith also provided a copy of the whole

⁵⁹ Hagen 1894, 219, n. 82. According to Cargill (1977, 100) the drawing of the Nabonidus Chronicle in Hagen's publication was made by Friedrich Delitzsch, who wrote the addenda to Hagen's contribution.

⁶⁰ Lehmann 1898.

⁶¹ Lydia (^{kw}*Lu-ud-di*) is mentioned in eight passages in Ashurbanipal's inscriptions. See the preliminary on-line edition of RINAP 5: <http://loracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/rinap5/page/>. Cf. also Bagg 2007, 158. Lehmann-Haupt could not rely on a standard publication, where the different writings of the name of Lydia were given according to Babylonian sources. See Zadok 1985, 213, where the few attestations write the toponym as *lu-ū-du/a*.

⁶² Lehmann 1902, 344; Lehmann-Haupt 1921, 113–14; 1929, 123–25.

⁶³ Hüsing 1915, 178.

⁶⁴ Hüsing writes Ū, but this can only refer to the sign Ū.

tablet. Similar to Grayson's above-mentioned statement, Smith confirmed that 'the name of the land probably begins *Lu ...*'.⁶⁵ Smith only had to refer to the established 'fact' that Cyrus marched against Croesus in 547 BC to make his reading more plausible. A look at Smith's copy, however, highlights the problem of this sort of argument, as the corresponding sign does not exhibit the shape of LU.⁶⁶ König⁶⁷ on the other hand followed Hagen's suggestion to read SU and did not attempt an interpretation, but refused a connection with Lydia on historical grounds.

Amendments of the suggested readings were repeatedly made: Smith, for example, changed his opinion 20 years after his original publication about the Nabonidus Chronicle, but nevertheless insisted upon the connection with Lydia. Instead of LU he now read IŠ, even though in his opinion LU was not entirely impossible.⁶⁸ Lambert and Sachs also collated the tablet with the result ZU-x[...] ⁶⁹ but in 2010 Lambert changed his opinion in favour of LU.⁷⁰ In 1977 Cargill⁷¹ demonstrated the serious problems associated with this text passage and concluded that it cannot provide any evidence for the fall of Sardis; Kuhrt⁷² and Schaudig⁷³ later reached a similar conclusion.

More recent collations appeared to establish a nearing consensus with the reading Ū and the possible interpretation Urartu, as Oelsner⁷⁴ and Waters⁷⁵ have both argued for a clearly visible Ū sign. Since then other scholars have followed their suggestion.⁷⁶ However, in a further collation Finkel⁷⁷ now excluded the possibility of reading Ū and SU/ZU. Furthermore, he remarked that even the sign KUR is written differently from usual. Glassner obviously agreed with this, as he opted for the reading ⁷⁸ ^{kur} *Li-ū-[di]*, otherwise unattested for Lydia. The new edition of the Babylonian Chronicles by Finkel and van der Spek also appears to return

⁶⁵ Smith 1924, 101.

⁶⁶ Already pointed out by Oelsner 1999–2000, 379.

⁶⁷ König 1931, 180–81.

⁶⁸ Smith 1944, 36, 135, n. 74.

⁶⁹ Grayson 1975, 282.

⁷⁰ Lambert's collation is mentioned by Zawadzki 2010, 147, n. 27.

⁷¹ Cargill 1977.

⁷² Kuhrt 1988, 120, n. 62.

⁷³ Schaudig 2001, 25, n. 108.

⁷⁴ Oelsner 1999–2000, 379.

⁷⁵ Personal information quoted by Rollinger 2008, 56.

⁷⁶ Haider 2004, 86; Stronach 2007, 165; Rollinger 2008, 56–57; Kokkinos 2009b, 19; Cahill 2010, 344; Marek 2010, 155, 189; van Dongen 2013, 49.

⁷⁷ Finkel's statement about his collation is quoted by Zawadzki 2010, 147, n. 27.

⁷⁸ Glassner 2004, 236. To the best of our knowledge, Glassner is the only one who suggests this particular reading.

to the reading LU for Lydia,⁷⁹ as a statement of van der Spek reveals. Van der Spek reported once more a collation of the chronicle by himself, Mark Geller, Irving Finkel and Stefan Zawadzki in 2013. Their unison conclusion was that the sign is to be read as LU and that Ū should be regarded as impossible.⁸⁰ Therefore, van der Spek proposed the reading KUR *Lu-ú-[du GI]N* for the end of line obv. ii 16. This immediately became a ‘fact’ in further scholarly discussions.⁸¹

What remains from an exclusively palaeographic point of view is the fact that the crucial sign obviously proves very difficult to be read, which is not only caused by its fragmentary state but also by its placement on the edge of the tablet. Finkel⁸² at one point even suggested that Assyriologists would never have dared a confident reconstruction of the broken toponym, if it were not for the link with Herodotus, as the traces of the sign are just too fragmentary.⁸³ The different and repeatedly changed opinions of various scholars should probably serve as a warning against identifying the sign with too much certainty, even more so as this tiny fragment implicates far-reaching historical conclusions. In Fig. 1 (below), the various suggested readings and respective signs are shown. As the line is so central for the history of Anatolia and the Near East in the 6th century BC a new collation was undertaken by Angelika Kellner.⁸⁴ As the picture of the relevant passage of the tablet demonstrates (Fig. 2), in our opinion a ‘definite’ conclusion on how to read the sign is simply not possible. From all the suggestions brought forward we would tend to exclude the reading of the sign as ÍŠ. However – and this is equally important to note – to the best of our knowledge no secure reading can be inferred.

⁷⁹ Selim Adali has also personally checked the sign on the tablet and concluded that it is to be identified as LU in 2014: Payne and Wintjes 2016, 14, n. 6.

⁸⁰ van der Spek 2014, 256, n. 184: ‘On March 12, 2013, I collated the tablet together with Mark Geller, Irving Finkel, and Stefan Zawadzki, and we all agreed that the reading *Lu* is by far the most acceptable reading, while *ú* is impossible.’ Note, however, that Rocío Da Riva was also present at this occasion, although she is not mentioned by van der Spek. She writes in an e-mail of 21 November 2016 to RR: ‘Ich war im BM als Bert [van der Spek] die Tafel kollationiert hat, und er hat mich natürlich auch gefragt, was ich dort sah/las, M. Geller war auch dabei, und auch I. Finkel. Wir 4 [scil. van der Spek, Geller, Finkel und Da Riva] haben die Tafel ganz, ganz genau angeguckt und: Bert und Mark sahen LU, ich sah eher Ū, und Irving sah beides.’ And in an e-mail from 22 November 2016 to RR she adds: ‘Ich hatte damals auch die Tafel kollationiert, mE ist Ū ‘not impossible’. Aber das bedeutet nicht, dass man *ú-[rash-tu]* zwangsläufig lesen muss, oder?’ Van der Spek’s affirmative reference to Stefan Zawadzki is obviously due to a confusion since he, in the very same note, refers to Zawadzki 2010, 147, n. 27, and earlier collations by W.F. Lambert and I. Finkel (cf. above nn. 70 and 77). In any event, the claim that the reading Ū ‘is impossible’ hardly appears to be tenable.

⁸¹ Rung 2015, 8, n. 3; Thonemann 2016, 152 with n. 1; Wallace 2016, 168 with n. 1.

⁸² Finkel’s statement is quoted by Zawadzki 2010, 147, n. 27.

⁸³ See Rollinger 1993, 190.

⁸⁴ We would like to thank the Curators of the British Museum for granting access to the tablet.

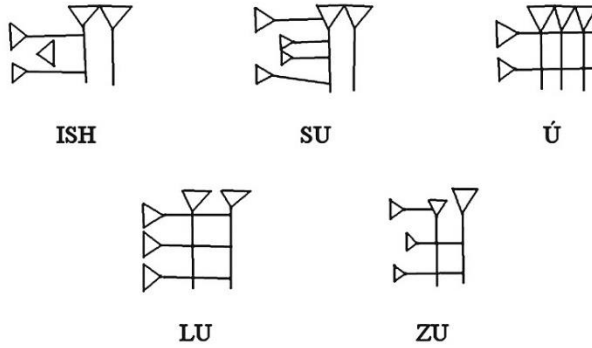


Fig. 1: Overview of the various signs suggested for the broken toponym.

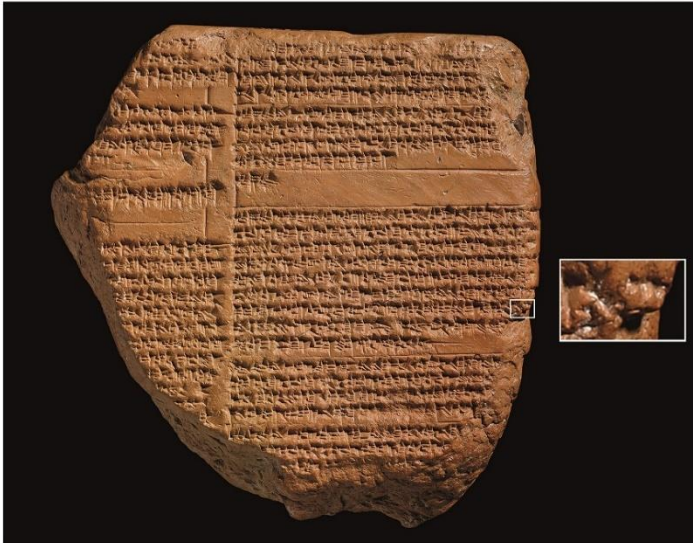


Fig. 2: Detail from the Nabonidus Chronicle obv. ii 16 (© Trustees of the British Museum).
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Thus placing the campaign of Cyrus the Great against Croesus in the year 547 BC exclusively on the evidence of the Nabonidus Chronicle is neither sound nor definite proof. Only contextualising the information of the Tigris crossing and scrutinising the historical context independently from the problematic Greek chronographic traditions can lead to new insights.

Contextualising the Evidence of the Nabonidus Chronicle obv. ii 15–18

Let us return to the informations we gain from the Nabonidus Chronicle.⁸⁵ There it is stated that Cyrus (II) of Parsu mustered his army and crossed the Tigris downstream from Arbēla and, in the month of Iyyar, [march]ed to X [???]. He defeated its king (or: put its king to death), seized its possessions, [and] set up his own garrison [there]. After that, the king and his garrison resided there.⁸⁶

Contextualising this evidence can be achieved in two complementary ways. First, we will analyse the geographical perspective of the passage itself. Afterwards we will place this analysis in a larger framework that takes into consideration campaigns in the very same geographical regions.

The Geographical Perspective of Nabonidus Chronicle obv. ii 15–18

The document's geographical perspective immediately reveals an important dimension of argument, although this crucial point is generally all but totally ignored, for the alleged statement that Cyrus crossed the Tigris and marched towards Lydia is very difficult to explain. According to google maps, the distance between Erbil and Sardis is 1739 km, calculating the shortest route through upper Mesopotamia crossing the Euphrates at Birecik and continuing via Gaziantep to the west. However, Cyrus could not have taken this short route, for most of the area was, at least at that time, controlled by the Babylonians.⁸⁷ If the reading Lu-[???] is supposed to be correct, he must have taken a route via eastern Anatolia that was about 2000 km in length. This is slightly less than the distance between Cologne and Moscow (about 2300 km). From this perspective, such an interpretation becomes hardly tenable. It is as if a 19th-century Central European source on Napoleon's campaign against Russia had described the event as follows: 'The French emperor crossed the Rhine below Cologne and marched against Moscow.' Additionally, one has to stress that the perception of space is not an absolute value: 2300 km was a much larger distance in Cyrus' times, when Lydia was perceived to be at the western fringes of the world. Lydia is therefore not

⁸⁵ For more details, see Rollinger 1993, 188–97.

⁸⁶ Nabonidus Chronicle ii 15–18; Grayson 1975, 107.

⁸⁷ Jursa 2003; Rollinger 2003.

really an attractive option for the reconstruction of the toponym. What is clear is that Cyrus marched against a still independent country in the immediate reach of a route along the Tigris. If we want to identify this country as well as the region that might have been the ultimate goal of Cyrus' campaign we have to decode the meaning of Cyrus' river crossing. Apparently for a Babylonian reader of the text the crossing as well as the route along the Tigris were somehow connected with the region that marked the goal of Cyrus' campaign. It is this kind of mental map we will have to have a closer look now.

The Larger Context: Campaigning from the Tigris to the North

As has been demonstrated earlier we know that after the fall of the Assyrian empire the Assyrian heartland was under firm Babylonian control until 539 BC.⁸⁸ It is also worth recalling that considerable parts of the north-eastern Tigris region around Arrapha were part of the Babylonian empire as well. This is important, for it explains, why an otherwise insignificant detail, i.e. the crossing of the Tigris was recorded at all by the Babylonian Chronicle: *Cyrus crossed the Tigris downstream from Arbēla*. The obvious answer is that every Babylonian knew that it was by this route that Cyrus passed through Babylonian territory. But is there anything further we can learn from this passage?

Immediately after the crossing of the river the chronicle reports the goal of Cyrus campaign. From this we may deduce with a high degree of probability that the country and object of Cyrus' campaign was either not too far away from the crossing point or that the combination of the given toponyms, i.e. the Tigris valley and name of the relevant country, immediately referred to a well-known mental map that was well aware of an established route connecting these toponyms. And indeed we do have evidence for such a combination from Neo-Assyrian to Neo-Babylonian and Persian-Achaemenid times. Karen Radner has shown that in order to get from the Assyrian heartland to eastern Anatolia the route along the Tigris is best avoided because of the extremely rough and mountainous terrain. Therefore the Upper Tigris region is most directly and most easily reached by crossing over the Tūr 'Abdīn mountain range.⁸⁹ Since the Tigris valley itself offers no easy passage,⁹⁰ two routes west of the Tigris which both lead to the southern and south-eastern piedmont of the Tūr 'Abdīn (Mazı Dairarı) are much better suited. From these two and their different branches,⁹¹ however, the closest and most easily accessible one enters the Tūr 'Abdīn directly from the south-east. There the gentle slopes of the basalt ranges

⁸⁸ Cf. Rollinger 2008.

⁸⁹ Radner 2006.

⁹⁰ See now also Comfort and Marciak 2018, 3, 7.

⁹¹ For other routes cf. Rollinger 2008.

offer fairly easy access to the plateau of the Anatolian highland. This route starting from the Tigris valley of the Assyrian heartland passed the Sufan Çay plain and continued via Midyāt and Savur to the regions of the Upper Tigris.⁹² From the time of Adad-nērārī I (1300–1270 BC) onwards it was used again and again by Assyrian armies. One of the best documented itineraries is the fifth campaign of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC) in 879 BC as it is related in his Annals. It starts from Tillē (Tiluli) in Katmuḫḫu and heads forward via Ba Sebrina/Haberli (pass of Ištarāte) and Kivakh (Kibaki) to Midyāt (Matiātu) from where it continues via Savur (Šūru) to the Upper Tigris region. Since the campaign of 882 starts from the source of the River Supnat which can safely be equated with the Sufan Çay it is evident that also the campaign of 879 started from the Sufan Çay plain.⁹³ One of the regions mentioned in these contexts many times is Izalla that has to be located between Nusaybin and İdil/Asakh and may be equated with the Dibek Dağı, an area where the limestone is coated by a layer of basalt from the long extinct volcano of Alem (Elim) Dağı in the vicinity of the source of the Sufan Çay.⁹⁴ This evidence can be compared with what we know from the Babylonian Chronicles about the campaigns of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar in eastern Anatolia in the years after the fall of the Assyrian empire. There it is not only Izalla that appears to be one of the stage goals of the Babylonian army but also the ‘region of Urartu’ (*piḫāt^{ku} Uraštu*) as one of its final objects. This applies for the year 609 BC, when Nabopolassar led his troops to the north on an operation towards the region of Izalla and as far as the ‘region of Urartu (*piḫāt^{ku} Uraštu*)’.⁹⁵ The same is true for the following two years, when the Babylonian army operated again ‘in the region of Urartu (*piḫāt^{ku} Uraštu*)’. Whereas, for the year 607 BC, Chronicle 4 offers only a very short note with no clear indication about the army’s final destination,⁹⁶ the same document reports an intriguing piece of information for the preceding year 608 BC:

⁹² Cf. now also Comfort and Marciak 2018, 36.

⁹³ Cf. Liverani 1992, 57–62 with fig. 6; Radner 2006.

⁹⁴ Radner 2006, 293. See also Bagg 2017, 263–65. The source of the Sufan Çay (Supnat) is situated at Babil ca. 26 km south-west of Cizre.

⁹⁵ Chronicle 3, ll. 70–74; ⁷⁰LUGAL UR^{ki} *ana re-su-ut ÉRIN^{me}-šú DU-ma šal-tú [ul DÜ^{ul} ana^{ku} I]-za-al-la i-li-ma⁷¹ URU^{me} šá KUR^{me} ma-a-du-tú [...]-šú-nu ina IZI iš-ru-up⁷² ina UD-mi-šú-ma ÉRIN^{me} [šá ...] EN pi-ḫat^{ku} U-ra-š-tu⁷³ [D]U ina KUR(?) [...]^{me}-šú-nu iḫ-tab-tu. ⁷⁴šú-lu-nu šá LUGAL [...] ina šá-šú ú-še-lu is-su]-bu-nim-ma⁷⁵ ana^{ku} [...] i-lu-ú. The king of Akkad came to the aid of his troops, but [did not join(?) battle. He went up [to I]zalla and he set fire to the [...] in many mountain localities. At this time the troops of [(?) ... m]oved as far as the region of Urartu. In [...] they pillaged their [...] They dro[ve] out the garrison that the king of [..] had set up there] and went up to [...]. Cf. Grayson 1975; Glassner 2004; Rollinger 2008.*

⁹⁶ Chronicle 4, l. 11: ... iḫ-[tab]-ta EN pi-ḫat^{ku} [U-ra-š-tú(?) gi-mi]r KUR^{me} ik-šú-ud. ... He [i.e. Nabopolassar] conquered [al]l of the mountains as far as the region of [Urartu(?)]. See Grayson 1975; Glassner 2004; Rollinger 2008. But cf. Reade 2003, who proposes to read ... EN pi-ḫat

The eighteenth year (of the reign) of Nabopolassar [ca. 608 BC], in the month of Elul, the king of Akkad mustered his troops, moved along the bank of the Tigris, climbed the mountain of Bit-Īhanūniya, a region of Urartu, burned and pillaged towns. In the month of Tebeth, the king of Akkad returned to his own country.⁹⁷

Here it is clearly stated that the campaign started at the bank of the Tigris (GŪ ^{id}IDIGNA). However the army followed the river valley only for a certain distance from where it entered the Tūr 'Abdin mountain range (Bit Īhanūniya) to continue its way to the 'region of Urartu' (*pīḫāt Uraštu*). Thus this source not only testifies that the Babylonian army followed in the footsteps of its Assyrian predecessors by choosing the old and fairly easily passable approaches to the Upper Tigris region. Moreover it proves the existence of a mental map that clearly connected the Tigris region of the Assyrian heartland with the regions of Uratu when referring to a military campaign from south to north. Apparently the most convenient way to reach this 'region of Urartu' was to start out somewhere to the west of the Tigris in the plain of the Sufan Çay and to cross the Tūr 'Abdin by approaching it from the south-east. This route can be documented for about half a millennium; it was the one taken by the Assyrian kings and later by the Babylonian army. Moreover, with a high degree of probability, its ongoing relevance can also be demonstrated in the decades following Cyrus' reign.

When the Babylonian version of the Behistun inscription (DB) deals with the revolts of the first year of Darius' reign in eastern Anatolia (DB §§ 26–30) it talks about fierce resistance in 'Uraštu'.⁹⁸ Darius dispatched his generals Dadaršiš and Omises who had to fight three and two battles, respectively, until they finally quelled the rebellion. The locales where these actions took place are named in DB but we are able to identify only one place name with certainty: Izalla, where Omises fought the last and decisive battle against the Urartians/Armenians (DB § 29) – significantly the same place where about 90 years earlier Nabopolassar fought and from where the Assyrian kings preferred to approach the Tūr 'Abdin. Although we do not know from where the Persians started their military campaigns against Urartu/Armenia it is very probable that this was the Assyrian heartland as it happened in the preceding periods.

tam-timī, '...as far as to the district of the sea (Lake Van)'. He also suggests restoring l. 7 KUR. *za-tu-ri*, Zaduri in the Upper Tigris.

⁹⁷ ¹MU 18^{kin} ^dAG.IBILA.ŪRI *ina* ⁱⁿKIN LUGAL UR^{ki} ÉRIN^{me}.šū *id-ke-e-ma* ²GŪ ^{id}IDIGNA UŠ-ma *ana* KUR-i šā É-Ī¹Ha-nu-ni-ia ³pī-ḫat ^{ku}U-ra-š-tu i-li-ma URU^{me} *ina* IZI š³-ru-up ⁴ḫu-bu-ut-su-nu ma-diš iḫ-tab-ta *ina* ⁱⁿAB LUGAL UR^{ki} *ana* KUR-šū GUR-ra.

⁹⁸ The Old Persian and Elamite versions of DB have, as equivalent for the Babylonian Uraštu, the toponym Armenia (Old Persian: 'Armina'; Elamite: 'Ḫarminuyā'), which appears here for the first time.

This of course touches the question what 'Uraštu' in the Babylonian Chronicles actually referred to. Was it just a region or did the term also bear political connotations? To be clear, it is not possible to answer this question definitely. The Babylonian phraseology *pīḫāt Uraštu* (region of Urartu) appears to imply that it is not anymore the former unified kingdom of the 7th century that the Babylonian armies invaded. Indeed, written sources from Urartu come to an end in the forties of the 7th century BC.⁹⁹ This looks very much like as if the Urartian kingdom as it is known from the 9th century onwards did not exist anymore. However, this must not mean that the region was ruled by external powers. One could even take the Babylonian terminology *pīḫāt Uraštu* as indication for the existence of some form of local rule, maybe in a politically fragmented landscape. Also the evidence from the Bisitun inscription appears to imply the survival of remnants of a local consciousness of political independence. This is however only possible if some form of political independence still existed from the second half of the 7th through the first half of the 6th century BC. There is further indirect evidence for this.

We know that Darius I and Xerxes set up inscriptions not only in their favourite residences, like Persepolis and Susa, but also in residences of those former political entities that were conquered by Cyrus and in which the early Achaemenids presented themselves as true and legitimate successors of their Teispid predecessors.¹⁰⁰ This is true for Hamadan and Babylon, but also for Van. The inscription placed at a steep rocky flank of the former Urartian capital was obviously tremendously important, for Xerxes explicitly mentions that his father Darius already intended this construction, but only he was able to achieve this. The inscription only makes sense, however, if the choice of the location commemorates the former capital of a substantial political entity that ended through Teispid conquest. Of course, there is still the question of a Median presence in this area. This is especially due to Herodotus' testimony that the Medes and the Lydians met at the River Halys (Kızılırmak) to forge an alliance during an eclipse generally dated to 585 BC. Although many historians still treat Herodotus as a sourcebook, simply used like a quarry to rephrase history, in recent years it has become increasingly clear that he has to be dealt with as a literary work completed during the Peloponnesian War, presenting a view on the past, first and foremost, through a Greek lens of around 420 BC.¹⁰¹ In his *Histories* he skilfully elaborates ancient Near Eastern history as a sequence of empires, where empire is modelled according to the perception of the Persian-Achaemenid empire of Herodotus' own time.¹⁰² However, Herodotus' Lydian-Median 'border'

⁹⁹ Cf. the various contributions in Kroll *et al.* 2012. See also Stronach 2012; 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Rollinger 2015, 118–20.

¹⁰¹ Cf., for example, the various contributions in Harrison and Irwin 2018.

¹⁰² Bichler 2000; Rollinger *et al.* 2011.

at the Halys looks very much like a Greek construction of the 5th century to organise ancient Near Eastern history according to a line of succeeding and well defined empires with fixed borders and clear cut historical structures.¹⁰³ In order to prove such a construction of a frontier line it is bound to a legendary story. This is exactly the 'historical' context for localising the Median-Lyidian treaty at the Halys and for the famous story about Thales, the sage who allegedly predicted an eclipse of the sun that brought Median-Lyidian strife to an end.¹⁰⁴ The Medes might have campaigned through Anatolia for a very brief period of time, and they may indeed have concluded a treaty with the Lydians, but there was no permanent Median control of eastern – let alone central – Anatolia in the 6th century BC. Thus, in its last stages the Urartian kingdom may have become disintegrated and fragmented. The monarchy unifying all parts of the country may have disappeared in the second half of the 7th century BC.¹⁰⁵ The evidence of the Babylonian Chronicles fits perfectly into such a scenario. Also the testimony of the Bisitun inscription as well as Xerxes' Van inscription can be adduced as additional arguments for such a historical reconstruction. This does not exclude the possibility of some kind of Median supremacy or overlordship in eastern Anatolia, but if so, it existed only for a very short period of time.

Against this backdrop the evidence of the Nabonidus Chronicle also gains momentum. We do not claim that the reading \dot{U} of the toponym obv. ii 16 is the only possible solution. We also do not claim that this reading is the basis for our historical construction. We do however claim that the first sign of the toponym cannot be definitely identified and that it is impossible to come to a definite decision between the two most probable readings, i.e. either LU or \dot{U} . Such an allegation would be untrustworthy. However, as far as we can see, with the reading LU it is impossible to offer a plausible historical reconstruction of the events involved. This does neither fit to the mental map as it can be reconstructed from the chronicle itself nor to a broader historical context. In contrast, the reading \dot{U} offers the paths for a very plausible historical reconstruction if the toponym is reconstructed as \acute{u} -[raš-tu]. To be clear, this is still a hypothesis, but we think it is the most convincing and plausible one based on the sources so far available.

¹⁰³ Rollinger 2003; Stronach 2012; 2018.

¹⁰⁴ See also Lanfranchi 2000.

¹⁰⁵ See also Stronach 2007; 2012; 2018. An important observation is still that of Stronach 2007, 170: 'If Sardis had been the main target of Cyrus' campaign of 547, it is difficult to suppose that Croesus, the last king of Lydia (and the reputed brother-in-law of Astyages) would not have been mentioned by name and that both his dazzling capital and his vaunted treasures would not have earned at least similar notice to that extended to the possessions of Astyages (scil. Nabonidus Chronicle ii 1-4; Grayson 1975, 106)'.

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Abbreviation

BNJ I. Worthington (ed.), *Brill's New Jacoby*, <<http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-jacoby>>.

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تواریخ سال نهم نبونیدوس (۵۴۷-۶ قبل از میلاد): بابل و لیدیا^۱

روبارتوس یوهانس ون در اسپک^۲

منصور حمدالله‌زاده^۳

دوفصلنامه علمی مطالعات ایران کهن - شماره اول، سال دوم، بهار و تابستان ۱۴۰۱

اکثر پژوهشگران تاریخ را با مطالعه آثار کلاسیک شروع می‌کنند، اما دسته‌ای دیگر از آنها پیشینه‌ای همچنان در مطالعه تاریخ دارند. پیر بریانت و خودم به دسته دوم تعلق دارد. بیشتر مورخان باستان بر تاریخ یونانیان و رومی‌ها تمرکز می‌کنند و در مورد متون یونانی و لاتین بحث می‌کنند. اغلب آنها را در راهنماهایی‌های مطالعاتی و در وب سایت‌های دانشگاه‌ها می‌یابیم که در حوزه مهد تمدن غرب مطالعه می‌کنند. به عنوان دانشجوی تاریخ در لیدن، من این تجربه را داشتم، اما برایم جالب بود که هنگام مطالعه، به عنوان مثال، امپراتوری ایران اطلاعات زیادی فراتر از کارهای هرودوت داده نمی‌شد. بیشتر و بیشتر به این نتیجه رسیدم که تاریخ یونان و روم به طور جدایی‌ناپذیری با تاریخ خاور نزدیک باستان مرتبط است و به غیر از جهان یونانی-رومی، تمدن‌های آسیای غربی و مصر مسئول تحولات اروپای بعدی بوده‌اند.

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The Nabonidus Chronicle on the ninth year of Nabonidus (547-6 BC). Babylonia and Lydia in context

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Introduction

Most Ancient Historians start with a study of classics, but some have a background in the study of history. Pierre Briant (like myself) belongs to the latter category. He studied history at the University of Poitiers (1960-1965). Most ancient historians focus on the history of the Greeks and the Romans, discussing Greek and Latin texts. Most often we find in study guides and on websites of universities that Ancient Historians in doing so study the cradle of the western civilization. As a student of history in Leiden I had this experience, but it struck me that when studying, e.g., the Persian Empire not much information was given beyond the work of Herodotus. More and more I came to the conclusion that the history of Greece and Rome is inextricably connected with the history of the Ancient Near East, and that apart from the Graeco-Roman world the civilizations of Western Asia and Egypt were responsible for developments in later European history.

I soon learnt that Pierre Briant was a scholar who did not limit himself to Greek and Roman texts, but familiarized himself with the disciplines that focused on Near Eastern history. He realized that in antiquity no such dichotomy existed between East and West, apart from the portrayal of eastern decadence in Greek and later Western literature and art, but that the Persian Empire, for instance, was the main power of classical times and not merely a background scene in the theatre of Greek history. It should thus not be studied as a byproduct of Greek history. One of the many results is his standard work on the Persian Empire, *Histoire de l'empire perse* (Briant 1996).¹ In this major work all relevant sources are used, discussed and critically evaluated, interesting not only for those who have their upbringing in Graeco-Roman history, but also for students of Near Eastern languages and history, who also are often not aware of the relevance of their work for history beyond the Near East. Briant's brainchild Achemenet.com has the same broad perspective.

In this contribution I want to present a new edition of a passage in the so-called Nabonidus Chronicle concerning the ninth year of the last Babylonian king Nabonidus (547/6 BC). Of the matters reported here, two hotly debated topics are recorded: the advance of Cyrus into Asia Minor and the recurrent observation that king Nabonidus was staying in Tema in Arabia, so that he could not participate in the New Year's or *Akitu* festival. I suggest a few new readings and translation and discuss the matter in the context of the debate on the *Sitz im Leben* of the chronicle.

I realize that these subjects are treated endlessly and even a discussion of the *status quaestionis* would demand a long article in itself, especially as regards the wretched question of whether or not

¹ Translated into English as Briant 2002.

Lydia is mentioned in this passage. I shall not do that, as it can be found elsewhere (Rollinger 2004 and 2019 and Zawadzki 2010). The story is well-known. One can read it in Briant 2002, p. 31-38. The conquest of Asia Minor, one of the first projects of Cyrus, is described at some length by Herodotus (I, 79-92).

The Nabonidus Chronicle is a product of Babylonian scholarship fitting in with the Babylonian tradition of collecting data, in this case historical data concerning the king and the cults in Esagila. A recurrent issue is the cancelling of the Akitu festival during the period that the Babylonian king Nabonidus was in Tema. The character of the document is debated. According to some it is principally an historical document, history for history's sake (Grayson 1975, p. 11); according to others it is anti-Nabonidus propaganda (Von Soden 1989, p. 288; Zawadzki 2010). Caroline Waerzeggers argued that the document as we have it was composed in the Hellenistic period, that the authors were aware of Greek historians and took part in a Greek historiographic debate (Waerzeggers 2015). I agree that the document as we have it was edited, compiled or copied in the late Persian or Hellenistic period, but I assume that a proto-chronicle must be the basis of this text. It hardly can be a really new composition (Van der Spek 2015, p. 451-462).

A new edition of the Nabonidus Chronicle II 10-18 (BM 35382 = Sp II 964). ABC 7, Col. II (Fig. 1)

10. MU 9.KAM ^mPA.I LUGAL <ina> URU *Te-ma-a* DUMU LUGAL ¹⁰GAL.MEŠ u ERÍN-ni ina KUR URI.KI LUGAL *ana* ITI BÁR *ana* TIN.TIR.KI
11. NU GIN-ku ⁹AG *ana* KÁ.DINGIR.RA.KI NU GIN-ku ⁹EN NU È-a *i-sin-nu a-ki-tú ba-til*
12. SISKUR.SISKUR.MEŠ *ina* É.SAG.GÍL u É.ZI.DA <ana> DINGIR.MEŠ *ša* <TIN.TIR.KI> u BAR.SIP.KI *ki šal-mu SUM-na*
13. ITI BÁR UD 5.KAM AMA LUGAL *ina* BÂD-ka-ra-šú *sá* GÚ ÍD UD.KIB.NUN.KI *e-la-nu Sip-par.KI*
14. *im-tu-ut* DUMU LUGAL u ERÍN.MEŠ-šú 3 u₄-mu šu-du-ru ÉR GAR-at *ina* ITI SIG₄ *ina* KUR URI.KI
15. *bi-ki-tú ina* UGU AMA LUGAL GAR-at *ina* ITI BÁR ^mKu-raš LUGAL KUR Par-su ERÍN-šú *id-ke-e-ma*
16. *šap-la-an* URU *Ar-ba-'-il* ÍD IDIGNA *i-bir-ma ina* ITI GU₄ *ana* KUR ¹L_u-i¹-[du² GIN²]
17. LUGAL-šú GAZ *bu-šá-a-šú il-qí šu-lit šá rama-ni-šú ina* ŠÁ¹ (text: LU) *ú-še-li* [(...)]
18. EGIR *šu-lit-su* ù <É> *šar-ri ina* ŠÁ GÁL-ši

Translation

10. The 9th year. Nabonidus, the king, was <in> Tema. The son of the king (Belshazzar), the officers and the troops (were) in Akkad. The king for the month Nisannu to Babylon (Tintír)
11. did not come. Nabû did not come to Babylon (Kadingirra). Bel did not go out. The Akitu festival did not take place.
12. Offerings in Esagila and Ezida <for> the gods of <Babylon (Tintir)> and Borsippa were presented correctly.
13. Month Nisannu, 5th day (6 April 547 BC). The mother of the king (Adad-Guppi) in Dur-Karašu which (is on) the bank of the Euphrates above Sippar

14. died. The son of the king and his troops were in mourning for three days; an (official) mourning was established. In the month Simanu (III = 31 May – 28 June 547 BC) in the land of Akkad
15. an (official) mourning for the mother of the king was established. In the month Nisanu (I = 2 April – 1 May 547) Cyrus, the king of Persia (*Parsu*), mustered his troops and
16. he crossed the Tigris below the city of Arbela and in the month Ayaru (2-30 May 547 BC) [he wen]t to the land ʿLyʿ[di]a.
17. He killed its king, took its valuables (and) stationed a garrison of his own there.
18. Afterwards his garrison and the royal <treasury> (*basilikon*) remained there.

Some comments

10. The text has *ana Nisanmu*, not *ina Nisanmu*. It is not a scribal error, since in the parallel passages we have *ana* as well. Hence the translation: “for Nisanu”: (the king) did return *for* or *because* of the Nisanu festival (cf. AHW I, p. 48a, s.v. *ana* 12).
12. *kī šalmu*. This expression also occurs in II 8, 21, 25, III 8 and in ABC 17 II 4. Grayson translates “as in normal times” admitting that he is not certain about its meaning. Smith (1924) translates “as is correct” and “as is right”. CAD K, s.v. *kī*, p. 319b translates similarly “as is appropriate”. Cf. CAD Š I, p. 256, s.v. *šalmu* “favorable, propitious” (said of rituals, of appropriate times. CAD Š I, p. 217b, s.v. *šalāmu* 5b, “to be completely carried out (said of a ritual),” translates: “according to the complete (ritual?).” The message is that although the Akitu-festival did not take place, the offerings were performed correctly, properly. There is no reference to “normal times.” More on this below.
13. Adad-Guppi was the centenarian mother of Nabonidus, born in 20th year of Assurbanipal (649/8 BC), priestess of the god Sin of Harran. The creation of the fort Dur-Karashu on the Euphrates was explained by Beaulieu as an answer to the threat from Persia (Beaulieu 1989, p. 197-203; cf. Schaudig 2001, p. 500-513).
14. *Parsu*, “Persia.” Cyrus is called king of Anshan in II 1 and in the Cyrus Cylinder (latest translation Van der Spek 2014, p. 261-4). Waerzeggers (Waerzeggers 2015, p. 104) supposes that Parsu is “anachronistic”, adding “This should urge us, at the very least, to accommodate room for change and adaptation in the copyist’s work.” I concede that a copyist may have adapted the work, but the use of the term *Parsu* is definitely not Hellenistic. Both Anshan and Parsu were known. Anshan refers to Cyrus’s original Elamite city (note Cyrus’s Elamite name *Kurash* in Babylonian texts² and the title “king of Elam” in the Hellenistic Dynastic Prophecy II 17; Van der Spek 2003, p. 313). The use of the name Elam is probably not a Hellenistic *nouveauté*, as Waerzeggers supposes, but arises from the wish of scholars to use archaic terms to make a connection with omens (Van der Spek 2008, p. 285). The name Anshan may have been out of date already in the early Persian period and may have been replaced by the name Parsu, at least since the reign of Darius I in whose time the chronicle ABC 1 was composed (cf. Van der Spek 2015, p. 455) and who was called “the Persian, King of *Parsu*” in the Babylonian version of the Bisotun Inscription, line 1 (Babylonian version, Von Voigtlander 1978). Xerxes is called “king of Parsu” in many Babylonian documents.³

² Henkelman (2008, p. 55-7) argues that Cyrus’ Elamite name (*Kuraš*) was the original name and the Persian version (*Kuruš*) secondary.

³ Graziani 1986, p. 142 for references.

16. "He crossed the Tigris below Arbela" is odd, as Arbela is not situated on the Tigris, but on a tributary of the Upper Zab. I surmise that Cyrus crossed the Tigris below the mouth of the Upper Zab, or that he actually crossed the Upper Zab to take the road to Nineveh to cross the Tigris there.

Lu-ú-du, "Lydia". This is the most crucial and controversial passage. Grayson originally read the name of the kingdom that was conquered by Cyrus as ^{kur}*Lu¹-u*[*d-di*], adopting a suggestion by Sydney Smith (Smith 1924, p. 120). However, in his corrigenda, he wrote: "Regarding the problem of whether or not Lydia can be read here - Since completion of the manuscript it has come to my attention that a collation by W.G. Lambert and A. Sachs quoted by Galling, *Studien*, p. 22 reads: ZU-x[...]. In view of this, I have again collated the passage. A further trace at the end of the line, on the edge, was observed and could stand for [*il-li*]k. But the preceding traces are ambiguous. At best, one can say it is not impossible to read: *ana* ^{kur}*Lu¹-ú¹-du¹ il-li*]k, but such a reading is suggested by historical probability rather than any clear indication from the traces."

This reading has been criticized by various scholars, of whom I mention a few. Joachim Oelsner (1999/2000) proposed to read Urartu here (*ana* ^{kur}*Ú¹-[raš-tu il-li]*k) and this was accepted by Robert Rollinger (Rollinger 2004). Glassner (Glassner 2004, p. 236) stuck to the interpretation "Lydia", but read *ana* ^{kur}*Lú-ú*[*dí il-li*]k.

On 12 March 2013 I was able to study the tablet in the "Arched Room" of the British Museum and came to the conclusion that the reading suggested by Grayson in his corrigenda is in fact the most plausible. Fortunately, Irving Finkel and Mark Geller, who were present that day, arrived at the same conclusion. Professor W.G. Lambert was of the same opinion already on 3 June 2010 in discussing the passage with Stefan Zawadzki (cf. Zawadzki 2010, p. 147 n. 27). Apparently he had discarded the reading *zu* by that time.

The relevant sign is damaged, but one can see at least two⁴ vertical wedges and one horizontal wedge on top. The point is that the vertical wedges are too far from each other to warrant a reading *ú*. The horizontal wedge on top excludes the reading *ú*. Horizontal wedges in *ú* are positioned much lower (cf. *ú-še-li* in fig. 2). These features point to a reading *lu*. Comparison with the sign *lu* in *lu-bu-uš-bi* in III 26 and in I: 3 in *ú-bil-lu*, where we have the signs *ú* and *lu* closely together and where the difference is apparent (fig. 4), corroborates our reading. Glassner's reading has also to be discarded. He supposed that the three Winkelhaken of the sign KUR ("land") are actually part of the sign *lú*. Apparently he saw a horizontal wedge below these Winkelhaken, but this is not more than a crack in the tablet. For the next sign he accepted Oelsner's and Rollinger's reading *ú*. The sign LÚ, however, is never used in Late Babylonian with syllabic value *lú*, but only as determinative for persons or professions and with logographic value = *amīlu* (e.g., in LÚ-*tú* = *amīlūtú*) and = *ša* (e.g. in LÚ.SAG = *ša rēšī*); cf. Borger 2003: 357, no. 514.

A "city" of Lūdu, ¹⁰*Lu-ú-du*, is mentioned in ABC 6: 25. The determinative for "city" should not bother us, as URU ("city") and KUR ("land") are, at least in places outside Mesopotamia, used interchangeably (Zadok 1976: 70 n. 101; Van der Spek 2016). Reference is made here to

⁴ Typically the Late Babylonian sign LU consists of three vertical and three horizontal wedges. Sometimes the most left vertical wedge is hardly visible as it is written just behind the heads of the horizontals or it is not written at all. See for examples Ossendrijver 2019. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314606079_Images_of_Late_Babylonian_Cuneiform_Signs_version_9

“the border of Lydia,” which obviously does not refer to a city border, but to the border of the Lydian kingdom.

So the interpretation “Lydia” seems to be the most probable interpretation after all. Finally, this reading fits best what we know about Cyrus’ campaigns. The defeat of a substantial kingdom was important for the chronicler to underline the rise of Cyrus’ power.

17. Grayson translated GAZ (*idūk*) as “he defeated”, because he believed that king Croesus (according to Herodotus I 86-7), although sentenced to execution on a pyre, was pardoned by Cyrus. However, the normal meaning of this word when it refers to persons rather than armies, is “to kill.”

When a Babylonian king captures a defeated king, chroniclers use the verb *kašādu* (e.g. in ABC 5: 12 and 19). That Croesus was executed on a pyre is strongly suggested by Bacchylides’ *Third Ode*, 59, dated to 468 BC (i.e., a generation before Herodotus), where we read that “Apollo, born on Delos, brought the old man to live among the Hyperboreans,” which seems to suggest that he in fact died, but was “saved” just as Iphigeneia in Aulis once was, when she was sacrificed to appease the gods, but was taken by the gods to Tauris on the Crimea, which one might call the land of the Hyperboreans. Herodotus may have known this hymn and have rationalized it, making Croesus accompany Cyrus on his campaigns into northeastern Iran.

šu-lit-su: CAD Š III, p. 264-5, s.v. *šūlūtu* (*šūlūtu*), “garrison”; cf. CAD E, p. 128, s.v. *elū 8d* (*šūlū*) “to man a garrison” or “to station a garrison”.

ina ŠĀ (text: LU) *ú-še-li*, “within it he stationed”. Grayson (followed by Glassner) read: <<AŠ>> *lu ú-še-li*. He considered the horizontal wedge AŠ (= *ina*) to be a scribal error, a sign that should be deleted. This sign, however, can be read *ina*. A scribal error is rather to be seen in the next sign, LU. Grayson interpreted it as the asseverative particle *lu*. This is unlikely, as an asseverative particle hardly makes sense here (in fact, Grayson does not render it in his translation) and as the particle is normally written *lu-ú*. In Late Babylonian script the sign LU resembles the sign ŠĀ closely. Both signs are characterized by three upright wedges, crossed by three more or less horizontal wedges, which in the case of the ŠĀ sign are somewhat slanted (see in this text III: 13). So I assume that the scribe intended to write ŠĀ, yielding the prepositional phrase that is expected with *šūlū*, namely, *ina ŠĀ* = *ina libbi* = “within (it),” perfectly fitting in this context, viz. the description of the fate of Lydia; “he (Cyrus) killed its king, took its possessions and stationed his own garrison within it.”⁵

šar-ri. Smith, Grayson (and Glassner) translate: “the king” in the nominative case: “the king remained therein (Smith), was in it (Grayson), resided there (Glassner)”. This is in my view unacceptable for the following reasons. 1. In the chronicles (and most other texts) the word king is written with the ideogram LUGAL. 2. *šarri* is genitive, not nominative. Nominative is *šarru*. 3. The word order of the sentence is against all reason: “Afterwards his garrison and the king was in it”; one would expect: “the king and his garrison was in it” (how indeed Grayson translated it). 4. It did not happen. The king (be it either Cyrus or Croesus) did not stay in Lydia: Croesus was killed (or in Herodotus’ version accompanied Cyrus on his campaigns) and Cyrus broke camp and continued his campaigns.

Hence I assume that the scribe unintentionally omitted one sign: É; so he intended to write É *šar-ri*, *bit šarri*, literally “house of the king”. This does not refer to the palace (which is É.GAL,

⁵ Similar: ABC 3: 68: *šu-lu-nu šĀ* LUGAL UR.LKI *ana ŠĀ-bi ú-še-lu-ú*, “the garrison which the king of Akkad had stationed inside”. Note that the first editors Pinches (1882) and Schrader (1890) actually read *ina lib* (?).

ekallu), but some royal taxation office, as was first pointed out by Gilbert McEwan (McEwan 1981, p. 138-9, “administrative office of the crown,” where records were kept for taxation purposes). In most cases it refers to the “royal treasury”, in Greek to *basilikon*.⁶ GÁL-ši = *ibašši* or *ušabši*? In my note concerning this passage in the chronicle (Van der Spek 2014, p. 256, n. 184) I opted for *ušabši*, “he created,” thus “he established the garrison and the treasury,” since that would continue the subject of the previous line: king Cyrus.⁷ Now, I opt for the G-stem durative and return to Grayson in this respect. The Š-stem *šubšû* is not used for the erection of a building or an institution, but is rather used for the creative work of gods (cf. CAD B, s.v. *bašû* 3, 155-7; cf. Schaudig 2001, p. 190-191, sub IV 3.4.e). Secondly, it would be repetitive of the previous line where it is already stated that Cyrus established a garrison there. Line 18 describes the result of line 17: Cyrus took the booty and established a garrison (l. 17); (part of) the booty, stored in the royal treasury, and the garrison remained in Sardis after Cyrus’ departure. The treasury was necessary for the payment of the garrison soldiers. And all this perfectly fits Herodotus, as was observed by Edward Rung (2015, p.8 n. 3) where he discussed Herodotus I 153: “It may be very attractive to consider that the Persian garrison mentioned by the chronicle was commanded by Tabalus and that Croesus’s valuables and the royal treasury were supervised by Pactyes”.

Evaluation

The Nabonidus Chronicle provides an interesting perspective of a Babylonian scholar of the rise of the Persian empire in relation to developments at home. One of the main concerns of the chronicler seems to be whether or not the New Year’s festival (Akitu Festival) took place in the presence of the king. This was not the case in years when Nabonidus was absent from Babylon. The performance of the ritual is a concern of other chronicles as well: the Chronicle Concerning the Early Years of Nebuchadnezzar II (ABC 5: 14), the Akitu Chronicle (ABC 16), the Esarhaddon Chronicle (ABC 14), the Shamash-shuma-ukin Chronicle (ABC 15) and the Religious Chronicle (ABC 17). A further study of these related chronicles (their date of composition, their *Sitz im Leben*) would be promising. Another composition known in a version from the Hellenistic period, the New Year’s Festival ritual text, evidently exhibits the same concern (Linssen 2004, p. 215-237). It is usually taken for granted that this ritual text was a copy of a much older one, that described practices in the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods, but it may also well be that it was “invented tradition” of the Persian or Hellenistic periods to underscore hopes of the return of the festival with royal participation. It may also have served the wish to upgrade the role of the high priest at a time that kings did not normally participate any more.

In this ceremony the “high priest” (ŠEŠ.GAL or URĪ.GAL, read *šešgallû*, *urīgallû* or *aḫū rabû*, “elder brother”) is the leader during the entire festival and the king has to obey his orders; the high priest even strikes the cheek of the king (ll. 419 and 449). At the same time, the king has to declare

⁶ Cf. Babylonian Chronicle concerning Seleucus III (BCHP 12: 5 KÜ.BABBAR TA É LUGAL, “silver from the royal treasury”, and the Lehmann Text in the context of taxation CTMMA 148A: 6 (*šibtu ša bi šarri*, “taxation (on animals) of the treasury”) and 15. See also Astronomical Diary AD -161A, 24: *ana É LUGAL*. For a syllabic writing see BRM II 33: 4 (*ina SAR.MEŠ šā É šar-ri*) with the parallel formula in McEwan 1982 = OECT IX 48: 3 (*ina SAR.MEŠ šā É LUGAL*).

⁷ Actually the translation there left the verb partly out: “Afterwards he had his garrison and the royal treasury in it”.

that he had not struck the cheek of a privileged citizen (¹⁶*šab-bi ki-din-mu*; l. 426). In the chronicles the role of the high priest becomes even more prominent, when the king is absent. The high priest sees to it that the offerings are presented properly. He is the man who is now the main character guarding Babylonian traditions, as we read in Nabonidus Chronicle II 8, regarding the 7th year, when the king was absent: "The *aḫu rabû* performed the scattering⁸ and he took care of (*ip-qid*) the temple." The same expression, again in relation to the non-performance of the Akitu ritual, is found in the Religious Chronicle ABC 17 II 5: "Until the day of the offerings the king did not perform the scattering, the *aḫu rabû* performed the scattering and took care of the temple." Thus in the absence of the king the *aḫu rabû* was responsible. In a late hymn his fame is exalted by the god Marduk even at the expense of the king (Jursa & Debourse 2017) in unprecedented terminology: "May the king humbly revere you. May all the priests speak well of you" (II 6' - 7'); "may your name be great like the king's. Let no one treat you deceptively. Let neither king nor governor strike your cheek. May your work be a work for eternity. The king or the governor who strikes your cheek, may a king who is their enemy defeat them" (II 12' - 17'). This is certainly a reference to (perhaps a pun on) the right of the high priest to strike the cheek of the king in the text of the New Year ritual. The priest is allowed to strike the king's cheek, but not vice versa!

One might speculate that the *beltistos*, "the best", who according to Berossus had taken the lead in Babylon after the death of Nabopolassar, was in fact the *aḫu rabû*, rather than, as I suggested earlier, the *šatammu* (Josephus, *Contra Apionem* I 138; cf. Van der Spek 2008, p. 294).⁹

It should be borne in mind that after the first year of Cyrus the Akitu festival was hardly ever performed in the presence of the king. Babylonian temple officials and scholars may have hoped for it, but this hope did not materialize (Waerzeggers 2015b, p. 192-202). There is no evidence of Akitu with the king, and although absence of evidence is not the same as evidence of absence, there are hardly occasions when it could have happened. From the Hellenistic period there are scant indications of royal involvement. King Seleucus III presented bulls for the offerings of the 8th of Nisan in 224 BC (BCHP 12: 3' - 8') and Antiochus III was incidentally present in 205 BC and took at least a role on the appropriate 8th day of Nisan (ADART II, no. - 204C: rev. 14-18). However, the reality of life was that rituals could be performed, but the absence of the king had to be accepted. This led to the more prominent role of the *aḫu rabû*, while the local political power was represented by the *šatammu* and the *kiništu* (but see n. 9). That reality of life was present in the time that the Nabonidus Chronicle and the New Year's Festival ritual were written. It may well be that Babylonian scholars hoped for a new chance after the advent of Alexander the Great and these hopes may have been rekindled at times. Alexander ordered the reconstruction of the temple tower (cf. Van der Spek 2003 and 2006), Antiochus I ordered repairs on Esagila and Ezida (BCHP 6) and was the last king to have composed a foundation cylinder commemorating repairs there (Stevens 2014; Stol and Van der Spek 2008), and he visited two Sin temples in Babylon (BCHP 5). My opinion of the chronicles concerning the Akitu is that for the scribes in an ideal world the king would participate and that would be good for Babylon and the king, but at present the temple can do without it as long as the offerings are presented regularly and properly. In this respect the situation is not much different

⁸ *is-ruq*, from *sarāqu A*, "to strew, scatter, sprinkle (offering material –aromatics, fumigants, flour-, in rituals)" CAD S, s.v. *sarāqu A*, 172-4. Grayson translates "made a libation", but sprinkling a liquid is used in non-ritual contexts.

⁹ If the *aḫu rabû* and the *šatammu* are not in fact one and the same person, *šatammu* in his role as chief administrator and political leader and *aḫu rabû* in his role as high priest. It is remarkable that the *aḫu rabû* is not attested in the astronomical diaries and in administrative texts.

in Jerusalem, where one also had to cope with a society without a local king. In this case too the temple could handle its own affairs without the king with the high priest in a prominent role (Van der Spek 2015a, p. 462-466).

The fate of the king is also a prominent concern of chronicles, if not the main concern. King Nabonidus was absent, and that for a long time, and it may well be that people and temple functionaries frowned upon that. The chronicler may also have had his misgivings, but one should not jump to conclusions. One of the main tasks of the king is to go on campaign, and as such it is not bad in itself that the king is absent for that reason. Although the king was absent, the crown prince was present and a royal army was also present to defend the city. No negative judgment is given of the king (pace Waerzeggers 2015a; cf. Van der Spek 2015, p. 453-460). When he returns he did his duty by taking part in the New Year's Festival and the rituals were performed "properly," *kī šalmu* (III 5-8).

What was alarming, however, was the advance of Cyrus, the king of Anshan. He defeated king Astyages (of Media) whose royal city Ecbatana he captured in Nabonidus' 6th year. The 7th year has only the notification of the fact that the king was in Tema and that the Akitu festival did not take place. The 8th year has no more than a blank line. I assume that this means that the notification of the 7th year could be repeated. I find Zawadzki's theory (Zawadzki 2010, p. 150) that the chronicler wanted to suppress the news that Nabonidus was for one year in Babylon, so that the festival could take place, far-fetched and unfounded. Whatever the case, the advance of Cyrus is the main issue for the remainder of the chronicle and the 9th year reports Cyrus' conquest of Lydia. The conquest of Babylon in the 17th year gets an extra long treatment and understandably so.

The main topics of Cyrus' advance are the elimination of his opponent Astyages, the conquest of Lydia and the fall of Babylon. As a matter of fact, the same events that were highlighted by Herodotus. If the final redactor knew Herodotus (as Waerzeggers infers 2015a, p. 115-117) then he followed him in this, but the choice of these topics can of course also have been made independently, as these were the most important successes to report. And if he followed Herodotus, then it was not without critique: it was not Cyrus who rebelled, but Astyages who attacked Cyrus (Cyrus may not have been a vassal of Media at all), Croesus was not spared, but killed, and Babylon was not taken by a stratagem after a siege (Herodotus I 190-1), but simply after a battle at Opis and a surrender afterwards. Even in this criticism the chronicler had good Greek precedents. Greek historians often claim to be continuing the work of predecessors, but at the same time like to criticize and correct them.

Conclusion

In this contribution I have tried to solve a few problems in reading and translating the section on the ninth year of Nabonidus in the Nabonidus Chronicle. I hope to have presented some useful new readings and translations and to have provided reasoning supporting the claim that the section after all refers to Cyrus' campaign against Lydia. I have also tried to evaluate the perspective of the chronicler regarding the relation of king Nabonidus to the New Year's festival. But in solving matters of detail, one cannot leave aside the character of the document in question and let the problems multiply.

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions on the role and *Sitz im Leben* of the Nabonidus Chronicle. We can no longer easily assume that it was composed right after the demise of Nabonidus. The copy we have is arguably late, late Persian or early Hellenistic period, but it is difficult to say at what time the text was first composed. In view of the details presented in the text I cannot assume that it was composed from scratch in the Hellenistic period, as Waerzeggers argues, but one cannot rule

out that the copyist made changes and additions that were relevant at the time of writing. Whatever the case, the document as we have it was composed at a time that the Persian power was relevant and in a time that New Year's rituals were normally not performed in the presence of the king and when scholars and clergy had to come to terms with this. This is also true if one assumes that a proto-chronicle was made in the early Persian period, since the participation of the king in rituals stopped or was at least very limited immediately after the first year of Cyrus.

Post-scriptum

After I had submitted the manuscript of this essay, I received a copy of a new article by Robert Rollinger and Angelika Kellner (Rollinger & Kellner 2019) on the interpretation of II 16 concerning the alleged interpretation as Cyrus' campaign to Lydia. This is a very helpful article as the authors provide an extensive overview of the debate. They present the Greek evidence and all suggestions that have been made in the past to read the broken sign that would represent *lu*, being the first syllable of the country that we know as Lydia. They also take note of my brief discussion of the reading of II 16 in the *Festschrift Stolper* (Van der Spek 2014, p. 256, n. 184). The authors argue, however, that the interpretation of II 16 as referring to Cyrus' expedition to Lydia cannot be substantiated and is historically impossible. Instead they prefer, as Rollinger did in 2009, to read here Urartu (*ú-[raš-tú]*) and interpret the relevant sign, that was read by many, including me, as *lu* in the phrase *ana KUR 'Lu-ú'-[du GIN]* as *ú* or at least holding this as a viable option. And as there have been proposed many readings for this wretched sign, one cannot build anything on it, they argue. Hence they turn to their second argument. Lydia would be far from the Babylonian perspective and unlikely get an entry in the chronicles. It would therefore be advisable to look for a country closer to the Tigris.

I fear, however, that these arguments cannot stand. I agree with the authors that it is hazardous to build much on a sign that is hardly readable. There must be additional evidence. Yet it is not true that all the proposed readings (*lu*, *ú*, *iš*, *su* and *zu*) are equally possible. I still maintain that *ú* instead of *lu* is flatly impossible. The authors present schematic drawings of the relevant signs from sign lists and conclude that all these signs can be accommodated to the remaining part of the sign. This, however, is an abortive approach. One should not look at signs in sign books, but at the signs as they are written by the scribe of the tablet. Then we see swiftly that he wrote *ú* quite differently, as I explained above, p. 4. Of all the proposed signs *lu* is simply by far the best option. That is the sign where the upper horizontal wedge at the left side is placed just under the head of the vertical wedges. In *ú* the horizontals are placed much closer to the bottom¹⁰. In addition the head of the lowest horizontal wedge is visible too and so is a trace of the middle horizontal wedge. The signs next proposed by me, are speculative indeed, as they are written on the right edge and are nearly totally destroyed. We see the head of one horizontal wedge (which could belong to *ú*) and some other traces of which it is very difficult to determine if we see a sign or a crack. The rest is effectively destroyed. We see one upright wedge at the end, but this too might be simply a crack (fig. 3).

¹⁰ See for a clear *lu* in a NB text which perfectly corresponds with the traces of our chronicle: <https://labasi.acdh.oeaw.ac.at/tablets/glyph/detail/12596> (=Pirngruber *et al.* 2020)

Whatever the case some form of *illik* (*il-lik*, GIN, GIN-*ku*¹¹, GIN-*ma*) is to be expected. *Alāku* is the usual verb in chronicles to denote kings who depart for a campaign (e.g. ABC 7, II: 1; ABC 5: 2, 16, 18, rev. 6, 9, 11, 12).

This leads us to Rollinger's and Kellner's second argument: Lydia is far beyond the scope of the chronicler. The destination would be too far and to state that the king crossed the Tigris and departed to Lydia would be something like saying that Napoleon crossed the Rhine at Cologne and departed to Russia. That might be true, but it is not uncommon in the chronicles. The chroniclers were better informed on the date of departures than on the rest of campaigns. Our chronicle says that Cyrus crossed the Tigris in Nisannu (I) (he probably encamped there), and departed to Lydia in Ayaru (II). It gives no information as to when Cyrus arrived in Lydia. I give a few parallels for this. In ABC 5: rev. 6-7 we read that Nebuchadnezzar II marched (*illik*) to Egypt (equally far away) in the month Kislimu (IX). The battle (undecisive) and the return of the Babylonian king are mentioned, but with no date. Sometimes a date is mentioned, as in ABC 5: rev. 11-12: the king of Akkad departed (*illikma*) in Kislimu to Syria (*Hattu*), encamped before Jerusalem (no date given) and captured the city in Addaru (XII). There is a clear sequence of events in chronicles: The king musters his army (*dekū*), departs (*alāku*) and does battle (featured as bringing about a defeat, taking a city, killing or capturing a king), and returns home. Hence the capture of Sardis by Cyrus can have taken place in any month after month II of Nabonidus' ninth year and the long distance is no problem.

The authors further argue that the reading "Lydia" is only inspired by the fact that Herodotus recorded the capture of Sardis by Cyrus. No one would have thought of looking for Lydia without that knowledge. Herodotus gives no date and the dates that were given by later authors (ranging from 547 to 545 BC) are suspect. That is true of course. But that does not mean that the reasoning is wrong. I think that nobody will deny that Cyrus at some point did conquer Lydia. The historical evidence for that is overwhelming. So the lengthy discussion the authors offer of the difficult route over the mountains that Cyrus had to take is dispensable. He did arrive in Sardis after all and he could have marched by moving upwards along the Tigris and from Nineveh taking the route that was later the route of the Royal Road to Sardis. In Rollinger's reconstruction he would have to cross the Tigris again in order to reach Urartu, which would be very illogical. For Herodotus the three main conquests of Cyrus were: Media, Lydia and Babylonia. The Nabonidus Chronicle has the same sequence. This can be explained by reasoning that this simply was the state of affairs, so that it is no wonder that both recordings focus on these three events. Media, Lydia and Babylonia were the major powers of the day. But there may be even more. Rollinger and Kellner (p. 154) accept Waerzeggers' argument that the chronicle was written in the Hellenistic period in a debate with Greek historiography. If that is true, then it is even more likely that the chronicler wanted to describe the conquest of Lydia, rather than talking about a kingdom of Urartu for whose existence at this period there is only very faint evidence and of which the Greeks knew nothing.¹² Thus the most viable conclusion must remain that the chronicle refers to Cyrus' campaign against Lydia, while the option of Urartu should be discarded.

¹¹ At first sight one would be inclined to read *illiku*, "they went", but in late-Babylonian texts the final vowel was not pronounced. The writing GIN-*ku* for the singular occurs very often in chronicles. The phonetic complement was only intended to help the reader to identify the sign GIN, that could also be read as *kānu*, "to become firm", GUB = *izuzzu*, "to stand" or *šaqāru*, "to write" or *zaqāru*, "to plant, to erect".

¹² I agree with Waerzeggers that the copy we have probably is Hellenistic or Late Persian, but the chronicler had information that Herodotus did not have, such as the month of the crossing of the Tigris and Cyrus departure to Lydia. This is one of the reasons that I think that there was at least a proto-chronicle.

Figures



Fig. 1. ABC 7, II: 10-18 (Photo: author).



Fig. 2. ABC 7, II 15-17 (right side) (Photo: author).



*Fig. 3. ABC 7, right edge at II: 13-17.
(Photo: author)*



*Fig. 4. ABC 7, I: 3 (u-bil-lu).
(Photo: author)*

Abbreviations

- ABC = Grayson 1975
 ADART I – III = Sachs & Hunger 1988, 1989, 1996
 BCHP = Finkel and Van der Spek [2004]
 CTMMA IV 148 = Wallenfels & Van der Spek 2014

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