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## **The Many Deaths of Cyrus the Great**

*This article uses narratives of the death of Cyrus the Great as a test case in order to examine the use of propaganda in the Achaemenid empire. By comparing the accounts found in Herodotus, Ctesias, and Xenophon, it is shown that these Greek historians have captured propagandistic messages created in the courts of contemporary Achaemenid kings. While the Greek works were very much the product of their authors' literary imagination, nevertheless they preserved substantial evidence about the role of propaganda during the Achaemenid period.*

When discussing the Achaemenid Persians, scholars frequently mention imperial propaganda and its role as a tool of imperial rule.<sup>1</sup> These studies generally rely on the few surviving texts and images from this period, for the simple reason that they are concrete examples of the genre. In this paper, I would like to examine a few possible examples of non-textual Achaemenid propaganda. After a discussion of the definition of “propaganda” in an ancient context, I will look at accounts of the death of Cyrus the Great, which I argue were originally crafted as oral texts. We will see that the theme of the death of Cyrus was reused multiple times and in different contexts, depending on the needs of the user.

### *Definition*

A piece of propaganda cannot exist in a vacuum; it is a communication between two parties. Propaganda consists of three elements: the message, be it text, speech, image, or performance; the sender, who is responsible for the creation and distribution of the message; and the recipient, at whom the message is aimed.<sup>2</sup> In order to distinguish between persuasion and propaganda, we define the sender as a member or representative of a political group with a “clear institutional ideology and objective” and that follows “a careful and predetermined plan of prefabricated symbol manipulation.”<sup>3</sup> The recipients are identified as such by the sender, but may be unaware of their classification as a targeted group. The recipients will never be “the people” as a whole, as this is too vague and too inefficient to be of any use.<sup>4</sup>

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Instead, the recipients will be a relatively small but highly influential group, which, in the ancient world, will generally mean the small number of powerful nobles who have a legal or de facto influence in political affairs. All societies, ancient and modern, are broken up into different groups, each with their own languages, symbols, beliefs, needs, and powers, so there will be no one message that can apply to all groups.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the message must have a clearly-defined goal, and be crafted so as to convince this specific group to undertake specific actions or adopt specific thoughts which will ultimately benefit the sender.<sup>6</sup> This is done not through persuasion, but by the exploitation of the epistemically flawed ideological beliefs of the recipients. Epistemic deficiency implies that the sender understands the ideological beliefs of the recipient, but it is not necessarily the case that the sender must also share those beliefs.<sup>7</sup>

Taking the Bisotun inscription of Darius the Great as an example, Darius' claim to the throne is based on three points:<sup>8</sup> his dynastic heritage ("From ancient times our family has been kings ... There are eight in my family who formerly have been kings; I [am] the ninth; [thus altogether] nine, now as ever, are we kings"<sup>9</sup>), his moral standing ("For that reason Ahuramazda and the other gods who are brought me aid, because I was not disloyal, I was no follower of the Lie, I was no evil-doer, neither I nor my family, but I acted according to righteousness, neither to the powerless nor to the powerful did I do wrong, and the man who strove for my royal house, him I treated well, who did harm, him I punished severely"<sup>10</sup>) and his victories ("Proclaims Darius, the king: This is what I have done by the favor of Ahuramazda in one and the same year, after that I became king: Nineteen battles I have fought. By the favor of Ahuramazda I defeated them and captured nine kings"<sup>11</sup>). These claims are not offered as a rational argument for why the Persians ought to recognize Darius as their rightful king. They are intended to exploit the ideological beliefs (in this case, the culturally determined notions of kingship, as well as religious beliefs and fears of disorder) of the recipients in order to force them into acceptance without ever making a rationally sound argument at all. This closing off of reason and autonomous decision-making is the essential difference between "persuasion" and "propaganda."<sup>12</sup>

How did senders communicate with their intended recipients? In one case, the Assyrian king Assurnasirpal II (r. 883-859 BCE) claimed to have feasted nearly 70,000 guests at his new palace at Calah:

When I consecrated the palace of Calah, 47,074 men [and] women who were invited from every part of my land, 5,000 dignitaries [and] envoys of the people of the lands Suhu, Hindānu, Patinu, Hatti, Tyre, Sidon, Gurgumu, Malidu, Hubušku, Gilzānu, Kummu, [and] Musasiru, 16,000 people of Calah, [and] 1,500 *zariqū* of my palace, all of them—altogether 69,574 [including] those summoned from all lands and the people of Calah—for ten days I gave them food, I gave them drink, I had them bathed, I had them anointed. [Thus] did I honor them [and] send them back to their lands in peace and joy.<sup>13</sup>

Even if Assurnasirpal has vastly exaggerated the number of guests, still hundreds of foreign and local nobles and dignitaries must have been exposed to the writing, images, oral pronouncements, and performances which were designed to impress upon them the king's wealth, power, and legitimacy.<sup>14</sup> But in general, the vast majority of the population had little to no interaction with the state, apart from working to pay taxes, and serving in the military. Their opinions were irrelevant. Since this was the case, scholars have wondered whether or not the term "propaganda" can be used in an ancient context at all. In the absence of a need to manipulate "public opinion," what would be the point of propaganda? Oppenheim argued that royal inscriptions were primarily ceremonial,<sup>15</sup> and Garelli argued that royal inscriptions and palace reliefs were the result of the king's ego, and any influence they had on others was secondary.<sup>16</sup> Finkelstein ruled out the possibility of the use of propaganda in the ancient world because this term "presumes a situation or context where a number of competing ideologies or sources of authority seek the allegiance or loyalty of large masses of persons." Thus the Ancient Near East had what he calls "polemic" texts, but not propaganda.<sup>17</sup>

Propaganda intentionally closes off the possibility of other courses of action and, even if it relies on information that is factually true, avoids rational argumentation. This presupposes that propaganda occurs in a context in which argumentation or debate is possible. One might insist that, even if only the tiniest sliver of the population had any influence, this still might add up to several hundred, perhaps thousands of individuals in a large state, consisting of different aristocratic families and clans, trade guilds, temple priesthods, regional administrators, vassal kings, and other groups, all of whom will have their own unique agendas, which may or may not be naturally aligned with the agenda of the central power. Even if these groups have no "right" to act independently, rebellion and resistance are always an option, and propaganda might be a tool for keeping these groups in line. However, as Garelli argues, this might be a waste of energy: propaganda, he says, is unlikely to influence foreigners, as it was extremely difficult to transmit a message over great distances. Terrible images on the palace walls could make ambassadors quiver in awe, but only those individual ambassadors who were actually present would be subjected to the message. No matter how accurately they described the images to their compatriots back home, it was unlikely to have a great effect, and the frequency of rebellions by Assyria's vassals shows how ineffective this technique really was.<sup>18</sup> Amongst the native aristocracy, royal propaganda was probably just as futile: like dangling a slab of meat before a lion, royal propaganda emphasized the glory of kingship, tempting those of a treasonous bent to cross the line into rebellion for a chance to possess that glory for themselves; those who were loyal were already loyal, and needed no more convincing.

But is this argument valid? Garelli assumes that once a noble started down the rebellious path, nothing could return him to loyalty, and in fact royal propaganda would only strengthen his treason. Rebellious vassals and pretenders make the history books, but any examples of a potential rebel who was convinced by the images of the severed heads, the depictions of the king's close relationship with the gods, is a negative case, an absence that leaves no mark. For every Assyrian

vassal that did rebel, how many had been convinced by propaganda to stay in line? How many more would have rebelled if there had been no propaganda? And how can we assume that propagandistic claims were not taken at face value? Based on the evidence available to the individual reading the royal inscription or viewing the relief, the king of an empire (Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, or otherwise) was in all likelihood the single most powerful mortal on the planet. His armies were as irresistible as the tide, and his palace held all the treasures of the known world. Perhaps it was possible to consider a rebellion when on one's estate, but a trip through the royal palace might change one's mind.

Propaganda is an official public message by which the sender exploits the beliefs and emotions of the recipients in order to cause the recipient to think a certain way, or to take a certain action, which benefits the sender. In what follows, we will see that the three reports of the Death of Cyrus the Great meet this definition, and are therefore best understood as propaganda.

We have no Persian textual sources describing the death of Cyrus, so we must rely solely on our Greek historians. First, Herodotus says that there are many versions of Cyrus' death, but that the most plausible is that he was captured and killed during a pointless war against the nomadic, savage Massagetae. Second, the Cyrus of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* learned from a dream that his time had come. After three days of sickness, he summoned his two sons to his side and divided the kingdom between them. Following a thoroughly Greek meditation on morality and the immortality of the soul, Cyrus died. Finally, in Ctesias' *Persika*, we see hints of death both on the battlefield and in bed. In one fragment, Cyrus was captured by the Saka, but survived. In a different fragment, Cyrus was wounded while at war with the Derbices, but survived long enough to return to Persia. Again, he divided the empire between his sons before his death.<sup>19</sup>

These three versions are irreconcilable: Cyrus cannot die in bed and in battle. But rather than try to isolate the "historical kernel" of this episode, we will attempt to reconstruct the original context of these three versions in order to understand their function as propaganda.

### *The Story According to Herodotus*

Herodotus' account of Cyrus' demise comes after his telling of the Babylonian conquest and description of the customs of that region. At 1.201, Herodotus begins with a description of the Massagetae homeland, which lies east of the Araxes (Oxus, modern Amu Darya) river, thus approximately modern-day Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The people of this region are hunter-gatherers who fornicate in the open "like animals" and smoke intoxicating leaves. Beyond this region is a flat plain, "over which the eye wanders till it is lost in the distance."<sup>20</sup> According to Herodotus, Cyrus had "many reasons" for his desire to conquer this land, but only mentions (1) his belief in his superhuman status, and (2) his belief in his invincibility. We might assume that Cyrus had more mundane objectives in mind, perhaps recognizing

the steppe tribes as a security risk on his Eastern flank,<sup>21</sup> but this concern did not interest Herodotus.

Cyrus' opening gambit was to propose marriage to Tomyris, widowed queen of the Massagetae. She refused, so Cyrus ordered his men to bridge the Araxes. While this work was still in progress, she sent him a message advising him to be content with his conquests already won. But if he must have war, she agrees to meet him in battle a three-day march from the river, either in his land or hers. Croesus, the deposed Lydian king acting as Cyrus' advisor, recommended that the Persians advance three days into Massagetae land, and there set up a rich banquet to distract the nomadic warriors unused to such civilized fare. Thus occupied, the Massagetae will be easy prey for the Persians. Cyrus took this advice and crossed the Araxes. In bed one night, Cyrus dreamed that he saw Darius—"who was the eldest of the sons of Hystaspes, son of Arsames, who was an Achaemenid"—with a pair of wings large enough to put both Europe and Asia in shadow.<sup>22</sup> Upon waking, Cyrus determined that the dream was proclaiming that Darius was actively plotting against him, but Herodotus intervenes to tell us that this interpretation was not quite right: the dream had been sent in order to warn Cyrus of his impending death and the subsequent succession of Darius to the throne.

Once they had marched an appropriate distance from the Araxes, Cyrus sent a small detachment of troops to prepare the feast, in accordance with Croesus' plan. Right on schedule, one-third of the Massagetae swooped in, killed the Persian soldiers, and set about the feast. Gorged on food and wine, they were killed or captured by the remaining Persians, with Tomyris' son amongst the captives.<sup>23</sup> When she heard the news, Tomyris offered the Persians a retreat without harassment in exchange for her son, but "more blood than they can drink" if they chose battle. Cyrus refused to retreat, and meanwhile, the prince killed himself in his captivity. In the ensuing battle, Cyrus was killed. When Tomyris found his corpse, she pushed his head into a wine-skin filled with human blood, "and cried out as she committed this outrage: 'Though I have conquered you and live, yet you have ruined me by treacherously taking my son. See now: I fulfill my threat: you have your fill of blood.'"<sup>24</sup> According to Herodotus, there are many accounts of Cyrus' death, but this one is the most credible (πιθανώτατος).

There are reasons to be suspicious. This *logos* certainly fits into Herodotus' overall narrative structure. The death of Cyrus at the hands of the Massagetae is a repeating topos of the hubris of Persian overreach: just as Cyrus meets his demise beyond the Araxes, so too does Cambyses fail in Ethiopia, Darius in Scythia, Xerxes in Greece.<sup>25</sup> The fulfillment of Tomyris' threats, the significance of the dream-omen, and Croesus' discussion of strategy all find many parallels elsewhere in the *History*, and are therefore Herodotean creations or modifications. It is not likely, however, that he created the story from scratch. Certain elements of the tale are easily recognizable motifs that work towards Herodotus' ideological arguments, so they can be explained as such. Other elements cannot be attributed to Herodotus, or to Greek literary culture in general. For example, the Massagetae names Tomyris and Spargapises are most likely of Iranian origin,<sup>26</sup> and are not Herodotus' inventions. The ethnographic details about

the Messagetæ, especially in material culture, are broadly applicable to “Scythian” steppe culture generally.<sup>27</sup> Again, the point is not that Herodotus’ account is correct, it is that his account is based on a core given to him by someone else, ultimately Iranian in origin.

That Herodotus had at least one knowledgeable Persian informant is generally accepted today,<sup>28</sup> and should not be particularly surprising; such a person would not have been hard for Herodotus to find. In fact, Herodotus himself tells us that Zopyrus, son and grandson of Persian satraps, lived in Athens in exile.<sup>29</sup> What I wish to bring to the foreground is the fact that, regardless of the social status of Herodotus’ Persian informants, their information would have been a reflection of the “official party line” put out by the contemporary royal court. This does not rule out the possibility of an unofficial folk-narrative that could compete with the official story, nor is it to be taken to suggest that there was only one official story: competing factions within or around the court might also be at work, challenging the other’s recollection and interpretation of the past. On topics as politically significant as the births, achievements, and deaths of kings, Herodotus would have been listening to propaganda.

We can begin by establishing the context of the propaganda. There is good reason to believe that Herodotus was receiving a narrative crafted in the relatively recent past. Cyrus, of course, did not write his own death-story, but we can be sure that his son, Cambyses, would have emphasized his father’s amazing achievements, as well as his own legitimacy. However, it is just as certain that Darius, likely a usurper from outside of the direct line of legitimate succession, would have rewritten the narrative for his own benefit, and to the detriment of Cambyses. Thus, the narrative could not be any older than the beginning of Darius’ reign, ca. 520 BCE. We know that Darius went on a propaganda spree, spreading his Bisotun text (in Old Persian, the *\*dipiçica-*) throughout the empire.<sup>30</sup> We also know that an oral version of this narrative (the *handuga*<sup>31</sup>) made it to Greece, and forms the backbone of Herodotus’ account of Darius’ journey to the throne of Persia.<sup>32</sup> I suggest that Darius also issued a new narrative of Cyrus’ death, the original now being lost to us. Most likely, it would have been an oral text, in order that it would be accessible to a large number of people. Unfortunately, this means that there was no attempt to preserve it permanently, but some portion of the narrative may have made it to Greece, and formed the core of Herodotus’ account of the death of Cyrus.

In Herodotus’ account, there is more specific evidence that Darius was the sender. At 1.209, Cyrus has his dream, wherein Darius’ wings spread across both Asia and Europe. In the *Histories*, prophetic dreams come almost exclusively to foreign tyrants. They appear at decisive and transitional moments and offer a coded glimpse of the future.<sup>33</sup> In Greek literature, the dreams of rulers were regarded as especially significant, as they influenced the destinies of whole nations.<sup>34</sup> Cyrus’ dream during the Massagetæ campaign is no different, and shows all the traits we would expect of a Herodotean dream. Yet there are signs that it may not be solely the product of Herodotus’ own imagination. Asheri identified the wings on Darius’ back as a “charismatic symbol of the king, the chosen one of Ahura Mazda.”<sup>35</sup> In

Achaemenid art, the winged *xwarrah* symbol typically appears above a king, and the two are clearly differentiated,<sup>36</sup> but it is easy to see how a foreigner might transpose the wings onto the king himself, especially based on an oral description of the icon. Since we are working under the assumption that Darius was the original author of Cyrus' dream scene, the emphasis must have been on the divine foretelling of Darius' succession to the throne. We cannot determine if the dream was originally attributed to Cyrus or not, as Herodotus has most likely decontextualized and repurposed the scene for his own literary needs, leaving too few traces of the original.

While I still would not reject the possibility that Cyrus' dream is the product of Herodotus' imagination, a closer look at the passage reveals an interesting detail.

When Cyrus awoke he considered his vision, and because it seemed to him to be of great importance, he sent for Hystaspes and said to him privately, "Hystaspes, I have caught your son plotting against me and my sovereignty; and I will tell you how I know this for certain. The gods care for me and show me beforehand all that is coming. Now then, I have seen in a dream in the past night your eldest son with wings on his shoulders, overshadowing Asia with the one and Europe with the other. From this vision, there is no way that he is not plotting against me. Therefore hurry back to Persia, and see that when I come back after subjecting this country you bring your son before me to be questioned about this."

Cyrus said this, thinking that Darius was plotting against him; but in fact, heaven was showing him that he himself was to die in the land where he was and Darius was to inherit his kingdom.<sup>37</sup>

In this passage, Herodotus goes out of his way to emphasize that Darius was not, in fact, plotting to usurp the throne. Instead, the dream, which Cyrus identifies here as an infallible message from the gods, only predicts that Cyrus will die and Darius will become king. This preemptive absolution for the eventual coup can only have come from Darius' own court.

I suggest that, after Darius' coup, he commissioned a retelling of Achaemenid history. As his Bisotun narrative shows, he faced repeated revolts throughout his empire, and needed to establish his legitimacy so that he could maintain his rule with something other than brute force. He could not claim to be the legitimate successor of Cyrus, as Cyrus had made a great effort to publicly demonstrate his support for Cambyses, his son and designated heir. Herodotus<sup>38</sup> records that Cyrus had nominated Cambyses as his successor, and Babylonian documents confirm this: Cambyses may have participated in a ritual shortly after the capture of Babylon in 539,<sup>39</sup> and was installed as the King of Babylon during Cyrus' reign.<sup>40</sup> Rollinger argues that Darius crafted a new dynastic family tree, in which he and Cyrus shared a common ancestor, Tiespes. The most obvious display of this propaganda campaign are the three forged Old Persian inscriptions at Pasargadae attributed to Cyrus, where he claims Achaemenes as an ancestor.<sup>41</sup>

This dovetails with Darius' claim at Bisotun, that he had restored the kingship to its rightful place, that is, in the control of his family.<sup>42</sup>

But this would not have been sufficient. Darius still had to deal with the fact of the legitimate reigns of Cambyses and Bardiya. His solution was to undermine Cyrus' legitimacy without undermining Achaemenid kingship as a whole. His attack was threefold: first, he stripped Cyrus of his virtues, but only at the very last moment of his life. Whereas Herodotus' Cyrus is wise, pious, and a brilliant strategist, for most of Book 1, in the chapters following the Babylonian conquest he becomes vain, reckless, and made soft by luxury.<sup>43</sup> The ultimate display of the gods' displeasure with Cyrus was his death on the battlefield.<sup>44</sup> Next, Darius used the dream to show that heaven had transferred its mandate from Cyrus to Darius. Finally, in the account preserved in the Bisotun inscription,<sup>45</sup> Darius claimed that Cambyses had secretly killed his brother and heir, Bardiya, and then he himself died in Egypt. The evil magus Gaumata, pretending to be Bardiya, had then taken the throne. This usurpation had prompted Ahuramazda to grant the rule to Darius.<sup>46</sup> In this fashion, Darius managed to avoid casting too much aspersion on the character of the empire's founder, while simultaneously eliminating Bardiya and Cambyses as legitimate competitors for the kingship.

Darius was the sender, and his message was of his own legitimacy. Who was his recipient? It was most likely not "the Persians," writ large, as the vast majority of Persians, let alone non-Persian members of the empire, had so little influence that it was not necessary for Darius to persuade them of his legitimacy. However, there would have been a part of the aristocracy that was either loyal to the direct descendants of Cyrus, or perhaps had royal aspirations of their own. In the period immediately after Darius' coup, at least five men in the vicinity of Persia attempted to challenge Darius based on their own claims of local dynastic legitimacy. Āçina, the son of Upadarama, declared himself king in Elam.<sup>47</sup> The Elamites themselves turned him over to Darius for execution, but while Darius was in Babylon, a Persian named Martiya declared himself Imani, king in Elam.<sup>48</sup> Once again, the Elamites overthrew this rebel, only for a Mede named Fravartiš to claim be the descendant of Cyaxares, Cyrus' great-grandfather. He, too, was ritually tortured and executed at Ecbatana.<sup>49</sup> Next, Ciçataxma, a Sagartian, also claimed descent from Cyaxares, and for his troubles was impaled at Arbela.<sup>50</sup> Finally, the Persian Vahyazdāta claimed to be Bardiya and seized control of Persia. After several battles, he was finally defeated, captured, and killed.<sup>51</sup> Although his rewriting of the death of Cyrus was only one part in Darius' propaganda campaign, it was essential because it allowed noble Persians to turn their support to him without completely rejecting Cyrus' heritage or, more importantly, his conquests.

While it is impossible to gauge the impact of Darius' message, there are clues that it was largely successful. It survived long enough to reach Herodotus' ears nearly a century after it had been composed. This means that it was continually repeated at the court. Consider also that it was composed and distributed a minimum of ten to fifteen years after the actual death of Cyrus, meaning that there would have been few eyewitnesses left to offer a convincing argument against Darius' version.



However, the very fact that alternate versions appeared in the writings of other Greek historians shows that its dominance was not absolute. It is to these alternate versions that we now turn.

### *The Story According to Ctesias*

Ctesias' account is preserved only in fragments recorded by other ancient writers.<sup>52</sup> Ctesias claims that, as the doctor for the Persian king Artaxerxes II, he had personal access to the king and his family members, and that he was present at the 401 BCE battle of Cunaxa, where Artaxerxes fought and defeated his brother Cyrus the Younger. The dates and length of his stay at the royal court are uncertain, as the sources are contradictory.<sup>53</sup> Ctesias' history ends in 398/397 BCE, and it is believed that he wrote his *Persika* in ca. 394. He tells us that Cyrus, while at war with the Derbices, fell from his horse and was struck by a javelin. Once he was safely in bed, he gathered his sons, appointed Cambyses as king, made Tanyoxarces master of the lands of the Bactrians, Choramnians, Parthians, and Carmanians, and declared that he would not have to pay tribute on these lands. With his last words he told them to be at peace with each other, and to honor their mother. He died two days later.<sup>54</sup>

Once again, this version has been heavily reworked by the author in order to give a commentary on the nature of the Persian empire, to be read by a Greek audience. But there is no reason to assume that the core of the story (Cyrus died in bed, after dividing the empire between his sons) was not from a Persian source. Instead, as we did with Herodotus, we should consider the context in which Ctesias, and later Xenophon, may have received these narratives in order to determine if they might have been pieces of propaganda. If that seems to be the case, we shall attempt to determine the sender, recipient, and message of each version.

Some scholars strongly caution using Ctesias' *Persika* as a historical source, because they see it as untrustworthy or fabricated. While this approach still predominates, in recent years scholars have started to come around on Ctesias.<sup>55</sup> A proper analysis of this debate requires far more space than is available here, and I will only say that, for the purposes of this study, we are interested in the authenticity of Ctesias' account, not its historical accuracy; that is to say, we seek evidence that Ctesias made use of information which he received from Persian, Babylonian, or other Near Eastern sources. One argument in favor of this is that various excerpts from the *Persika* agree with what we know from cuneiform sources and/or archaeology. For example, Ctesias shows knowledge of the Median-Babylonian coalition which destroyed the Assyrian empire,<sup>56</sup> and his account of Darius' rise to power has similarities with Darius' narrative at Bisotun<sup>57</sup>—both instances where Ctesias is in closer accord with the Mesopotamian texts than is Herodotus. One might also think of the Iranian and Mesopotamian names known from cuneiform texts in Ctesias, such as Arbaces (Arbaku)<sup>58</sup> and Parsondes (Paršandāta).<sup>59</sup> To be clear, to note that Ctesias got some things right is in no way a suggestion that we should take everything he says as fact. But unless we can discover a previous Greek source

for these pieces of historical data, we must assume that Ctesias learned them from Near Eastern sources.

A second argument concerns the possibility of Ctesias' access to written texts at the Persian court. On two occasions Ctesias claimed to have based his narrative on "royal records," which are called βασιλικά διφθεραὶ or βασιλικά ἀναγραφαί. No trace of such records have been found at any Persian administrative center.<sup>60</sup> It is possible, however, that Ctesias misidentified the texts as "Persian," when in fact they were Babylonian. The Babylonian chancery continued its chronicle tradition throughout the Persian period, and indeed into the Seleucid and Parthian ages. The composition of texts such as the Cyrus Cylinder, the Dynastic Prophecy, and the Antiochus Cylinder show that the Babylonian scribes were perfectly capable of composing narrative texts based on recorded data, in the service of the ruling dynasty.<sup>61</sup> In addition, the Hebrew Bible makes a few references to a Persian "book of deeds" which served to educate and entertain the royals.<sup>62</sup> None of this is proof that the βασιλικά διφθεραὶ/ἀναγραφαί existed; even if we were to have proof, we would still need to show that Ctesias did in fact have access to such an archive, and that he was able to understand the texts.

However, even if Ctesias was unable to make use of written sources, he still would have had access to oral sources. Assuming that he did in fact spend time at the Persian royal court as a doctor, we can be sure that he would have been able to speak with the locals, even if only through a translator: what good is a doctor who cannot communicate with his patients? Ctesias cites the queen Parysatis as a source, as well as the Greek commander Clearchus;<sup>63</sup> but there is evidence that he was exaggerating his own importance in the narrative, so he may not have actually spoken with these individuals.<sup>64</sup> However, in the Achaemenid court there would have been eunuchs, servants, bureaucrats, and all the other functionaries that remain unnamed, but nevertheless would have been priceless sources of first-hand knowledge, gossip, and folklore. This would have given him access to the accounts of past and contemporary events. While this is hardly a reliable source for "serious history," in our case, what we want is court gossip. We need Ctesias to preserve the tales popular amongst the Persian elites of his day, however unbelievable those tales might be. Royal propaganda, especially when it took the form of oral narrative, was not designed to be stored in a library and analyzed by scholars. Ideally, it would capture the imagination of the population, who would internalize it and repeat it.

With that in mind, it is reasonable to assume that Ctesias was, at least in part, reporting what he saw, read, and/or heard at Artaxerxes' court. Although he had no specific motivation to scrupulously report the truth, he also had no clear motive to invent his narratives wholesale.<sup>65</sup> Since the revolt of Cyrus the Younger was easily the most important event of Artaxerxes' early reign, Ctesias must have been bombarded with royal propaganda concerning that episode, and, at least while at court, probably did not have access to many competing narratives. This propaganda was likely the core of Ctesias' source material.

One strategy employed by Artaxerxes was to destroy Cyrus' reputation. According to Ctesias, Artaxerxes' trusted satrap, Tissaphernes, accused Cyrus of plotting to kill the king by hiding like a coward in a temple and murdering him during his investiture

ceremony.<sup>66</sup> Another strategy was to ensure that the narrative of the battle of Cunaxa made Artaxerxes look like a heroic warrior-king. Ctesias reports that Artaxerxes, after the battle, claimed to have been the one who actually dealt Cyrus the death-blow, even though this deed actually belonged to a Persian called Mithridates, and that he silenced the men who actually killed Cyrus with lavish gifts.<sup>67</sup>

It is obvious that Artaxerxes, having barely survived an attack on himself and his throne, would want to fashion a narrative of the battle of Cunaxa that conveyed a message of his legitimacy and power. It is less obvious where the story of Cyrus the Great comes into play. However, it is apparent that Ctesias' account of the final days of Cyrus the Great served both to challenge Cyrus' legitimacy and to emphasize the importance of loyalty between royal brothers.

In this version, Cyrus' death is not radically different from that found in Herodotus. Cyrus marched against Amorges and his wife Sparethe, king and queen of the Sakae tribe.<sup>68</sup> Cyrus managed to capture Amorges, but Sparethe led a coordinated counterattack and ultimately defeated Cyrus. Several Persian nobles were captured, and Amorges was freed in a prisoner exchange. Nothing further is known about this battle.<sup>69</sup> Later, while on campaign against another tribe, the Derbices, an Indian struck Cyrus with a javelin in his hip and knocked him off his horse. As Cyrus was carried from the field, Amorges, now apparently Cyrus' vassal or ally, arrived with his Saka horsemen and led the combined Persian-Saka army to victory.

Whatever we might think of this account in terms of its historical value, it clearly shows Cyrus as a weak leader who cannot even stay on his horse, being reliant on the nomad Amorges to win his battles for him. Just like Darius, Artaxerxes would have benefited from a portrayal of Cyrus as a king who, in his last campaign, lost his ability to command troops and, therefore, his right to rule. But Artaxerxes may have gone a step further. Whereas Herodotus states that Cyrus was the son of Cambyses, a Persian "of a good family,"<sup>70</sup> and Mandane, a Median princess, Ctesias reports that Cyrus' father was a Mardian thief named Atradates and his mother was Argoste, a goat herder.<sup>71</sup> The effect of all of this was to link Cyrus the Younger to his namesake, whose reputation was now, if all went according to plan, thoroughly diminished.<sup>72</sup> Unlike Darius, Artaxerxes was ruling at a time when the Achaemenid empire was a century and a half old, and therefore felt that any damage to the prestige of the empire's founder would have no consequences, other than to tarnish the image of the only other Persian noble to bear that same name.<sup>73</sup>

The similarities between Cyrus' birth narrative and that of the Assyrian king Sargon are striking.<sup>74</sup> The original tale was probably in existence by the end of the third millennium BCE, and resurfaced under Sargon II in the eighth century.<sup>75</sup> The Babylonian chancery would have been well-equipped to refashion the motif for Cyrus the Great in the aftermath of his conquest of the city in 540, but the question is whether they did so. The Cyrus Cylinder does not record a narrative based on Sargon's model, but the tale could have been preserved and spread orally. Given the frequency of the motif of the "hero abandoned as a child" across Indo-European and specifically Greek mythology,<sup>76</sup> we might also imagine that Ctesias created the narrative, using his own native literary models. If Ctesias' version was not created

under Artaxerxes II, it was certainly to Artaxerxes' advantage that there existed a ready-made literary model which could be used to contrast Cyrus' lowly upbringing with his own royal heritage.<sup>77</sup>

At the same time, Artaxerxes was also using Cyrus the Great and his heritage to further attack Cyrus the Younger. According to Ctesias, on his deathbed, Cyrus made Cambyses king and declared that his younger son, Tanyoxarces, would have control over Bactria, Choramnia, Parthia, and Carmania, without owing Cambyses tribute. Further, he nominated other elite Persians to satrapies, and had them "pledge an oath of allegiance with him and each other. He prayed that whoever remained well-disposed towards the others should prosper but called down curses on anyone who initiated any unjust act."<sup>78</sup>

Artaxerxes, the sender, intended his message to be: *I am the rightful king, as eldest son and chosen successor of the Great King Darius II, and my legitimacy is proven by my personal defeat of the rebel Cyrus*. The recipients must have been the surviving Persian nobles, those who stayed loyal and those who fought for Cyrus. Ctesias reports that Artaxerxes richly rewarded his allies, and punished rebels for cowardice, rather than treason.<sup>79</sup> The only ones he killed were those who deviated from his official story, by claiming that they, not the king, had killed Cyrus, "for he wanted all the barbarians and Greeks to believe that while fighting in close combat in the course of his expeditions he had both given and received a blow—and that whilst he had been wounded himself, he had also killed his adversary."<sup>80</sup>

### *The Story According to Xenophon*

Like Ctesias, Xenophon was also at the battle of Cunaxa, but on the other side—an Athenian serving under the Spartan mercenary commander Clearchus. After the death of Cyrus the Younger in the battle, Xenophon and the remaining Greek troops had to fight their way back to safety, an account of which became the basis for Xenophon's *Anabasis*. He also wrote the *Cyropaedia*, a discussion of the philosophical and practical aspects of kingship, written sometime in the 360s.<sup>81</sup> Plutarch reports that Xenophon was familiar with Ctesias' works.<sup>82</sup> Xenophon's account is not purely Persian propaganda; he was definitely motivated by Greek politics,<sup>83</sup> and the *Cyropaedia* especially is clearly a rhetorical project of Xenophon's own design. This makes it even more difficult to assess the influence of Persian propaganda on the final product. However, assuming that we were right in linking Artaxerxes' propaganda to negative images of Cyrus the Great in Ctesias' work, we should expect that Cyrus the Younger had a response. The character of Cyrus the Younger in the *Anabasis* is clearly modeled on Cyrus the Great of the *Cyropaedia*. Xenophon may well be responsible for much of the detail, but it is unlikely that the real Cyrus the Younger did not make good use of his name.

According to the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus, now an old man, made one last journey back to Persia. He saw a god in a dream who told him, "Make ready, Cyrus; for thou shalt soon depart to the gods."<sup>84</sup> Cyrus then climbed to an altar on a high mountain and sacrificed to his gods. Afterwards, he gathered his nobles for one last speech. He gave

thanks for his long and happy life, and his many friends. He nominated his son Cambyzes as his successor, and encouraged him to be at peace and in friendship with his younger brother, who is here named Tanaoxares. He ended with a meditation on the soul and the afterlife. His last words were “If you do good to your friends, you will also be able to punish your enemies.”<sup>85</sup>

But, tragically, Cyrus’ admonitions went unheeded. After his death, his empire began to pull apart, and his subjects abandoned their traditions. According to Xenophon, “Their morality is in such a state, that all the inhabitants of Asia have been turned to wickedness and wrongdoing. For, whatever the character of the rulers is, so too is that of the people under them for the most part.”<sup>86</sup> The Persians in Xenophon’s own lifetime, he says, are more dishonest, effeminate, and impious, and far weaker in body and spirit. As such, their army is made up of officers who were promoted based on their personal connections, not skill, and soldiers who are undisciplined, cowardly, and poorly trained. We can readily attribute this section to Xenophon himself, as it is self-evidently a summary of his own judgments. However, this judgment itself needs explanation. It is now generally accepted that, despite the claims of Ctesias, Xenophon, Isocrates, and others, the fourth century was not a period of continuous decline for the Achaemenids.<sup>87</sup> We can chalk up Xenophon’s assessment to simple ignorance and inaccuracy, no doubt magnified by the decades between his time in Persian territory and the date of composition of the *Cyropaedia*. But this assessment might also have been based on his experiences in the late fifth century, considering his sources of information. The only Persians that Xenophon would have been in contact with were those surrounding Cyrus the Younger, if not the man himself. When we read the *Cyropaedia* and the *Anabasis* together, it is clear that Cyrus the Younger was equating himself with his namesake, while accusing his brother of illegitimacy, because he had perverted or lost all the royal virtues. The plea for a savior, a Cyrus reborn, to lead the empire back to its glory days, is left unspoken.

Cyrus’ campaign against his brother was as much a propaganda battle as a contest of arms. He knew that his brother would fight him with all the resources of the empire, and had raised his own army by convincing men to turn away from the legitimate, divinely-aided king, an act that would certainly end in torture and death if they were not victorious. He had to “generate personal loyalty strong enough to break the links that bound the Persians to the Great King.”<sup>88</sup> As Cyrus was preparing his revolt, he attracted elite supporters by scrupulously performing acts of propaganda associated with the virtues of Persian royalty: honesty, generosity, skill with horses, piety, martial prowess and bravery.<sup>89</sup> Traditional Iranian motifs may lie beneath other aspects of Xenophon’s account as well. Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg has analyzed Cyrus’ deathbed speech and compared it to the inscriptions of Darius the Great at Naqš-e Rostam, finding that these texts had similar ideological frameworks. Naturally, Xenophon never read any Old Persian inscriptions, so he must have received this information from an oral source, and adjusted his version to appeal to his Greek readers.<sup>90</sup>

It must be acknowledged that, as much as Xenophon respected Cyrus the Younger, he did not write the *Cyropaedia* as an apology for his former employer. His account raises the issue of the brotherly trust and love between Cambyses and Tanaoxares, the sons of Cyrus. This is problematic for Cyrus the Younger: how can the younger son justify overthrowing his elder brother, when this is specifically what Cyrus told Tanaoxares not to do? First, the elder son is made the heir because he is wiser and more experienced; should he demonstrate that he is, in fact, inferior to his younger sibling, he can no longer claim legitimacy. Second, the dying Cyrus reminds his sons that their support is mutual, not one-way. Like Ctesias, Xenophon reports that Tissaphernes suggested to Artaxerxes that Cyrus was plotting, and Artaxerxes believed the accusation.<sup>91</sup> “Only when a brother stands with his brother,” the dying Cyrus told Cambyses, “does he stand beyond the reach of the envy of others.”<sup>92</sup> By dishonoring his brother, Artaxerxes was the first to sever their relationship and was therefore responsible for Cyrus’ rebellion.

So the sender was Cyrus the Younger, his message was that he embodied the virtues of Cyrus the Great, while Artaxerxes had demonstrably lost whatever legitimacy is provisionally granted to the eldest son. His recipients were the Persian magnates within his own satrapy (western Asia Minor), as well as other nobles at the court of Artaxerxes. Xenophon reports that all of the Ionian cities defected to Cyrus, while almost no one defected from him to the king. His message was not aimed at his Greek mercenaries: he had to trick them to get them to march into Syria, and he only offered financial rewards. There is no evidence that he strove to appeal to their emotions.

To conclude, the story of the death of Cyrus the Great was one which must have aroused strong feelings amongst the Persian aristocracy, even 150 years after the fact. This made it the perfect framework around which later rulers and rebels could craft a powerful piece of propaganda. Darius could appeal to his recipients’ fear, by telling them that Cyrus had lost divine favor, and put the empire at risk—and he, of course, was divinely chosen to set the empire back on its proper footing. Artaxerxes could appeal to his recipients’ sense of justice, by showing that Cyrus the Great was the descendant of a criminal, while simultaneously reminding them of the loyalty which a younger son and servant owed to his elder brother and master. Cyrus the Younger could appeal to his recipients’ nostalgia by reminding them of the glorious conquests and wisdom of Cyrus the Great. All three—a rebel who died in battle, a usurper who made it to the throne, a ruler who barely held on—were attempting to push their recipients—always the Persian nobility—to accept them as the legitimate king.

### Notes

1. For only some recent examples: Waerzeggers, “Facts, Propaganda, or History?”; Petrovic, “Posidippus and Achaemenid Royal Propaganda”; Barjamovic, “Propaganda and Practice”; van Dongen, “Propaganda im frühen Perserreich”; Jacobs, “Kyros, der große König”; Zawadski, “The Portrait of Nabonidus”; Kuhrt, “Cyrus the Great of Persia.”

2. Ross, "Understanding Propaganda," 18, calls this tripartite model "The Epistemic Merit Model" of propaganda.
3. Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 3-7.
4. Ellul, *Propaganda*, 6-7, states that the recipient is always the individual, "but always in terms of what he has in common with others, such as his motivations, his feelings, or his myths. He is reduced to an average."
5. Instead, the recipients will be a relatively small but highly influential group, which, in the ancient world, will generally mean the small number of powerful nobles who have a legal or de facto influence in political affairs. All societies, ancient and modern, are broken up into different groups, each with their own languages, symbols, beliefs, needs, and powers, so there will be no one message that can apply to all groups.
6. Cooley, "Propaganda, Prognostication, and Planets," 9-10. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, 6, while not disputing this point, states that "much propaganda is accidental or unconscious," although he does not provide any explanation of what exactly this would look like.
7. Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*, 60-1
8. According to Rollinger, "Das teispidisch-achaimenidische Großreich," 155-7, claims to legitimacy based on lineage, glorious deeds, and divine sanction were nothing new, as all three were already ancient Near Eastern traditions by the Achaemenid period.
9. DB §3-4. All citations of Darius' Bisuton inscription (henceforth DB) are based on Schmitt, *The Bisitun Inscriptions*.
10. DB §63.
11. DB §52.
12. Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*, 48-9, 57; Ross, "Representations, Reality, and Ideology," 21-3.
13. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers*, 293, lines 141-54.
14. Barjamovic, "Propaganda and Practice," 55-7.
15. Oppenheim, "Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires," 116-18.
16. Garelli, "La propaganda royale assyrienne," 25-7.
17. Finkelstein, "Early Mesopotamia, 2500-1000 B.C.," 53-4. Ellul, *Propaganda*, 4, draws the distinction between ancient and modern propaganda based not on social differences, but technological ones: "First of all, modern propaganda is based on scientific analyses of psychology and sociology ... Without the scientific research of modern psychology and sociology there would be no propaganda, or rather we still would be in the primitive stages of propaganda that existed in the time of Pericles or Augustus." I do not believe we know enough about ancient propaganda to so confidently call it "primitive," but that is a discussion for another time.
18. Garelli, "La propaganda royale assyrienne," 25.
19. Berossus 3.5.1 states that Cyrus died nine years after the conquest of Babylon (that is, in 530), in battle "on the plain of the Daas." I have here omitted the account of Cyrus' death according to Berossus, as this was created in a context too different from the others to justify its inclusion in this article. See Burstein, *The "Babyloniaca" of Berossus*, 29.
20. *Herodotus: The Histories*, 1.204, trans. de Sélincourt.
21. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 660; Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, 48; Benveniste, "La ville de Cyreschata," point to historians such as Strabo 11.11.4, who identify a string of forts in Bactria and Sogdiana, founded by Cyrus in order to defend this frontier.
22. 1.209.
23. 1.211.
24. 1.214. λυμαينوμένη δὲ τῷ νεκρῷ ἐπέλεγε τάδε: "σὺ μὲν ἐμὲ ζῶσάν τε καὶ νικῶσάν σε μάχη ἀπόλεσας, παῖδα τὸν ἐμὸν ἐλὼν δόλω: σὲ δ' ἐγώ, κατὰ περ ἠτείλησα, αἵματος κορέσω."
25. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought*, 25n31; Younger, *Ancient Conquest Accounts*, 71-89.
26. Justi, *Iranisches namenbuch*, 307, 328; Altheim and Stiehl, *Geschichte Mittelasiens im Altertum*, 27-8; Humbach and Faiss, *Herodotus's Scythians*, 14, suggest Spargapeises is a compound of *sparga-* "sprout" (Av. *sparāga-*) and *-peithēs/-pisēs* "ornament/adornment" (Av. *paēsah-*), possibly a title for a royal prince rather than a personal name. They reject Tomiris < Av. Taxma Urupi, MP. Tahmūrāb,

- “brave/strong body,” the name of the successor of the mythical King Yima, but do not offer an alternative.
27. Sulimirski, “The Scyths,” 149: “His [Herodotus’] descriptions, in the light of the results of archaeological research, are on the whole correct. However, the eastern part of Scythia seems to have been little known to him. He often generalizes from exceptional occurrences and seems to have telescoped some events which took place in about the same region but at different periods.” But Yablonsky, “Scythians and Saka,” 26, reminds us that historians, both ancient and modern, tend to use names like “Scythian,” “Massagetae,” “Araxes,” and so on, “to denote the heterogeneous and multicultural conglomerate of the steppe nomads as well as the stock- and cattle-breeders.”
  28. Munson, “Who Are Herodotus’ Persians?,” 462-70; West, “Herodotus’ Sources”; Balcer, *Herodotus and Bisitun*, 126-30, has doubts that Herodotus and Zopyrus ever met in Athens, and largely rejects the “Zopyrus Novelle” as it “can at no point be correlated with the Bisitun account” of the Babylonian revolts under Darius. While this is undeniable, it is not an argument against the possibility of Zopyrus supplying Herodotus with propaganda, regardless of his factual value.
  29. Hdt. 3.160.
  30. DB §70.
  31. Shayegan, *Aspects of History and Epic*, 93-102.
  32. *Ibid.*, 27-33.
  33. Bichler, “Die ‘Reichsträume’ bei Herodot,” 128-9.
  34. Hollmann, *The Master of Signs*, 75, cites Agamemnon’s dream at the opening of *Iliad* Book 2 as an example.
  35. Asheri, *Commentary*, 215. At page 157 Asheri also points to the possibly genuine “Eastern sources” in Herodotus’ account of the dreams of Astyages, Cyrus’ grandfather, at 1.107.
  36. For a review of the discussion of the relationship between the Achaemenid winged-disc figure and *xwarrab*, see Silverman, “Was there an Achaemenid Theology of Kingship?,” especially 176-7.
  37. *Herodotus: The Histories*, 1.209-10, trans. de Sélincourt.
  38. *Ibid.*, 1.208.
  39. Nabonidus Chronicle (Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, text 7) col. 3.24-5.
  40. Peat, “Cyrus ‘King of Lands.’”
  41. Schmitt, *Die altpersischen Inschriften*, 35-6, texts CM a, b, and c.
  42. Rollinger, “Der Stammbaum,” 191-6.
  43. Avery, “Herodotus’ Picture of Cyrus,” 538-43.
  44. Laato, “Assyrian Propaganda,” 200-1 shows that Neo-Assyrian texts regularly ignored Assyrian defeats or transformed them into victories. If the Persian bureaucracy was anything similar, no official ‘history’ would have acknowledged Cyrus’ death and defeat on the battlefield, but it is also possible that Darius wished to suggest that Cyrus’ defeat was evidence of divine displeasure. I am not suggesting that Cyrus did not die in battle, but rather that, whatever the cause of Cyrus’ death, Darius framed it as a shameful affair. If Cyrus had died peacefully, it is doubtful that Darius would have been able to get away with so radically altering the biography of a revered figure, only a few decades after the fact. Exactly where the Persian story ends and Herodotus’ Greek version begins is hard to tell, although we can be sure that most of the details will be Herodotean inventions.
  45. DB §10-14.
  46. This account is slightly in conflict with that of Herodotus, wherein Cambyses goes mad while conquering Egypt. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 61, counts this version as a native Egyptian product, the result of Egyptian priests’ anger at financial hardships brought on as a result of Persian rule.
  47. DB §16.
  48. DB §22-3.
  49. DB §32.
  50. DB §33.
  51. DB §40-3.
  52. Any serious study of Ctesias must begin with, at the very least, an examination of the transmitters of the fragments of Ctesias, and the sources on which Ctesias may have relied. Interested readers can



- begin with the introductory sections of the recent translations of Ctesias' works by Lenfant, Llewellyn-Jones and Robson, and Stronk, and the bibliographies contained therein.
53. Diodorus 2.32 says that he had been taken prisoner by Artaxerxes, and served in his court for seventeen years. Tzetzes, *Chiliades* 1.85–89 claims that this seventeen-year period began after Artaxerxes took Ctesias captive at the battle of Cunaxa; but Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 11.3, is clear that Ctesias was already in the king's service at the battle. Modern scholars tend to opt either for emending Diodorus' "seventeen" to "seven," or for accepting this figure and putting Ctesias' time at the court from ca. 413 to 397 BCE. See Llewellyn-Jones and Robson, *Ctesias' History of Persia*, 12–14, for a summary and sources.
  54. F9, Photius §7–8.
  55. See Llewellyn-Jones and Robson, *Ctesias' History of Persia*, 22–31, for a review of the literature. Stevenson, "Lies and Inventions," argues that Ctesias' version of the murder of Stateira is "mostly correct," and accuses Deinon of reporting Achaemenid propaganda. First, we should reject the urge to see propaganda as inherently false, or non-propagandistic sources as inherently more trustworthy. Second, there is no reason that both authors cannot be transmitting propaganda, or that an author might rely on propagandistic sources for some sections, and non-propagandistic sources for others.
  56. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, Text 3.
  57. Lenfant, "Ctésias et Hérodote," 360, describes some of the similarities between Ctesias and Darius' narrative at Bisotun. One might also think of the Iranian and Mesopotamian names in Ctesias, such as Arbaces (Arbaku), Parsondes (Paršandāta), or Belesys (Bēšunu); or of the description of the Median-Babylonian coalition against Assyria, a fact not mentioned by Herodotus.
  58. Arbaces appears in an inscription of Sargon II as *Ar-ba-ku*, one of forty-five Medes who paid tribute to the Assyrians in 713. Llewellyn-Jones and Robson, *Ctesias' History of Persia*, 137n52; Justi, *Iranisches namenbuch*, 20–1.
  59. Justi, *Iranisches namenbuch*, 343–4.
  60. Since Ctesias is clearly reporting a narrative or chronicle, the economic records found in the archives of Persepolis cannot be used as models.
  61. There is disagreement as to the context of the Dynastic Prophecy. Most scholars see it as a product of the Seleucid era, although Neujahr, "When Darius Defeated Alexander," dates it to the very end of the reign of Darius III, while Shayegan, *Arsacids and Sasanians*, 48–60, 137–40, argues that it was composed after the wars between the Seleucid king Antiochus VII and the Arsacid king Frahad II, i.e. post-129 BCE.
  62. Stronk, *Ctesias' Persian History*, 15–21, cites passages from the Hebrew Bible that mention a Persian "book of records," as well as archaeological evidence from Elephantine and Persepolis. While this is far from conclusive, it is sufficient to prevent us from rejecting outright the very possibility of Achaemenid βασιλικαὶ διφθερὰι and βασιλικαὶ ἀναγραφαὶ.
  63. According to Photius §51 (F15), Ctesias claimed to have received information directly from Parysatis herself. Plutarch (Art. 18.3–4; F28) says that Parysatis approved of Ctesias' plan to aid Clearchus in prison, and that Clearchus attempted to convince Ctesias to smuggle in a knife for him.
  64. Dorati, "Ctesia Falsario?" [Ctesias the Falsifier] 37–44, 48–50, compared Ctesias' accounts of some events—such as the Battle of Cunaxa—with those versions recorded by Xenophon, Deinon, or Isocrates. The upshot is that Ctesias is the only one who acknowledges his own role in these events. Dorati argues that, bound as he was by the Greek literary tradition, Ctesias had to insert himself as a character into some key events in his narrative, in order to present his tale as a first-person experience. Thus, he created for himself the role of the Greek doctor, based on Herodotus' Democedes of Croton, who supposedly had been kept in the court of Darius the Great.
  65. Bassett, "Death of Cyrus," 476.
  66. F17, Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 3.1–6; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 616: "The story was doubtless invented later as a part of the royal propaganda that was designed to smear the memory of the rebellious brother."
  67. F20, Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 11–13.

68. Note the similarity between the name of the queen Sparethe here, and Spargaspises, her son, in Herodotus.
69. F9, Photius §3.
70. Hdt. 1.107.2.
71. F8d, Nicolas of Damascus *Frag. Griech. Hist.* 90 F66 §3.
72. Hirsch, *Friendship of the Barbarians*, 73; Lenfant, *Ctésias de Cnide*, lix-lx.
73. Ctesias (F15a. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 1.3) specifically states that Cyrus the Younger took his name from Cyrus the Great.
74. For discussion of these similarities, see Drews, “Sargon, Cyrus and Mesopotamian”; Lenfant, “Ctésias et Hérodote,” especially 366-9; and Kuhrt, “Making History.”
75. Kuhrt, “Making History,” 352.
76. Redford, “The Literary Motif”; Lewis, “The Legend of Sargon.”
77. Lenfant, *Ctésias de Cnide*, lix-lx, and “Ctésias et Hérodote,” 368.
78. F9, Photius §8, trans. Llewellyn-Jones and Robson. The bibliographic information: Llewellyn-Jones, Lloyd, and James Robson. *Ctesias' History of Persia: Tales of the Orient*. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.
79. F26, Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 14.1-4.
80. *Ibid.*, 14.6-16.7, trans. Llewellyn-Jones and Robson.
81. Tuplin, “Xenophon’s Cyropaedia,” 72.
82. *Artaxerxes*, 15.6.
83. Bassett, “Death of Cyrus,” 475: “Having risked trouble with the Athenians by accompanying a Persian who had actively assisted the Spartans, it was also in his best interests to portray Cyrus the Younger in a good light.”
84. Miller, *Xenophon: Cyropaedia*, 8.7.2.
85. *Ibid.*, 8.7.28.
86. *Ibid.*, 8.8.5. Sage, “Dying in Style,” demonstrates that section 8.8 does, in fact, belong to the *Cyropaedia*, contra Hirsch, *Friendship of the Barbarians*, 91-7.
87. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 674-5, 783-813; Wiesehöfer, “The Achaemenid Empire.”
88. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 621.
89. Brownson, *Xenophon: Anabasis*, 1.9. With that said, Flower, *Xenophon’s Anabasis*, 188-94 shows that, while Xenophon reports this Message, he is also critical of Cyrus the Younger, and subtly points out ways that he did not live up to his namesake. Xenophon, like Herodotus and Ctesias, was not an uncritical mouthpiece for Achaemenid propagandists.
90. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, “The Death of Cyrus,” 468-71.
91. Brownson, *Xenophon: Anabasis*, 1.1.2-4.
92. Miller, *Xenophon: Cyropaedia*, 8.7.16; my translation.

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