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Herodotean Soundings

The Cambyses *Logos*

edited by Andreas Schwab
and Alexander Schütze



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Andreas Schwab / Alexander Schütze (eds.)

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Herodotean Soundings

The Cambyses *Logos*

Alexander Schütze and Andreas Schwab

In the present volume, researchers from different disciplines of Ancient Studies examine Herodotus' famous narrative about the Persian king Cambyses and his conquest of Egypt. The papers here represent new and original research by an international group of both renowned scholars and young academics presented and discussed in an interdisciplinary circle in Heidelberg in June 2017.¹

An important incentive for choosing the theme of the conference was the effort of one of the editors to understand the Cambyses *logos* in the context of his habilitation thesis focusing on encounters with foreign religions in the *Histories* of Herodotus.² However, the Cambyses *logos* is not only of special interest for Herodotus' account of foreign religion. Herodotus' work offers the only comprehensive narrative of the conquest of Egypt under the Great King. At the same time, Cambyses and his misdeeds represent the first pinnacle of Herodotus' characterization of a whole series of despots, beginning with the Lydian and Persian kings Croesus and Cyrus. In the *logos* on Cambyses, Herodotus demonstrates his understanding of the relativistic, and culturally relativistic, nature of history in a particularly condensed form as he contrasts Persian, Egyptian, and Greek views of the events he narrates. Last but not least, beginning with the opening of Book 2, the Cambyses *logos* in fact also frames the extensive Egyptian *logos* of Book two which in turn can be understood as a prelude to the narrative on Cambyses at the beginning of Book three.

This central narrative from Herodotus' *Histories* has been studied from the perspectives of Ancient Greek language and literature, Egyptology, and ancient history. However, these perspectives and also the experts in each of the fields

1 With the exception of Olaf Kaper's response to Damien Agut and the contribution of Andreas Schwab developed after the conference and based on both contributions.

2 Schwab (2020) with its last chapter on 'Religion in Interaktion', esp. 226–7 and 233–269.

are rarely brought together. The idea of the conference goes back to the desire to create an opportunity for scholars from these disciplines to meet and focus intensely on a discrete and seminal section of Herodotus' work. The present volume attests to the benefit of such a multi-disciplinary approach to Herodotus that arises from intense focus on a small, but important section of his work. Its contributors not only arrive at new conclusions to challenging aspects of Herodotus' account, but at the same time have opened up further perspectives for future research.

In the last twenty years, a number of collected volumes dealing with different aspects of Herodotus' *Histories* have been published which illustrate the complexity of this multifaceted text. One may roughly discern two tendencies: on the one hand, studies that deal with the text of the *Histories* itself through various modes of literary analysis, and on the other hand, works that juxtapose the narratives handed down in the *Histories* with indigenous sources belonging to the cultures his work describes. A number of volumes deal with Herodotus' worldview and his portrayal of the other.³ Other works focus on the narrative strategies of the ancient author, illuminate the *Histories* in the context of contemporary historiography, or relate them to myth.⁴ In addition, there are volumes that juxtapose the *Histories* with contemporary sources of the cultures described by Herodotus or deal with how Herodotus portrays the Persians and incorporates ancient Near Eastern motifs into his narrative.⁵

Of some relevance for this volume is the conference volume *Hérodote et l'Égypte. Regards croisés sur le livre II de l'Enquête d'Hérodote* edited by Laurent Coulon in 2013, in which the second book of Herodotus' *Histories* was subjected to a revision building on the current state of Egyptological research on Egypt in the 1st millennium BC.⁶ Thanks to the numerous religious texts and archaeological findings from Late Period Egypt that have been published in recent decades, the facts that Herodotus knows to report about the Egypt of his time can be evaluated much better than Alan B. Lloyd was able to do in his commentary on Book two.⁷ In fact, it is possible to identify a real historical background for many of Herodotus' descriptions, some of which seem strange to the modern reader.

3 Derow (2003); Karageorghis and Taifacos (2004); Munson (2013a); Figueria and Soares (2020).

4 Derow (2003); Baragwanath (2012); Geus et al. (2013); Munson (2013b); Bowie (2018).

5 Bleckmann (2007); Rollinger and Allinger-Csollich (2011); Dunsch and Ruffing (2013); Klinkott and Kramer (2017); see also Fehling (1971).

6 Coulon (2013).

7 Lloyd (1975–1988).

A whole series of contributions in the present volume continue these in-depth soundings against the background of the current state of research.

With regard to method and approach, two volumes in particular influenced our perspective. While in the above-mentioned volumes a variety of text passages is discussed, the following collected volume takes a different approach: In *Reading Herodotus. A Study of the Logoi in Book 5 of Herodotus*, the contributing authors discuss the *logoi* of an entire book in terms of structure, language, and place in the overall structure of the *Histories* as well as the significance for the overall interpretation of Herodotus' monumental work.⁸ This approach of a discussion of a coherent, continuous section from the *Histories* is followed here on a small scale using the example of the Cambyses *logos*, because only in this way do repeating motifs, figures or rhetorical strategies become visible for a discussion from different angles.

A multidisciplinary approach with a focus on the text of a particular episode from Herodotus seems suitable and promising for examining the 'multivocality of his text' in a multidisciplinary environment.⁹ In the volume *Interpreting Herodotus*, the editors examine anew Charles W. Fornara's thesis that Herodotus' *Histories* are to be read against the background of the Atheno-Peloponnesian War and that Herodotus' criticism of Athenian expansionist policies, which ultimately led to Athens' downfall, is inherent in the work.¹⁰ This question can also be applied to Herodotus' Cambyses *logos* (and the preceding Saite History), as the contributions by Elizabeth Irwin and Alexander Schütze in this volume show.¹¹ Seen in this light, the volume also represents a continuation of this important contribution to the understanding of the *Histories*.

A narrative such as the Cambyses *logos* provides numerous challenges and welcomes, if not also demands, a discussion from multiple disciplinary angles. It deals with a concrete historical event, the conquest of Egypt by the Persian Great King, but is composed of a whole series of peculiar shorter narratives inviting critical examination of Herodotus' account, whether the presumed reasons for Egypt's conquest, descriptions of his failed campaigns, or the characterization of Cambyses as a mad king. At the same time, the *logos* alludes to and exploits in its telling a variety of Egyptian *realia*, such as the famous Apis bull, the oracle of Buto or the tomb of Amasis, that can be correlated with sources in the Egyptian tradition. We therefore see this *logos* as a perfect opportunity to conduct an

8 Irwin and Greenwood (2007).

9 Harrison and Irwin (2018) 6.

10 Harrison and Irwin (2018); see also Fornara (1971).

11 See also Irwin (2017).

interdisciplinary experiment that examined how all these aspects of the text might be dealt with together on one occasion and in one volume.

With its multidisciplinary structure, this volume addresses two research *desiderata*. On the one hand, for Egyptology and Ancient History, Herodotus' narrative about the Persian king in Egypt is, along with the Egyptian inscription of Udjahorresnet, the only narrative source on a seminal event in Egyptian history: the conquest of Egypt by the Persians brought the Saite period to an abrupt end, a period that had brought Egypt a late-flourishing cultural 'renaissance'.¹² And yet despite this extraordinarily central importance of Herodotus' *Histories* for the Egyptological study of this historical and political *caesura*, it must be noted that Egyptologists have often engaged with the *Histories* with a particular interest in Book two mostly concentrating on what discrete facts might yield without a view of the overall work and composition of the *Histories*.¹³ But such focus on the historicity of Herodotus' account in Egyptology and ancient history—which is often difficult to verify due to the lack of relevant sources—can sometimes cause one to lose sight of the fact that Herodotus' multi-layered text is more than a mere 'factual account'. Rather it is a highly complex and well-composed narrative of an author who pursued an agenda with regard to his Greek readership in a highly sophisticated age.¹⁴ On the other hand, Classicists find themselves all too often in want of the expertise of Egyptologists if they are to understand what might be distinctive about Herodotus' handling of this material.¹⁵ Recent research in Demotic studies and discoveries in Egyptian archaeology (especially in the oases of the Western Desert, e.g. in the oases of Dakhla or Kharga), illuminates Herodotus' text and often vindicates him. In doing so, such research can open up hitherto unimagined perspectives on the Greek text as well as on its meaning and interpretation¹⁶, whether, for instance, by placing Herodotus' disparate narratives about the failed campaigns of Cambyses in relation to the geopolitical conditions in the areas bordering Egypt in the late 6th century BC or by making rather peculiar descriptions of Egyptian cult images plausible on the basis of archaeological findings.

12 For research on the inscription of Udjahorresnet and related questions, cf. Wasmuth and Creasman (2020) and the contribution of Wasmuth in this volume.

13 E.g. Cruz-Urbe (2003), Jansen-Winkel (2002).

14 Cf. Irwin (2017) and the contribution of Irwin in this volume.

15 Cf. Schwab (2020) 154 n. 8.

16 Cf. Coulon (2013), in particular Quack's study rich in new demotic source-texts (pp. 63–88) and Postel's contribution on Herodotus' history of Egyptian Kings and the Egyptian royal annals (pp. 89–118).

The contributions in this volume are not intended to offer a “commentary” on the Cambyses *logos*. Instead, they both suggest to readers the kind of direction a commentary needs to take if it is to embrace the many facets of this complex and monumental work and constitute an important contribution to such a project in the future. Achaemenid and Ancient Near Eastern perspectives such as the source situation for the reign of Cambyses in the Persian heartland or Babylonia are not treated exhaustively, nor are text passages such as the excursus on Ethiopia.¹⁷ One aim of the individual contributions is rather to offer selected and targeted ‘soundings’ that deal with specific passages of the Herodotus text. On the one hand, these are ‘soundings’ taken directly from Herodotus’ text; on the other hand, they are ‘soundings’ of Herodotus’s legacy, impact on multiple fields of research, such as Egyptology, philology, ancient history, archaeology, ethnography, philosophy, and history of religion, which examine the *logos* of Cambyses and in doing so also pose the difficult question of what we can know about the ‘historical’ Cambyses. Following previous studies on the Cambyses *logos*, the contributions of this volume are organized in four parts reflecting the complexity of this particular passage in Herodotus’ *Histories*.¹⁸

Part 1: Linguistic, narratological and philosophical perspectives

The first part of the volume contains three contributions that deal with the text of the Cambyses *logos* in particular, while all the other contributions relate it more or less to other sources. They offer a first close reading of the Cambyses *logos* from linguistic, narratological, historical and philosophical perspectives, looking at and analysing the *logos* as a whole.

In the first contribution **Elizabeth Irwin** (“Just *Who* is Cambyses? Imperial Identities and Egyptian Campaigns”) explores the method of reading required to get at what the complex and idiosyncratic account of Herodotus’ Cambyses in Egypt attempts to communicate about historiography, culture relativity, and morality. Building on her seminal article (“Just *Why* did Cambyses Conquer Egypt?”) from 2017, Irwin investigates the content and mode of narration of Herodotus’ extended Cambyses *logos* in order to demonstrate the degree to which the text challenges readers not to become implicated in the madness of its character. She reveals that challenge which involves their having to account not only for the cause of Cambyses’ madness, but also for the cause of Herodotus’ characterization of him as such. Through a close reading of the episodes of Cambyses’ story Irwin illustrates how Herodotus’ text holds up a mirror to those

17 For the Ethiopian *logos*, see e.g. Török (2014) and Irwin (2014).

18 E.g. Lloyd (1988), Munson (1991), Dillery (2005), Irwin (2017).

readers who fail to recognize the aims and complexity of his account, and the reflection found there is a startling, and not attractive, one.

In “Herodotus’ verbal strategies to depict Cambyses’ abnormality” **Anna Bonifazi** delves into the linguistic choices Herodotus makes in his characterization of Cambyses. Bonifazi draws close attention to the language Herodotus uses in depicting the king’s abnormal behaviour, behaviour that is largely nonverbal. Her argument draws on the general assumption that the historical, religious, and cultural significance of any Herodotean *logos* cannot be considered independently of the actual words it uses. At first, she illustrates how Herodotus shapes this *logos* by interweaving the accounts he attributes to others with his own narrative perspective to form his own inquiries into a literary work of art. Her second point is to reinforce Munson’s idea of an implicit comparison between Cambyses and Herodotus—words and non-words being the pivotal elements. Thirdly, she relates his linguistic choices to the cognitive and semiotic phenomenon of iconicity. In doing so, she illuminates individual recurring patterns that represent strategies with iconic meanings to convey Cambyses’ abnormality.

Anthony Ellis examines the phenomenon of cultural relativism at play in the Cambyses *logos* in order to understand the text’s relationship to the kind of relativity practiced and advocated both by his contemporaries and by later moral philosophers. Ellis argues that Herodotus’ relativist perspective on the validity of diverse cultural practices is closely linked with the differences in how various peoples conceive of what is divine and holy. He draws attention to and examines the tension displayed in the work between the relativist-sounding comments in the Egyptian *logos* and other apparently non-relativist statements contained both in the *logos* and the rest of his work.

Part 2: The Cambyses *logos* and other sources on the conquest of Egypt

The second part deals with the relation of the Cambyses *logos* to contemporary Egyptian sources and its reception by later classical authors. While the first contribution provides a typology of sources on the conquest of Egypt under Cambyses, classifying them according to temporal and spatial proximity to the event, the second contribution deals with the image of Cambyses in Egyptian sources. The third contribution in turn traces the reception of the Cambyses *logos* by later authors who adapted the narrative material to suit their needs. Taken together, these contributions offer a comprehensive overview of the sources available to us.

In her contribution on “Perception and Reception of Cambyses as Conqueror and King of Egypt: Some Fundamentals”, **Melanie Wasmuth** draws attention

to several studies evaluating the primary sources from the later 6th century BCE in Egypt and Persia that draw a very different picture of Achaemenid royal display and reception. She notes that scholarly discussion of the extent to which these primary sources are representative for the reception of Achaemenid rule is largely missing. Thus, her contribution seeks to address this gap in the scholarship by focussing on four questions: which sources are available to reveal ancient contemporary perceptions on Cambyses as king of Egypt? Could a different image of Cambyses be displayed in the contemporary sources from Egypt? To which extent can the primary and secondary sources on Cambyses' reign help to re-evaluate Herodotus' history construction? And finally, how might the Cambyses *logos* be turned into a case study for discussing history constructions from an inside/outside angle? Her answers are illuminating and help to define the direction future research might take.

In the chapter "Cambyses the Egyptian?", **Alexander Schütze** deals with the question of how Cambyses and the penultimate ruler of the Egyptian 26th dynasty, Amasis, were remembered in Egypt in the 5th century BC. In the absence of relevant sources that would provide information on this, the focus of the investigation is on how the names of said kings are handled: during the short reign of Cambyses over Egypt, the name of Amasis was apparently written without a royal title in documentary texts, and his name, as well as those of members of the royal family, were physically removed from both royal monuments and those of high officials. By contrast, the evidence suggests that Darius treated his predecessor with the same disrespect, depriving his name of a royal title. Schütze interprets these observations against the backdrop of the two Persian Great Kings' efforts to legitimize their rule and discusses the role of Amasis in the *Histories* with regard to Herodotus' portrayal of Cambyses.

Finally, **Reinhold Bichler** deals with a special aspect of reception: the image of Cambyses in Greco-Roman texts written after Herodotus. He begins by concentrating on literary "echoes" of Herodotus' "mad king". Most of the author's well-known stories, such as Cambyses' worst acts of violence directed against the corpse of Amasis and the killing of the Apis, were extracted from the wider complex narrative of the *Histories* and transformed through reworking to fit new narrative contexts. In the second part he asks whether there is "a post-Herodotean Cambyses apart from Herodotus?", and shows that within the widespread stories of Cambyses' alleged destruction and plundering of the Egyptian sanctuaries and his misguided campaigns against the Ammonians and the Ethiopians, we find numerous elements that derive from other sources or are greatly extended variants of Herodotus' narrative or even free inventions. Bichler makes available an appendix that outlines in detail the variety of facts

and names that occur in the stories of Cambyses pertaining to his family, his conquest of Egypt and his fate.

Part 3: Geopolitical dimensions of the Cambyses *logos*

The third part deals with the geopolitical dimensions of Herodotus' account of Cambyses' conquest of Egypt. While one contribution deals with the Arabian island and its possible role in the conquest of Egypt, three contributions study Cambyses' campaign against the Ammonians in the Egyptian Western Desert. This narrative of Herodotus is examined from a historiographical, archaeological and philological perspective, which together provide a dense description of this peculiar passage.

Gunnar Sperveslage investigates the striking parallels between the annals of Esarhaddon and Herodotus' account of Cambyses' rule. As there are no other sources that prove an alliance between Cambyses and Arab tribes, Sperveslage argues that Herodotus might have placed a historical event from the time of Esarhaddon in the context of the Persian conquest of Egypt. Seen this way the tribe of Qedar, which had a renewed and powerful position after the end of the Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires, would be the likely candidate for an alliance in connection with the conquest of Egypt. Herodotus' report fits with the historical and archaeological situation in Northwest Arabia.

The following three contributions deal with one topic from different perspectives: the march of the Persian army against the Ammonians into the desert. **Damien Agut** engages in fundamental source criticism devoted particularly to Herodotus' narrative at 3.26. Agut argues that Herodotus combined two strands of memory in narrating the fate of Cambyses' army in the Western Desert. While he attributes the first part of the narrative (3.26.1–2) to common memories of the Greeks living in Egypt, he attributes the second part (3.26.2–3) of the narrative, that which is explicitly not shared by the Egyptians and others, to the Ammonians (i.e. the inhabitants of the oases) who have good reason to narrate the destruction and almost numinous downfall of the Persian army in a sandstorm. The "fairy tale" of the Ammonians would then have reached Herodotus through the mediation of the Cyreneans. In addition to this source-critical distinction, Agut argues that the Persian king was interested in the oases of the western desert for strategic geopolitical and economic reasons: the Persian king sought to control a 'rebellion zone' and was interested in gaining control of valuable trade routes.

In contrast, **Olaf Kaper** argues that new archaeological excavations and finds in the Dakhla Oasis point to an Egyptian king Petubastis IV, who is said to have successfully rebelled against Persian rule and controlled large parts of Upper

Egypt. The new material establishes that Petubastis IV successfully revolted against Persian rule and after which, crowned in Memphis, he went on to control Upper Egypt. Moreover, his reign lasted long enough to undertake building activities in the Dakhla Oasis as an important power base for him. Against this background, Kaper is particularly interested in two questions: when the revolt under Petubastis IV began—in view of Uzume Wijnsma’s argumentation, which refers to the investigation of the rebellions in the Behistun inscription—and why Cambyses moved with his “expedition” into the western desert. He explains the Persian king’s expedition as a punitive measure aimed at suppressing a dangerous rebellion. The revolt in the desert was the real reason for the march and especially the large army. According to Kaper the story of the sandstorm was always more fantastic than it could be credible, but a military confrontation is more likely to have dispersed the Persian army and severely reduced its number.

The following contribution by **Andreas Schwab** examines Herodotus’ account of the disappearance of Cambyses’ army in the desert from a philological perspective. He shows that Herodotus’ narrative of the campaign against the Ammonians contains some linguistic clues that are ambiguous to his Greek readers. These clues reveal hints of earlier Greek literature and elicit literary motifs and mythical references. Based on Herodotus’ multi-layered text, he argues that due to the frequently and significantly used word ψάμμος (sand) and the “Ammonians” (= “those who belong to the sand”), another way of reading and interpreting is possible. In support of and alongside the examinations of Agut and Kaper, Schwab argues, in particular with regard to Thebes, the Ammonians and ‘psammos’, for Herodotus’ literary engagement with Pindar. His investigation illustrates how the text’s literary and poetic design—with special attention to wordplay and references to Pindar—may support Kaper’s and Agut’s theses regarding a possible rebellion and even a rebel enigmatically present in the text of Herodotus.

Part 4: Cambyses and the Egyptian Temples

The last three contributions in this volume deal with a topic that has occupied generations of Egyptologists: Cambyses’ treatment of the temples of Egypt during and after the conquest of the land on the Nile. Herodotus’ account of Cambyses’ atrocities such as the murder of the sacred Apis bull, but especially those of later authors such as Diodorus and Strabo on the destruction of Egyptian temples, have strongly shaped the perception of researchers. While the first contribution offers an overview of the events described by Herodotus, another presents an Egyptian source on the cult politics of Cambyses in Egypt. The last

‘sounding’ places Herodotus’ account of the important sanctuary of Memphis in its historical context.

Dan’el Kahn deals specifically with Cambyses’ attitude towards the temples of Egypt in contemporary and later sources. He first discusses the conquest of Egypt under the Great King and its impact on Egyptian temples, drawing primarily on late sources. He then briefly discusses Cambyses’ campaigns against the Ethiopians and Ammonians and focuses on the atrocities that Cambyses is said to have committed in Egypt according to Herodotus. Finally, he presents Jeremiah 43 as another source not yet discussed in this context.

Fabian Wespi’s contribution takes up the topic of contemporary *realia* behind the negative image of Cambyses—especially the curtailment of temple revenues. In addition to the often-cited Pap. Bibliothèque Nationale Paris 215, he adduces recent evidence that demonstrates deviations from the known version in the designation of the name of Cambyses. These new findings have consequences for the historical image that Cambyses has among Egyptologists and have a connection to Schütze’s contribution.

In “Cambyses and the sanctuary of Ptah” **Joachim Friedrich Quack** investigates a short episode, namely Hdt. 3.37. Quack demonstrates that Herodotus’ story about a dwarf-shaped cultic image of Ptah in Memphis as well as about children of Ptah in the same shape, located in an area of restricted access, and the link to Phoenicia and the Pataikoi, agree very well with the available Egyptian and Phoenician evidence. For the way the episode could have been shaped in memory, he draws attention to evidence for existing patterns of Egyptian thought.

The aim of this volume is to prepare and offer a deeper understanding of the Cambyses *logos* and its role for the historiography of this important epochal change in the history of late modern Egypt through marrying close reading of Herodotus’ *logos* in its own historical and cultural context with current research on the geopolitical relations of Egypt and its neighbouring countries during the Persian conquest (among other soundings). Moreover, it aims also to show what a reading of this extensive and complex text that considers both the literary character of the *Histories* and the *realia* behind the narratives could look like. It illustrates what such a marriage of disciplines might contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the genesis and meaning of the *Histories*.

This volume may be read in exactly this sense: the contributions are organized in four thematic clusters examining one aspect of Herodotus’ *logos* of Cambyses from different perspectives. In part, the contributions complement each other, e.g., when Part 1 discusses Herodotus’ narrative style, his choice of words and his handling of the cultural relativism of his time. Part 3 even offers three different

readings of the same passage, the Ammonian *logos*, which vividly illustrate the complexity of possible interpretations. In part, the contributions provide very different assessments of ancient sources, with regard to the image of Cambyses in later sources, or Cambyses' dealings with Egyptian temples. We hope that these contradictions will lead to a productive discussion of the above-mentioned questions.

The volume's central premise, and that of the conference upon which it was based, is that such interdisciplinary discussions are absolutely required if we are to understand adequately the contribution a work of such complexity as the *Histories* can make to understanding not only the various histories of the ancient world, but also the histories of the disciplines that study them. One may say that hardly any ancient research discipline does not refer to Herodotus' *Histories* in one way or another, and therefore the editors are convinced that the contributions are particularly well chosen to demonstrate the benefit from joint research by different disciplines of ancient studies on a concrete subject within them such as Cambyses' *logos*. In this sense, they hope that further, equally fruitful in-depth studies may follow.

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Munich and Kiel, January 2023

A. Schütze and A. Schwab

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Map of the Eastern Mediterranean with selected place names mentioned in the Cambyses *Logos* or discussed in this volume (© A. Schütze)

Close readings: Linguistic, narratological and philosophical perspectives

Just Who is Cambyses?

Imperial Identities and Egyptian Campaigns

Elizabeth Irwin¹

It was with enthusiasm that I accepted the invitation to participate in ‘Religion, Violence, and Interaction? An Interdisciplinary Approach to Herodotus’ Narrative on Cambyses’, the workshop that gave rise to this volume. The event offered a unique opportunity to meet with scholars from other disciplines and methodological perspectives in order both to share and to have challenged the understandings I had come to have about Herodotus’ treatment of Cambyses, and to explore further the method of reading required to get at what his complex and idiosyncratic account attempts to communicate about historiography, culture relativity, and morality. Those understandings were largely published in 2017 in an article on the first chapters of Herodotus’ account of Cambyses’ rule, his conquest of Egypt.² In ‘Just why did Cambyses conquer Egypt? Herodotus’ *logos* of Cambyses’ Egyptian Campaign: his story as history’, the *logoi* pertaining to Cambyses’ conquest of Egypt were closely analyzed as an introduction to themes crucial to both Persian history of this period and to Herodotus’ account of it to follow in Book 3, and also as an oblique, yet sustained allusion to Athens’ own military operations in Egypt and its citizenship law passed at the end of that period in 451/0 BC. Here in the present article I want to apply the approach of that article and its conclusions to the content and mode of

1 I would like to thank above all Andreas Schwab and Alexander Schütze for providing the opportunity to present these arguments both orally and in written form, for their critical acumen, expertise, and enthusiasm in engaging with them (again and again), and for their willingness to wait. I am also most grateful to Pat Easterling, Jan Haywood, and Simon Ubsdell for their unstinting generosity and critical insights on this paper as it developed, and to Reinhold Bichler, Emily Greenwood, John Henderson, Robin Osborne, and Dorothy Thompson for taking the time to read and engage with it. This article is dedicated to Pat.

2 Irwin (2017b).

narration of Herodotus' extended Cambyses *logos* in order to demonstrate the degree to which the text challenges readers not to become implicated in the madness of its character, a challenge which involves their having to account not only for the cause of Cambyses' madness, but also for the cause of Herodotus' characterization of him as such. Herodotus' text will be shown to hold up a mirror to those readers who fail to recognize the aims and complexity of his account, and the reflection found there will prove not a flattering one. As background to the present discussion, I will provide a brief recap of the conclusions of that earlier article.

The *logos* of Cambyses' presence in Egypt sets out, as is fitting at its beginning, with an account of the *aitie* of his campaign, an account ostensibly explaining why Cambyses went to Egypt, but one whose real importance lies in its introduction of two themes central to this chapter in Persian history and to Herodotus' handling of it. The 'account' is actually *three* different accounts dealing with the Egyptian concubine Nitetis and the role that her relationship to Cambyses had in inciting the campaign. This composite account serves two functions: first, it provides an implicit exploration of the difficulties of accounting for the cause of an event lying at some distance in the past, and, second, it foregrounds the question of Cambyses' identity, who this Egyptian *pallake* Nitetis was, and—more importantly—who she was *to him*, and therefore what his motives would have been in bringing an army to Egypt.³ This second point is not unrelated to the first: the narrator comments in the second *logos* that in making Cambyses son of Nitetis, the Egyptians pervert the *logos* in order to be related to the house of Cyrus, and in doing so he conveys a crucial point about the role of human agency in altering accounts of the past, not least when constructing (often self-serving) narratives of causation.

This seemingly offhand dismissal of the Egyptian version disguises its overall importance, introducing as it does three central themes in Herodotus' depiction of both Cambyses and Persian monarchy at this juncture in Persian history. First, in its portrayal of the flagrantly mad Cambyses, the narrative implicitly explores madness as a deviation from and disrespect of norms, *nomoi*, and further raises questions about the criteria or standard against which one is able to declare someone mad, particularly on a figure occupying the exceptional position of king, which as the royal judges point out is a kind of law unto itself.⁴ Readers are

3 On the motives implicit in the second story see Atkinson (1956), Balcer (1987) 73–4, and Irwin (2017b).

4 Hdt. 3.31.4: ἄλλον μέντοι ἐξευρηκέναι νόμον, τῷ βασιλεύοντι Περσέων ἐξεῖναι ποιεῖν τὸ ἄν βούληται ('They had, however, discovered another law, [that said] it is possible for the king of the Persians to do whatever he wants'). The focus on *nomos* in Cambyses'

invited to view Cambyses' various acts from differing perspectives involving the question of who he is as agent, Persian or half-Egyptian. The text at once raises the question, against whose *nomos*, Persian, Egyptian, (implicitly) Greek, Cambyses should be judged, while also rendering it otiose: for out of this display of multiple cultural perspectives, Herodotus' *logoi* ultimately make an implicit argument for certain acts and attitudes being worthy of censure from all points of view. An argument for universal *nomoi* is paradoxically made through a display of cultural relativity.⁵ This is Herodotus the sophist at his finest, making the weaker argument the stronger, but doing so for the uncustomary purpose of upholding traditional morality.⁶ At the same time, his account subtly raises the question of how anyone can be in any position to judge Cambyses when it is impossible to be sure about even the cause of something on the scale of his expedition to Egypt or something as basic as the background of his mother, Egyptian or Achaemenid. The question of Cambyses' identity will, in fact, prove central to understanding the history recounted in Book 3.

Second, with regard to Darius, the text sows seeds of uncertainty about the version of history it seems to go on to endorse. For in dismissing the Egyptians' claim that Nitetis was Cambyses' mother as a fabrication designed to connect them to the house of Cyrus (Hdt. 3.2: ἀλλὰ παρατρέπουσι τὸν λόγον προσποιούμενοι τῇ Κύρου οἰκίῃ συγγενέες εἶναι—'But they pervert the story in an attempt to pretend they are related to the house of Cyrus'), it draws attention to a distortion that many scholars of Persia impute to Darius in his efforts to legitimize what was actually a usurpation of the Persian throne.⁷ Although seeming to maintain the main thesis of the official Persian version of Darius' succession—albeit with significant variation—⁸ as his having deposed a pretender to the throne, the version he gives is only 'something like' that promulgated by Darius: Herodotus' introduction of a second Magus into the revolt (Hdt. 3.61.2), the brother of the first, one who looked like the brother Cambyses killed, and indeed, didn't only look like him, but also (remarkably)—

logos is obvious and well recognized in the scholarship: see e.g. Immerwahr (1966) 168–9, and most recently Kingsley (2018) 45–6.

5 See Munson (1991) 60–1.

6 Cf. Barrionuevo (2017) who makes an analogous point about *nomos*.

7 In the form of the Bisitun inscription (DB §1–4) for which the written script of Old Persian seems to have been invented and which has inscribed within it the provision to circulate this version of his genealogy and the history of his succession (§56–70), on which see now Huyse (1999), Rollinger (2014) and (2016). For a basic background to the inscription and its claims see Köhnken (1980) 40–1, Rollinger (2006) 41–53, Kuhrt (2007) 136–8. See also Irwin (2017b) 106, 110, 114 with n. 60.

8 As will be discussed below.

the force of *καὶ δὴ καὶ* had the *same* name—seems designed to test the credulity of readers,⁹ whose confidence should be further shaken by encountering a Darius prepared to transgress a fundamental Persian *nomos* (so Hdt. 1.136.2) in finding lying no different than telling the truth, both having profit as their goal.¹⁰

This final point opens the third path to understanding Herodotus' handling of Cambyses. For this chapter of Persian history itself provided Herodotus with the invitation to take great licence in its recounting: it would have been clear to well-informed people of Herodotus' day, if clear to us now at this distance, that owing to the efforts of Cambyses' successor very little, let alone the truth, about Cambyses could be known, or at least known to the majority of his readers.¹¹ This period of Persian history gave Herodotus both the inspiration and the licence to manipulate it—as Darius had, but to a different end—through fabricating stories about Cambyses in such a way as to invoke the ruler of another *arche* closer to Herodotus' contemporaries, an *arche* that waged its own Egyptian campaign: namely, that of Athens. Of this Egyptian ambition, Herodotus reminds readers at salient moments of the campaign (Hdt. 3.12, 3.15) and once again at the very conclusion of Book 3 (Hdt. 3.160.2); moreover, Athens' own 'imperial phase' was characterized by its own *nomos* restricting legitimacy and inheritance (Plut. *Per.* 37) in the form of Pericles' Citizenship Law, passed at the time of their own Egyptian campaign and evocative of that attributed to the Persians in chapter

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- 9 The whole introduction to this figure is worth quoting: ἦν οἱ ἀδελφεός, τὸν εἶπά οἱ συνεπαναστήναι, οἰκῶς μάλιστα τὸ εἶδος Σμέρδι τῷ Κύρου, τὸν ὁ Καμβύσης ἐόντα ἐωτοῦ ἀδελφεὸν ἀπέκτεινε· ἦν τε δὴ ὅμοιος εἶδος τῷ Σμέρδι καὶ δὴ καὶ οὐνομα τῷ τούτῳ εἶχε Σμέρδιν ('He had a brother, whom he told to revolt with him, very much in appearance like Smerdis son of Cyrus whom, although his own brother, Cambyses killed. He was indeed similar in appearance to Smerdis and indeed also had the same name, 'Smerdis'). Other elements further challenge readers' credulity: the missing ears (Hdt. 3.69.4, 69.5, 69.6, 72.1), the 'Constitutional Debate' (Hdt. 3.80–2: *logoi* said to be found *apistoi*), and a sexually aroused horse (Hdt. 3.85–6). Moreover, one should note that the reasons given for Cambyses murdering Smerdis are predicated on two elements derived from passages overwhelmingly deemed to be Herodotean fictions: the Ethiopian *logos* with its bow (see Irwin (2014)), and the dream (Köhnen (1980)).
- 10 Hdt. 3.72.4–5: ἔνθα γάρ τι δεῖ ψεῦδος λέγεσθαι, λεγέσθω...εἰ δὲ μηδὲν κερδήσασθαι μέλλοιεν, ὁμοίως ἂν ὁ τε ἀληθιζόμενος ψευδῆς εἴη καὶ ὁ ψευδόμενος ἀληθής ('For when it is necessary to say some lie, let it be said...If they would not end up benefitting in any way the truth-teller would just as soon be dishonest, and the liar truthful'). See Asheri (2007) 391–3 on the focus on falsehood and truth throughout the Persian *logoi* of the first half of Book 3. Cf. Pl. *Rep.* II, 362e4–363a5.
- 11 Konstantakos (2016) 51–4 (with extensive bibliographical footnotes) has an economical discussion of hostile Persian influences on the reception of Cambyses.

2.¹² Moreover, in the eyes of some contemporaries these Greek possessors of this *arche* were deemed ‘mad’ by their attitudes towards the *nomoi* of themselves and others, as well as for denying the universality of certain (moral) *nomoi*. This essay develops that earlier argument by demonstrating how Herodotus’ narrative collapses the distinctions between Persia and Athens, and in particular between the figure of Cambyses as he pursues his imperial ambitions in scornful and indiscriminate disregard for *nomoi*—both his own and others’—and his readers who may have been (or be) afflicted with the same kinds of madness (see below).

The larger, more fundamental questions of that article were these: how are we meant to be reading Herodotus’ text and what exactly is it trying to communicate to its readers through an account such as the one he provides in the case of Cambyses? An essential tenet in my reading of Herodotus is that he is a highly self-conscious, highly rhetorical author, who has composed an account full of pitfalls designed to entrap readers who fail adequately to recognize these qualities at work within his text: quite simply, such readers risk finding that the naiveté or gullibility that they have assumed in the narrator to be in reality nothing more than a demonstration of their own. In particular, those who underestimate the sophistication of this text, treating Herodotus as naively misled into accepting the truth or at least the sincerity of his sources, are in most cases the ones naively misled by their source, his text. The implications of this point for the text’s handling of Cambyses would be that for his account to be so at odds with the primary evidence available to us,¹³ that is, for there to have survived such diverse near contemporary sources allowing even us to realize this, despite the far greater chasm separating us from this period than Herodotus himself, would require either that he created such an account consciously, or—despite his claims—that he has greatly misrepresented, if not entirely fabricated, the firsthand experience of Egypt that he purports to possess.¹⁴ This point takes on even greater weight when we realize that Herodotus himself reveals, in the very second chapter of book 3, the possibility of seeing Cambyses otherwise, from an Egyptian perspective that embraced him as their own, and labels, in the third chapter, ‘unpersuasive to me’ an account that imputes to Cambyses the

12 See already Bichler (2007 [2000]) 106 for this point; see also Rauflaub (2009) and Irwin (2017b) 131–3 and on Darius and Persia as models for Pericles and Athenian *arche*.

13 The evidence outside Herodotus is unusual in its quantity, provenance, and amount. This is conveniently collected and discussed by Kuhrt (2007) 104–70. See also the discussions in this volume.

14 See Spiegelberg (1927), Armayor (1985).