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THE MEDIAN *LOGOS* OF HERODOTUS AND THE PERSIANS' LEGITIMATE RULE OF ASIA[1]

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Abstract: In *Histories* 1.95-130, in a narrative about Cyrus the Great and the rise of the Persians to the hegemony of Asia attributed to Persian sources, Herodotus relates how the rule of (Upper) Asia, first held by the Assyrians, passed to Persian hands following Cyrus' conquest of the Medes, whose power had grown to encompass the near-entirety of the territories formerly controlled by the Assyrians.
This representation of Persian rule over Asia as a successor to former Assyrian and Median regimes, which is also attested in Ctesias, has long been presumed to reflect a Persian view of history that sought to promote the legitimacy of Persian imperial rule as heir to preceding major Near Eastern powers. On the other hand, one long-traditional view of Herodotean historiography has continued to hold that this interpretation of the history of Asia could have been, more than anything else, a reflection of Greek, possibly Herodotean, historical thought.
This paper aims to clarify some of the historiographic ambiguities that have so far stood in the way of a straightforward recognition of the historical sequence of three Asiatic kingdoms as a Persian construct.

Keywords: Herodotus, Medes, Persia, legitimacy, kingship, Asia

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[1] The present paper constitutes a summary announcement of results of the author's research on the impact of Persian rhetoric on sources for the emergence of the Persian empire. A shorter version was delivered in one of the Iranian sessions held in honor of Professor David Stronach in the Annual Meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research, San Francisco, 17 November 2011. Warmest thanks are owed to Raphael Sealey for comments at an early stage of the formulation of the ideas presented here, to David Stronach for reading the present final draft and helpful comments concerning the current evidence on the extent of the Median state and to Michael Weiskopf for useful bibliographical references. I also wish to express my appreciation to Sabrina Maras for her excellent organization of the ASOR Iranian sessions and associated events and for kindly inviting me to participate.

References to the Greek text of Herodotus are to the Oxford (OCT) edition (Hude 1927). I usually follow the translation of George Rawlinson (1942).

The three-kingdom sequence and its Herodotean context: earlier interpretations

In *Histories* 1.95.1, following the conquest of the Lydian kingdom of Croesus by Cyrus the Great, Herodotus sets out to relate "who this Cyrus was who conquered the *archē* ("rule") of Croesus, and in what manner the Persians became masters of Asia". The relevant narrative, stated to follow Persian authorities, may be divided into two sections. The account proper about the background of Cyrus and his ultimate conflict with and victory over Astyages (the last Median king and, according to the account transmitted in Herodotus, Cyrus' maternal grandfather), which putatively made Cyrus and the Persians masters of Asia (1.130.2: ἐπὶ Ἀστυάγεος οἱ Πέρσαι τε καὶ ὁ Κῦρος ἐπαναστάντες τοῖσι Μήδοισι ἦρχον τὸ ἀπὸ τούτου τῆς Ἀσίης), is presented in the second section (1.107-1.130). The earlier part of the narrative (1.95.2-107.1), the so-called Median *logos*, offers a survey of the history of the Median kingdom to the accession of Astyages which, taken together with the account about Cyrus, patently oversimplifies the political history of the region. The Median tribes, we are told, were able to break free from the yoke of the Assyrians, who had held the rule of Upper Asia for a period of 520 years; were united into a single Median kingdom under the wise man Deioces; then, brought under their sway, first, the Persians and, by the time of the accession of Astyages, the near entirety of the territory, which was formerly controlled by the Assyrians, and which was to pass to Cyrus, subject to his conquest of the Medes.

Herodotus' description of a successive Assyrian, Median, and Persian political ascendancy over the same expansive Asiatic domain, which is alternately referred to in his text as 'Upper Asia' and 'Asia', leaves a lot to be desired in terms of historical and geographical accuracy. The neat linear sequence of three Asiatic kingdoms may still be cogently explained as an instance, the earliest known one at that, of a more pervasive propagandistic approach to 'world' history as a succession of empires which finds various expressions in Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman period writings (see, e.g., Metzler 1975: 443; Wiesehöfer 2003, both with further references).

Being attested initially in Herodotus and in the slightly later, and probably independent (see, e.g., Goossens 1940: 28; Lenfant 1996), account of Ctesias, in both instances with reference to Persia and the 'empires' that

preceded it, and in narratives that are expressly stated by their authors to be indebted to Persian sources (for Ctesias, see *FGrHist* 688 F5[4]), the representation of the history of Asia as a sequence of an Assyrian, a Median, and a Persian kingdom — and reformulations of the historiographic *topos* of the succession of 'world empires' in later works — would be *a priori* likely to emanate ultimately from a Near Eastern, and, in particular, a Persian, environment. This likelihood has been variously pointed up in the past.

In his commentary about the account of Assyrian history that formed a prelude to Ctesias' history of Persia, published in 1940, Godefroy Goossens argued for a deliberate assimilation of the extent of Assyrian conquests depicted therein (and including, among others, Lydia and the Pontic region!) with the considerably wider compass of later Persian expansion, as well as for an overall invention of 'facts' of Assyrian history in the same account. Goossens attributed the sum of such invented historical details to an official Persian view of Persia and the 'empires' that preceded it that "aimed to legitimize the universal dominion of the Achaemenids as heirs to the Median and Assyrian monarchies" (cf. Goossens 1940: 26 and 38). This same scholar pointed to possible indications for a further reformulation of the Assyrian background to the Persian empire in the Seleucid period that could reflect a manipulation of earlier accounts by the Achaemenids' Seleucid successors, again, as "un moyen d'affirmer [leur] titres" (Goossens 1940: 44).

In yet another exploration of the tradition of the three Asiatic kingdoms, this time, also with reference to the account of Herodotus, Dieter Metzler (1975: 444-446) proposed that the representation of the Persian empire as a successor to the Assyrian and Median polities must have been devised during the reign, and on the behalf, of Cyrus. For it was the latter ruler, who had at once liberated the Persians from the Median yoke, simultaneously conquering the Median kingdom, *and* subdued Babylonia, a domain that Cyrus would have associated (as Metzler inferred from a reference to the Neo-Assyrian monarch Ashurbanipal, as a prototype of political behavior for Cyrus, in a fragment of the Cyrus Cylinder [Walker 1972: 158-159]) with the Assyrians. In this interpretation, the scheme would have been specifically aimed to promote the legitimacy of the rule of the Persian Cyrus over two major political domains of the Near East, in neither one of which he was a natural successor.

These earlier pronouncements in support of the Persian affinities of the historical sequence of three 'panasiatic' kingdoms, which is attested in

Herodotus and Ctesias, are not without further reflections in the scholarly literature (see, e.g., Calmeyer 1987: 18-19, who allows, however, for a post-Cyrus date for the emergence of the scheme; Kratz 1991: 197-212 [cited by Wiesehöfer 2003: 392]; Lenfant 2004: LIII-LIV and LXIII, closely echoing the conclusions of Goossens 1940: 26, 38, 44). To date, however, this thesis would seem difficult to validate with any degree of confidence in the absence of direct corroboration from Persian sources.

Limited and problematic though it may be in this respect, the Iranian evidence in and by itself does not preclude a Persian origin of the three-kingdom scheme. Despite arguments to the contrary (notably, Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1988 and 1994; cf. Liverani 2003), the currently available evidence leaves open the possibility of Median rule over the greater part of *at least* northern Iran (see Stronach 2003), if not over much more extended territory both to the west and to the east (see, e.g., Hdt. 1.74; Briant 1984: 85-88; Vogelsang 1992: 176-177; Muscarella 1994: 60-62; Roaf 2003: esp. 20-21; Tuplin 2004) — a condition that could no doubt be thought adequate to justify an official Persian representation of a Median imperial predecessor. Equally, there is no overriding reason for doubting (*pace* Wiesehöfer 2003: 391-393; cf. 2004: 214-215) an actual readiness of the Persians to represent their imperial power, at least in certain contexts, as an heir to previous Assyrian and Median territorial regimes. In the case of the Assyrians, this much is implied, for instance, by the prominent references to the Assyrian legacy in the Babylonian Cylinder of Cyrus (e.g., Metzler 1975: 445; Harmatta 1971b; Kuhrt 1983: 89-93). A parallel substantive Persian appreciation of a preceding Median political visibility (as a part of the image of Persia) might be possible to infer, among others, from preferential references to the Medes, together with the Persians, as the constituents *par excellence* of the Persian realm (Kent 1953: DB I 34-35, 41, 46-47, 66-67) and to the dual, Persian and Median, basis of military support received by Darius on a number of occasions in his struggles against his adversaries for the throne (Kent 1953: DB II 18, 81-82; III 29-30) in the Bisitun inscription. In as much as the three-kingdom scheme is not directly attested, however, in Persian sources, its Persian origin will seemingly always be subject to doubt due to its initial occurrence in a Herodotean context. The problem, as it emerges from prior discussions, is directly connected with the vexing uncertainties that surround Herodotus' sources, his handling of the materials he received from his informants, and the composition of his work.

Herodotus asserts that his account about Cyrus and the rise of the Persians to the rule of Asia follows Persian authorities, and, at least in theory, he could have had access, among others, to Persian informants (cf., e.g., Wells 1923; Drews 1973: 82-83). His sources on Cyrus are not named, however. They are merely qualified as "some of the Persians who desire not to make a fine tale of the story of Cyrus but to tell the truth" (1.95.1) — presumably as opposed to the advocates of the other three versions of the story of Cyrus whose existence Herodotus notes in the same passage but did not care to record. Let alone the uncertainty as to whether or not Herodotus transmits an official tradition (see esp. Murray 1987: 111-115), this lack of specificity (which is characteristic of references to Persian sources throughout his work, cf. 1.1, 1.5, 3.87, 7.12) is responsible (not to count pronouncements that altogether deny the authenticity of the reports) for a feeling that he did not directly consult Persian authorities but relied on non-Persian sources, which, to the best of his knowledge, transmitted information disseminated by the Persians themselves (Lewis [1985] suggested that such 'Persian' reports would have been likely transmitted by Greeks in the Persian administration; on the general uncertainty concerning Herodotus' sources about the Persians, see, more recently, Flower 2006 and West 2011). If Herodotus did not directly consult Persian sources, this leaves open the provenance and quality of his 'Persian' report about Cyrus. For instance, the representation of Cyrus as a half-Median prince (which does not tally easily with the emphasis on the Anshanite dynastic background of this ruler in the text of his Babylonian Cylinder [Pritchard 1969: 315-316]), as well as the important role ascribed to the Median general Harpagus in the events that brought about the downfall of Astyages in the Medo-Persian narrative have led to speculation that the reportedly Persian authorities of Herodotus in this instance might be instead a Median source (see, e.g., Murray 1987: 110-111 [suggesting that Herodotus transmits a "Median aristocratic version"], with comments on earlier discussions in a similar sense). On such grounds, the three-kingdom scheme attested in Herodotus — wherein the Medes are elevated to the status of Persia's sole immediate imperial predecessor — might also owe more to a Median, rather than a Persian, view of history.

To date the licence that Herodotus, as a historian, may have exercised in adapting his source-material to the purposes of his composition also remains in general a moot point. In the case, moreover, of the interpretation of the history of Asia offered in the Medo-Persian *logos*, speculation

about potentially extensive Herodotean interventions would seem to be especially warranted by a characteristic, recurring feature of the account about the Persian empire given in the earlier part of the *Histories*.

Books 1-4, serving as a prelude to the Greek-Persian confrontations related in Books 5-9, recount Persian affairs from the reign of Cyrus the Great to that of Darius the Great, focusing mainly on circumstances of royal accessions and deaths and successive Persian rulers' expansionist undertakings. Within this lengthy Persian sequence, there are embedded — in addition to sections of Greek materials, which evidently offer a parallel introduction to the Greek protagonists of the Greek-Persian conflict related in the work — extensive accounts about peoples and lands attacked by the Persians that are commonly thought to be more or less extraneous to Persian affairs. In 1.6-46.1 and 1.92-94, for instance, framing the account of Cyrus' conquest of the Lydian kingdom, Herodotus presents, in the former section, a survey of the earlier history of Lydia down to the time of Croesus and an account of the affairs of Croesus prior to his confrontation with Cyrus; and, in the latter section, a description of Croesus' offerings to Greek sanctuaries and Lydian marvels and customs. Further on in Book 1, the account of Cyrus' conquest of Babylon (1.188-191) is preceded by a description of this Mesopotamian city, including references to the deeds of two famous Babylonian queens, Semiramis and Nitocris (1.178-187); and is followed by a section on Babylonian resources and customs (1.192-200). The fatal campaign of Cyrus against the Massagetae is equally preceded by chapters on the geography of the regions around Araxes and the Caspian (1.201-204) and followed by a section on the habits and customs of this central Asiatic people (1.215-216). Among further examples of this pattern of composition, the most notable one is that of Egypt, whose geography, culture and earlier history, prefixed to the account of the campaign against, and conquest of, this country by Cambyses (3.1-16), occupy the entirety of Book 2.

Judging by their place in the narrative, these eastern historical and ethnographic sections were occasioned in each instance by Persian attacks against given peoples and lands. So far, however, it has not been possible to establish causal historical connections between these eastern accounts and the actual events of Persian expansion with which they are associated in the narrative scheme of the *Histories*. Explanation for the inclusion of the former accounts has thus been variously sought with reference to Herodotus' historical method and/or the larger aims of his work.

Depending on the varying opinions of different scholars, these sections have been viewed as more or less justifiable "digressions" that could offer, for instance, telltale signs of an earlier phase of Herodotus' career as a composer of ethnographic *logoi* (Jacoby 1913: cols. 330-331). Or, considering Herodotus' wider historical-ethnographical interests, they could be apposite to a composition that was conceived of by its author as an ethnographic-historical survey of the Persian empire (e.g., de Sanctis 1926: 294-300; Powell 1939: 39-55; Fornara 1971). For others, they could be germane to overarching patterns of thought that are attested in the *Histories*, such as the preoccupation with the rise and fall of important individuals and states (notably, Immerwahr 1966: 81-86 and 93-98) or the attention devoted throughout the work (and programmatically announced at the opening of the *Histories*) to accounting for the great *erga* ("deeds") of the barbarians as well as of the Greeks (Drews 1973: 45-96 *passim*).

A consensus about the particular significance of Herodotus' eastern *logoi* has been difficult to reach so far. Insights, however, gained over the years into connections of the varied materials in question with the larger literary, historical, ethnographic, and philosophical fabric of the *Histories* have led to a now widespread perception that these eastern accounts can be accepted as manifestations of an "ethnographic dimension" of the *Histories* (for the most recent expression of this view, see Lenfant 2011: 25), and as integral elements of a Herodotean, ecumenical view of history that paid attention not only to political and military events but also to origins, as well as the nature and cycles of the affairs of individuals, peoples and states. This general perception directly affects the discussion of the origins of the three-kingdom scheme.

According to one position, the information recorded in *Histories* 1.95.2-130 about the rule of the Assyrians, the early history of the Medes, the background of Cyrus, and Cyrus' conquest of Media could derive, as a whole, from a single, and, as Herodotus 1.95.1 indicates, Persian (or, at any rate, Iranian) source (see, e.g., Legrand 1970: 106-110; Murray 1987: 110-111) that portrayed a continuum of Medo-Persian history. Such a view would leave room for speculation concerning the Iranian origin of the sequence of the three Asiatic kingdoms depicted in the Median *logos*. General uncertainty, however, about the sources of Herodotus and his treatment of his materials would still allow suppositions that Herodotus may have altered at will the details of the reportedly Persian account. More importantly, the pattern of seemingly intrusive commentaries about the

native affairs of eastern peoples attacked by the Persians throughout his narrative would appear to warrant assumptions that the survey of the history of the Medes could have been combined with the account about Cyrus and his conquest of the Median kingdom on the initiative of, and could have even been concocted by, Herodotus himself.

The latter considerations are not always directly acknowledged in studies of the Median *logos*. They lie nonetheless at the root of certain modern assessments of, for instance, details of Herodotus' portrayal of the emergence of the Median state as having been fashioned after Greek political experience and/or Achaemenid practices that were familiar to Herodotus (e.g., How and Wells 1928: 104; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1988: 211; Briant 1984: 98 [after Harmatta 1971a: 11-12], cf. 1996: 36; Liverani 2003: 2); of the sequence of Median kings given by Herodotus as having been obtained by Greeks directly from archival Babylonian sources (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1994, cf. 1988: 210-212); and of the overarching historical/chronological framework making the Assyrians the beginning of the history of Asia in Herodotus' work as a product of Greek historiography and chronography (e.g., Drews 1969; cf. among others, Fowler 1996: 74-76 with further bibliography).

By such reasoning, the three-kingdom scheme would also most likely reflect a Greek, rather than a Persian, approach to history. To mention two variant formulations of this position that are current today, "the series of three universal monarchies", which is reflected in Herodotus' work, was "probably formed in Ionia soon after the fall of Lydia" (Asheri *et al*. 2007: 148-149) or represents a particularly Herodotean "model" or "view" (Wiesehöfer 2003: 393 and 396, respectively followed by e.g., Michels 2011: 693 and n. 24). In the latter case, it would have issued forth, as it has been maintained, from "Herodotus' own global perspective on the history of Asia and the *ecumene*", which was responsible for making "the whole territorial heritage of the Persians' predecessors merge into the Persian empire", and would reflect the focus of Herodotus "on the historical process of the origin, consolidation, erosion, and collapse of the Asian empires, which he causally relates to guilt and fate, responsibility and compulsion of the governing protagonists…" (Wiesehöfer 2003: 393, citing in particular Bichler 2000: 213 ff.).

In as much as the actual sources that Herodotus used for his history of the Persian empire and its Asiatic prehistory remain largely unknown or uncertain, and the accomplishments of his Greek predecessors and

contemporaries are largely enshrouded in obscurity (see, e.g., Fowler 1996 and relevant articles in Luraghi 2001 and Dewald & Marincola 2006), one should be wary of propositions that early Greek historiography possessed an inherent potential to generate both the larger framework and crucial details of the Asiatic background to the emergence of the Persian empire attested in the *Histories*. As we shall see, one should also be wary of contentions that "no theory of the succession of world empires circulated in the East before the Greeks imported it" (Momigliano 1982: 554; cf. Mendels 1981: esp. 338-339 [Addendum]).

The remainder of this discussion looks at the section of Herodotus' narrative that refers to the rise of Cyrus (and, hence, to the rise of the Persians) to the rule of "all Asia" — a section which, as Herodotus signals at 1.130, encompasses references to the histories of the Lydians and the Medes. It proposes that the text of Herodotus provides (a) indications of the integrity of the supposedly intrusive commentaries and (b) grounds for the recognition of an overall Persian bias in Herodotus' treatment of the history of pre-Achaemenid Asia and 'his' three-kingdom scheme.

The two rules of Asia

Histories 1.130.2-3, concluding the account of Cyrus' conquest of the Medes, makes an expansive claim of Cyrus the Great's rule over "all Asia" in terms of his conquest of only two kingdoms: "[I]n Astyages' time", we are told, "the Persians and Cyrus rose in revolt against the Medes, and from this time ruled Asia (ἦρχον τὸ ἀπὸ τούτου τῆς Ἀσίης)… and afterwards… he [i.e., Cyrus] subdued Croesus… and after this victory he became sovereign of all Asia (πάσης τῆς Ἀσίης ἦρξε)". The passage, grossly exaggerating the overall extent of the Asiatic territory conquered by Cyrus (and in general by the Persians), is also in contradiction with specific reports of Persian campaigns against the coastal districts of Asia Minor (1.141-170 [Ionians/Aeolians] and 1.171-176 [Carians, Caunians, Lycians]), Babylon (1.188-191), and the Massagetae (1.201-214), all of them presented in the remainder of Book 1, and seemingly all postdating the victories of Cyrus over Croesus and Astyages (for the chronological problems pertaining to Cyrus' campaigns, see e.g., Briant 1996: 44-45, Bichler 2000: 213-214). In an attempt to account, at least in part, for the historical inconsistencies engendered in the testimony of the 1.130 passage, one might assume that the reference to Cyrus as a lord of

Asia following the defeat of Astyages was meant as "a programmatic declaration" (cf. Briant 1996: 44). The point is, however, that the Herodotean narrative was not concerned in this instance with the *actual* course of Persian expansion. The claim of Cyrus' rise to the rule of "all Asia" as a consequence of his conquest of (only) Croesus and Astyages' kingdoms belonged in the ideological domain.

In 1.6.1 Croesus is identified as the lord (*tyrannos*) of "all the nations within [i.e., to the west of] the river Halys (ἐντὸς Ἅλυος ποταμοῦ; cf. 1.28)". In 1.130.1 the Medes are stated, in turn, to have "ruled over the parts of Asia above [i.e., to the east of] the river Halys (τῆς ἄνω Ἅλυος ποταμοῦ Ἀσίης)…" (cf. 1.103.2: [Cyaxares] ὁ τὴν Ἅλυος ποταμοῦ ἄνω Ἀσίην πᾶσαν συστήσας ἑωυτῷ, "[Cyaxares] who brought under his dominion the whole of Asia above [i.e., to the east of] the river Halys"). Herodotus was just as aware as his modern critics (e.g., Rollinger 2003: 305-313) that these statements were not meant to offer a precise representation of the territories under Lydian and Median rule in the time of Cyrus (in 1.28 Cilicia and Lycia, both of them perceived as being located to the west of the Halys, are excluded from the domain of Croesus; references to a Babylonian kingdom that was independent from that of the Medes in the part of Asia to the east of the Halys are given in 1.178-191, cf. 1.74.3). Defined as encompassing, respectively, the territories to the west and to the east of the river Halys (cf. 1.72.2), the *archai* of Croesus and Astyages conquered by Cyrus are clearly assimilated in these contexts with Lower and Upper Asia, the two conceptual components of Persia's Asiatic realm. The histories of the kingdoms of Croesus and Astyages, narrated in sequence in 1.6-92.1 and 1.95.2-130, were arguably also concerned with these two conceptual domains. They defined two separate lines of rule that existed on either side of the Halys at the outset of Persian expansion and accounted for their rightful takeover by Cyrus.

The theme of sovereignty (*archē*), which is repeatedly evoked in the 1.130 passage, framed both the Lydian and the Median account and determined the scope of their historical materials. Beginning at 1.6.1 with a statement of Croesus' credentials as a *tyrannos* and his geographical domain of rule (ἐθνέων τῶν ἐντὸς Ἅλυος ποταμοῦ [i.e., "Lower Asia"]), the Lydian narrative proceeds to relate the manner in which the latter *archē*, whose origins were traced to the offsprings of Lydus (1.7.3), passed, first, to Croesus' family following 22 generations (or 505 years) of Heraclid kingship (1.7.4); then, to Croesus himself, following a succession of

a further four Mermnad rulers (1.14-26.1); and, finally, to Cyrus and the Persians (1.86.1; cf. 1.92.1 and 1.94.7). The inclusion of materials about the early history of Lydia out of a specific interest in the history/transmission of the Lydian *archē* is most clearly enunciated in the opening and closing phrases of the section about the Heraclids:

1.7.1: ἡ δὲ ἡγεμονίη οὕτω περιῆλθε, ἐοῦσα Ἡρακλειδέων, ἐς τὸ γένος τὸ Κροίσου
"the sovereignty (*hēgemoniē*), which had belonged to the Heraclids, passed into the family of Croesus in the manner which I will now relate"

1.14.1: τὴν μὲν δὴ τυραννίδα οὕτω ἔσχον οἱ Μερμνάδαι τοὺς Ἡρακλείδας ἀπελόμενοι
"such was the way in which the Mermnads deposed the Heraclids, and themselves obtained the sovereignty (*tyrannis*)"

Putting aside the often lengthy sections of narrative concerned with the Greek world (e.g., encounters of the Greek cities of the western coast of Asia Minor and the Greek mainland with the Mermnad rulers, and digressions on Peloponnesian and Athenian history) that are intertwined with the Lydian historical sequence, confusing its basic meaning, the materials that Herodotus records about the history of Lydia composed, as his closing remark also indicates, first and foremost a history of the *archē* of Croesus (or the *archē* of Lower Asia): κατὰ μὲν δὴ τὴν Κροίσου τε ἀρχήν … ἔσχε οὕτω, "[s]uch was the fate … of the *archē* of Croesus" (1.92.1).[2]

In its various formulations as *archē*, *tyrannis*, *basilēiē* and *hēgemoniē*, the theme of sovereignty is featured just as prominently in the opening and closing phrases and the historical references of the Medo-Persian *logos*.

[2] In Hdt. 1.92.1 (κατὰ μὲν δὴ τὴν Κροίσου τε ἀρχὴν καὶ Ἰωνίης τὴν πρώτην καταστροφὴν ἔσχε οὕτω or "[s]uch was the fate of the *archē* of Croesus and the first enslavement of Ionia") the parallel mention of the "first enslavement of Ionia" refers to the narrative about Ionian/Greek affairs which, in the opinion of the present author, was grafted onto the Lydian sequence (from the outset of the Lydian *logos*, see 1.6.2-3) by Herodotus or his source(s) owing to the particular interest of the Greek historiographic tradition in Greek affairs and/or Herodotus' own aim (1.5.3, cf. 1.6.2) to "point out" from the very beginning of his account of the Greek-Persian confrontation that "the person (i.e., Croesus)" was the first to his knowledge to have "commenced aggressions against the Greeks".

The account is introduced with a statement of Herodotus' intention to relate "in what manner the Persians came to rule Asia" (1.95.1: τοὺς Πέρσας ὅτεῳ τρόπῳ ἠγήσαντο τῆς Ἀσίης) and concludes with Cyrus' accession to the *archē* of the Medes/Asia (1.130.1-2). As in the case of the Lydian sequence, it deals in order with the origins of this *archē* (it was initially held by the Assyrians for 520 years [1.95.2: Ἀσσυρίων ἀρχόντων τῆς ἄνω Ἀσίης ἐπ' ἔτεα εἴκοσι καὶ πεντακόσια]) and its subsequent history down to the time of Cyrus. Opening the survey of the Median dynasty, the story of Deioces, who "became infatuated with tyrannical rule" (1.96.2: ἐρασθεὶς τυραννίδος) and "collected the Medes into a nation and ruled (ἦρξε) over them" (1.101), served to set the stage, as Herodotus anticipates, for the re-imposition of sovereign authority over the Medes and the other nations that had succeeded in liberating themselves from the yoke of the Assyrians (1.96.1: ἐόντων δὲ αὐτονόμων πάντων ἀνὰ τὴν ἤπειρον ὧδε αὖτις ἐς τυραννίδας περιῆλθον, "while all the nations in the continent were self-governed, they thus fell again under the sway of 'tyrannies'"). The entirety of the Median dynastic sequence is referred thus to the theme of Asiatic *archē*. The details of the ensuing commentary (1.102-106) about Deioces' successors, Phraortes and Cyaxares, are more or less strictly concerned with the history of rule in Upper Asia. They focus on Median expansion, and in particular on Median attacks upon, and ultimate capture of, Nineveh (1.102.2, 1.103.2-3, 1.106.2); on the Medes' temporary loss of their sovereignty to the Scythians, who invaded Media, and "became masters of all Asia" (1.104.2: οἱ μὲν Μῆδοι … τῆς ἀρχῆς κατελύθησαν, οἱ δὲ Σκύθαι τὴν Ἀσίην πᾶσαν ἐπέσχον) for twenty-eight years (1.106.1); and on the eventual reinstatement of the Medes to their former dominion (1.106.2: οὕτω ἀνεσώσαντο τὴν ἀρχὴν Μῆδοι καὶ ἐπεκράτεον τῶν περ καὶ πρότερον). The remainder of the account (1.107-130), dealing with the reign of the last Median king, Astyages, "has as sole incident", as Myres (1953: 93) and others recognized, "the emergence of Cyrus" and, as Herodotus (1.95.1 and 1.130) specifies, his accession to the Asiatic *archē* of the Assyrians and the Medes.

Earlier seen as perhaps a normal (or unavoidable) element of ethnographic *logoi* (i.e., as mere chronographic markers) or as parts of an overarching chronological framework that emerged, *inter alia*, from Greek chronographers' attempts to correlate Asiatic with Greek history (e.g., Drews 1969, cf. 1973: 27-28; Helm 1981: e.g., 87, with n. 27 on pp. 89-90, and 88; Asheri *et al*. 2007: 79-80 note on 7.1, cf. 30 [Introduction] and 148

note on 95.2; but see also Brown 1988: 83), dynastic sequences and the regularly noted time spans of political regimes (of states, dynasties and kings) defined, in each of the two *logoi*, a continuum of kingship from the earliest remembered (or earliest expedient) moment of the institution until the enthronement of Cyrus.

Colorful tales about Lydian and Median rulers, which disrupt and diversify the chronological presentations of successive dynasties, kings and conquests, fell in with the same scheme (*pace* Murray 1987: 112, and others). They punctuated new dynastic beginnings; patched up discontinuities in the standard, hereditary transmission of rule; sanctioned newcomers' aspirations to kingship; all along anticipating the arrival of Cyrus and his legitimate acquisition of the Lydian and the Median throne — or the rule of Lower and Upper Asia.

Lydian and Median royal tales: Persian perspectives

Oblivious of the activities, and even the names, of the descendants of Lydus, the Lydian *logos* also passes up in silence the history of the twenty-two-generation-long line of Heraclid kings, pausing exceptionally on Agron and Candaules, whose reigns marked, respectively, the beginning and the end of Heraclid rule. In both instances, moreover, the commentary is exclusively concerned with the corresponding disruptions in the hereditary transmission of royal authority and their justification. Lacking bloodties with the descendants of Lydus, who ruled Lydia formerly, the Heraclid dynasty founded by Agron was "confirmed on the throne by an oracle" (1.7.4: ἔσχον τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκ θεοπροπίου). The end of Heraclid rule — which, as Herodotus stresses, was (also) transmitted over the course of 22 generations "from father to son" (1.7.4: παῖς παρὰ πατρὸς ἐκδεκόμενος τὴν ἀρχήν) — and transfer of power to the Mermnads was accommodated by another oracular utterance. It sanctioned, this time, the accession on the throne of the founder of the Mermnad house, Gyges (1.13.1: [Gyges] ἔσχε … τὴν βασιληίην καὶ ἐκρατύνθη ἐκ τοῦ ἐν Δελφοῖσι χρηστηρίου, [Gyges] obtained…the kingship and was confirmed [in the possession of the throne] by an answer of the Delphic oracle"). At the same time, a decree of fate and a tale of popular morality placed responsibility for the demise of Heraclid authority on the predisposition and actions of the last, violently deposed Heraclid king. "Fated to end ill" (1.8.2: χρῆν γὰρ Κανδαύλῃ γενέσθαι κακῶς), Candaules was killed, we are told, by

Gyges (his "bodyguard") at the instigation of the queen, because Candaules had forced Gyges to watch her naked against ancestral custom (1.8.3-4, 1.11.3).

Oracular utterances, disastrous repercussions of moral transgression, and workings of destiny —the very same set of principles evoked in the earlier part of the Lydian *logos* in order to justify the irregular transfer of political authority from the family of Lydus to the Heraclids and from the Heraclids to the Mermnads— are also instrumental in the culminating episode of the Lydian account, the story of Croesus and his encounters with Solon and Cyrus. They are evoked to justify the transfer of rule from the last Mermnad ruler to the Persian Cyrus. The famous series of oracles (1.13.2; 1.46.2-50; 1.53-56.1; 1.75.2; 1.91) that were ignored or misinterpreted by Croesus anticipated and sanctioned (in the however cryptic language of oracles) the accession of a foreigner, Cyrus, to the Lydian throne against the hereditary prerogative of a native Lydian king. The earliest such oracle —the one that neither Croesus nor any of his Mermnad predecessors took any account of until it was fulfilled (1.13.2) — dated, allegedly, from the time of Gyges. It alluded to the future arrival of Cyrus as divine vengeance foretold for the demise of the Heraclids to be visited on Gyges' posterity in the fifth generation (that of Croesus) (1.13.2: Ἡρακλείδῃσι τίσις ἥξει ἐς τὸν πέμπτον ἀπόγονον Γύγεω; cf. 1.91.1). Being mentioned for the first time in the earlier part of the Lydian *logos*, in the commentary about Gyges, the latter oracle makes plain the running bias of the history of Lydian kingship recorded by Herodotus in favor of the representation of Cyrus as a legitimate successor on the Lydian throne. Predicted by oracular utterances, the downfall of Croesus was further sealed, as in the case of Candaules, by his own moral transgression (*hybris*, 'arrogance') — which is made manifest by his exchanges with Solon and the tragedy of Atys (1.29-45, esp. 1.34.1; cf. Immerwahr 1966: 83) — and Fate. As Croesus was advised by the Pythian priestess following his demise, "[i]t is not possible even for a god to escape the decree of destiny" (1.91.1: τὴν πεπρωμένην μοῖραν ἀδύνατά ἐστι ἀποφυγεῖν καὶ θεῷ).

Croesus' arrogance and his blindness to the significance of divine warnings have been extensively analyzed as integral elements of the literary and philosophical-moralizing framework of the *Histories* and as reflections of the conventions of Greek tragedy in Herodotus' work (see, e.g., more recently, Kornarou 2004 and Griffin 2006, both with earlier bibliography). The tradition about Croesus conveyed in the Lydian *logos* reverberates

nonetheless with a Persian political bias. The aspersions cast on the moral conduct of the lawful Lydian king, the sustained negation of supernatural favor to his rule in deference to a divinely foretold predominance of Cyrus, as well as the recurring insistence upon Croesus' responsibility for the confrontation with Cyrus (1.46.1, 47.1, 53.1, 54.1, 73-75.2) — a confrontation that led to the Persian conquest of Lydia — effectively acquitted the Persian conqueror of all responsibility for the disruption of the native Lydian socio-political order, simultaneously supplying justification for his newly acquired Anatolian rule. The emphatic assertion that Cyrus did not (ultimately) put to death the Lydian king (1.86-88), which would appear to be belied, moreover, by another preserved tradition about the fate of Croesus (cf. Kuhrt 2007: 180, with reference to the version of Croesus' self immolation and supernaturally effected disappearance attested by the Greek lyric poet Bacchylides [Maehler 1982: F3]), may well subscribe to the same justificatory logic. It could be meant to alleviate detrimental charges of regicide that were bound to be leveled against the Persians (just as they had been against Gyges and his Mermnad successors: 1.13, 1.91.1) by local factions opposed to Persian rule.

Turning to the Medo-Persian *logos*, the concern of the Median dynastic tales with the legitimacy of Cyrus is more easily discernible in the tale of Astyages. Therein, 'prophetic' dreams, the details depicting the background of Cyrus, and an emphasis on the contrasting personal qualities of the Persian conqueror and the last Median king, all readily lend themselves to an interpretation as complementary expressions of divine, moral, and ideological grounds for Cyrus' eventual 'legitimate' succession.

Dreams of water flowing from Astyages' daughter, Mandane, in a quantity that could "fill his city and overflow all Asia" (1.107.1), and "a vine that grew from Mandane and covered the whole of Asia" (1.108.1), are reasoned in our text as causes for Astyages' fear that he might be displaced by his daughter's still unborn son (1.108) and his subsequent cruel behavior toward Cyrus. Their motifs could also function in a legitimation context as 'proof' of Cyrus' "predestined", hence supernaturally sanctioned, "conquest of all of Asia" (wording Cizek 1975: 540) and the equally supernaturally ordained overthrow of his alleged Median grandfather (cf. 1.127.2 wherein the characterization of Astyages as θεοβλαβής imputes his downfall to the clouding of his senses by the god(s) [Immerwahr 1966: 162]).

Cyrus' alleged exposure as an infant, the subsequent revelation of his 'true' identity as the grandson of Astyages and reinstatement to his rightful

position, and his eventual establishment of a new order, are all recognized as elements of a widely popular heroic leader motif. The whole bears closest similarities with extant formulations of the 'birth legend' of the late-third-millennium Mesopotamian 'world' conqueror, Sargon of Akkad (see, esp. Drews 1974 and Kuhrt 2003), a legend which apparently enjoyed considerable official favor in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian discourse on the 'right to rule'. It was especially popular in the reigns of his late-eighth-century Assyrian namesake, Sargon II (Lewis 1980), and Cyrus' contemporary, Nabonidus (Kuhrt 2003: 355), each of whom owned, like Sargon of Akkad, a once shaky claim to royal authority. Royal Persian interest in the cult of the Akkadian ruler in the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses (Kennedy 1969; cf. Kuhrt 2003: 356), combined with indications that the motif, rather than representing merely a popular Mesopotamian folk tradition (Drews 1974), could function at an official level, led to the suggestion that the adaptation of the legend in the case of Cyrus was likely fostered, even by Cyrus himself, in connection with his accession to the Babylonian throne (Kuhrt 2003: 354-356). In this regard, the fusion of the personality of Cyrus with that of the Mesopotamian hero of antiquity has been specifically interpreted as having been meant to convey an image of Cyrus "as the 'true king' of the universe, whose right to rule Babylonia had existed from birth" (Kuhrt 2003: 356). This motif, however, which was evidently popular in an Assyrian imperialist context, and which is attested in Herodotus in a narrative that posits a Persian accession to the rule of Upper Asia that was initially held by the Assyrians, may well have been more broadly connected with Cyrus' claims to the former Assyrian *archē*.

Occurring in the same historically tendentious, legimation context, Cyrus' otherwise unconfirmed (and even denied by Ctesias, *FGrHist* 688 F9[1]) half-Median royal descent — which bears, significantly, on the crucial requirement of direct, bloodline transmission of legitimate rule — is equally likely to have been deliberately fostered as a means of masking Cyrus' irregular accession, this time, to the Median throne (cf., e.g., Metzler 1975, Briant 1984: 75 [cf. 1996: 34-35], Lenfant 1996: 368-369, and the analogous claim of Cambyses' half-Egyptian royal descent in an Egyptian context in Herodotus 3.1-2).

Astyages' impulsive and cruel behavior toward Cyrus (1.108.3-4), Harpagus (1.118-119) and the Magi (1.128.2), which stands as a counterpart to the moral transgressions of Croesus and Candaules, and Cyrus' representation, as in the Lydian *logos*, as an "instrument of providential

nemesis" (wording Cizek 1975: 540), have been analyzed so far as manifestations of the moral dimension of Greek/Herodotean historical vision. They might equally be understood, however, as *a priori* salient ingredients of a story belonging in the realm of Near Eastern political justifications. The particular system of values that predicated Cyrus' 'rightful' displacement of the lawful native monarch in this instance, and the overall Iranian and Mesopotamian spirit that guided the justification of Cyrus' takeover of the rule of the Medes and (Upper) Asia, find initial reflections and further clarification in the tale of Deioces.

Earlier scholarship has dealt extensively with the ambivalent merits of the Herodotean story of the Median layman, Deioces — who allegedly succeeded in uniting under his absolute authority the several autonomous, village-based communities of the Medes, founding a Median institution of kingship — as a 'document' for early Median history (for different approaches in this respect, see, among others, Helm 1981; Brown 1988; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1988; Briant 1996: 36-37 and 908-909 [notes documentaries]; Liverani 2003; Meier e.a. 2004; Tuplin 2004). Posing as Median history, the acts (and personality) of Deioces, and the Median *logos* as a whole, may well represent instead, as Helm (1981: e.g. 87; cf. Brown 1988: 79) first argued, a combination of elements of heroic oral sagas from a Median and more generally Iranian past. The relevance of the tale to the Persian report about Cyrus, of which it purports to form a part in Herodotus, has also often been doubted in the past on account of echoes of Greek political circumstances and/or Herodotean improvisations that have been 'recognized' in its contents. Thus, the organization of the Medes into several separate villages (1.96.2: κατὰ κώμας) before the enthronement of Deioces, and the single large city (1.98.3: ἓν πόλισμα) of Ecbatana created on his demand upon his rise to power, have been understood as reflections of a Greek model of state formation (How and Wells 1928: 104). References to the 'tyrant's' friends (1.97.2: οἱ τοῦ Δηιόκεω φίλοι), bodyguard of spearbearers (1.98.2: κρατῦναι αὐτὸν δορυφόροισι), and spies (1.100.2: καί οἱ κατάσκοποί τε καὶ κατήκοοι ἦσαν ἀνὰ πᾶσαν τὴν χώρην τῆς ἦρχε) have been suggested to be "parts of the ordinary Greek 'Tyrant's progress'" (e.g., How and Wells 1928: 104; cf. Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1988: 211 and Liverani 2003: 2). Or, simultaneous similarities of the worldly trappings of Deioces' kingship — such as his capital, personal guards, court etiquette (1.99), spies — with Achaemenid royal institutions and ceremonial have been held suspect of implying that

Herodotus fashioned details of Median kingship recorded in his account on the basis of Achaemenid royal practices known to him (e.g., Briant 1996: 36). The tale as a whole, however, is entirely compatible with the purposes of an account that conveyed connected claims of Cyrus and the Persians' rightful accession to the throne of Media, not to mention the former Mesopotamian Asiatic rule.

The designation of the type of monarchic power sought by Deioces as *tyrannis* and the description of the Mede as "having become infatuated with tyrannical rule" (1.96.2: ἐρασθεὶς τυραννίδος; cf. the similar representation of the Lacedaemonian Pausanias in 5.32) appear to be key references accounting for comparisons between Deioces' political aspirations and accomplishments and the Greek 'Tyrant's progress'. In the present context, they need imply nothing more than an apt conceptual comparison of the monarchic regime, which was reportedly established by this Median layman in the absence of a pre-existing (hereditary) Median institution of monarchic rule, with analogous regimes created by Greek upstarts. Herodotean license in enhancing the character of Deioces' kingship could also be appropriate to postulate only with reference to the role of Deioces' 'friends' — the single instance in which a reference bearing on Deioces is explicitly stated to represent a Herodotean opinion (1.97.2). From the Near Eastern perspective of the Medo-Persian *logos*, the emphasis on the splendid palace and capital city constructed at the orders of Deioces by the Medes as an appropriate setting for his royalty, Deioces' retinue of guards and spies, and the ceremonial attributed to the same monarch, are ever more likely to have been associated with a different, and patently Near Eastern, monarchic outlook. They would have served as allusions to a Mesopotamian endowment of kingship (note in particular the parallel between Deioces' explicit preference for a city-based kingship and the notion of kingship as a prerogative of cities in Mesopotamia, e.g., in the Sumerian Ling List [Jacobsen 1939, with the comments of Zournatzi forthcoming]) that was pre-eminently associated in the earlier part of the first millennium with the Assyrian imperial legacy (cf. Panaino 2003: 333-334) and was emulated by Assyria's heirs, including the Persians (hence, the similarities with Achaemenid institutions and protocol noted by earlier scholars). The merging of the figure of Cyrus with that of Sargon of Akkad in the tale of Astyages has just been proposed to express, in suitable Mesopotamian terms, the Persian conqueror's inherent personal 'right to rule' over the former Assyrian *archē*. Presented as features of a Median

institution of kingship that was created from scratch by Deioces — an institution that was for a time thought to signal the introduction of Greek improvisations — the worldly trappings of Deioces' monarchy would have adduced, in a similarly appropriate Mesopotamian fashion, complementary 'ritual' credentials in support of the claim of a new Iranian — ostensibly Median but, ultimately, Persian — order to the same Assyrian inheritance.

The remainder of the tale's references (1.96-98.1), accounting for the circumstances of Deioces' rise to power, articulated further crucial moral/religious grounds for the justification of Persia's Asiatic rule. As the story related by Herodotus goes, Deioces, a "wise man" (1.96.1: ἀνήρ…σοφός) among the Medes and a man of mark in his village became infatuated with sovereignty. Bent on obtaining the sovereign power, and as lawlessness prevailed throughout the land, he "applied himself with greater zeal and earnestness than ever before to the practice of justice…in his conviction that justice and injustice are engaged in perpetual war with one another" (1.96.2: καὶ μᾶλλόν τι καὶ προθυμότερον δικαιοσύνην ἐπιθέμενος ἤσκεε· … ἐπιστάμενος ὅτι τῷ δικαίῳ τὸ ἄδικον πολέμιόν ἐστι)". He showed himself "a singularly upright judge" (1.96.3: ἀνὴρ μοῦνος κατὰ τὸ ὀρθὸν δικάζων), eventually attracting the attention of those, who lived in the surrounding villages and "had long been suffering from unjust judgments" (1.96.3: πρότερον περιπίπτοντες ἀδίκοισι γνώμῃσι). Once he gained the Medes' exclusive confidence, he announced that he no longer intended to hear causes as it did not square with his interests "to spend the whole day in regulating other men's affairs and to neglect his own". Thereupon robbery and lawlessness broke out afresh, and prevailed through the country even more than before. The Medes held a consultation on this state of affairs and resolved to set a king over themselves so that "their land [might] be well governed, and [they themselves might] be able to attend to their own affairs, and not be forced to quit [their] country on account of anarchy". In the debate that ensued in order to determine who should be appointed to the office, the merits of Deioces prevailed.

Subject to a singular emphasis throughout the account of Deioces (see also 1.100), the notion of a ruler's commitment to justice was a standard ingredient of the official utterances of Near Eastern monarchs, who also sought, time and again, to legitimize their authority by drawing a contrast between their just behavior and the acts of injustice perpetrated by their adversaries. The particular details in which this time-honored Near Eastern motif of royalty is rendered in the tale of Deioces evokes more closely

elements of the analogous political rhetoric of the Achaemenids and notions germane to the ancient Iranian worldview.

Defined in this context as independent, opposite forces that are in eternal conflict with each other, and as agents, respectively, of social orderliness and disorder, δίκαιον ("justice") and ἄδικον ("injustice") might be said to resonate a dichotomy engendered in the ancient Indo-Iranian metaphysical concepts of *aša*/*ṛta* and *drug*, also depicted as "independent, active" forces, and encompassing, the former notion, "cosmic and moral order (= "truth")" and, the latter one, "all which is opposed to this harmony and regularity" (Schwartz 1985a: 641). This dichotomy appears to be expressed in the royal philosophy of Darius I by the opposition of "Lie" (Av. *draoγa*-, OP *drauga*-) and "Truth", the latter being the principle with which Darius' actions and inclinations, as a ruler, were consistently associated (see Schwartz 1985b: 685-686;[3] for an interpretation of OP *ṛta* as "Law, Justice", see Kent 1953: 170 s.v. *arta*-).

In Herodotus the appointment of Deioces as king was precipitated by circumstances of lawlessness (1.96.2-3, 1.97.2). The Medes decided to appoint a king to rule over them so that their land would be well-governed and they themselves would be free from sufferings brought by anarchy (1.97.3). In the Bisitun inscription, a similar state of affairs is suggested by the "commotion" that was widespread in the land (because of the 'Lie') (e.g., Kent 1953: DB I 32-35) before Darius was selected by Ahuramazda to "put [the land] down in its place" (Kent 1953: DNa 31-36) and the orderliness/justice brought by Darius' royal authority (cf. Panaino 2003: 332).

Wisdom, featured in the Herodotean account as the determining trait of Deioces' personal nature, and apparently of import with reference to the Mede's ability to act as a most upright judge, is also ascribed a leading importance in the (self-)representation of the superior royal makeup of Darius. In this monarch's funerary inscription at Naqsh-i Rustam, *xraθu* ("wisdom") is introduced as the quintessential intellectual quality bestowed upon him (together with physical competence) by Ahuramazda (Kent 1953: DNb 3-4). It heads the list of (and is probably to be understood, as in the case of Deioces, as ruling) Darius' other excellent (and equally divinely bestowed, Kent 1953: DNb 47-52) mental and moral qualities for

[3] As Martin Schwartz informs me, he now prefers the translation of *aša*/*ṛta* as "rightness" and the translation of *drug* as "wrongness".

exercising kingship: namely, his being by nature "a friend to right …not a friend to wrong" and "not a friend to the man who is a Lie-follower", having a "desire for what is right" (Kent 1953: DNb 5-13), as well as the capacity to control his weaknesses. As he states, he was not "hot tempered", was able to hold under control "what things developed in [his] anger by [his] thinking power (*manah*)", and to "rule firmly over [his] impulses" (Kent 1953: DNb 13-15).

The system of positive and negative mental and moral royal qualities that emerges from the beliefs and actions of Deioces and Darius re-materializes in the last tale of the Medo-Persian narrative, creating a stark contrast between the respective personalities (and qualifications for royalty) of Cyrus and Astyages. Cyrus, who came to be exposed as an infant due to Astyages' fear that he might replace him (1.107-108), was 'recognized' as the grandson of the Median monarch at the age of ten. The miraculous recognition of his 'real' identity was prompted by his alignment with justice in a game of 'king' (1.114-116), wherein his punishment of the arrogance of a nobleman's son (e.g., 1.115.2: ἐγὼ δὲ ταῦτα τοῦτον ἐποίησα σὺν δίκῃ, "I treated him thus in accordance with justice") echoes directly the righteous manner in which Deioces (and Darius), as a king, decided analogous cases at law (1.100.2: εἴ τινα πυνθάνοιτο ὑβρίζοντα, τοῦτον ὅκως μεταπέμψαιτο, κατ' ἀξίην ἑκάστου ἀδικήματος ἐδικαίευ, "if he [i.e., Deioces] heard of any act of arrogance, he would send for the offender and punish him as the offense deserved"; cf. Kent 1953: DNb 17-18). As an adult, Cyrus would deliberate grave matters with wisdom (1.125.1: ὁ Κῦρος ἐφρόντιζε ὅτεῳ τρόπῳ σοφωτάτῳ Πέρσας ἀναπείσει ἀπίστασθαι, "Cyrus set himself to consider how he might most wisely persuade the Persians to revolt").

Impulsiveness/proneness to anger (1.109.2: εἰ παραφρονήσει τε καὶ μανέεται κάκιον ἢ νῦν μαίνεται, "[Astyages] may become madder and more frantic still than he is now"; cf. 1.117.1, 118.1) and cruelty (1.123.2 [πικροῦ], 1.130.1 [πικρότητα], 1.108.3-4, 1.119.3-7, 1.128.2) — all of which may be understood from the representations of Deioces and Darius discussed above as qualities that were opposite to wisdom and righteousness, and, hence, as traits inappropriate for kingship — are consistently associated with the personality of Astyages. They are also variously indicated in the text of Herodotus to have been responsible for Astyages' loss of his crown and the Persians' enslavement of the Medes (e.g., 1.130.1: Ἀστυάγης … τῆς βασιληίης κατεπαύσθη, Μῆδοι δὲ ὑπέκυψαν

Πέρσῃσι διὰ τὴν τούτου πικρότητα, "Astyages…lost his crown, and the Medes, in consequence of his cruelty, submitted to the Persians").

The assembly of the autonomous Medes sanctioned the aspirations of the layman Deioces to rule over them because of his wisdom and demonstrated commitment to justice. The main thrust of the justification of Cyrus' seizure of Astyages' *archē* was based on Cyrus' possession, like Deioces (and Darius), of wisdom and a strong sense of justice, qualities that countered Astyages' impulsiveness and cruelty, establishing Cyrus' superior mental and moral credentials and, hence, claim to rule.

The three-kingdom sequence as a Persian scheme

Subject to the foregoing analysis, the (eastern) historical sequences and associated dynastic tales of Herodotus' Lydian and Median narratives would be germane, respectively, to etiologies of Cyrus' takeover of the Lydian and Median thrones — or, as our text would have us believe, of the two age-old lines of kingship of Lower and Upper Asia. Herodotus was not an apologist for Persian imperial rule. The justificatory tenor and Persian bias of both of these narratives are best attributed to his sources and can be presumed to reflect the impact of the political rhetoric of Persia on then extant accounts about her subjects' historical past. In this regard, the representation of Cyrus' right to rule over the Lydians and the Medes in terms of different motifs, and apparently distinct worldviews, may be further seen to be consonant with the varied responses of the Persian rulers to the imperative for the legitimation of their authority in different political and cultural spheres of their imperial realm.

Depicted as a half-Median/half-Persian king in Herodotus, Cyrus represented himself as a stereotypical Mesopotamian monarch in Babylon (Kuhrt 2007) and as an Anshanite ruler in the wider Elamite-Mesopotamian environment (Zournatzi forthcoming). The combination of Achaemenid and Egyptian motifs of sovereignty in the inscriptions and iconography of the Egyptian-made statue of Darius discovered at Susa speaks for analogous Persian allowances for traditional perceptions of legitimate rule in Egypt (Zournatzi forthcoming). The Lydian *logos*, which seeks to justify Cyrus' accession to the Lydian throne on grounds (oracles, *hybris*, Fate) that were, as far as we can tell, acceptable in a Greco-Lydian environment, may echo yet another Persian scheme of legitimation, shaped, in this instance, in dialogue with western traditional perceptions of legitimate rule

and addressed to the empire's western Anatolian subjects. Although it nominally focuses on Median and Persian affairs, the Medo-Persian *logos* was actually meant to promote Cyrus' rightful accession to a rule of (Upper) Asia traced to the Assyrians and appeals to concepts and formulations of legitimate kingship that were variously apposite to an Iranian and a Mesopotamian worldview. It could represent an iranocentric address of Persia's right to rule over the wider Near Eastern world that was placed under Assyrian and Median and, then, Persian sway. The suggested Iranian bias of this *logos* may also be seen to be encoded in the three-kingdom scheme.

Following the collapse of Assyrian power, extensive central and western stretches of the Assyrian empire came under the control of the Babylonians, who were also principally responsible, together with the Medes, for the demise of the last major Assyrian stronghold, Nineveh. The existence of this Babylonian kingdom, which is known to have been in its prime at the same time as the maximal rule of the Medes and to have survived through the first decade of the reign of Cyrus, and which should be properly mentioned together with the Medes as an immediate predecessor to Persia's rule of (Upper) Asia, is nowhere clearly enunciated in the Median *logos*.

Earlier scholarship has variously sought to explain this omission as being incidental to the narrow focus of the Median *logos* on activities of Median rulers, to Herodotus' imperfect knowledge of seventh- and sixth-century Near Eastern affairs when he initially composed his account about the Medes, and/or to the Greek historian's intention to present pertinent information about the political history of Babylon (and Assyria) in a separate *logos* (or even a separate work) that is now lost or perhaps never materialized (see, among others, Zawadzki 1984, with a critical review of earlier opinions; see also Madreiter 2011, with reference to the similar obliteration of the Babylonian Kingdom in Ctesias). Be that as it may, the text of Herodotus supplies a number of indications that the effective obliteration of the Babylonian kingdom from among Persia's imperial predecessors in the account of Cyrus' rise to the rule of (Upper) Asia must have been, to begin with, a matter of a deliberate suppression.

As we have seen (above, pp. 231-232), far from constituting a mere collection of testimonies about the history of the Median kingdom, the Median dynastic sequence is directly referred to the theme of sovereignty that is elaborated in *Histories* 1.6-1.130, and is portrayed in particular as *the* link

in the transmission of the *archē* of (Upper) Asia from the Assyrians to the Persians. The wording of the account transmitted by Herodotus also consistently equates the near totality of the region of Asia once controlled by the Assyrians with the domain that fell under Median sway. At 1.102.2, describing the beginnings of Median expansion under Deioces' son and successor, Phraortes, Herodotus indicates that, having first subdued the Persians, Phraortes "proceeded to conquer Asia overrunning province after province (until) at last he engaged in war with the Assyrians … who were formerly rulers of all (ἦρχον … πάντων), [and who] stood alone at present by the revolt and desertion of their allies". With the exception of the Persians, the nations that were reportedly conquered by Phraortes are not named and cannot be placed on the map. The reference, however, to provinces overrun one after the other, leading ultimately to an attack upon Assyria, gives an impression of a Median domain that encompassed (possibly among additional districts in the east never touched by Assyrian power) the sum of the nations once controlled, and by then lost, as we are told, by the Assyrians, who "were formerly rulers of all". And when Nineveh was taken, during the reign of Phraortes' successor, Cyaxares, our text implies an exclusively Median responsibility (and glory) for this dramatic turning point in the political history of Upper Asia: the Medes "took Nineveh … and conquered all Assyria except the district (μοίρης) of Babylonia" (1.106.2: τήν τε Νίνον εἷλον … καὶ τοὺς Ἀσσυρίους ὑποχειρίους ἐποιήσαντο πλὴν τῆς Βαβυλωνίης μοίρης). The reference to Babylonia in the latter context —the only such reference throughout the Median account— passes up in silence the role of the Babylonians in the sack of Nineveh and depicts the Neo-Babylonian kingdom as a mere district of Assyria. If anything, it makes one think of a co-option of this kingdom into the Assyrian realm whose former territories are otherwise repeatedly stated or implied in the text to have been taken over by the Medes.

Throughout the account, moreover, the transition from the Assyrian to the Persian rule of (Upper) Asia is portrayed exclusively in terms of Iranian political visibility: a succession of Median rulers, whose regime — spanning, perhaps, as many as 156 years (e.g. Scurlock 1990) from the time of the alleged founder of the Median state, Deioces, down to the time of the last Median king, Astyages, displaced by Cyrus — was interrupted only by a brief (1.106.1: twenty-eight-year) interlude of a Scythian (hence, also Iranian!) regency of Upper Asia (1.130.1: Μῆδοι δὲ ὑπέκυψαν Πέρσῃσι

…, ἄρξαντες τῆς ἄνω Ἅλυος ποταμοῦ Ἀσίης ἐπ᾽ ἔτεα τριήκοντα καὶ ἑκατὸν δυῶν δέοντα, πάρεξ ἢ ὅσον οἱ Σκύθαι ἦρχον, "the Medes ruled over the [parts of] Asia above [i.e., to the east of] the Halys for 128 years, excepting [or including] the time when the Scythians had the dominion"). Whether or not this representation of a Median and Scythian 'exclusivity' in the rule of Upper Asia following the deterioration of Assyrian power and before the rise of Persia preserves echoes of an actual process of Scythian expansion that led to the formation of a Scytho-Median elite in charge of an imperial Median state (Vogelsang 1998), its iranocentric standpoint is inescapable. Seen in this light, the elimination of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom from the history of Asiatic rule related in the Median *logos* is far more likely than not to have been consistent with a historical perspective that consciously sought to promote an Iranian political order against a Mesopotamian one. Such a manipulation of the past was well within the capabilities of eastern imperialist history making.

As indicated in the beginning of this presentation, in Book 1.178-200 (thus, *outside* the narrative section, 1.6-1.130, that treats the theme proper of the Persians' accession to the rule of Lower and Upper Asia) Herodotus offers a lengthy account about Babylon and its conquest by Cyrus. Even though it makes no reference to Babylon's extensive territorial control, his Babylonian narrative directly acknowledges both Babylon's long history of rule (e.g., 1.184) and the continuing existence of a Babylonian kingdom through the era of Median power (1.185.1 and 1.185.7; cf. 1.74.3-4 and 1.77.2) and into the early period of Cyrus' reign. It also appears to preserve traces of a tradition that posited a direct Babylonian inheritance of Assyrian kingship, ignoring the analogous, competing claim that the Median *logos* puts forward with reference to the Medes. The most striking instance is a reference in the opening of the Babylonian *logos* (1.178.1, cf. Högemann 1992: 57 n. 80) to the transfer of the seat of rule (or "kingship") in 'Assyria' from Nineveh to Babylon following the fall of Nineveh, which may be understood as a close Greek translation of the standard formula used in the Sumerian King List for the transmission of (legitimate) kingship in Mesopotamia from city to city (Zournatzi forthcoming). A further reference, this time to the last Babylonian monarch, Labynetus (i.e., Nabonidus), attacked by Cyrus, as one who "held the *archē* of the Assyrians" (1.188.1: ἔχοντα … τὴν Ἀσσυρίων ἀρχήν), might also be taken to imply the perpetuation of Assyrian sovereignty as a prerogative of Babylonian rulers down to the time of Cyrus.

From the information about Babylon at his disposal, Herodotus would have probably been able to correct the skewed perspective on the history of Asiatic rule presented in the Medo-Persian narrative. His single reference to the exclusion of Babylonia from the Median domain (1.106.2), which is incongruous with the tenor of an all-encompassing Median rule that pervades the Median *logos*, might represent just such an attempt (the reference has also been attributed to a Herodotean realization that "eliminating … information about Assyria (*sic!*) distorted the history of Mesopotamia and the whole Ancient East" by Zawadzki 1984: 266). The overall impression one forms, however, from Herodotus' text is that he did not, at least not drastically, intervene in the essentials of an Iranian storyline. Treating the history of Babylon and its conquest by Cyrus in a different narrative section, thus, as being distinct, from the story of Cyrus' rise to the rule of (Upper) Asia related in the Medo-Persian *logos,* Herodotus may be seen to have preserved two different Asiatic traditions (evidently derived from different sources) about the succession to Assyrian rule: a Babylonian/Mesopotamian tradition that posited a Babylonian inheritance of Assyrian kingship, and an Iranian one that only admitted a transmission of the same Assyrian rule through the Medes (and Scythians) (for other considerations suggesting the Babylonian affinities, and anti-Persian spirit, of the tradition reflected in the Babylonian *logos*, see, e.g., Kratz 2002: esp. 151-153). Though in conflict with each other, these two traditions were based on the same principle. They perpetuate a perception of a single-line transmission of kinship that did not acknowledge the existence of parallel rules. This notion is attested in the Near East as early as the time of the composition of the Sumerian King List. Judging by Herodotus 1.178.1 (above), it was still alive in Mesopotamia in the Persian period.

In the political environment of Mesopotamia, to which the Sumerian King List refers, the idea of legitimate territorial rule was traditionally expressed in terms of a single heavenly kingship that was transferred in a direct line from one Mesopotamian city to another. Following the phenomenal expansion of the Assyrians in the Near East in the early centuries of the first millennium, their successors' claims to extended control over Asia would be inevitably traced to the Assyrian legacy, to the exclusion, again, of any form of competing dominion.

Concluding remarks

This discussion of the Median and other eastern materials of the first book of the *Histories* cannot claim to expose the full range of problems that pertain to Herodotus' interpretation of the history of Asia or the amount of discussion that they have generated. It has been primarily meant to draw attention to the potential of these materials to yield new insights into the dialogue between Greek and Near Eastern historical perspectives at an early moment of Greek historical writing.

For over a century, the extensive preoccupation of Herodotus with the history of the East prior to the emergence of the Persian power has been perceived as being more or less extraneous to the events of Persian history he treats in his work and as emanating from his own historical-ethnographical-geographical interests. The foregoing interpretation of the Lydian and Median historical narratives as etiologies of Persian rule suggests that, at least in these two instances,[4] this preoccupation was integral to his Persian theme. It must have been predetermined, moreover, by his source material: extant accounts that were ultimately shaped by an eastern approach to history as a sequence of kingdoms ruled by kings and a perennial eastern concern with legitimate kingship which could freely claim priority over historical accuracy.

Featured in Herodotus as a survey of Median history, but loosely concerned with historical facts, the Median *logos* bears testimony first and foremost, like its Lydian counterpart, to the imperative for the justification of Persian imperial authority and the impact of the imperial rhetoric of Persia on the historical traditions of her subjects and Greek neighbors. The latter impact is illustrated, among others, by the iranocentric, 'Herodotean' interpretation of the history of (Upper) Asia as a sequence of an Assyrian, a Median, and a Persian kingdom — a Persian adaptation of a millennial Near Eastern historical perspective that would continue to be echoed in the west through subsequent reformulations of the theory of the succession of world empires.

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[4] Accounting for a further important line of kingship and Cambyses' accession to it, the history of Egypt in 2.99.2-3.16 may also be said to adhere to a similar scheme. On the whole, the special focus of the Herodotean account about the history of the pre-Achaemenid East on Lydia, Media, Babylon, and Egypt may be seen to correspond with the major lines of kingship that were extant at the time of the emergence of the Persian power and were taken over by the Persians.

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