

RELIGION AND POWER

Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond

edited by

NICOLE BRISCH



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with contributions by

Nicole Brisch, Gebhard J. Selz, Piotr Michalowski, Paul John Frandsen,
Irene J. Winter, Erica Ehrenberg, Clemens Reichel, Reinhard Bernbeck,
Michelle Gilbert, David Freidel, Michael Puett, Bruce Lincoln,
Greg Woolf, Jerrold S. Cooper, *and* Kathleen D. Morrison

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King Naram-Sin of Akkad in horned tiara near a mountain summit, with soldiers. Rose limestone stele
(2230 B.C.E.). Originally from Mesopotamia, found in Susa, Iran. 200 × 105 cm.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ca.	circa
cf.	<i>confer</i> , compare
cm	centimeter(s)
col(s).	column(s)
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example
esp.	especially
et al.	<i>et alii</i> , and others
etc.	<i>et cetera</i> , and so forth
fig(s).	figure(s)
ibid.	<i>ibidem</i> , in the same place
i.e.	<i>id est</i> , that is
km	kilometer(s)
lit.	literally
m	meter(s)
n(n).	note(s)
n.d.	no date
no(s).	number(s)
obv.	obverse
op. cit.	<i>opere citato</i> , in the work cited
p(p).	page(s)
pers. comm.	personal communication
pl(s).	plate(s)
r.	reign
rev.	reverse
viz.	<i>videlicet</i> , namely
vs.	versus

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THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN ACHAEMENIAN IMPERIALISM*

BRUCE LINCOLN, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

I

There was a time when sacred kingship was a fashionable topic among historians of religions, who thought they were able to find confirmation of Frazerian theories in the patterns of myth and ritual attested throughout the ancient Near East. For some, including Sir James George himself, identifying countless examples of dying and rising gods, ritual regicide-cum-deicide, priest-kings with magic control over vegetation and symbolic links to the cycle of the seasons, all served to advance a rationalistic critique of Christian beliefs as yet one more variant on a familiar set of primitive superstitions.¹ For others, and here one thinks of Jessie Weston, T. S. Eliot, and other romantic souls, the same kinds of material and theory served entirely opposite purposes. In their constructions, it was the loss of myth and ritual, declining faith in priests, kings, magic, and the sacred — in short, the same disenchantment of the world that progressive rationalists celebrated — that produced the worst ills of modernity.²

The variegated, almost protean utility of Frazerian theory helps explain the breadth of its popularity, although the exoticism of Frazer's examples, the imperial reach of his knowledge, the breathless verve of his descriptive prose, and the skillful way he positioned himself as heir to both Tylor and Robertson Smith also contributed significantly to his success and reputation. Like all grand theorists, however, and especially those of the armchair variety, he was guilty of distortion, pretentiousness, procrusteanism, selective blindness, cultural condescension, and a host of other failings. As each of his errors was identified, his project slowly deflated, with the result that his theories not only lost their power to transport, they began to look a bit pathetic. Although staunch devotees of the "Myth and Ritual School" continued to espouse Frazerian positions even into the 1960s,³ his serious influence had evaporated long before, the crucial turning point having been Bronislaw Malinowski's Frazer Memorial Lecture of 1924, which some regard as an act of ritual regicide, with Sir James George in attendance, cast as outgoing King of the Wood (Malinowski 1954). At present, Frazer stands alongside Friedrich Max Müller as one of the ancestors remembered with more embarrassment than gratitude, let alone reverence, by the several interrelated disciplines that once hailed him as one of their founders (anthropology, folklore, history of religions).

Assyriologists familiar with the Babylonian *akitu*-festival, Egyptologists steeped in the drama of Osiris, Horus, and Seth, certain students of the Hebrew Bible, and those disposed to

* I would like to acknowledge the kind assistance I received from Matthew Stolper in dealing with the Elamite and Akkadian texts treated in this paper.

¹ On Frazer, see Smith 1978: 208–39; Ackerman 1987; Lanwerd 1993; Stocking 1995: 124–51.

² For Eliot's use of Frazer in "The Waste Land," and more broadly on Eliot's views concerning myth, reli-

gion, politics, culture, and the failings of modernity, see Manganaro 1992 and Carpentier 1998. As Eliot acknowledged, he read Frazer via the mediation of Weston 1920. See also Vickery 1973 and Fraser 1991.

³ Among the last true believers was Theodore Gaster (1961 and 1969).

situate Jesus as a dying-and-rising deity of the ancient Near East were among the most enthusiastic supporters of the Frazerian paradigm, alongside the Cambridge ritualists.⁴ In general, Iranists invested less heavily in the Frazerian model.⁵ Those who concerned themselves with kingship were generally quick to note that the relevant texts construe the royal office as a gift bestowed upon rulers by Ahura Mazdā (“the Wise Lord”), which is to say that the king himself was not regarded as magic, divine, or priestly. At best, we have a legitimating ideology couched in a religious idiom, not a sacred kingship recognizably Frazerian in nature (Frye 1964; Schmitt 1977; Root 1979; Duchesne-Guillemin 1979; Frei and Koch 1984; Gnoli 1984; Kuhrt 1984; Ahn 1992; Lincoln 2007).

Given the paucity of evidence that might fit their patterns and suit their purposes, enthusiasts of *The Golden Bough* thus came to focus their energies on a single Iranian datum. This is the set of relief sculptures adorning the steps of the Apadāna, an enormous reception hall in the palace complex of Persepolis. In these images (fig. 12.1), they thought they saw evidence of a New Year’s festival involving the ritual enactment of mythic dramas, through which kingship and the cosmos itself were annually renewed as the king slew dragons, overcame chaos, and revitalized the earth, crops, and seasons.⁶ Some adherents of the theory went so far as to describe Persepolis as a ritual city, whose sole raison d’être was the annual performance of this ceremony.⁷

Heady stuff, but very little supported by any evidence of the Achaemenian period. To compensate for this inconvenient fact, adherents of the thesis relied on comparative materials (especially the *akitu* ritual) and anachronistic testimonies (especially al-Beruni’s description of the Sassanian Now Rōz) to constitute the Apadāna reliefs as one more example of the patterns they knew so well from elsewhere. For a time, they succeeded in getting their ideas taken seriously, but the hearing they obtained brought with it critical evaluation, in the wake of which the Frazerian balloon deflated that much further.⁸

II

Subsequent scholarship has made clear that the Apadāna reliefs depict a procession of tribute-bearers drawn from every province of the empire bringing gifts to the Achaemenian king (fig. 12.2; Walser 1966; Hinz 1969: 95–114; Schmidt 1970: 108–20; Tilia 1972; Root 1979: 227–84; Shahbazi 1978; Jacobs 1982; Trümpelmann 1983; Koch 1983; Stronach 1985; Cahill 1985; Jamzadeh 1992; Hachmann 1995). Although most contemporary authors would grant that the payment of tribute had a certain ceremonial aspect, few would explain this via

⁴ For Frazerian influence in studies of the ancient Near East, see Hooke 1933, 1935, 1958. Also relevant are such works as Langdon 1914; Labat 1939; Engnell 1943; Frankfort et al. 1946; Frankfort 1948; Gadd 1948; Kramer 1969; Jacobsen 1976. Among the writings of the Classicists influenced by Frazer who styled themselves “Cambridge Ritualists,” note Harrison 1912, 1922; Murray 1912. Also useful are Ackerman 1991; Segal 1996, 1998.

⁵ The chief exception is Geo Widengren, whose sense of Iranian sacred kingship was strongly influenced by Frazer, but mediated by Dumézil 1924, 1929. See, for instance, Widengren 1953: 201–09, 1955: 51–55, 1959,

1965: 41–49, 1974, and 1983. Less important, but worth noting, is Richards 1979.

⁶ Crucial to this view was interpretation of a relief sculpture from Persepolis in which a lion overcame a bull as having calendric and zodiacal significance denoting the New Year as the moment when the constellation Leo succeeded that of Taurus. Such was argued by Herzfeld 1941: 251; Pope 1957a: 128; Hartner and Ettinghausen 1964, but is quite unlikely, as shown by Nylander 1974: 141–44.

⁷ This was argued by Pope 1957a–b; Ghirshman 1957; Erdmann 1960; and Fennelly 1980.

⁸ The most telling critiques are Nylander 1974; Calmeyer 1980, 1985–86; and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1991.

a discourse of sacred kingship and rituals of renewal, rather than one of imperial protocol, for example.⁹ There are alternatives, however, to the abuses of Frazerian comparatism on the one hand, and a principled — but anachronistic — insistence on treating ancient political institutions as wholly secular in nature. For in antiquity, neither kingship, nor tribute, nor much else for that matter, can be properly understood without some reference to religion, insofar as all ideology tended to be couched in a religious idiom. For it is only with the Enlightenment that religion came to be viewed and organized as one cultural system among others (politics, economy, literature, art, philosophy, fashion, etc.), all of which enjoy relative independence. Previously, religion was constituted as a uniquely privileged transcendent system of culture that encompassed, structured, disciplined, and permeated all others. And, as a result of the extent to which those other systems were informed, even controlled by the religious, none of them can be understood as secular in the modern sense.

On general principles, I am thus inclined to think the tributary practices depicted in the Apadāna reliefs had a certain religious significance, although not of the sort normally associated with Frazerian models of sacred kingship. To demonstrate this, however, depends on close consideration of the Achaemenian evidence, most important of all the reliefs themselves and the four inscriptions placed on the south retaining wall of Persepolis (original site of entry to the palace complex). As has been generally recognized, the physical placement of these inscriptions suggests they were meant to form a coherent set, and this is also evident in their use of language. For although most Achaemenian inscriptions are trilingual (Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian), the same three languages are distributed among these inscriptions, such that reading left to right, the first two are in Old Persian (DPd and DPe), the third in Elamite (DPf), and the last in Akkadian (DPg). As a set, they thus make a statement about unity and diversity, while also describing linguistic and political relations at the central core of the empire. Three different languages and peoples cooperate in the central administration, but one — the Persian rulers and their native tongue — outrank the others, as marked by both number and sequence (although it may be that the two inscriptions in Old Persian are meant to represent the Persians first and then the Medes).¹⁰

For our purposes, the most convenient point of departure is the inscription known as DPg, written in Akkadian, which begins with an account of the world's creation. This is not unusual, for 70% (23/33) of the Achaemenian inscriptions that contain more than two paragraphs begin in the same fashion. In all cases, however, the cosmogonic narratives are brief, stereotyped, and highly formulaic.¹¹ In its opening passage, DPg conforms closely to the standard formulae, but as it continues, it develops in ways that are unique and highly significant. The vast majority of variants attribute five distinct acts of creation to the Wise Lord (Ahura Mazdā), four of which occurred at the dawn of time, before history proper. In its treatment of these primordial events, DPg follows conventions, as is apparent when one compares it to other variants for which we have good Akkadian versions (table 12.1).¹²

⁹ To date, discussions of tribute have not paid particular attention to their religious dimension, but have been understandably concerned with issues of political economy. See, above all, Koch 1980; Briant 1982, 1986; Descat 1985; Briant and Herrenschildt 1989; and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1998.

¹⁰ On these inscriptions, their placement, and their coherence as a set, see Shahbazi 1985: 15–16; Herrenschildt 1990; Lecoq 1997: 97–98; Schmitt 1999: 27–36, 2000:

56. On the extent to which the Achaemenian inscriptions use a language that makes use of both Median and Persian forms, see Lecoq 1974.

¹¹ The fullest study of these formulaic texts is Herrenschildt 1977.

¹² For the most part, the Old Persian variants are identical in content to the Akkadian versions presented here, but for the purposes of precise analysis, it is preferable to compare DPg to variants written in the same language.

Table 12.1. The Four Primordial Creations, as Narrated in Four Variants of the Cosmogony Written in Akkadian

<i>Darius, Persepolis (DPg)</i>	<i>Darius, Elvend</i>	<i>Darius, Naqš-i Rostam</i>	<i>Xerxes, Persepolis (XPa)</i>
Great is the Wise Lord, who is the greatest of all the gods,	A great god is the Wise Lord	A great god is the Wise Lord	A great god is the Wise Lord
who made sky	who created this earth	who made sky	who created this earth
and earth,	who created that sky,	and earth,	who created that sky,
who made people,	who created people,	and who made people,	who created humanity
who gave all happiness to people living therein. ¹³	who created all abundance for people. ¹⁴	who created happiness for people. ¹⁵	who created happiness for humanity. ¹⁶

The contents here are quite consistent and require little commentary. For our purposes, it suffices to mention a few points only. First, three of the four primordial creations are denoted in the singular (heaven, earth, and happiness~abundance). Second, as regards the remaining item, usage varies. While DPg, DE, and DNa speak of “people” in the plural, XPa speaks of “humanity” in the singular (*amelûtú*). In general, the Akkadian versions of the Achaemenian cosmogony tend to employ the plural here, but on this point XPa follows the Old Persian variants, which consistently use the singular (*martiya* “man, mankind”) and do so to make an important point. For within pan-Iranian mythic traditions, the human species makes its original appearance in a single, prototypical individual who encompasses within his being all the possibilities later distributed among different members of the species. (The same is true for plants and animals in Zoroastrian accounts.) Diversity, then, enters only at a later stage of cosmic history, when the demonic force the Achaemenians referred to as “the Lie” (Old Persian *drauga*, Akkadian *piršātú*) assaulted the world and caused its fragmentation.¹⁷

The Lie’s assault disrupted the primordial peace, beauty, and “happiness” (Old Persian *šiyāti*, Akkadian *dumqu*) of creation, introducing strife, corruption, and death into existence. It also marked the beginning of history proper, history being the finite time when the Wise Lord and the Lie struggle for supremacy, with the world as their battleground. The two cosmic powers do not grapple with one another directly, however. Instead, people — now differentiated morally and in other fashions — become foot soldiers on either side, while the forces of good are placed under the leadership of a trusted individual. It is in this context that the cosmogonic accounts narrate the Wise Lord’s fifth act of creation, temporally removed from the first four, as a response to the crisis provoked by the Lie’s invasion. It is on this precise point that the

¹³ DPg §1: *Urumazda rabi ša rabû ina muḥḥi ilāni gabbi, ša šamê u eršiti ibnû u nišê *ibnû, ša dumqi gabbi iddinuma nišî ina libbi balṭû*. Text in Weissbach 1911: 85. I am grateful to Matt Stolper for his help in translating this inscription.

¹⁴ DE §1 (Babylonian): *ilu rabû Aḥurumazdā, ša qaqqaru agâ iddinu ša šamê annûtu iddinu ša ummānāti (?) iddinu ša gabbi nuḥšu ana ummānāti (?) iddinu*. Text in Weissbach 1911: 101.

¹⁵ DNa §1: *ilu rabû Aḥurumazdā ša šamê u eršeti [ib]nû u nišî ibnû ša dumqi ana nišî iddinu*. Text in Weissbach 1911: 87.

¹⁶ XPa §1: *ilu rabû Aḥurumazdā ša qaqqaru agâ iddinu ša šamê annûtu iddinu ša amēlûtu iddinu ša dumqi ana amēlûtu iddinu*. Text in Weissbach 1911: 107.

¹⁷ The Zoroastrian variants are most extensively narrated in the *Greater Bundahišn* 1–18, the *Selections of Zādspram* 1–3, and *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.

originality of DPg becomes evident, for it describes the Wise Lord's fifth creation in much more elaborate fashion than do any of the other variants (table 12.2).

Table 12.2. The Fifth Act of Creation, as Narrated in Four Variants of the Cosmogony Written in Akkadian

<i>Darius, Persepolis (DPg)</i>	<i>Darius, Elvend</i>	<i>Darius, Naqš-i Rústam</i>	<i>Xerxes, Persepolis (XPa)</i>
who made Darius king	who made Darius king	who made Darius king	who made Xerxes king
	one over the previously existing kings, one over the previously existing rulers. ¹⁸	of many kings. ¹⁹	one over many kings, one over many rulers. ²⁰
and gave King Darius kingship over this broad earth,			
which has many lands-and-peoples in it:			
Persia, Media, and other lands-and-peoples			
with other languages,			
with mountains and plains,			
on this side of the ocean (lit., the bitter river) and the far side of the ocean,			
on this side of the desert (lit., the land of thirst) and the far side of the desert. ²¹			

¹⁸ DE §1: *ša ana Dāriamuš šarru ibnū, ištēn ina šarrāni maḥrātu, išten ina mute'imē maḥrātu*. Text in Weissbach 1911: 101.

¹⁹ DNa §1: [*ša*] *ana Dāriamuš šarru ša šarrāni mādūtu ibnū*. Text in Weissbach 1911: 87.

²⁰ XPa §1: *ša ana Ḫištarši šarru ibnū išten ina šarrāni mādūtu ištēn ina mute'imē mādūtu*. Text in Weissbach 1911: 107.

²¹ DPg §1: *ša ana Dariamuš šarru ibnū u ana Dariamuš šarri šarrūtu iddinu ina qaqqar agā rapšātu ša mātāti madetu ina libbišu Parsu Mādaya u mātāi šanētima lišānu šanītu, ša šadī u mātu ša aḫanā agā ša nār mar-ratu u aḫulluā ulli ša naru marratu, ša aḫanā agā ša qaqqar šumāma'itu u aḫulluā ulli ša qaqqar šumama'itu*. Text in Weissbach 1911: 85.

Obviously, all these texts are concerned to represent the King as possessing a divine charisma in the most literal sense. Called by the Wise Lord, he serves as the instrument through which divine purpose is to be accomplished on earth. Somewhat less obviously, the same passages also address the issue of unity and diversity, for they implicitly acknowledge that as a result of the Lie's action, humanity has fractured into multiple groups, each of which produces its own leaders who style themselves as kings, and this situation produces the possibility of competition, rivalry, warfare, bloodshed, disorder, and terrible suffering. The solution to this, as suggested by the phrases that name Darius "one king over many kings, one ruler over many rulers," is for the many to be encompassed by the one, as all other kings (and all other peoples) accept the leadership of God's chosen: the Achaemenian monarch.

Whereas all other variants signal this set of (complex and tendentious) ideas with a single well-chosen phrase, DPg alone develops the issues at length. It thus announces that the Wise Lord conferred not just kingship on Darius, but universal kingship: "kingship over this broad earth" and, going further, it reflects on the relation of unity and diversity within his domain by specifying that the "broad earth" over which the king rules has "many lands-and-peoples in it." And here, it is relevant to note that the standard royal titulary ended by naming Achaemenian rulers "King of lands-and-peoples, King in this earth," with the further understanding that the term translated as "earth" (Old Persian *būmī*) also denoted the empire (Herrenschmidt 1976).

DPg then offers a set of binary oppositions that organize the categories into which lands and peoples have been divided: the divisions to be overcome, if primordial unity and perfection are to be restored. As regards peoples, the primary division is that between those of the absolute center (Persians and Medes), as opposed to all others, with language as the chief index of diversity. As regards lands, three interrelated binaries are introduced: high/low (mountains and plains), wet/dry (sea and desert), near/far (this side and that side of the sea or desert). Implicitly, these also encode a hierarchy of values, suggesting that the ideal terrain is neither high nor low, neither so wet as to be chaotic (the sea), nor so dry as to be arid (the desert), but a land that is moist and fertile. Presumably, it was understood that this was the situation of the earth as it was originally created, and that the diversity introduced by the Lie's assault was a diversity of inferior forms, for each separate terrain came to achieve its unique identity only in the degree to which it deviated from primordial perfection, becoming a bit more dry, a bit more moist, a bit more high and rocky, a bit more low and swampy, etc., as a mark of its fallen state.

Fragmentation of original unity thus produced multiple different lands, each with its own distinctive people, speaking their own language, and differing from all others in its institutions, habits, character, and culture. What is more, each land — by virtue of its different climate and terrain — was capable of supporting different forms of plant and animal life, while the earth itself harbored different minerals, ores, and other resources. Some areas were richer, others more poor, but none possessed everything, and insofar as all lands and peoples lacked certain goods (understanding "goods" not only in an economic sense, but also with broader moral, aesthetic, and religious implications), general well-being and contentment were compromised. Alternatively, one could say that the unified, perfect, primordial happiness that the Wise Lord created for humanity as the last of his original acts had been fractured and pieces of it distributed across the now-diversified globe. It is this situation that the fifth act of creation was meant to redress, and the continuation of DPg — which is unparalleled in any other inscription — describes how this might be accomplished.

King Darius proclaims: Under protection of the Wise Lord, these are the lands-and-peoples who made this (palace) that is made here:²² Persia, Media, and other lands-and-peoples, with other languages, with mountains and plains, on this side of the ocean and on the far side of the ocean, on this side of the desert and the far side of desert, according to the order I gave them.²³

What Darius describes is the reunification of peoples across all the lines that divide them. At his command, all assemble at Persepolis and the palace itself is the product of their coordinated, cooperative, unified-and-unifying labor.²⁴ But how was this accomplished? The other inscriptions that accompany DPg on the city's south wall help address that question.

III

DPe also signals its interest in the problem of unity and diversity, albeit in subtle fashion. Thus, whereas the Achaemenian ruler is always given the title “King of lands-and-peoples,” only DPe calls him “King of lands-and-peoples, *of which there are many.*”²⁵ Like many other inscriptions, it follows the royal titulary with a list of the numerous lands-and-peoples (Old Persian *dahyāva*) that, to date, have been encompassed within the empire. Unlike the others, however, it specifies the instrument through which this has been accomplished (table 12.3).

²² Weissbach (1911: 85) read *ip-ḫu-rum*, and his reading was accepted by the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* in its listing for *akanna* “here,” which cites him and translates the relevant phrase “these are the nations which gathered here.” After studying the text once again in situ, George Cameron revised Weissbach on this and other points. His translation appeared in Schmidt (1953: 63), where the same phrase is rendered “these (are) the countries which *did this which was done* here.” Schmidt (1953: 62 n. 20) stated that Cameron had prepared a new transcription of the text that ought to be separately published, but apparently this was never done. Matt Stolper informs me (pers. comm., 9 January 2007) that having consulted all published photographs of the inscription, he takes the text to be defective, but believes that Weissbach’s *ip-ḫu-rum* (from the verb *paharu*, “to gather [intransitive]”) is impossible, given details of the

epigraphy evident in Schmidt’s plate 7b. Possible and preferable is *ep-šú*, from the verb *epešu* “to make, do, build”; also possible is *ib-nu*, “they made/built.” Presumably, this is what Cameron also concluded.

²³ DPg §2: *Dāriamuš šarru iqabbi ina šilli ša Urumazda aḡanētu mātātī, ša aḡā īpušā, ša akanna epšu Parsu Madāya u mātāati madētu šanētima lišanu šanītu, ša šadī u mātu ša aḡanā aḡā ša nār marratu u aḡulluā ullī ša nār marratu, ša aḡanā aḡā ša qaqqar šumāma’ītu u aḡulluā ullī ša qaqqar šumāma’ītu libbū ša anāku řeme aškunušunu.*

²⁴ DSf, DS, and DSaa describe the palace Darius built at Susa as the result of a similar process, and do so in some detail. See further Lincoln 1996.

²⁵ DPe §1: *xšāya θiya dahyūnām tayařšām parūnām.* Text in Schmitt 2000: 61.

Table 12.3. Introductory Formulae Preceding Lists of Lands-and-Peoples under Achaemenian Rule

<i>Darius, Persepolis</i>	<i>Darius, Bisitun</i>	<i>Darius, Susa</i>	<i>Darius, Susa and Naqš-i Rostam; Xerxes, Persepolis</i>
Proclaims Darius the King:	Proclaims Darius the King:	Proclaims Darius the King:	Proclaims Darius the King:
		The Wise Lord bestowed the kingship/ kingdom that is great, whose people are good, on me. He made me king in this earth/ empire.	
By the Wise Lord's will,	These lands-and-peoples, which came to me by the Wise Lord's will,	By the Wise Lord's will,	By the Wise Lord's will,
these are the lands-and-peoples		these are the lands-and-peoples	these are the lands-and-peoples
that I took hold of	I was king of them. ²⁶	over which I became king. ²⁷	that I seized far from Persia.
with this Persian army.			
They feared me		I ruled over them.	
and bore me tribute. ²⁸			They bore me tribute. ²⁹

If all the inscriptions consistently and obsessively proclaim the king as God's chosen instrument, DPe is unique in acknowledging the Persian army as the instrument through which that king subjugated other lands-and-peoples. In its closing paragraph, this text goes further still as Darius advises his successors on how they can complete the divinely-enjoined project he began.

²⁶ DB §6: *θāti Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya: imā dahyāva, tayā manā patiyāi ša, vašnā Auramazdāha adamšām xšāyaθiya āham*. Text in Schmitt 1991: 49.

²⁷ DSm §2: *θāti Dārayavauš XŠ AMmai y xšačam frābara taya vazrkam taya umartiyam, mām xšāyaθiyam ahyāyā būmiyā akunauš, vašnā AMhā imā dahyāva tayaišām adam xšāyaθiya abavam*. Text in Kent 1953: 145.

²⁸ DPe §2: *θāti Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya: vašnā Auramazdāhā imā dahyāva, tayā adam adarši hadā anā Pārsā kārā, tayā hacāma atṛsa, manā bājim abara*. Text in Schmitt 2000: 61.

²⁹ DSe §3 = DNa §3 = XPh §3: *θāti Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya: vašna Auramazdāha imā dahyāva, tayā adam aḡrbāyam apataram hacā Parsā; adamšām patiyaxšaya; manā bājim abaraha*. There follows one other phrase before the list commences ("That which was proclaimed to them by me, that they did. My law — that held them" *tayašām hacāma aθanhya, ava akunava; dātam taya manā avadis adārāya*). Texts in Schmitt 2000: 29, 91; Kent 1953: 141.

Proclaims Darius the King: If you should think thus: “May I feel no fear from any other,” then protect this Persian army. If the Persian army should be protected, happiness will be undestroyed for the longest time.³⁰

As this passage makes clear, the issue is not just conquest or pacification in a narrowly military sense, but the restoration of primordial happiness and the accomplishment of God’s will for humanity. Thus, Old Persian *šiyāti*, which means “happiness,” occurs twenty-three times in the corpus of Achaemenian inscriptions. All twenty-two of the other occurrences are in variants of the cosmogonic account, where it always denotes the last of the Wise Lord’s original creations: “happiness for mankind” (*šiyāti ... martiyahyā*).³¹ Considering DPe §§2 and 3 together, we come to understand that the Persian army was responsible for three interrelated accomplishments: (1) it inspired fear in all other lands-and-peoples; (2) this led those lands and peoples to pay tribute (*bāji*) to the Persian king; (3) this led to the restoration of a happiness that “will be undestroyed for the longest time,” that is, an enduring happiness that comes with the establishment of a Pax Persiana, imposed by military force, but opening onto a final eternity whose bliss and perfection mirror those of the era before the assault of the Lie.

IV

If DPg describes the unity of the original cosmos, fresh from the Wise Lord’s hand, and contrasts this with the lacerated state that characterizes existence in historic time, DPe speaks of the way to reverse this fall from perfection, pointing to the Achaemenian king and the Persian army as prime agents in the process. DPd pursues the argument further still, indicating why this role fell to the Persians and identifying the obstacles they had to overcome in order to fulfill their mission.

As regards the former point, the assertion is simple enough:

Proclaims Darius the King: This land-and-people Persia, which the Wise Lord bestowed on me, is good. Possessed of good horses, possessed of good people, by the will of the Wise Lord and of me, Darius the King, it feels no fear of any other.³²

Three points are worth making. First, the adjective *naība*, which here modifies Persia, is a religiously charged term that connotes a moral, aesthetic, and ethical status attuned to the divine.³³ Although the word occurs eight times, only Persia and the Persian kingship (or kingdom, the semantic range of *xšaça* encompasses both) are said to be *naība* by nature.³⁴ Uniquely gifted, Persia possess animate resources — good men and good horses — that give it an advantage over all other lands-and-peoples, but insofar as these are a gift of God, they bring with them a

³⁰ DPe §3: *θāti Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya: yadi avathā maniyāhaḡ: hacā aniyānā mā tṛsam, imam Pārsam kāram pādi; yadi kāra Pārša pāta ahati, hayā duvaištam šiyātiš āxšatā*. Text in Schmitt 2000: 61.

³¹ On the semantics of this highly significant term, see Herrenschildt 1991; Kellens 1995: 34–38; Piras 1994–95; and Lincoln 2003.

³² DPd §2: *θāti Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya: iyam dahyāyš Pārša, tayām manā Auramazdā frābara, hayā naībā uvaspā umartiyā, vašnā Auramazdāhā manacā Dārayavaḡuš xšāyaθiyahyā hacā aniyānā naḡ tṛsati*. Text in Schmitt 2000: 58.

³³ On the semantics and significance of Old Persian *naība*, see Kent 1953: 192; Herzfeld 1938: 266–67, with comparison to Ossetic (Iron) *nōib* “holy.”

³⁴ Note also DSp §1: “The great Wise Lord is the greatest of the gods. He created Darius (as) king. He bestowed the kingship/kingdom on him, which is good (*naībam*), whose chariots are good, whose horses are good, whose people are good.” *Auramazdā vazṛka haya maθišta bagānām haḡ Dārayavaum XŠyam adā haḡšaiḡ xšaçam frābara taya naībam taya uraθam uvaspam umartiyam*. Text in Kent 1953: 146.

divine responsibility. Everything else described as “good” (*naḡba*) becomes so only as the result of some constructive action undertaken by the Persian king, as in the following examples.

Proclaims Darius the King: When the Wise Lord made me king in this earth/empire, by the Wise Lord’s will, I made everything good (*naḡbam*).³⁵

Proclaims Xerxes the King: By the Wise Lord’s will, I made this colonnade of all lands-and-peoples. Much other good (*naḡbam*) was made in Persepolis: that I made and my father made it. That which is made that seems good (*naḡbam*), all that we made by the Wise Lord’s will.³⁶

Proclaims Darius the King: Much that was ill-done, that I made good (*naḡbam*). The lands-and-peoples were seething (in rebellion), one smote the other. This I did by the Wise Lord’s will, so that one does not smite the other any more.³⁷

Having been given a good land from which to work, a land blessed with good men and horses — who in turn will fill his armies — the Persian king works to make other things good. And because this task is divinely ordained, neither he, nor his army, nor his people need feel fear of any other. Rather, they cause others to fear, submit, obey, and bear tribute.

Immediately after commenting upon the fearlessness of the Persian land-and-people, DPd proceeds to identify the three greatest forces that cause fear and disrupt the state of happiness God intended for humanity. To recover the primordial state of unity, wholeness, and bliss, it is thus necessary to vanquish these dangers.

Proclaims Darius the King: May the Wise Lord bear me aid, together with all the gods, and may the Wise Lord protect this land-and-people from the enemy army, from famine, from the Lie.³⁸

Although this triad of ills has often been studied as a set, it is also important to understand them as a sequence.³⁹ Logically (and chronologically) first is the menace that is named last in the text: the Lie, whose entry into creation caused the loss of unity. Thus, whereas there is only one Truth, falsehood by nature implies duplicity in the most literal sense, that is, a deceptive duality that plays on the difference between the way things are and the way one’s speech makes them seem to be. The Lie thus manifests itself in countless ways, all of them corrosive of morality, harmony, decency, and order. Where true speech — in the form of promises, contracts, treaties, vows, oaths, solemn pledges, honest testimony, sincere acts of self-disclosure, and the like — binds people together, building trust and creating the basis for future cooperation, false speech does precisely the opposite, sowing mistrust, confusion, suspicion, hostility, envy, resentment, and hate. False speech — in such forms as perjury, heresy, slander, fraud,

³⁵ DSi §2: *θāti Dārayavauš XŠ ya θā AM mān XŠyam akunauš ahyāyā BUyā vašnā AMha visam naḡbam akunavam*. Text in Kent 1953: 144.

³⁶ XPa §3: *θāti Xšayaḡšā xšāya θiya: vašnā Auramazdāhā imam duvar θim visadahyūm adam akunavam; vasaḡ aniyašci naḡbam kṡtam anā Pārsā, taya adam akunavam utamaḡ taya pitā akunauš; tayapati kṡtam vaḡnataḡ naḡbam, ava visam vašnā Auramazdāhā akumā*. Text in Schmitt 2000: 68.

³⁷ DSe §4: *θāti Dārayavauš XŠ: vasaḡ taya duškartam āha, ava naḡbam akunavam. dahyāva ayauda, aniya ani-*

yam aja. ava adam akunavam vašnā Auramazdāhā ya θā aniya aniyam naḡ jati cinā. Text in Kent: 141.

³⁸ DPd §3: *θāti Dārayavauš xšāya θiya: manā Auramazdā upastām baratu hadā visaḡbiš bagḡbiš, utā imām dahyāyūm Auramazdā pātu hacā haḡnāyā, hacā dušiyārā, hacā draḡgā*.

³⁹ The older analysis of Benveniste 1938 now must be modified in light of Panaino 1986. See also Herrenschmidt 1991.

breach of contract, deceit, seduction, beguilement, treason, sedition, and so forth — not only produces concrete harm, it also breeds mistrust and resentment, driving people apart and leading them to resolve their differences, not through speech (which has proven untrustworthy), but through violent action.

The Lie thus gives rise to war, or at least to the threat described as the “enemy army.” Here, it should be noted that the term translated in this fashion (Old Persian *hainā*) had the most sinister connotations and was used only for non-Persian troops.⁴⁰ In pointed contrast, the much more benign term *kāra* was reserved for the Persian army or, more precisely for the Persian people-in-arms, since this word could also be used of the same men when they turned their energies to peaceful occupations (Benveniste 1969: 111–12). The threat of an enemy army (*hainā*) forced them to put down their tools of productive labor and pick up weapons, with the consequence that when the *kāra*-at-peace became the *kāra*-at-arms, the herds, fields, and crops were abandoned. Which is to say, once the Lie had manifested itself so powerfully as to cause war, the threat of the enemy army subsequently led to famine.

Clearly enough, the triple scourges were to be confronted and overcome by their opposites. It was not sufficient, however, for the Persian army to vanquish the enemy army, fighting on the defensive. Rather, the Persian army had to fight on behalf of Truth, had to conquer not only its military foes, but also the Lie that inspired them, and had to do so not just in one battle or on one terrain, but had to triumph over falsehood everywhere. Only then could all people return to peaceful activities, generating prosperity and surpluses sufficient to obviate all threat of famine. It is this situation — conclusive defeat of the Lie by the Truth, the triumph of the Persian army over all others, and the production of enduring global abundance — that Darius anticipated in DPe §3, when advising his successors “If the Persian army should be protected, happiness will be undestroyed for the longest time.”⁴¹

V

This brings us to DPf, the last of the set to be considered. After listing Darius’s royal titles, the text continues as follows.

Says Darius the King: On this terrace, here where this palace (or: fortress) is built, previously there was no palace built here. By the Wise Lord’s will, I built this palace. The Wise Lord and all the gods desired that this palace be built and I built it. I built it solid and beautiful, just as I desired it.

Says Darius the King: May the Wise Lord protect me, together with all the gods, and this palace, *and also those assembled here on this terrace.*⁴²

⁴⁰ The *daēvic* nature of Old Persian *hainā* and its Avestan cognate *haēnā* has been recognized since Bartholomae 1904: 1729. On the systematic opposition of demonic (*daēvic*) and divine (*ahuric*) vocabularies in Iranian languages, see Güntert 1914.

⁴¹ DPe §3: *yadi kāra Pārša pāta ahati, hayā duvaištam šiyātiš āxšatā*. Text in Schmitt 2000: 61.

⁴² DPf: §1: *ak Dariamauš sunkir nanri kat hima mur halmarriš hi kušika appuka hima halmarriš inni kušik*

zamin Uramazdana hi halmarriš u kušiya ak Uramazda hi zila tukminina nap marpepda idaka appa hi halmarriš kušika ak u kušiya kutta kušiya tarma ak šišni kutta šillak hi zila sap u tukmana. Ak Dariamauš sunkir nanri u Uramazda un nuškišni nap marpepda idaka ak kutta halmarriš hi kutta šarak kat hi ikka kappaka. I am grateful to Matt Stolper for his kind assistance in the interpretation of this passage.

In contrast to the three other inscriptions with which this one is grouped, DPf has an immediacy and an almost deictic quality to it. It speaks of the very place on which it is inscribed and of the people assembled on that place.⁴³ Nothing in this inscription addresses the question of who these people are, what brings them to Persepolis, or what is their relation to the building and the king. All those questions, however, do receive oblique attention in the inscription placed right beside DPf: DPg, the text with which we began.

Under the protection of the Wise Lord, *these are the lands-and-peoples who made this (palace) that is made here*: Persia, Media, and other lands, with other languages, with mountains and plains ... etc.⁴⁴

Although Darius states in DPf that he himself built the palace, while giving credit to all the diverse lands-and-peoples of the empire in DPg, there is no contradiction between the two texts. Rather, construction of the capital city is ultimately credited to the Wise Lord, who works through the king, just as the king works through the labor force that he assembled. Of particular note, however, is the international nature of that labor force, which came from every part of the empire — “Persia, Media, and other lands, with other languages” — bringing distinctive skills, tools, and materials with them. The palace is thus construed as something like the inverse image of the Biblical Tower of Babel, that is, the product of international collaboration, where human difference, as measured by language, was dissolved, rather than created. Or, to put the point back into an Iranian frame of reference, the construction of the palace constituted the reversal of the Lie’s primordial assault and the reunification of a previously sundered humanity.

Ongoing use of the palace also served to reunite peoples and goods, through the ceremonial presentation of tribute. One gets a better sense of how this act was theorized, however, when one realizes that the tribute bearers depicted on the Apadāna stairs bore *con*-tributions of things that had been *dis*-tributed as the result of the Lie’s assault, and the *con*-centration of those goods — also of those peoples — at the imperial center was the means of reversing the fragmentation and strife that had characterized existence ever since.

The relief sculptures depict delegations representing twenty-three lands-and-peoples as they bring tribute to the Persian king. Each of these delegations is led toward him by a Persian or Median official, and the order of the march reflects geographic distance from the Persian center. There is, however, no Persian delegation, as Persians were exempt from tribute (Herodotus 3.97; Wiesehöfer 1989). The first delegation is that of the Medes, led in by a Persian, after which follow Elamites, Armenians, Babylonians, and others, down to Libyans and Ethiopians at the end of the file.

Each delegation is quite distinct from the others in their physiognomy and clothing, and the artists were so concerned to depict national, racial, and cultural difference that the reliefs have been called a veritable ethnographic museum (Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989: 251). Painstaking attention was also given to the different animals each delegation brought with it and the material objects they conferred, down to the containers in which these were carried

⁴³ Other prayer formulae ask the Wise Lord to protect the King, his household, the Persian land-and-people, the kingship/kingdom, and all that the King has built (AsH §2, DPd §3, DPh §2, DNa §5, DSe §6, DSf §4, DSj §3, DSn, DSs, DSt §2, DH §2, XPa §4, XPb §3, XPc §3, XPf §5, XPg, XPh §5, XSc §2, XV §3, A¹Pa §3, A²Sa, A²Sd

§2, A²Ha §2, A²Hc §3, A³Pa §4, D²Sa). No other variant, however, seeks divine protection for the empire’s subject peoples. Here, once again, DPf is unique.

⁴⁴ DPg §2: *ina šilli ša Urumazda ağanētu mātāti ša agā ipušā ša akanna epšu Parsu Madāya u mātāti madētu šanētima lišānu šanitu ša šadī u mātu*

(figs. 12.3–4). So much so that it is easy to misread the relief in naïve democratic fashion as a celebration of diversity.

One must carefully note, however, that the relief captures all these people, animals, and objects as they mount the stairs, which is to say, in their very last moment of existence in the state of fragmentation and diaspora that has marked history since the assault of the Lie. Directly they stand assembled upon the platform of the Apadāna itself, all of them — animate and inanimate — will have left their provincial identities behind and been absorbed (or dissolved) into the imperial whole. At that moment, the state of wholeness, totality, and “happiness for mankind” that the Wise Lord made the crown of his original creation will have been restored, at least at the imperial center: a microcosm, where representatives of all the lands-and-peoples stand assembled, so the Great King can call God’s blessing upon them. Later, as surplus of all goods accumulates at the center, this can be returned to the peripheries. At that point, the entire world becomes happy, prosperous, peaceful, and whole once again, as history ends and a state of eschatological perfection opens onto eternity, thanks to the work of the Achaemenian king, the Persian army, and the tribute bearers of every land-and-people.

Or so the ideologists of empire believed and wished to believe. Not quite Frazer’s model of sacred kingship, nor a secular model of political economy, but — if I am not mistaken — something that might legitimately be understood as a theology of empire, in which the king is theorized as God’s chosen, who reunites the world and restores its perfection by processes that other, lesser-minded types might describe as conquest, domination, and tribute.



Figure 12.1. A Portion of the Relief Sculptures on the Apadāna Steps, Persepolis. Nine of the Twenty-three Delegations that Fill the Staircase Appear in this Photo (Walser 1966: pl. 3)

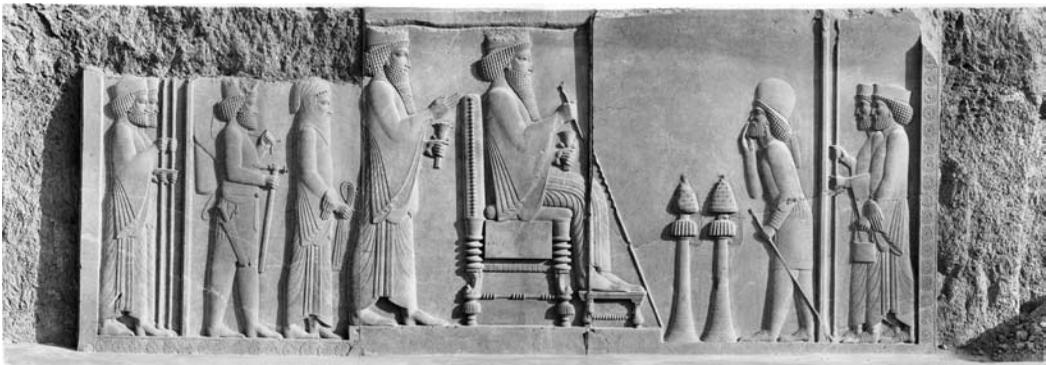


Figure 12.2. Relief Panel Initially Placed at the Summit of the Apadāna Stairs, Showing an Enthroned Darius, as He Receives the First Delegation of Tribute Bearers (Oriental Institute Museum P.57121)



Figure 12.3. Apadāna Reliefs, Detail. Contrast the Babylonian Delegation Above (led by a Mede) with the Assyrians Below (led by a Persian). Difference Is Marked at Every Level: Hats, Robes, Shoes, Beard and Hair, Facial Features, Animals, Vessels, and Gifts (Oriental Institute Museum P.29002)

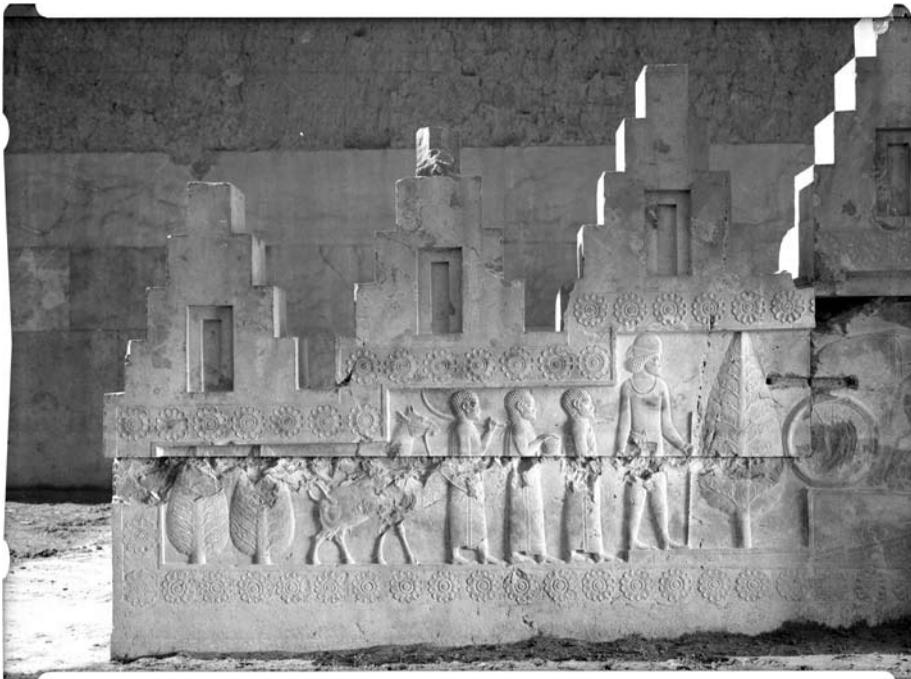


Figure 12.4. Last and Most Exotic of the Delegations, That of the Ethiopians (led by a Mede). Note the Giraffe and the Ivory Tusk that the Third Man in Line Carries on His Shoulder (Oriental Institute Museum P.28981)

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