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 remaind 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

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[1] I. M. D'YAKONOV: VDI 1959/4. 70 foll., F. ALTHEIM—R. STIEHL: 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 1924[3] 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 differred, 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

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[3] F. H. Weissbach: „Kyros". PWRE SpBd. IV. Stuttgart 1924. 1128 foll.
[4] Cf. *e.gr.* A. T. Olmstead: The History of the Persian Empire. Chicago 1948. 34 foll.
[5] Cyrus, Cyl. 1. 25 (F. H. Weissbach: Die Keilinschriften 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 frag ment of an inscription of Aššurbānapli, which mentions in 639 the grand-father 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-Achaimenes (Hero dotus VII. 11). Otherwise, however, the legend of origin of Cyrus told by Hero dotus 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, Cam byses and Teispes is, therefore, an actual task.

The name of Cyrus (Old Persian *Kuruš*) waš 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

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[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: Ver handlungen 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 Scythian name **Kula-xšaya-* 'young king'. From Middle Iranian we can refer to the following data: Saka *kula-* 'kinsman', Sogdian *wkwr, wk'wr* 'kinsman', Bactrian or Hephtalite *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 Scythian name **Kula-xšaya-* 'young king'. In the myth of origin of the Scythians 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 Scythian legend of origin, according to which the Scythians 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

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[10] As it was already pointed out by V. I. ABAYEV: К этимологии древнеперсидских имен Kuruš, Kambujiya, Čišpiš. Этимология 1965. Moscow 1967. 286 foll. The interpretations by Abayev of the names *Kambujiya* and *Čišpiš* 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 insu-
perable difficulty. Also in the Greek transliteration of *Zranka-* sigma cor-
responds 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 compo-
nent 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 rela-
tion 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
Čišpiš (*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

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[14] It is a vicious circle if on the basis of the names *Kuruš* and *Kambujiya* E. HERZ-
FELD: The Persian Empire. Wiesbaden 1968. 346 supposes that the Medes (!) had exten-
ded 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 transscriptions 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 attempt[18] 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] I. 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 ele-
ments of the later Old Persian royal titles *xšāyaθiya vazraka xšāyaθiya Pārsaiy*.
Finally, the Babylonian chronicle reports that «the army of Ištumegu (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 popu-
lation, surrounds himself with body-guards and does not communicate per-
sonally with his subjects. Every case has to be referred to him in writing,
in the whole country spies (*kataskopoi*) and informers (*katekooi*) 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 sepa-
rated 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-keepens, 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

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[20] Cf. E. HERZFELD: Zoroaster and His World. I. Princeton 1947. 116 foll.
[21] Cf. S. LANGDON: Neubabylonische Königsinschriften. Leipzig 1912. 220 (in-
scription no. 1 of Nabûna'id, I. 27). Cf. also I. M. D'YAKONOV: История Мидии. 336.
[22] F. H. WEISSBACH: Die Keilinschriften der Archämeniden. 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 proscynesis, and that of juris-
diction 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 inscrip-
tions 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 criteria[26] from the viewpoint of sub-
jects 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-xšāyaθya-* 'majordomo', **hazahra-pati-* 'chi-
liarch', **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', *uvaspa-* 'having
good horse'.

4. religion: *magu-* 'magus', *zūra-kara-* 'evil-doer', *asmān-* 'sky'.

5. administration of justice: *ufrastam pṛs-* '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 charac-
teristic Old Persian terminology. The adoption of the royal titles points to
the circumstance that the position of the Median king and the character of

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[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. MAYR-
HOFER: 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 differred 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 *xšāyaθya- made its way
even into the title xšāyaθiya 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 by xšāyaθiya-. We can perhaps
think of the word xšaya- 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 *duxçī- '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 men-
tioned 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 fratama- «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 deve-
loped 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 katekooi was introduced in
Media already by Deiokes. 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

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[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 *xšayat- (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 xšaya- could also
occur as the first member of compounds, see J. DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN: Les composés
de l'Avesta. Liege—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 supervisers. 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-ya-kaš < *didāyaka- 'inspector'. Much later, even in the Parthian documents of Nisa, the derivation 'wpdyt < 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 — *dvara-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', vaçabara-'axe-bearer', *varçabara- '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 Araben. 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 pṛs-* is well illustrated by the interrogation by torture of the herdsman Mitradates. 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 : niyaçārayam : kārahya : abicariš : gaiθāmcā : māniyamcā:*
Old Persian   *viθabišacā*[32]

Elamite   *U DU-taš a-ak ZÍZ a-ak ⟨⟩ kur-taš a-ak ⟨⟩ UL.ḪI*[lg] ⌈*mar-ri*⌉-*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

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[32] I hope to give a detailed explanation of this passage elsewhere. Old Persian *vⁱθabišacā* 'property of the royal house' can be interpreted as consisting of *viθ-* 'royal house' and *abi-iša-* 'property'. Old Persian *iša-* (< **ixsa-*) compares with Avestan *aēša-* 'Habe, Eigentum' (< **aixsa-*) in the same manner as Avestan *iš-* 'Wunsch' does with Avestan *aēša-* '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 ⌈*mar-ri-i*⌉*p-ma*, however, recommended by him, it seems to be more correct to read the form ⌈*mar-ri*⌉-*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 made 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]

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[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 Geburstag. Heidelberg 1971. 46—50.]