



HERODOTUS, EGYPT, AND THE ATHENIAN EXPEDITION

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Herodotus' Egypt has fascinated countless readers over many centuries. In part because the Egyptian *logos* ostensibly ends with the Persian conquest, readers have less often reflected on the historical background against which Herodotus wrote it. After the conquest, Egypt was anything but a quiet province of the Achaemenid Empire, and one major revolt took place during Herodotus' own lifetime. Starting from an overview of Egyptian restlessness under the Persian domination, I will investigate in the present study the extent to which post-conquest Egyptian history, and especially the major revolt that broke out after Xerxes died and saw the participation of troops of the Delian League in large numbers, may have impacted this part of Herodotus' *Histories*. Finally, I will present to the reader a somewhat speculative reflection on the original conception that underlies the Egyptian *logos*.*

ACHAEMENID EGYPT FROM CAMBYSES TO XERXES

Conquered by Cambyses in the spring of 526 BCE, Egypt represented the last major territorial addition to the Achaemenid Empire.¹ Unlike earlier foreign conquerors, who had either installed themselves in the Nile Valley or, like the Assyrians, had tried to rule Egypt indirectly through subordinate indigenous rulers, the Great Kings chose to be by

- * It is a privilege to offer these reflections to Hans-Joachim Gehrke—less as an inadequate attempt at beginning to repay a debt that cannot be repaid anyway than as the starting point for new conversations.
- 1 The date of Cambyses' campaign has been fixed by Quack 2011. For the timing of the campaign, see Kahn 2007 (with Quack 2011, 242). Cruz-Uribe 2003 discusses in detail many aspects of the Persian conquest.



and large pharaohs in absentia. They appear in Egyptian documents with the full titles of the pharaonic tradition, but in fact they ruled the Nile Valley as a province of their vast empire, installing in it governors, administrators, and garrisons—in part taken over from their predecessors of the XXVI dynasty.² This was a new situation for Egypt. The actual proportion of accommodation and resistance to Persian rule within the Egyptian elite is hotly debated among Egyptologists, but it is perfectly clear that it would have been impossible for the Achaemenids to run the country without significant local support.³

There is, however, another side to the story: Egypt holds the undisputed claim to the title of the most unruly province of the Achaemenid Empire. The history of what is usually called the first Persian domination, from 525 to 404, is an endless sequence of episodes of unrest, ranging from all-out revolts to lower-intensity but—one has the impression—almost endemic outbursts of organized violent resistance, until finally, in 404, after ten years of struggle, Egypt became independent again, and remained so for the next sixty years.⁴ In assessing Egyptian

- 2 Posener 1936 provides an invaluable collection of hieroglyphic evidence for the Achaemenids as pharaohs; Bresciani 1958 has a broader focus and is equally document-oriented. More recently, see Vittmann 2011. On the Persian garrisons in Egypt, see Tuplin 1987, 238–9 and *passim*. The most striking case of continuity with the previous situation is that of the Jewish garrison of Elephantine, installed there under the XXVI dynasty, which appears to have taken service with the Persians without any interruption; the same probably applied to numerous mercenaries from the Levant, see Bresciani 1958, 147–53, and Pétigny 2014, 12–14.
- 3 For balanced surveys of the evidence for the reactions to Persian domination in Egypt, see Devauchelle 1995 and Lloyd 2014. Holm-Rasmussen 1988 was especially important for framing the question and moving away from the anachronistic connotations of the concept of collaboration. The main piece of evidence for the latter is represented by the biographical inscriptions on the *naophoros* statue of Udjahorresnet (text and translation in Posener 1936, 1–26; English translation in Lichtheim 1980, 36–40), commander in chief of the fleet of Psammetichos III (but see Cruz-Urbe 2003, 13–15) and chief physician under Cambyses and Darius. For a recent survey of the evidence on this fascinating character, which now includes also his grave, see Smoláriková 2015.
- 4 There is now a book-length treatment of Egyptian revolts against the Persians, Ruzicka 2012, which focuses mostly on the period from 415 BCE onwards, but offers precise information and insight also in the earlier periods. The assessment

resistance to Persian domination, we need of course to keep in mind that episodes of even quite serious unrest are inherently likely to be underrepresented in our evidence and may well have been more frequent than the full-fledged revolts that involved local leaders taking the title of pharaoh, thereby leaving a trace in dating formulas if nothing else, and/or caught the attention of Greek historians. The suspicion that this might have been the case is reinforced by the evidence of the dossier of documents connected with Arsames, satrap of Egypt possibly from the fifties of the fifth century.⁵ As Christopher Tuplin memorably puts it, ‘where Egyptian troubles are concerned, multiplication of entities is not necessarily an offence against reason’.⁶

Whatever their specific causes, on which our sources provide only indirect evidence, full-fledged revolts involving the proclamation of an indigenous pharaoh may show some tendency to cluster around the beginning of the reign of each new Great King. This fact is not surprising and may hint, if not to a reason, at least to an important factor in the outbreak of the revolts. There has probably never been a monarchic system whose legitimacy did not depend at least from a modicum of charisma in Weberian terms, and accordingly, succession has usually been a delicate moment even for the most stable of dynasties.⁷ At the death of every Persian pharaoh, the option for some local leader of stepping in as the next pharaoh was obviously very attractive. This of course does not mean that other factors should be discarded a priori. Discontent with the fiscal regime imposed by the Persians, or with an ad hoc increase in the extraction of resources in connection with empire-wide military campaigns, has often been invoked by scholars as a motivating factor.⁸

of the Egyptian revolts in Rottpeter 2007 is based only on the Greek evidence, and accordingly misleading (see below).

- 5 See the detailed discussion in Tuplin 2013, 39–44 (and, for Arshama’s chronology, 8–10 and 26).
- 6 Tuplin 2013, 41.
- 7 For the proximity between succession on the Achaemenid throne and outbreak of revolt in Egypt see Tuplin 2013, 41, and Kahn 2008, 424.
- 8 See e.g. Lloyd 2014, 195, and note the reference to the expulsion of Persian tribute-collectors at the outbreak of the Inaros revolt in Diod. 11,71,3. On the impact of the Persian tributary system on Egypt, see also Bresciani 1989.

The list of short-lived indigenous pharaohs is opened, immediately after the death of Cambyses if not already at the end of his reign, by Pharaoh Petubastis IV, who only recently, thanks to new archaeological evidence, has acquired the profile of a bona fide separatist pharaoh. A reader of Herodotus might be tempted to wonder whether this early rebellion had been sparked by Cambyses' particularly harsh behaviour: especially in the Greek sources, Cambyses' presence in Egypt is associated to a veritable *leyenda negra* consisting of an impressive catalogue of impious and generally irrational actions, and there are reasons to believe that the negative tradition on Cambyses was not a mere product of the inexhaustible phantasy of the Greeks. The notion that Cambyses had overthrown the temples of the Egyptian gods is referred to in a petition to the Persian governor of Judah from the Jews of Elephantine in the last decade of the fifth century, which means that not only such a notion was not limited to the Greeks, or to Herodotus himself, but also that it was commonplace in the Achaemenid empire, to the point that it could be mentioned without fear of offending a Persian provincial officer.⁹ Whether such view conveys an even approximately adequate characterization of Cambyses' rule over Egypt, however, is highly questionable: the evidence overall has mostly been taken to suggest otherwise.¹⁰

Unlike his absentee successors, from the conquest of the country until the eve of his death in 522 BCE Cambyses had ruled the Achaemenid Empire from Memphis, a decision that may not have contributed to the stability of his imperial throne, but certainly involved closer interaction with the newly-conquered province. Whether he might have also tried to present himself as legitimate heir to Apries after the usurper Amasis, as some scholars have thought, is uncertain,¹¹ but in any case, Cambyses acquired a bona fide pharaonic titulary courtesy of Udjahorresnet and showed appropriate devotion for the goddess Neith, the protector of his predecessors of the XXVI dynasty. The infamous episode

9 For the text of the letter see Porten/Yardeni 1986, A 4.5.

10 So, at any rate, most of the relevant scholarship; cf. however Jansen-Winkel 2002, with noteworthy objections.

11 On the legend that made Cambyses a descendant of Apries and its implications for his title to rule Egypt, see Bresciani 1985, 503–4, but cf. Tuplin 1991, 257–9, and see also the comments of Dillery 2005, 388–9, on Hdt. 3,2 and further bibliography cited in n. 24.

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of the killing of the Apis bull by Cambyses, narrated by Herodotus and reprised with variations by other ancient authors, has been repeatedly debunked by scholars, and it does sit ill with the fact that Cambyses dedicated the granite sarcophagus of an Apis bull **who** was buried in 524 BCE.¹² The only substantial piece of evidence against Cambyses refers to the curtailment of certain economic privileges of temples that had been granted by Amasis.¹³

On the other hand, when it comes to searching for candidates for the role of manufacturing a posteriori the *leyenda negra* of Cambyses, we are faced with an embarrassment of richness: beside the Egyptians themselves, for whom in retrospect Cambyses may have come to embody the final loss of independence,¹⁴ and perhaps especially the priests whose privileges had been withdrawn or curtailed, there is of course Darius, who reached the Achaemenid throne via a rather oblique itinerary, which many would call outright usurpation;¹⁵ finally, the methodical disrespect for the customs of other peoples that characterizes Herodotus' Cambyses is so deeply reflective of key themes of the *Histories* that it is difficult to deny that Herodotus himself must have dealt rather

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- 12 For the text of the funerary stele of the Apis bull and of the sarcophagus dedicated by Cambyses, see Posener 1936, 30–6 and 171–5, with a very helpful discussion of the chronological issues, and Devauchelle 1995, 68–70. The killing of the bull is narrated in Hdt. 3,27–9. Depuydt 1995, 122–5, shows that, strictly speaking, Herodotus' story is not necessarily incompatible with the epigraphic evidence.
- 13 The text of Cambyses' measure, written on the other side of the famous Demotic Chronicle (pBN 215 Verso, text c), is presented in translation by Devauchelle 1995, 75. On the substance of the measure see Bresciani 1985, 506–7. Agut-Labordère 2005, 11–15, suggests that Cambyses may also have been trying to improve the finances of the Egyptian sanctuaries, rather than just curtailing their privileges (but cf. Agut-Labordère 2009/10, 358, where the reintroduction of the measure by Darius is presented as a sign of a later phase in Darius' reign in which Egypt received a harsher treatment than before, and note Quack 2011, 235–6 and n. 41, on Agut-Labordère's reading of the papyrus).
- 14 Menu 2008, 144–5. For a detailed argument in favour of an Egyptian origin of the *leyenda negra* of Cambyses found in Herodotus, see Dillery 2005. On resentment against Cambyses among the Egyptian priestly elite, see Lloyd 2014, 189.
- 15 Tuplin 1991, 268. For a different take on the question of Darius' legitimacy, see Jacobs 2011.



creatively with whatever negative image his sources provided to him.¹⁶ In other words, while we should not be too surprised by the bad press that Cambyses receives especially in Herodotus, the evidence for his rule over Egypt offers no particularly strong reason to think that the first Egyptian revolt against the Achaemenids had been sparked by any special harshness specific to Cambyses.

The rebel pharaoh, Petubastis IV, was once thought to be a vassal of Cambyses based somewhere in Lower Egypt. Recent discoveries in the Dakhla Oasis show that he had been acknowledged as the ruling pharaoh in Upper Egypt as well, and not only in the Memphis area as the evidence previously known was taken to suggest.¹⁷ He was very likely responsible for the revolt of Egypt mentioned, but without further details, in Darius' Behistun inscription (DB 21). Darius' silence on how the revolt had been suppressed makes of Egypt a unique case in the Behistun text and has caused some amount of perplexity among scholars. Since Aryandes, the satrap of Egypt installed by Cambyses, was still there, at least as late as 518 BCE and likely even later, **to be rid of** by Darius on trumped up accusations of attempted secession, **“to be got rid of”** the most economic hypothesis would be that Aryandes himself had undertaken the task of putting down Petubastis' revolt.¹⁸ Under this scenario, one might of course legitimately wonder why Darius mentioned the revolt in the first place, if he did not think its suppression could be made part of the glorification of his new order that is the central message of the Behistun text. It is also worth pointing out that, if Petubastis controlled Egypt from the Western Desert all the way to Memphis, it is unlikely that the Delta, the region most prone to revolt, had remained loyal to the Per-

16 On Herodotus' portrait of Cambyses as the worst embodiment of monarchic arbitrariness, see Munson 2001, 168–72. The substantial bibliography on Herodotus' Cambyses is collected in Rendina 2014.

17 Kaper 2015; see there the intriguing suggestion that Petubastis IV may have been the true responsible **of** the disappearance **in the desert** of the army that Cambyses famously sent into the Western Desert from Thebes in order to subjugate the Ammonians (3,25,3). On Cambyses' expedition against the oasis, see also Cruz-Urbe 2003, 35–7.

18 On the evidence for Darius' visit to Egypt and its chronological implications, see Tuplin 1991, 265–7. In particular on the chronology of **Aryandes** demise implied by Herodotus, see Corcella's note to Hdt. 4,166 in Ashery/Lloyd/Corcella 2007, 692–3. **Aryandes', also genitiv**

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sians. In this case, if it was really Aryandes who re-conquered Egypt, then he must have invaded it from the East, along the usual way.¹⁹ This would not have been possible without support from the neighbouring Achaemenid provinces. If we look at the likely timing of the events, there is a very real possibility that Aryandes may have acted, at least at the beginning, as a loyal subject of Cambyses' successor, even though he must have concluded his operations after Darius had ascended to the throne. A scenario of this sort might go some way towards explaining both Darius' odd silence and his diffidence towards Aryandes.²⁰ But given the troubled transition between Cambyses and Darius, it is perhaps unnecessary to speculate too much on why the latter might have eliminated a provincial governor installed by his predecessor.

Be that as it may, Darius famously went out of his way to behave as a good pharaoh, piously donating land to temples, overseeing the revival of central Egyptian institutions such as the House of Life, and interacting in a friendly way with the religious and military elites of the country.²¹ His efforts seem to have resulted in a generally positive attitude of the Egyptians, and not only among the elite.²² Egypt under Darius' reign appears to have been at peace, and in later Greek tradi-

- 19 On the general pattern of invasions of Egypt from Palestine during the first millennium, see Kahn/Tammuz 2009.
- 20 Polyaeus 7,11,7 speaks of Egyptians revolting because of Aryandes' cruelty, with Darius persuading them to abandon the revolt by an impressive show of respect for Egyptian religion (note that the introductory sentences are those in which Polyaeus most radically shortened his sources: we do not necessarily have to think of yet another revolt based on what he says here). Hdt. 4,166 has a somewhat puzzling story about Aryandes, installed by Cambyses as satrap of Egypt, producing (or minting?) silver of especial purity and thereby gaining Darius' hostility; finally, Darius falsely accused him of revolt and had him killed. On the Aryandic silver, see most recently van Alfen 2004/5, 25–6, with further references.
- 21 Donation of land to the temple of Horus at Edfu: Manning 2003, 74–7 and 265; Udjahorresnet's reopening of the House of Life under Darius' aegis: Menu 2008, 151–2. See also the compilation of Egyptian law and legal wisdom ordered by Darius in his third year of reign, Agut-Labordère 2009/10 and Lippert 2010, 159–62 (new readings of the relevant papyrus in Quack 2011, 233–6), which in all likelihood is connected to the later Greek tradition reported by Diodorus, see below.
- 22 See Lloyd 2014, 191–3.



tion Darius was included among the lawgivers of Egypt and praised for his close association with the Egyptian priests (Diod. 1,95,4–5). At the very end of his reign, however, Egypt revolted again. We know very little about this new revolt, which Xerxes proceeded to put down expeditiously, except for the fact that the two years of reign of a Pharaoh Psammetichos who appears in documents from Diospolis Parva, in Upper Egypt immediately downstream of Thebes, are most easily accommodated between 486 and 484 BCE, suggesting that this pharaoh, the fourth to carry the name of the founder of the XXVI dynasty, was in all likelihood the leader of the revolt.²³ The repression may have been especially severe, to judge by Xerxes' bad reputation in later Egyptian tradition.²⁴

INAROS' REVOLT AND THE ATHENIAN EXPEDITIONS TO EGYPT

A further and almost certainly far more serious revolt broke out once the news of Xerxes' death reached Egypt. Because of the involvement of the Delian League, this revolt has left quite a mark in the Greek sources.²⁵ Herodotus refers to it several times in asides, to be discussed later, while Thucydides provides a brief summary of it in his famously laconic treatment of the *pentekontaetia*. According to him Inaros, whom he calls 'a Libyan king, of the Libyans who lived towards Egypt', started from Marea, the old fortress on the Western side of the Delta, and managed to detach from Artaxerxes most of Egypt, becoming himself its ruler (1,104,1). It is worth noting, in light of an Egyptian document to be discussed in a moment, that Thucydides seems to be careful not to say that Inaros had been crowned pharaoh or acknowledged as such. Diodorus on the other hand, our other Greek authority on the revolt,

23 The chronology of the documents is explained in Pestman 1984, 147–8; see also Vittmann 2011, 395.

24 Vittmann 2011, 396–7. Xerxes is singled out for scorn in the Satrap Stele, in what purports to be a report by local Egyptian authorities rendered to Ptolemy Soter; see Klinkott 2007.

25 For a very recent and detailed treatment of the revolt, see Biondi 2016, with copious references to the relevant scholarship.

says that Inaros was recognized as king, which in the context can only mean king of Egypt (11,71,3).²⁶ Inaros immediately concluded an alliance with the Athenians, who sent a fleet of two hundred triremes of the Delian League (1,104,2)—according to Diodorus, they voted to send three hundred (1,71,5), but when the operations got under way, his figure is the same as Thucydides', two hundred (11,74,3). There is a marked difference, at least in terms of presentation, between Thucydides and Diodorus here: while Thucydides says that the Athenians were already en route to Cyprus when they received Inaros' request, Diodorus clearly thought that Inaros had sent an embassy directly to Athens, and the decision to support him had been taken by the Athenian assembly. The two may not be completely incompatible, but the difference is undeniable.

The discrepancy between Thucydides and Diodorus becomes even more striking as the narrative of the revolt proceeds. Thucydides seems to imply that the Greek fleet sailed upstream the Nile, took control of the river, and finally reached Memphis, where it started besieging Persian and Egyptian troops that had barricaded inside the White Fortress (1,104,2). What Inaros and the rebels were doing we are not told at this point, although later (1,109,1) we do learn that they were fighting alongside the Athenians. Diodorus, on the other hand, has a completely different story, in which a counterattack organized by Artaxerxes and lead by Achaemenes was defeated by a combined Egyptian and Athenian army (11,74,1–4). Diodorus' version presupposes that what Achaemenes was attempting was a *reconquista*, invading Egypt from the East and clashing with the rebels on the Eastern margin of the Delta. On the other hand, the Persians who survived the defeat are said to have regrouped in the White Fortress in Memphis (11,74,4), which, while agreeing with Thucydides, is hardly compatible with the above-mentioned scenario, and makes one wonder whether such scenario might not be a mere product of confusion. Some analogies with Ctesias' ver-

26 There is no need to expand on the respective reliability of Thucydides and Diodorus; Robinson 1999, 133–5, says all that needs to be said. The revolt is narrated briefly also in Photios' excerpts from Ctesias' *Persika* (FGrH 688 F14, 36–9, discussed extensively by Bigwood 1976); his report does not add much in terms of detail that might tempt one to ignore the general unreliability of this author.



sion of the expedition of Achaemenides (*sic*; FGrH 688 F14, 36) do nothing to support Diodorus' trustworthiness in this case.

The failure of the first Persian reaction, whatever shape it took, convinced Artaxerxes that he needed more preparation to curb the revolt. At first, according to Thucydides, he tried to bribe the Spartans into invading Attica, but his attempt failed: the Persian Megabazos returned after having spent money in vain (1,109,2–3).²⁷ Then, according to Diodorus, Artaxerxes put two of his lieutenants, Artabazos and Megabyzos, the son of Zopyros, in charge of organizing and training a massive army that successfully invaded Egypt and locked up the Athenians and the rebels on the large island of Prosopitis in the Upper Delta, not far from Memphis.²⁸ After eighteen months of siege, the Greeks were finally compelled to surrender. A few of the Greeks, says Thucydides (1,110,1), escaped towards Cyrene, and it is not clear how different his version is in the substance from the one found in Diodorus (11,77,4–5), according to which the survivors were allowed by the conditions of their surrender to go to Cyrene, and thence, of course, back to their native poleis.²⁹ Soon afterwards, a fleet of fifty triremes that had been sent to replace the forces in Memphis, not knowing what had transpired, was attacked when it landed at the Delta by the Phoenician fleet and by Persian land troops and almost completely wiped out (Thuk. 1,110,4).³⁰

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27 It is noteworthy that the money was spent at all: one wonders how exactly; see Lewis 1977, 62 and n. 84. Artaxerxes' attempt at bribing the Spartans into attacking Athens is mentioned also in Diod. 11,74,5–6. Some scholars have connected the obscure story of Arthmius of Zeleia to the mission of Megabazos; see the discussion in Biondi 2016, 50–6.

28 Diod. 11,74,6; 11,75 (the preparation for the invasion) and 11,77,1–2. Thuk. 1,109,3–4, much more succinct, mentions Megabyzos only, and does not refer to the preparations.

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29 The main difference is that Diodorus' version glorifies the Athenians beyond the bounds of credibility and downplays the role of the Egyptians; see the comments of Robinson 1999, 135, and Biondi 2016, 58–60.

30 On the real entity of the Athenian losses, see Robinson 1999, 144–7, who shows that it is utterly unlikely that the entire fleet initially sent to Egypt had remained there during the whole timespan of the revolt, to be besieged and finally eliminated by the Persians, or that Prosopitis might have hosted the crews of 200 triremes for a year and a half; his estimate is in the order of forty triremes and their crews (and note that no allowance is made in his calculations for the Egyptians who

The revolt, however, was not entirely quelled. Another local leader, the ‘king in the marshes’ Amyrtaios, seems to have continued almost seamlessly Inaros’ revolt (Thuk. 1,110,2).³¹ The Persians were not able to defeat him at first: Amyrtaios retreated to the marshes of the Delta and soon thereafter asked for support from the Athenians, receiving a squadron of sixty triremes detached from the fleet of the Delian League that Kimon was leading once again towards Cyprus (Thuk. 1,112,2–4).³² This time, the Athenian fleet does not appear to have spent much time in Egypt, and we cannot tell how much longer it took before Amyrtaios, too, like Inaros, was eliminated. Not long after his demise, at a time when Egypt may still have been in turmoil, a Psammetichos, king of the Libyans, is said to have sent a donation of 30,000 *medimnoi* of grain to the Athenians. The combination of name and title would point to a descendant of Inaros, and a fragment of Philochoros dates this episode to the year 445/4 BCE (archonship of Lysimachides). The reliability of this piece of information, however, would require further research.³³

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were also besieged on the island according to Diod. 11,77,3—whatever weight we decide to assign to this testimony).

- 31 The marshes in the lower Delta, a characteristic area, were famously impenetrable; see Hdt. 2,92 with Lloyd 1976, 370. Note that Amyrtaios, unlike Inaros, is called ‘king’ by Thucydides.
- 32 A somewhat confused reference to this episode is found in Plut. Cim. 18; see Biondi 2016, 104–8.
- 33 Philoch. FGrH 328 F119; the text is best consulted in *Scholia vetera in Aristophanis Vespas* 718a and 718b Koster (and see also *Scholia vetera in Aristophanis Plutum* 178a Chantry). Psammetichos is described as ‘king of the Libyans’ in the version of the fragment preserved in *Scholia in Aristophanem Vespas* 718b, where the name of Philochorus is absent. The same episode is apparently referred to in Plut. **Per.** 37,4, where a gift of 40,000 *medimnoi* from an anonymous Egyptian king is mentioned. Regardless of which figure is correct, it was a substantial amount; as a comparison, Athens received 100,000 (Attic?) *medimnoi* from Cyrene during a grain shortage at some point between 330 and 326 BCE (Rhodes/Osborne 2003, 486–93, with a very helpful commentary), but cf. also the early Hellenistic donations to the Athenians of Lysimachos (10,000 *medimnoi* in 299/8 BCE, IG II/III³ 877) and Ptolemy Soter (20,000 *medimnoi* in 283/2, IG II/III³ 911). Especially if the designation of Psammetichos as ‘king of the Libyans’ can be taken seriously, a connection to Inaros seems likely (but of course cf. Hdt. 3,15,3 discussed below); see Lloyd 1975, 45 and n. 205.

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The chronology of Inaros' revolt is not entirely clear, tied as it is to the broader problem of the chronology of the *pentekontaetia* in Thucydides and beyond. The early date that seems to be compatible with documentary evidence from Egypt could refer to the first phase of the revolt, before the Athenian intervention, especially if we follow a Thucydidean scenario for the latter, which seems advisable considering the geographic confusion of Diodorus' account.³⁴ As we will see later on, Herodotus' reference to the battle of Papremis might be taken to suggest that the revolt had possibly started quite some time before the Athenian intervention.

New evidence from Egypt has contributed an important piece to the puzzle of Inaros' revolt. Against an old prejudice that assumed that the revolt involved only the Delta and Memphis, denying that it extended to the whole of Egypt as Thucydides says, we now possess evidence showing that the royal era of an Inaros that can hardly be different from the leader of the revolt was used to date documents all the way to the Oases of the Western Desert in Upper Egypt; the second year of his reign appears in a contract written in demotic from the archive of the temple of Osiris at Manawir, in the Kharga Oasis, west of Thebes. Interestingly, Inaros's name is not accompanied by regular pharaonic titular, but by an epithet which has been read either as 'prince of the rebels' or, perhaps more likely, 'prince of the Bakales', a Libyan tribe.³⁵ Even though there may still be reasons to think that the Persians re-

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- 34 The chronology proposed by Kahn 2008, which sets the outbreak of the revolt early in 464 BCE, soon after Xerxes' death in the summer of 465 BCE, could in other words be compatible with the most common reconstructions of the chronology of the *pentekontaetia*, which date the beginning of the Athenian expedition to 460 BCE, give or take one year. As Winnicki 2006, 139, rightly points out, the evidence from Upper Egypt (Wadi Hammamat and Elephantine, where an inscription and a letter dated to year 5 and 6 of Artaxerxes respectively have been found) may simply indicate that these areas remained under Persian control during the revolt.
- 35 The Manawir *ostrakon* mentioning Inaros was published for the first time in Chauveau 2004; Winnicki 2006, 135–6, followed by Vittmann 2011, 400, doubts that 'prince of the rebels' could be the official designation of a ruler of Egypt, and accordingly proposes a different reading of the *ostrakon*, as referring to a Libyan tribe known from Herodotus (4,171) and from earlier Egyptian documents.



tained control of Elephantine, Thucydides' view of the extension of the revolt now appears essentially correct.

Finally, in a somewhat more speculative vein, it is worth mentioning a different Inaros, the hero of an extensive story cycle which until recently was documented only in demotic papyri of Ptolemaic and Roman date. The adventures of this Inaros, hailing from the city of Athribis in the Upper Delta, locate him in the early years of the XXVI dynasty and involve victorious fighting against the Assyrians, who repeatedly invaded Egypt under Esarhaddon. Recently Joachim Friedrich Quack has been able tentatively to identify this early Inaros with a ruler of the Delta documented in Assyrian inscriptions. The reinterpretation of an Aramaic tomb inscription from the Fayum area has demonstrated that at least parts of this narrative cycle, and in particular its main character and his struggle against the Assyrians, were already known in the early fifth century BCE. Accordingly, the old idea that the Inaros of the stories could be a transposition of the fifth-century rebel leader has to be given up, but the opposite possibility is now worth considering, namely that the later Inaros took his name after the rebel hero of the early Saite period.³⁶ If Christopher Tuplin is correct in separating the rebel Inaros mentioned in the Elephantine letters from Inaros the Libyan, one ends up with the intriguing suspicion that 'Inaros' had become a *nom de guerre* for rebel leaders in Achaemenid Egypt.

Before turning to Herodotus, one point is worth stressing. The expedition in support of Inaros is said by Thucydides to have lasted six years, and if we include the phase in which the revolt was led by Amyrtaios, we must reckon with well over ten years of intermittent engagement of Greek forces in Egypt. Literally thousands of Athenians and allies will have spent substantial time in the Nile Valley during this period—and not necessarily only in the Delta. The involvement of the Delian League in the revolt was no minor episode and must have left many permanent traces in the Greek poleis that participated, not only

36 On the Inaros cycle and its origins, see especially Holm 2007 and Quack 2006. Rutherford 2016 provides a fascinating if preliminary exploration of possible Greek literary influences on the shaping of the story. Overall, these studies open up fascinating perspectives on the cultural world of Saite Egypt and on the impact of Semitic and Greek elements (mostly mercenaries, presumably) on such world.



in Athens. The evidence is suggestive: in the Samian Heraion, two inscribed bases mention Samian captains who had fought in Egypt, Hegesagoras and Leokritos. The former, possibly erected retrospectively after the middle of the century, supported a statue, the latter supported an unknown object that had been dedicated by Inaros himself as an *aristeion* for Leokritos. Hegesagoras was somehow responsible for the capture of fifteen Phoenician ships.³⁷ In light of all this, it is clear that the expeditions of the Delian League to Egypt should be part of any discussion of the audience of Herodotus' Egyptian *logos* and of its previous knowledge of the topic.

HERODOTUS' EGYPTIAN *LOGOS* AND THE EGYPTIAN REVOLTS

The first two Egyptian revolts against the Achaemenids are still part of Herodotus' narrative purview, but the former, somewhat surprisingly, goes unmentioned,³⁸ while the latter appears only briefly at the point where Xerxes was about to **collect** his army for the invasion of Greece (7,1,3; 7,4; 7,7)—we will return to this. In the passage where he mentions this revolt, Herodotus has a forward-looking reference to the death of the new satrap of Egypt installed by Xerxes, the Great King's own brother Achaemenes, at the hands of the Libyan Inaros, son of Psammetichos (7,7), which is at the same time a cross-reference to a passage towards the end of the Egyptian *logos*. There, in the course of a famous comparison of Persian and Egyptian skulls, he refers to inspecting the remains of Persian soldiers who had died in the Battle of Papremis, where, he says, Achaemenes the son of Darius had been killed by the Libyan Inaros (3,12,4). The location of Papremis is not entirely certain, but the general area of the III or VII *nomes*, on the Western border of the Delta, seems the place to look—this, incidentally, forbids combining Herodotus and Diodorus/Ctesias and shows that the latter had a com-

“gather”
statt “collect”

37 Hegesagoras: IG XII 6.1, 279 = Meiggs-Lewis² 34; Leokritos: IG XII 6.1, 468.

38 See Tuplin forthcoming.

pletely different story for the revolt.³⁹ Considering that Inaros, according to Thucydides, had originally moved from Marea, Herodotus must be referring here to an early episode in the revolt, which may have taken place sometime before the Athenian expedition.

A few chapters later (3,15,3), talking about the demise of the last pharaoh of the XXVI dynasty, whom he calls Psammenitos, Herodotus observes that, if Psammenitos had avoided plotting, Cambyses would probably have reinstated him as his deputy, to judge by what the Persians did with the sons of Inaros and Amyrtaios, in spite of the fact that nobody caused as much harm to the Persians as Inaros and Amyrtaios. Indeed, says Herodotus, it was a Persian custom to honour the sons of kings, even of those kings who had revolted against them. The parallel is somewhat strained: Amasis was no rebel king after all, and it seems hard to believe that Cambyses would have even contemplated installing Psammetichos as governor of Egypt, as Herodotus seems to suggest. One cannot resist the impression that the real point of the passage is the additional information it provides about Inaros and Amyrtaios.⁴⁰ The sons of the two rebels, called Thannyras and Pausiris respectively, appear in no other source. Herodotus clearly means that, once the revolt was finally quelled, the two were left, as vassals of the Great King, in charge of the Delta principalities over which their fathers originally ruled. Unique to this passage is also the implicit reference to Amyrtaios' revolt as a concluded affair. Herodotus' emphatic assessment of the impact of the revolts of Inaros and Amyrtaios should not go unnoticed: any attempt at attributing to him a specific judgment of the Athenian involvement in support of the two rebel leaders should start from here—we shall return to this.

Finally, at the end of Book III (3,160,2), after narrating the self-mutilation of Zopyros, son of Megabyzos, which made it possible for Darius to conquer Babylon, Herodotus mentions Zopyros' son, himself called Megabyzos like the grandfather, who commanded the Persian

39 The most detailed discussion of the location of Papremis is Bresciani 1972; for further references, see de Meulenaere 1982. Biondi 2016, 35 and n. 101, somewhat misrepresents the issue; Sourdille 1910, 90–6, located Papremis in the Eastern Delta solely on the basis of the need to combine Herodotus and Diodorus, and was still unaware of the evidence later brought to bear on the problem.

40 As pointed out by Tuplin, forthcoming.



forces in Egypt against the Athenians and their allies. This is the only time that Herodotus mentions the participation of Greeks in the revolt, and he does so passing over their defeat. Herodotus then adds that Megabyzos' own son, called again Zopyros, ended up deserting to Athens, thereby generating endless speculations among modern scholars as to Herodotus' sources of information about Egypt and other Achaemenid matters.⁴¹

All in all, one might say that Herodotus provides reasonably comprehensive, if somewhat scattered information on the Egyptian revolt, its main episodes, leaders, and impact. Taken together these references indicate that, unsurprisingly, he was quite familiar with its history. To what extent, we may then wonder, does the revolt form an implicit background and frame of reference for the Egyptian *logos*? In the first place, the revolt must have left traces in the very Egyptian milieu from which Herodotus derived a good portion of his knowledge, as reconstructed most recently by Ian Moyer.⁴² To take the most obvious example, the Egyptian nationalist propaganda which is usually considered responsible for the extension of the conquests of Pharaoh Sesostris, in competition with those of the Achaemenids, may point precisely in this direction, and maybe we should view it less in terms of erudite revanchism and more in terms of a militant take on the relationship between Egypt and Persia, linked less to the musings of nostalgic Egyptian priests and more to the projects of ambitious Egyptian princes, or at any rate to their spin-doctors—in the end, priests, of course.⁴³

This suggestion is reinforced by a somewhat less obvious and certainly less often noticed echo of the revolts which comes in a story regarding the return on the throne of Anysis, the blind pharaoh who had been ousted by the Ethiopian ruler Herodotus calls Sabakos (2,140).

41 On Zopyros as a source for Herodotus, see e.g. Wells 1923, 95–111; cf. Lewis 1997, 349–50.

42 Let it be noted at this point that the more our knowledge of Egyptian evidence, especially of demotic documents of the late period, expands, the clearer it becomes that Herodotus' Egyptian *logos* is indeed based on knowledge of the Egyptian cultural tradition that cannot but have been acquired in loco; see now Quack 2013, 80–1, with his explicit criticism of the 'liar school'.

43 On Sesostris, see Moyer 2011, 73; the demotic evidence is discussed by Quack 2013, 63–6.

According to this story, after spending fifty years hiding in the marshes of the Delta, Anysis regained his position when the usurper fled. In between, for fifty years he had inhabited an island of his own creation, made by the accumulation of earth and ash that Anysis asked the Egyptians who visited him to carry. The artificial island was called Elbo and nobody was able to locate it until it was finally found by none other than Amyrtaios. There is much more to this story than meets the eye of a Greek reader. Beyond the folktale motif of the return of the vanished king, the story of Anysis and his phantom island reflects patterns that derive from the deepest layers of Egyptian political ideology. The emergence of a mound of land from the water is the first step of every Egyptian cosmogony, while the narrative complex in which the pharaoh, temporarily defeated by a barbarian, foreign king seeks refuge in the marshes, where he regenerates his strength in order to be able to regain his rightful place, is reflected in the mythic battle between Horus, the dynastic god of the pharaohs, and Seth, the god of disorder and barbarism. In the words of Jan Assmann, this myth was ‘the most impressive Egyptian response to the experience of foreign rule’.⁴⁴

The story of Elbo is embedded in a context of doubtful historicity, which conflates a whole dynasty of Kushite pharaohs into one single individual, the Ethiopian Sabakos, and seems obviously intended to confer legitimacy to Amyrtaios, the rebel king of the marshes, as Thucydides calls him (1,110,2). The leader of a revolt against a foreign domination, he may well have claimed to have found the secret refuge of a previous pharaoh who had himself fled to the marshes in order to take refuge against a foreign domination, along the lines of the ur-story of Egyptian resistance to foreign invaders. All things considered, we seem to have here a piece of Amyrtaios’ propaganda that linked his position to the old pharaonic tradition and to its rituals of kingship, filtered into Herodotus’ own version of pharaonic history, no doubt thanks to his direct or indirect Egyptian interlocutors, who certainly had a deep

44 Assmann 2003, 409. For fascinating explications of the symbolic complexes evoked by the Anysis story, see Dillery 2005, 390–2, and especially Haziza 2009, 75–9 (with a clear explanation of the actual historical background of the Kushite dynasty, quite different from Herodotus’ depiction of it). On the name of the island, see Quack 2013, 81.

understanding of the meaning of this story. Surely this tells us something about these interlocutors.

Somewhat more tentatively, it seems possible that the revolt has coloured Herodotus' own presentation of Egypt and the Egyptians more broadly. A discussion of the units of measure for land, implicitly pointing to the vast extent of the (arable) land of Egypt (2,6), or the somewhat misguided insistence on the miraculous fertility of the Delta region (2,14,2), may betray the imperial gaze of mid-fifth century Athens and point to the debates that must have accompanied the decision to send substantial amounts of troops to Egypt.⁴⁵ In a similar vein, the gross exaggeration of Egypt's military potential that can be deduced from Herodotus' reference to the numbers of Egyptian warriors, the *machimoi*, recently emphasized by Christelle Fischer-Bovet, would have had a very special ring on the background of Athens' support for the indigenous revolt.⁴⁶ As in the case of Herodotus' assessment of the damage done to the Persians by Inaros and Amyrtaios, this passage reflects indirectly on the wisdom of the Athenian intervention: whatever its outcome, the Egyptian revolt was a serious enterprise, supported by significant manpower, and even if it had failed, it had posed a severe threat to the Persians.

The place where the topical resonance of Herodotus' references to Egyptian resistance to the Persians appears strongest, however, is one that ostensibly refers to the second revolt, early in Xerxes' reign (7,1–7). Here, Herodotus creates a suggestive parallel between the Egyptians and the Athenians, both defiant enemies of the Persian superpower, at the price, one may suspect, of manipulating the chronology of the Egyptian revolt: Book VII opens with Darius preparing the vengeance for Marathon when he learns of the revolt in Egypt, and for the next few chapters, including the succession of Xerxes, the question comes up repeatedly, whether Egypt or Athens should be attacked first. It does not take an inordinate amount of phantasy to suggest that the parallel

45 They would resonate with Inaros' offer to the Athenians of a share in Egypt reported by Diodorus (11,71,4). Note that intervening in defence of allies and being attracted by the wealth of the land are not two incompatible reasons, as shown by Thucydides' depiction of the motives for the Sicilian expedition, **Thuc.** 6,6.

46 See Fischer-Bovet 2013, 210–19, commenting on Hdt. 2,164–6.

may have originally been meant to create a frame of reference for the support offered by the Athenians to the third revolt, all the more so if Herodotus has on purpose structured the story so that the parallel would be as close as possible. The theme may go back to the age of the revolt, but we should not exclude that it still possessed some topicality in later decades. Regardless of what one thinks of the Peace of Callias, the Persian threat had never fully vanished from the Aegean. Herodotus' depiction of the Egyptians as former and potential fellow-fighters in the war on Persia had a very immediate meaning for an Athenian audience, even in the forties and thirties.⁴⁷

EGYPT, THE PERSIAN WARS, AND HERODOTUS' *HISTORIES*

To conclude, let me trespass the boundary of controlled reconstruction and engage in a modicum of speculation—not otiose, as I hope the reader will agree. Book II is not just any part of the *Histories*. In terms of structure, there is no other part of Herodotus' work that is organized in such a clear and meticulous way: geography, ethnography and history are neatly separated, and the thematic transitions are regularly marked by chapters devoted to what we might call reflections on method or on the nature of the evidence.⁴⁸ Psammetichos' linguistic experiment (2,2), intended to figure out which human language was the oldest, provides a striking opening, putting on the table some of the key themes of Herodotus' version of the history of Egypt—monarchy with its arbitrary manipulation of human lives, the fathomless depth of the Egyptian past, and the sophistication of their intellectual tradition. We are then treated to a survey of Egyptian time-reckoning (2,4), of the geological history and extension of their country (2,5–18), and of the geography and morphology of the River Nile, including its unexplored springs and

47 General hostility between Athens and the Persians: Eddy 1973; I discuss this question and its implications for a reading of Herodotus *Histories* in a forthcoming contribution.

48 On the structure of Book II, see now Kimmel-Clauzet 2013, 18–19. As regards Herodotus' Egypt, I acknowledge here my profound debt to Vannicelli 1997 and 2001, as well as to many illuminating conversations with their author.



especially its mysterious regime of floods (2,19–27).⁴⁹ A very comprehensive ethnography, with special emphasis on religion, constitutes the main body of the first part. The transition to the historical narrative is marked by Herodotus' very famous statement regarding the provenance of his knowledge (2,99,1). Within the historical part, a further turning point, at the end of the earlier part of pharaonic history, is signalled by the anecdote of Hecataeus and the priests (2,143), which confirms both the reliability of the preceding narrative and the soundness of Herodotus' methodology, as opposed to that of his predecessor, before turning to the more recent part of the Egyptian past, for which, Herodotus emphasizes, evidence from non-Egyptians is also available.⁵⁰

The impression of a self-contained unit is irresistible, and it is reinforced on other levels, too. Book II, and the Egyptian *logos* more in general, is the part of Herodotus' *Histories* in which references to the process of collecting information and to the nature of the information collected are most frequent, explicit, and detailed—no other part of the *Histories* comes even close to Book II in this respect.⁵¹ Even the texture of the narrative parts and the underlying moral of the stories are distinctive: there are no wise advisers on the side of Egyptian pharaohs, for instance, and the moral tone that so frequently accompanies Herodotus' narratives of the past is distinctly absent.⁵² It comes as no surprise that many a scholar has been led to argue for a special status for this part of the *Histories*, and some have speculated that it might represent an earlier phase of Herodotus' project, originally conceived as an independent monograph, along the lines of what apparently most of Herodotus' contemporaries were doing.⁵³

49 On the importance of Egyptian time-reckoning as a foundation for the chronology of Egyptian history, see Vannicelli 2001, 216.

50 On the thematic transitions in Book II and the chapters that mark them, see Kimmel-Clauzet 2013, 29–30. West 1991 and Bertelli 2001, 91–4, offer different interpretations of the episode of Hecataeus and the priests.

51 So, among others, Darbo-Peschanski 1987, 108–9, Marincola 1987, 123–8, Luraghi 2001, 151–4. See also the discussion of Herodotus' methodology based on Book II in Hunter 1982, 50–92.

52 Fornara 1971, 17–18.

53 See the comments on Herodotus' contemporaries of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *de Thuc.* 5.

We have so far ventured only one little step into the dangerous land of speculation. In preparation for the next, more daring step, a few points need recalling. Firstly, the references to the revolt of Inaros and Amyrtaios discussed in this contribution give a strong impression that Herodotus had collected sufficient information to continue the history of Achaemenid Egypt up to and including the Athenian expeditions. This however, as shown by Pietro Vannicelli, would have been in contrast with the very keen sense of the lower chronological threshold of the *Histories* that Herodotus expresses in several places.⁵⁴ Now, if we are prepared to admit that this sharp chronological threshold, alongside the vision of the singular importance of the Persian Wars of which it is part and parcel, was a product of Herodotus' own historical reflection, and accordingly was not with him from the very outset,⁵⁵ we might start wondering whether the insistent presence, direct or indirect, of the Egyptian expedition in Herodotus' Egyptian *logos* might not be a pointer to the extension of the project that originally underlay this part of his work, so self-contained and so different from the rest of the *Histories*—a project the last part of which was later given up in favour of combining and integrating the histories and ethnographies of Egyptians, Lydians, Scythians, Babylonians, and of course Greeks and Persians, into a monumental history of the Persian Wars ending with the year 479.

54 Vannicelli 1993, 16–18.

55 See Fornara 1971, 1–4.

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