Violence in the Behistun Monument: Construction and Cohesion of Achaemenid Imperial Rule under Darius I (522-519 BCE)

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Abstract

What are the challenges of studying violence in the ancient world? How should we define violence for historical studies? How do appeals to violent ability aid the establishment and maintenance of regimes of power?

I explore these questions in my thesis through an analysis of the Behistun Monument, Darius I's memorial to his victories between 522-519 BCE. I investigate the king's use of psychological and figurative violence in the foundation of the Achaemenid regime of power, after violently suppressing the rebellions against him.

In the first part of the thesis I outline the methodological principles of the study and examine the source basis. In Chapter One, I examine how definitions of violence arising from the social scientific debate can be applied to different ancient source material and studies. My methodological approach is based on a 'wide' concept of violence, which accounts for its non-physical aspects. In Chapter Two, I contextualise the Behistun Monument within the extant corpus of Teispid (550-522 BCE) and Achaemenid (522-331 BCE) artefacts.

In the second part of the thesis, I conduct a case study of violence in the Behistun Monument. In Chapter Three I consider the monument's figurative aspects: the relief image and inscriptions on the mountainside. In Chapters Four, Five and Six, I consider the inscriptional content. This analysis relates primarily to the 'violent rhetoric': descriptions of the battles fought and punishments inflicted in the course of the crisis and what these reveal about Achaemenid imperial ideology.

In the conclusion, I outline the benefits of using a 'wide' definition to examine historical violence revealed by the case study and propose further directions for study.

Impact Statement

This thesis examines the application of social scientific concepts to the study of ancient history and specifically the study of violence in the ancient world and the Achaemenid Persian Empire, established in the 6th century BCE. Violence is one of the most pervasive aspects of human social relations, as the study of all periods of history demonstrates. Despite its prevalence, understanding of violence is rudimentary, and methods for examining it are concomitantly under-developed. Stark demonstration of this comes from examination of the social scientific debate in which there is still no concrete understanding of exactly what violence 'is'.

My thesis questions the ways that violence has been studied through the lens of ancient historical sources which show considerable typological variation and emanate from a range of cultural contexts. I suggest a shift in focus away from examinations of physical violence, for which our ancient historical sources, and indeed those emanating from more recent periods, may not be sufficiently reliable. Instead, I examine how violence is implemented with the broader aim of controlling societies and maintaining political structures. This is 'wide' violence, a definition of the term which takes into accounts its figurative and psychological aspects.

Through the study of objects and inscriptions, I demonstrate that this type of violence was fundamental in the construction and maintenance of the Achaemenid Empire throughout its lifetime. This conclusion is drawn from concerted interaction with sources for Achaemenid history emanating from the Persians themselves. The limitations of 'classical', that is, Greek and Roman, sources for Persian history are well-known. However, understandings of this have not impacted on the way that Achaemenid violence, a most sensitive area of imperial governance, is studied. I draw attention to the benefits of engagement with the Persians themselves through their own writings and images.

Beyond this thesis, I aim to expand my contribution to scholarly debates around violence in history through publications in journals and with a monograph based on this thesis. The latter would provide a much needed intervention in the debate about Achaemenid imperialism as viewed through the lens of the Behistun Monument, our most important document of imperial ideology and practice from the period. Until now, conversations have revolved primarily around the monument as a source for historical events. I aim to publish my methodological chapter, Chapter 1, as a journal article. This, I hope, would

catalyse a debate around the possible contribution of social scientific approaches to ancient and other historical violence. I also wish to expand on some of the analyses I have presented here in separate articles on the use of Greek sources for the study of Achaemenid violence and imperial ideology.

The research I have carried out here will also inform my future teaching of undergraduate and postgraduate students, particularly in addressing questions of how the range of sources, texts and objects, used in the study of ancient history can be used to understand different societies.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the extra participation of several people, who have contributed immeasurably to my life and work over the past four years.

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<u>Introduction</u>

The study of history reveals that violence is not merely a social ill, but a social necessity: it plays a key role in human social relations. Violence is a generative force which founds new relationships of power and is central not only in the establishment but also in the maintenance of these. In this thesis, I examine the use of violence to found and uphold the Achaemenid Persian Empire, which endured for almost 200 years, following Darius' accession to the throne (522-330 BCE).

The Persian kings used their military ability to conquer the largest and most culturally diverse empire the world had yet seen. After conquering the Median kingdom ruled by Astyages in 550 BCE, Cyrus II of the Teispid dynasty spent a further 11 years campaigning throughout Urartu and Babylonia before Babylon and Nabonidus, the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire acceded to Persian military might in 539 BCE. Thus was the Teispid Persian Empire established. Cyrus' son, Cambyses, enlarged the empire further, conquering Egypt in 525 BCE. Both kings proved themselves to be outstanding military strategists, and ability in warfare remained among the central tenets of Persian ideology of kingship throughout the empire's lifetime.

Darius I ascended to the Persian throne close to 20 years after Cyrus found the empire. The new ruler derived his right to rule from his ancestor Achaemenes, while the earlier kings, Cyrus, Cambyses and Bardiya claimed descent from Teispes (Achaemenes' son). For this reason, we refer to the Persian Empire from Darius' reign onwards as the 'Achaemenid' Persian Empire, and to his predecessors as the 'Teispids'. Thus, Darius' accession constituted a regime change, and the new king set out to vigorously assert the legitimacy of the Achaemenid dynasty to take possession of the empire. Among Darius' various innovations in Persian imperial strategy, I am most interested in the development of a new representational programme, used to celebrate and cement the Achaemenid regime of power.

Persian military ability, and warfare, and their role in Achaemenid imperial ideology have been the subject of intense study.[1] These studies do not take for granted the violence involved in militaristic pursuits, though the focus is often on understanding strategy, tactics and the ideological importance of militarism in Persian kingship. A handful of studies have appeared in recent years which place Persian physical violence at the forefront of their analyses, relying for the most part on the testimonies of authors including Herodotus, Xenophon, Plutarch and Arrian. But the role of violence, broadly defined, in ensuring the stability of Achaemenid power has yet to be interrogated from a Persian perspective.

I re-examine the challenges confronting the ancient historian of violence and suggest that we re-orient the field to examine both physical and non-physical forms of violence in ancient relationships of power. I achieve this via an extended case study of the Behistun Monument, Darius I's memorial to his victory over empire-wide rebellion in 522-519 BCE, which takes a 'wide' definition of violence drawn from the social scientific debate about how we can conceptualise violence. Over the past 50 years, interest in violence, and the way that we study it, has been on the rise. Debates have revolved around key questions, including the validity of biological and evolutionary explanations for violence, how different societies remember violence, and the ethical issues associated with the study of violence in the modern world. Besides this, more basic questions have been raised around the possible definition of violence, and the scope of the term – whether it should be limited to 'narrow' (physical) forms, or extended to include 'wide' (non-physical) forms.

The Behistun Monument (Fig. 1) is the earliest known Achaemenid monument. Its creation preceded the construction of the two major Achaemenid imperial centres, Susa and Persepolis, at which construction also began early in Darius' reign. We call it the 'Behistun' Monument, after the mountain on which it is carved, which held sacred significance for the Persians. Diodorus calls the mountain *Bagistanon* in Greek, which he derived from the Old Persian *Bagastana*, meaning 'place of the gods.'[2] It overlooks

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[1]   See for example: Tuplin 2013, 2014, 2017, Young 2004 (a military historical analysis of the Behistun inscriptions), Lee 2016a, 2016b, Hyland 2008, 2013, 2018. See below, Rawlinson 1867 and Olmstead 1948 were most interested in Persian militarism, rather than 'violence'.
[2]   Diodorus Siculus 2.13.1; Bae 2001, 12.

the Kermanshah plain and the royal road which, during the Persian period, connected Babylon, Susa and Ecbatana, respectively capitals of the regions Babylonia, Elam and Media (Fig. 2). The location also permanently marked the site of the act which allowed Darius to seize power. In nearby Nissaya in Media Darius and his nobles defeated Gaumata, according to Darius a rebel posing as the Teispid heir Bardiya, son of Cyrus.
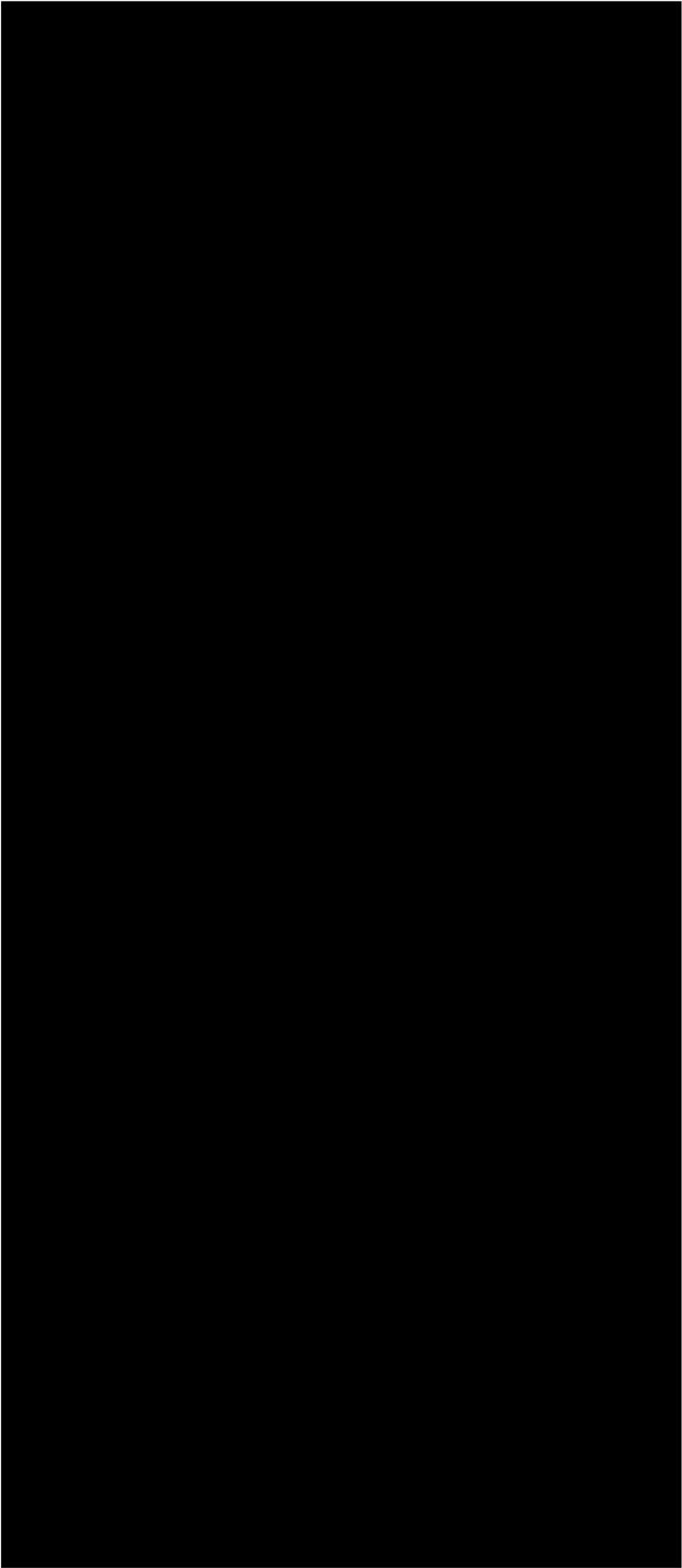
Figure 1 Line Drawing of the Behistun Monument showing placement of Inscriptions (Kuhrt 2007, 140, drawing Tessa Rickards)

Figure 2 Map Showing the Location of the Behistun Monument in Relation to Susa, Persepolis, Babylon, and other major sites mentioned in the thesis (ancient.eu/image/148/Achaemenid-empire-map/ accessed 11.08.19)

The monument measures seven by eighteen metres and comprises a relief image framed on three sides by inscriptions, in Akkadian, Elamite and Old Persian. In the relief image and inscriptions events from the end of Cambyses' reign, until Darius' third regnal year are depicted and described. From these, we know that the transition from Teispid to Achaemenid rule did not proceed smoothly. After Cambyses' death during the Egyptian campaign, Darius relates that a Media Magus he names as 'Gaumata', usurped the kingship. In his own words, the king narrates how he took back power from the Median usurper and restored the empire to its former greatness.

Following Gaumata's death, revolts against Persian hegemony erupted all over the empire, suggesting that resistance was catalysed by the fact that Darius himself was the usurper. Historians have long suspected that this was the case, as Olmstead wrote:

> We may state with assurance that the claim of Darius is false, that while, as he admits, the whole empire accepted Bardiya, when Bardiya was murdered almost the whole empire broke out in a perfect orgy of revolt against the assassin.

> Olmstead 1938, 399

The empire was embroiled in a civil war, which took almost three years to suppress (522-519 BCE), and presented the greatest existential threat to Persian primacy, until Alexander's conquests in the fourth century BCE. Darius' accounts of these events in the inscriptions on the Behistun Monument is the fullest ancient account of these events.

A translation of the Old Persian inscription on the Behistun Monument appeared in 1848, the culmination of several years' work by Major Henry C. Rawlinson, at that time an officer of the British East India Company army.[3] Rawlinson recognised the importance of the Behistun inscriptions for the future of Achaemenid historical studies:

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[3]   For this, he had relied on the attempts of numerous other scholars. Rawlinson 1848, 1-18 gives details about his interactions with this scholarship. Adkins 2003 gives a biography and overview of Henry Rawlinson's role in the decipherment of cuneiform scripts.

> Unless excavations should be undertaken on a great scale either at Susa, Persepolis, or Pasargadae, we must rest content with the sorrowful conviction that we have here, comprised in a few pages, all that remains of the ancient Persian language, and all that contemporary native evidence recorded of the glories of the Achaemenides.
>
> Rawlinson 1848, 18

Thankfully, in the many decades since the publication of Rawlinson's translation, numerous archaeological investigations have been carried out at the imperial centres of Susa, Persepolis and Pasargadae as well as in areas subsumed into the Achaemenid Empire, which have led to a much improved understanding of the workings of the empire at large. As a result, we can now count the Behistun Monument among a vast corpus of 'native' sources for Persian imperialism, including official declarations of imperial ideology in text and image, administrative documents, and glyptic imagery.

But despite the relative proliferation of material, the monument stands apart from the rest of the extant sources, because a majority of Achaemenid representational practice eschews a direct historical basis. The images and inscriptions on the monument are the only examples, in the whole corpus, of Persian representations of historical acts of violence. It is, therefore, our primary evidence for the use of violence in the suppression of the crisis between 522-519 BCE. More importantly, it offers an unparalleled insight into the ideological value of violence in stabilising the empire after the rebellions were suppressed.

In the rest of this introduction, I give a more detailed description of the Behistun Monument, and its image and inscription, followed by an overview of Persian representational practice. Next, I review the development of and the present state of scholarly literature relating to Achaemenid violence. Finally, I summarise the thesis' structure, and provide descriptions of each chapter.

1. Description of the Behistun Monument

As Bae has shown, the Behistun Monument was constructed in several stages.[4] In the first stage, the relief image was carved (Fig. 3). After this, identifying inscriptions (DBb-j) were added, labelling each of the rebel leaders in three different languages: Elamite, Akkadian and Old Persian. Next, longer inscriptions were added, in the same three languages, first the Elamite was engraved (DB AE), followed by the Akkadian version (DB AA) and finally the Old Persian version (DB OP). An extra column of text (Column Five) was added to the Old Persian inscription, outlining events between 521-519 BCE, and the original Elamite inscription was effaced and re-engraved elsewhere on the monument to make space for a depiction of the Scythian rebel, Skunkha behind the other rebel leaders with an identifying inscription (DBk) in Old Persian and Elamite. Finally, an identifying inscription was added above the figure of the king (DBa), also in Old Persian and Elamite.

Figure 3 The Behistun Relief Image (whc.unesco.org/en/documents/170204)

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[4]   The description is based on the reconstruction in Bae 2001, 31-57.

In the relief image, Darius is depicted in royal dress holding and bow and leading before him ten of the rebel leaders whom he defeated in his first three regnal years.[5] Two Persian nobles stand behind him bearing weapons, one a bow and arrow and the other a spear, insignia of their offices in the imperial organisation.[6] Above the king, a winged disc hovers, with a human figure emerging from it, offering the king a ring. This is the god Ahuramazda. The king stands 50 percent taller than his adversaries: 172cm tall, to their 117cm. Nine rebels are depicted, hunched over, shackled together by their necks and with their wrists fettered. Gaumata lies prostrate with the king's foot on his back. The rebel leaders are differentiated from the Persians on the relief by their stature, and posture, along with other physical characteristics, including their facial features, hair and beard styles and clothing, according to their individual ethnicities.

The image provides a static representation of the events described in the monument's main inscriptions (summarised in Table 1). There are differences in content between the three versions of the inscriptions, which I discuss in my analysis of the texts, but these do not affect our ability to give a general summary of the contents.[7]

The inscriptions are presented as if spoken by the king himself. Modern section divisions are made where the repeated phrase 'Darius the king says' appears. The king begins by outlining his genealogy, his descent from Achaemenes, and his legitimacy to exercise the Persian kingship. He lists the countries which are subject to Persian rule and gives a brief ideological statement about the qualities of Achaemenid kingship. After this, the historical part of the narrative begins, and this occupies the bulk of the inscriptions (DB OP §10-51 = DB AE/AA §10-40). The king narrates events at the end of Cambyses' reign. According to Darius, Cambyses killed his brother, Bardiya, before going on

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[5] For art historical analyses of the Behistun Monument see: Root 1979, 58-61 and 182-226, *idem* 2013; Feldman 2007; Rollinger 2016.

[6] Henkelman 2003, 124-129 discusses the use of ceremonial weapons as insignia in the Achaemenid Empire.

[7] Translations of the Old Persian and Akkadian inscriptions and the Aramaic copy were published by the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum:* Schmitt 1991 (Old Persian); von Voigtlander 1978 (Akkadian); Greenfield and Porten 1982 (Aramaic). See also Malbran-Labat 1994 a translation of the Akkadian inscription, including a grammatical section on 'Achaemenid Akkadian'; Bae 2001 gives translations of each inscription on the mountainside, and the Aramaic version, side by side. Parian 2017 gives the beginnings of a new edition of the Elamite version. New translations of the inscriptions are soon to appear which have, for the first time since Rawlinson's editions, been collated from autopsy reading at site under the auspices of the Bisotun epigraphic expedition: http://soudavar.org/bisotun-epigraphic-expedition/.

campaign to Egypt. After Cambyses' death, a pretender, 'Gaumata', usurped the kingship by posing as Bardiya son of Cyrus. This Gaumata kept hold of the kingship for around three months, until he and his foremost nobles were killed by Darius, and Darius took the throne. Once in office, Darius set about correcting the many ills Gaumata had inflicted on the empire and its peoples.

After Gaumata's death, Darius tells that rebellions broke out all over the empire and describes how he and his subordinates fought (and won) 19 battles against rebellious forces in the year after he came to the throne and describes the fates of the rebel leaders. These battle narratives are highly formulaic – a pretender arises in a certain region, claiming to be king or chief over the people, and persuades the people to rebel. After this, in each case, Darius either goes to confront the rebellious troops himself or orders one of his subordinates to do so. In most cases, we are told of no more than one or two battles to suppress the rebellion. The rebel leader is then punished, and each episode closes with Darius' statement that the region once again became his.

The battle narratives are laconic, though Darius habitually gives some precise details about each encounter: chronological and geographical data, and casualty figures telling how many of the enemy troops were captured and killed in the course of the battles, and those impaled after the battle was won (in the Akkadian version). He also describes some of the punishments inflicted on the rebels, which range from killing by unspecified means, to impalement and, in two exceptional cases, the king tells that he mutilated the rebel leaders' faces and displayed them before the city gates for all to see before impaling them.

After the lengthy historical section, Darius lists the pretenders by name, and the lies they told to make the people rebel. In the rest of the epilogue (DB OP §54-70 = DB AE/AA §43-55), Darius claims that the 'Lie' made the lands rebel against him, and that Ahuramazda allowed him to reconquer them and make them obedient. He exhorts future kings to protect themselves against the Lie, to keep the empire safe. He then repeatedly states that the account inscribed on the monument is the truth, and that it records events which took place over the course of a single year. He commands his successors to punish well liars and transgressors. He includes a warning to protect the monument, its

images and inscriptions, and bestows a blessing on the protector and a threat against the destroyer's progeny. After this, he lists the men who accompanied him when he killed Gaumata, and requests protection for them and their families. The Akkadian version ends here.

A further paragraph was added to the Old Persian and Elamite versions of the inscriptions:

> Darius the king says: by the favour of Ahuramazda this version, which I put opposite in Aryan, has been placed on both clay tablets and in parchment. I also put opposite (my) signature (and) I put opposite (my) lineage. And it was written down and was read aloud before me. Afterwards, I have sent this version everywhere into the countries, the people strove [to use it]
>
> DB OP §70 (trans. Huyse 1999, 47-48)

> Darius the king says: By the will of Ahuramazda, I made this version otherwise, in Aryan, which did not exist before, both on clay and on parchment. And I made (my) name and (my) lineage, and it was written and read aloud before me. Afterwards I sent (that) same version into all countries, the people strove (to use it).
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> DB AE §55 (trans. Huyse 1999, 48)

Interpretation of these statements is complicated by extensive damage to the Old Persian text, the difficulties involved in basing any restoration on the Elamite inscription, which contains numerous terms attested here and nowhere else, and finally the possibility that the Elamite version in any case diverges from the Old Persian.[8] No agreement has yet been reached on whether, in the first part, Darius is referring to the

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[8]   Huyse 1999, 45.

invention of the Old Persian script *ab novo,* or merely to the engraving of a monumental inscriptions in Old Persian for the first time.[9]

Interpretation of the final part is more straightforward. Here, Darius appears to claim to have had copies of the inscription sent all over the empire, and there is some evidence to suggest that this was the case. Fragments of an Aramaic version of the inscription were discovered at the Jewish colony of Elephantine in Egypt.[10] The version is believed to date to Darius II's reign (424-404 BCE), since Naveh identified the script used as being current in the late fifth century BCE.[11] Thus, Greenfield and Porten suggested that the copy was created to mark 'a reaffirmation of the loyalty of Elephantine Jews to the Persian crown', under the second Persian king to take the throne name 'Darius'.[12] In addition to this, two small fragments of a stele bearing a Babylonian local variation of the monument were also discovered on Babylon's Processional Way, a busy thoroughfare connecting the Ištar Gate with the centre of the city. According to Seidl's reconstruction of the stele (Fig. 4), it bore an abbreviated version of the image and inscription, written in Akkadian, omitting details of rebellions apart from Gaumata's and those in Babylonia.[13] It was made from basalt, a material of considerable value which was also difficult to carve, and thus a powerful reminder of the king's hegemony in Babylon. Seidl also tentatively suggested that the existence of this Babylonian version may indicate that the king's message circulated around the empire in other portable and visible forms, for the edification of Persian subjects.[14]

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[9]   HInz 1942, 345-349 first suggested this interpretation. See also Ghirshman 1965, 248-250; Hallock 1970.

[10]   Greenfield and Porten 1982, 2. This version closes with an Aramaic copy of the final paragraph of Darius' tomb inscription (DNb §3), see Sims-Williams 1981.

[11]   Naveh 1970, 35.

[12]   Greenfield and Porten 1982, 3.

[13]   Seidl 1999, 110.

[14]   *idem.*, 113.
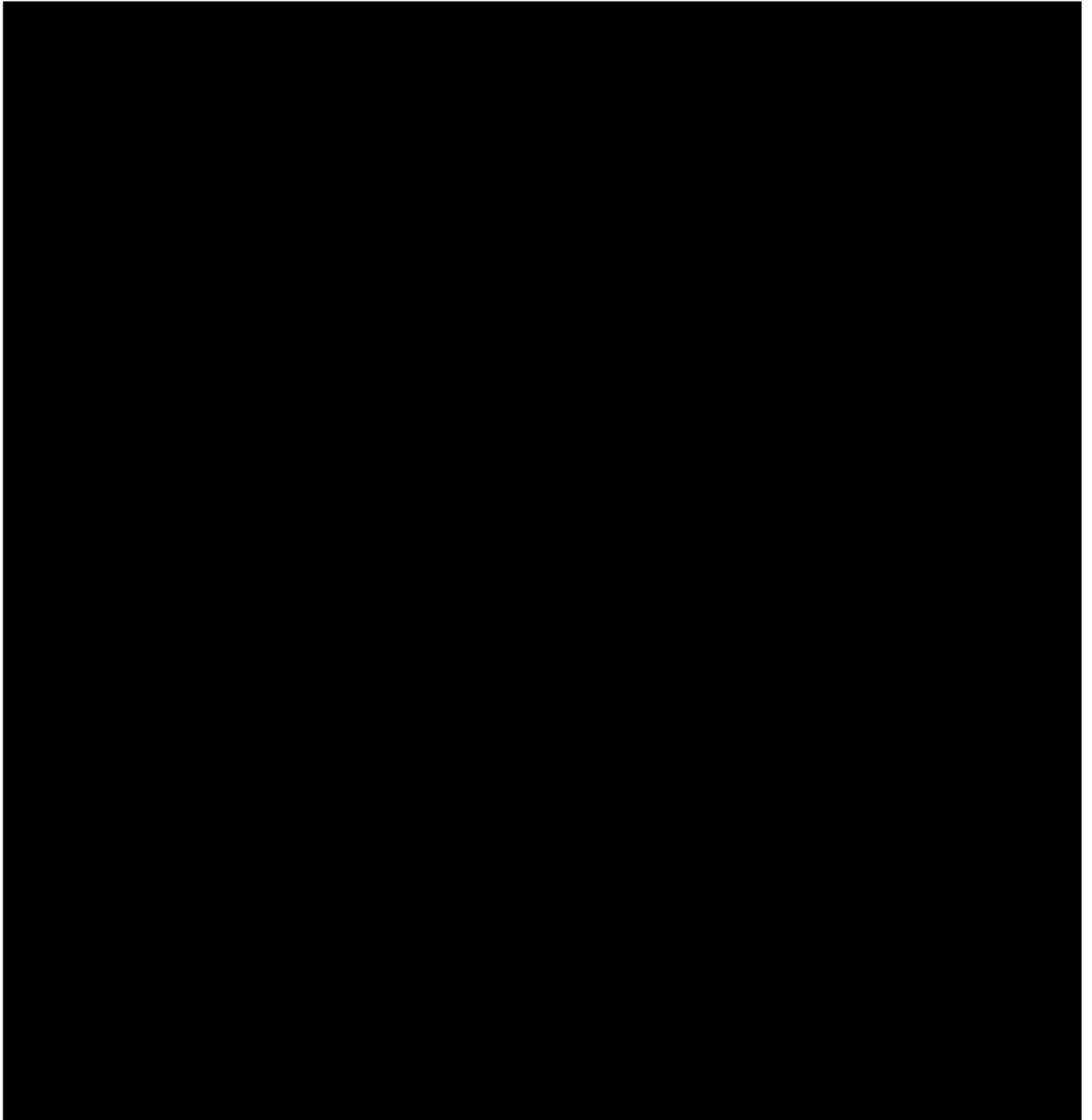
Figure 4 Reconstruction of the Behistun Stele from Babylon (Seidl 1999, 111, drawing C. Wolff)

After 519 BCE, a fifth column of text was added to the Old Persian inscription, in which Darius tells about events in his second and third regnal years. In his second year (521-520 BCE), the Elamites rebelled against the crown for the third time and he sent his subordinate Gaubaruva to take care of the rebellion on his behalf. After Elam was re-captured, the leader of the revolt was sent to Darius and executed (DB OP §71-73). In his third year (520-519 BCE), Darius went on a campaign to Scythia, to confront the rebellious Saka tribe. He defeated the rebels, captured their leader Skunkha, and made another chief over the tribe (DB OP §74-76).

Table 1 summarises the inscriptions' contents:

DB OP § = DB AE/AA §	
§1-9 = §1-9	Introductory statement, genealogy, list of subject lands, ideological statement
§10-15 = §10-14	Darius' story of the downfall of Cambyses and Bardiya
§16-51 = §15-40	Account of the rebellions
§52-54 = §41-42	Summary of military action
§55-67 = §43-53	Admonitions to posterity
§68-69 = §54-55*	List of Darius' helpers in slaying Gaumata, request for their protection
§70 = §55**	Darius claims he invented the Old Persian script
§71-76 (Column Five)	Account of second and third regnal years, the rebellions of the Elamite and the Saka

*End of Akkadian inscription

**End of Elamite inscription

Table 1 Summary of the Behistun Inscriptions.

2. A Note on Translations and Transliterations in the Thesis

Despite the proliferation of Achaemenid inscriptions, access to this material does not always prove straightforward. The *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* series furnishes editions of the Old Persian, Akkadian and Aramaic versions of the Behistun inscriptions, which include transliterations of the original text as reconstructed by the authors, and their own translations, [15] as well as the Old Persian versions of inscriptions from Persepolis and Naqš-i Rustam.[16] From a practical perspective, Bae's 2001 dissertation

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[15]   See above n. 7.

[16]   Schmitt 2000.

has proved invaluable in the course of researching and writing this thesis, since it is as yet the only single edition of each of the texts displayed side by side.

In this thesis, quotations from the Akkadian version of the inscription are my own translation, while I refer to Schmitt's translation for the Old Persian,[17] and to Bae's for the Elamite version.[18] New editions of each of the texts are being prepared by members of the Behistun Epigraphic Expedition, who have conducted autopsy readings of the texts on site.[19] This will be an invaluable tool for future students of Darius' monument, and I can only hope that these new readings will not refute the major conclusions I draw in my own study.

In cases where each version of the Behistun inscription reported the same, or practically the same, information, I have included a transliteration of the Akkadian version to support my translation. This is because the Akkadian version contains the most violent detail of any of the inscriptions, so I was bound to include more references to it in any case.[20] Where I discuss variations between the versions of the text I do not include Elamite or Old Persian transliterations except in cases of major variation which affected the sense of these passages by comparison with other versions. Wherever I have included quotations from the inscriptions, in any language, I have given the section number of all three versions. The Akkadian and Elamite section numbering is identical, but the Old Persian diverges from this. I use the sigla DB OP, DB AE, DB AA, to refer to the Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian versions respectively.

Apart from the Behistun inscriptions it has of course been necessary to refer on occasion to other Achaemenid inscriptions. For these, I have relied on the most recent publication of the texts. For Old Persian inscriptions from Persepolis and Naqš-i Rustam, I use Schmitt *The Old Persian Inscriptions of Naqš-i Rustam and Persepolis* (2000). For inscriptions from Susa and elsewhere, I have relied on Kent *Old Persian* (1953), and in

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[17]   *idem* 1991.
[18]   Bae 2001.
[19]   More information: http://soudavar.org/bisotun-epigraphic-expedition/.
[20]   Discussed further in Chapter 3, Section 2.4 and 2.5.

rare cases where he does not include an inscription, I have used Lecoq *Les inscriptions de la Perse achéménide* (1997).

The Behistun inscriptions apart, a major challenge has been tracking down original copies of other Achaemenid inscriptions in Akkadian and Elamite transliteration. On occasion, I refer to variations between multilingual versions of Achaemenid inscriptions. Lecoq usefully supplies notes on variations between the different language versions of inscriptions, though his work does not include original versions.[21] Where I do refer to them, I use Lecoq's translations, which I have adapted from the French. Where it has been impossible to track down the original language of inscriptions, in most cases the Elamite or Akkadian versions, I exclude a transliteration. For translations of hieroglyphic inscriptions, I have had to rely on Posener's reconstructions, again with my own translations from the French.[22]

For translations and transliterations from Neo-Assyrian sources, I have used the RINAP, RIMA and SAA volumes. Where I have quoted from Greek literature, I have excluded transliterations of the original language. For these translations, I have relied on the most up to date Loeb editions.

3. Literature Review: Achaemenid violence from the Decipherment of Cuneiform to the Present

Prior to the decipherment of Old Persian cuneiform in the 19th century, the history of the Achaemenid Empire and its kings was known primarily from the works of Classical authors, especially Herodotus' *Histories*, Xenophon's *Anabasis* and *Cyropaedia* and the fragments and testimonia of Ctesias' *Persica* and the Hebrew Bible. These works have proved indispensable in reconstructing the chronology of the Persian Empire. Scholarship on physical violence used by Persian kings has so far focussed above all on stories in Herodotus' and Ctesias' narratives. I will briefly consider the overall aims of

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[21]   Lecoq 1997.
[22]   Posener 1936.

these ancient authors, and their presentation of Persian violence before proceeding to review more recent literature on the subject.

In the *Histories,* although physical violence is employed by both Greek and non-Greek peoples, Persians perform the greatest number of violent acts. [23] Wiesehöfer summarised Herodotus' narrative aims:

> The central topic of Herodotus' *Histories* is how and why the great figures of this world succumb to the temptations and dangers of rule… Herodotus assigns the full range of qualities of men of power to his Persian characters… in the end they all fail because of their excessive ambition for conquest.
>
> Wiesehöfer 2009, 175

Violence is part of Herodotus' moralising discourse and is a major feature of his characterisation of the Persian monarchs, from Cyrus to Xerxes. Herodotus' narration of Cyrus' use of violence is evocative of the rhetorical use he makes of violence to explain the relative fortunes of each Persian ruler.[24] On the whole, Herodotus' portrait of Cyrus is favourable; the king can be measured in his judgements relating even to the treatment of his gravest enemies after their defeat in battle. This is clear for instance in Herodotus' story about Cyrus' treatment of Croesus.[25] According to the narration, Cyrus decided to have Croesus burned to death on a pyre, along with 14 Lydian boys. He reconsiders his decision, however, when he realises Croesus' piety, and the Lydian king is saved by divine intervention. According to this story, Cyrus can reflect on his violence and attempts to rectify his mistakes.

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[23]   Rollinger 2010, 562-3 provides tables showing the attribution of violent acts to people of different ethnic affiliation. Persians perform 55 violent acts. Greeks are in second place with 32 total.
[24]   I consider Herodotus' presentation of Cambyses' violence in Chapter Two, Xerxes' in Chapter One, and Darius' at several points throughout the case study of Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six.
[25]   Hdt. 1.86-91.

On the other hand, Cyrus meets his downfall because he carried out excessive and illegitimate violence against the Massagetae.[26] According to Herodotus, Cyrus and his men ambushed the Massagetae army when they were drunk, slaughtering many and taking others prisoner. Following this, he refused the truce proposed by the Queen Tomyris and was subsequently killed during a confrontation Herodotus describes as 'the fiercest battle between non-Greeks there has ever been.'[27] Herodotus tale of Cyrus' demise provokes questions about the legitimacy and illegitimacy of violence. In short, Herodotus' portrayal of Persian violence serves primarily didactic purposes. However, to understand authorial motives, or possible connections between Herodotus' accounts and the reality of Persian imperial ideology, it is necessary to consider these on a case by case basis.

Our knowledge of Ctesias and his works is based entirely upon the fragments of the work and testimonia of his life found in later authors. There are 90 extant fragments in total from the *Persica,* spread across 50 different authors, including Aristotle, Diodorus, Photius, Plutarch and Xenophon.[28] According to the available information, Ctesias lived at the Persian court for between 7 and 17 years, early in the reign of Artaxerxes II (404-358 BCE), and acted as physician for the king and the women closest to him. The dates of his stay are either 413-397 BCE, or a shorter term of 405/4-398/7 BCE.[29] After returning to Greece, Ctesias composed the *Persica* – a work focussed primarily on events within the Persian court which he witnessed or heard about during his stay. Ctesias has been subject to a mixed reception since antiquity. Criticisms of the work have revolved around his narrative technique and the historical accuracy of his account.[30] But despite doubts raised concerning his reliability as a historian, the *Persica*

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[26]   *idem.* 1. 211-214.

[27]   *idem.* 1. 214.

[28]   There were others besides Ctesias who composed 'Persica', which also now survive only in fragments. Deinon is the most well-known among them, his work dealt with some of the same events as Ctesias, and those which took place after Ctesias' narrative ended. See Drews 1973, Stevenson 1997.

[29]   Stronk 2004/5, 102-104. Tzetz., *Chil.*, 1.85-89; Strabo, *Geography*, 14.2.15; Diod. Sic., 2.32.4; Phot. *Bibl.* 72 44a 31-34.

[30]   Photius preferred Ctesias' work to Herodotus' (*Library,* 72 p. 35b35-36a6), Plutarch was more ambivalent, questioning truthfulness in Ctesias' narrative (Plut. *Artax.* 1.2, 13.5-7, 18.4-5), but accepting certain statements without question (11.3, 13.4, 14.1, 18.1-4) while also criticising his narrative technique (Plut. *Artax.* 11.6). Strabo *Geography* 11.6.2-3 and Antigonus of Carystus *Historiarum Mirabilium Collectio* 5 both accused Ctesias of lying and exaggerating. Rawlinson 1858 77-9 preferred the *Histories* to the *Persica,* stating that the Ctesias had 'striven to notice by a system of 'enormous lying' to which the history of literature hardly presents a parallel'. Jacoby 1922, 2047 the value of the *Persica* was 'gleich null'; Cook 1983, 22; 1985, 206 the *Persica* presents little more than 'petite histoire' including 'the scandals of court, the machinations of

has become a more popular subject for study in recent decades. New recensions of the available fragments and testimonia, studies considering the genre of Ctesias' work, themes within it, and contemporary influences on it have all been produced.[31]

The overall impression of the *Persica* gained from the fragments is that Ctesias was preoccupied with the use of violence in the Persian court. As Lenfant remarked:

> The use of violence appears as a rule of the Persian court… the executions ordered are distinguished by the variety and the means, which Ctesias rarely fails to describe… the narrative also mentions methods that would appear more original in the eyes of the Greek reader… that Ctesias searched for the most sensational material is possible, but the fact remains that the king himself did not hesitate to display the tortures that he had inflicted. Did not Darius himself describe, in his Behistun inscription, that he cut off the nose, the ears, and in one case, the tongue of two rebel leaders, and that he gouged out their eyes, and that he displayed them in public before impaling them?
>
> Lenfant 2004, cix-cx (my translation)

Thus, she suggests that we need not entirely reject the narrations of violence Ctesias included in his account: they may reflect the Persian kings' overall willingness to advertise their use of extreme violence. Tuplin suggested that Ctesias' interest in wounds and tortures was a result of his medical background and wish to understand the psychological and physiological effects of such actions.[32] On the narration of certain forms of torture, however, he cautioned:

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eunuch chamberlains, unspeakable tortures, vicious harem intrigues', though he later conceded that the work might reflect some of 'the corruption of the royal court.' Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987b, 43 suggested that Ctesias should be seen as 'at best… an unskilled informant, who has preserved more of the literary tradition than of the factual history of Persia.' For studies of Ctesias' reliability or otherwise as an informant on matters in the Persian court, see Drews 1973, 97-132; Bigwood 1983 and 1989; Lenfant 2004 especially vii-ccvii, 2012 and 2014; Stronk 2007; Almagor 2012; Lenfant 2012 and 2014, Llewellyn-Jones 2010, Waters 2017. On Persian violence in the *Persica* see especially Rollinger 2010, discussed below.

[31] Stevenson 1997; Lenfant 2004; Tuplin 2004; Llewellyn-Jones and Robson 2010; Stronk 2007; Lanfranchi, Rollinger and Wiesehöfer (eds) 2011; Morgan 2016, 189-221; Waters 2017.

[32] Tuplin 2004, 336-337.

> The inclination to expatiate on this sort of nastiness could in principle come entirely from the desire to provide an excitingly shocking picture of oriental barbarity. The real test would be the way in which Ctesias' full text dealt with the other, more 'ordinary' forms of terminal physical abuse.

> Tuplin 2004, 337

Since everything we know about Ctesias and his *Persica* emanates from the works of other authors, each with their own distinct agenda and narrative style, it is not possible to gauge how the extant fragments reflect the original tenor of the work.[33] Despite the many obstacles to interpretation of the *Persica* and its violent episodes, reported by later authors, these have proved popular among those wishing to understand the mechanisms of Persian violence, and I examine this scholarship in more detail below. In my own thesis, Persian violence in the *Persica* is not a central subject for study. Indeed, evaluation of this could form the basis of an entire thesis. In my view, such a thesis would contribute to understanding the conceptualisation of violence among the audience for these works and not necessarily among the subjects of the work. Put differently, it may not enhance understanding of the role of violence in the Persian imperial strategy.

From the 1840s onwards, the decipherment of languages written in cuneiform scripts made Babylonian documentation from temple administrations and businesses, as well as the inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings available for study. In 1848, Henry Rawlinson's translation of the Old Persian version of the Behistun inscription appeared, the first full translation of an inscription from the mountainside.[34] After an interval of close to 20 years, Henry's brother George Rawlinson's *The Fifth Oriental Monarchy* appeared; a first attempt in the Anglophone tradition to collate information from the newly discovered and deciphered Near Eastern material with the more familiar classical and biblical sources.[35] This was the final instalment in the series *The Five Great Monarchies*

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[33]   However, see Dalley 189 Appendix which gives 'items for which the veracity of Herodotus and Ctesias has been challenged, but subsequent work by Assyriologists has shown the challenge to be ill-informed and wrong.'
[34]   Rawlinson 1848.
[35]   Rawlinson 1867.

of the Ancient Eastern World, histories of the Chaldaeans (Sumerians), Assyrians, Babylonians and Medians and, finally, the Persians.[36]

At the time of publication, Rawlinson's history was reviewed in several prestigious journals, and was subject to a positive reception. This, though Henry Rawlinson pointed out that since we now possess a narrative of events emanating from the king himself, that Herodotus' narrative of the end Cambyses' reign, the Gaumata's rise and fall, and Darius' accession 'must be received with considerable caution.'[37] The major criticism levelled at the work – well over a century after its publication – related to a conspicuous reliance on classical and biblical sources, and the use of the Iranian sources to supplement or confirm what was already known from these.[38] Sancisi-Weerdenburg suggested that this was most troublesome because it inaugurated a trend in subsequent discussions of Persian history,[39] which was not interrogated until the establishment of the *Achaemenid History Workshop*, discussed below, and their reconsideration of source analysis for Persian history.

Sancisi-Weerdenburg levelled a further criticism, namely that the work displayed 'a preoccupation with national characteristics that was current in 19th century historiography but is inadequate and outdated in the later part of the 20th century'.[40] Indeed, in each volume, Rawlinson included a section entitled: 'Character, Manners and Customs, Dress etc., of the People'. In these sections, among other qualities, Rawlinson made his comments about the violence of each monarchy. He considered violence to have been a part of everyday life throughout all periods in the Near East. Noting for example, he noted that Babylonian treatment of their enemies betrayed 'a savage and inhuman temper… common in Asiatics, but none the less reprehensible on that account'.[41]

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[36]   Rawlinson 1862-1867 later expanded to include two further histories, of the Parthian and Sassanian monarchies.
[37]   Rawlinson 1848, 187; DB OP §1-15 = DB AA/AE §1-14. On the brothers Henry and George, and their individual approaches to Near Eastern history see Harrison 2013.
[38]   Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987c, 128.
[39]   Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987c, 128. This is evident not only in the works of Rawlinson and Olmstead surveyed here, but even until Cook 1983, 230: 'as regards the qualities of the Persians… clearly they were not a people that we should call intellectual.'
[40]   Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987c, 130.
[41]   Rawlinson 1865, 332.

George Rawlinson was most preoccupied with violence as it manifested in the military organisation and tactics of each people. He admired those who were more distinguished in this respect (like the Assyrians and the Persians), and disdained those who were not (like the Sumerians and the Babylonians). Besides military matters he also alluded to punishment practices. Persian punishments, he notes, were lenient by comparison with some of their predecessors, but they nonetheless employed cruel and barbarous methods in the everyday exercise of tyranny, and in legal punishments.[42]

Despite his conviction that each of the monarchies surveyed was especially violent, George Rawlinson considered that the Persians, especially under Cyrus, exercised a remarkably benevolent form of imperialism – because it was devoid of religious violence. Shortly after the discovery and translation of the Cyrus Cylinder, he stated:

> (Cyrus was) so broad in his views as to be willing to identify his own Ahuramazda alike with the One God of the Jews, and with the chief god of any and every religious systems with which he came into contact… his tolerance of the religion (of the Jews) was not peculiar, but part of a general system of tolerance.
>
> Rawlinson 1880, 93-94

The suggestion, which was put forward by his brother in the same year,[43] was that, according to the evidence of the cylinder's inscription, Cyrus was especially 'tolerant' of religions besides his own. This owed primarily to a statement in the inscription:

> *ištu Šuanna adi Aššur u Šušan Akade Ešnunnak Zamban Me-Turnu Deri adi pāṭ Quti māhāza eberti Idiqlat ša ištu panama nadû šubatsun ilī āšib libbišunu ana ašrišunu utērma ušarmâ šubat dāriāta kullat nišīšunu upahhiramma utēr dadmīšun*
>
> For [Šuanna] to Aššur and Susa, Agade, Ešnunna, Zabbān, Mê-Turān, Dēr, as far as the border of the land of the Gutians, (and) cult-centres on the opposite

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42   Rawlinson 1867, 140-142.
43   Rawlinson 1880, 82.

side of the Tigris River whose dwellings had previously been in ruins – I returned the deities who live inside them to their (proper) places and I made (them) reside in their eternal dwelling(s). I gathered (together) all the people and returned (them to) their settlements.

CB §30-32

Upon the discovery and translation of the Cyrus Cylinder inscription, this passage was used to corroborate statements in the Hebrew Bible about Cyrus' benevolence towards the Jewish people living in Babylonian captivity and the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem:

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfil the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it into writing: 'This is what Cyrus king of Persia say: 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord.

Ezra 1.1-3[44]

The Cyrus Cylinder is still the most famous Persian artefact, and popular interpretations of its content still refer to its inscription as for example enshrining 'humanitarian ideals of freedom, respect for cultural diversity and inclusiveness'.[45] Scholarly interpretations are more equivocal about Persian tolerance of their subjects' cultural and religious norms, and the motivations behind it. In the first place, the Cyrus Cylinder is not a straightforward declaration of imperial policy. As Amélie Kuhrt noted 'the main significance of the text lies in the insight it provides into the mechanisms used by Cyrus to legitimise his

[44]   Also Isaiah 45; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23. On the portrayal of Persian rulers in the Hebrew Bible and problems with biblical sources for Achaemenid history see Ackroyd 1988 and 1990.
[45]   This is the explanation given by the Farhang Foundation for the decision to use the form of the Cyrus Cylinder as inspiration for design of the 'Freedom Sculpture' unveiled in 2017, a monument celebrating religious freedom, cultural diversity and inclusiveness, on Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles http://freedomsculpture.org/ (accessed on: 4.7.2019).

conquest of Babylon by manipulating local traditions'.[46] Besides this, though it is true that the Persian kings did not impose a state language or religion on the peoples of the empire, as Harrison pointed out: 'to applaud the Persians for not proselytising, for not imposing their own cults more broadly, is to give them credit for something that they could scarcely have thought to do.'[47] In the context of the Achaemenid Empire, 'tolerance' is an anachronistic term, simple 'acceptance' may better described their attitudes towards their subjects' cultural and religious norms. Adoption of a policy of 'acceptance' may simply be regarded as the most politically expedient solution to the problem of imperial diversity.

The Fifth Oriental Monarchy remained the definitive Anglophone history of the Persian Empire for more than eighty years, until the publication of Olmstead's *History of the Persian Empire.*[48] Olmstead treated violence, especially punishment, in a similarly laconic manner as Rawlinson, scattering references gleaned from classical sources throughout the work, such as:

> Punishments for crimes were severe. As a matter of course, offenses against the state, against the person of the king or of his family, or even against his property were liable to the death penalty. Of this character is the majority of punishments described by the Greek authors; they were often horrible. There is little information on the punishment for ordinary crimes, but mutilation of hands or feet or blinding appears to have been common.
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> Olmstead 1948, 130

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[46]   Kuhrt 1983, 93.

[47]   Harrison 2010, 83. See also Assmann 2008, 30-31 and 144 who discusses the general absence of 'religious violence' in polytheistic societies, which he argues is only a feature of monotheistic societies and Dadamayev 1999, 279 who goes further, suggesting that the Persians may even have been actively avoiding sharing their gods with others, in order to deprive them of the benefits they could bestow.

[48]   In his preface, Olmstead 1948, vii explained that this resulted from the fact that 'Rawlinson possessed virtually all the sources even now available for the general narrative and for the culture in general.' The idea that these sources could be subject to a re-evaluation was not at the forefront of Olmstead's concerns in composing the new history of the Persian Empire, as it had been for the other four 'Ancient Oriental Monarchies' which 'have long since been hopelessly antiquated'.

The brief allusions both Rawlinson and Olmstead made to Persian punishment practice denote that they did not consider it a serious subject for study – military matters took precedence over this. Moreover, when they talk about other kinds of physical violence, it is clear from the anecdotal presentation of the information that they relied on classical sources despite the availability of the translated Behistun inscriptions and the clear references to punishment in them.

The significant gap between the publication of Rawlinson's and Olmstead's work, the latter being followed eventually by Cook's *The Persian Empire* in 1983, resulted not only from a dearth of new sources but likely also reflected a general lack of interest in Persian history. The meetings, and subsequent publications of the *Achaemenid History Workshop* engendered a renewed interest in all things Achaemenid. This was a meeting of scholars from across various disciplinary backgrounds, including Classics, Egyptology, Assyriology, Biblical Studies and Archaeology, which took place on several occasions from 1981 to 1990 and resulted in the publication of multiple volumes in the 'Achaemenid History' series.[49] One of the original aims of the *Workshop* was to establish an integrated approach to Achaemenid history, which drew focus away from attempts to create a chronology of events for which classical sources are most useful, and to pay attention to the whole plethora of material which could give a view of the entire society of the Achaemenid Empire.

'Violence' was not a pre-eminent concern during *Workshop* discussions. It appeared as an aspect of the 'orientalising' portrait of Persian civilisation gained from Greek sources – the overwhelming impression that Persian rulers were cruel and arbitrary in their decision making about punishment, and stories about Persian queens taking punishment into their own hands. Thus, for example, 'violence' entered Sancisi-Weerdenburg's study of the portrayal of Persian women in Greek sources, though she did not dwell on the brutality involved in the acts of violence ascribed to women.[50]

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[49] Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987a; Kuhrt and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987; Kuhrt and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1988; Kuhrt and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1990; Drijvers and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1990; Kuhrt and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1991; Drijvers and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1991; Kuhrt, Root and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1994.

[50] Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987b, 40 a list of acts of revenge by queens. Brosius 1996, 116 also comments on the attribution of violence to Persian queens, and notes that despite the relative proliferation of stories about this, the king must have maintained control over punishment in reality.

Though the meetings and publication of the *Workshop* engendered a renewed interest in the Achaemenids, and particularly in the effective use of source material for understanding the empire. This did not immediately lead to a surge in discussion about Achaemenid violence, likely because the *Workshop* also brought to the fore the ongoing difficulties associated with using classical sources, a key repository of stories about Persian violence. And how much more work it would take to uncover the complexities of these narratives.

Advances in the study of Achaemenid violence have been made only since the 2000s. Bruno Jacobs' 'Grausame Hinrichtungen – friedliche Bilder zum Verhältnis der politischen Realität zu den Darstellungsszenarien der achämenidischen Kunst' (2009) considered how the methods of execution attributed to the Persians would lead to death, and the disparity between accounts of Persian violence and their 'peaceful' representational practice. He argued that three modes of execution: 'Throwing in the Ashes', 'The Ordeal of the Troughs' and impalement, were institutionalised forms of the 'death penalty' in the Achaemenid Empire, though the first two of these are known to us only through the testimonies of classical authors.[51] In the second part of the study, Jacobs attempts to reconcile this image of violent Persia with that of peaceful Persians, which he says derives from their own representational practice – as it contains a conspicuous lack of 'horror scenes' by comparison with the Neo-Assyrians – as well as the image of Cyrus in the Hebrew Bible and the Cyrus Cylinder.[52]

Robert Rollinger's study 'Extreme Gewalt und Strafgericht. Ktesias und Herodot als Zeugnisse für den Achaimenidenhof' (2010) carried out a comprehensive examination of evidence pertaining to the existence of a Persian criminal justice system and the

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[51]   Jacobs 2009 121-146.

[52]   Jacobs 2009, 147-155; on the difference between Assyrian and Persian imperial representation see also Fuchs 2009, 65: 'it is their (the Assyrians') insistence on detailing their methods in words and pictures that is different' and Barjamovic 2012, 46. These works have emphasised this divergence, as a means to dispel any perception that the Assyrians really were 'more violent' than the Achaemenids, but I have not found any evidence to suggest that this is a widely held view. It is possible that the Greek sources, and the kinds of violence attributed to the Persians there, which are better known than the imperial representational practice of either the Assyrians or the Achaemenids, offer enough of a corrective to the apparently peaceful image of subject-ruler cooperation in Achaemenid imperial representation. On Achaemenid imperial representation, see further Chapter 2, Section 1.

reliability of Herodotus' and Ctesias' descriptions of Persian violence.[53] He compared the types of violence described in the *Histories* and the *Persica* with that attested in Near Eastern source material in diachronic perspective. He showed that scepticism towards both authors' accounts of Persian violence is well-founded – both, he concluded, coloured these to make them seem shocking, and always to appear as arbitrary acts dictated by the mood of the king or queen.[54] Overall, he found Ctesias' stories more tendentious.[55] This assessment may apply to the overall character of the original *Persica*, but as noted above, it is difficult to get to the original character of the work, as it is known only from later authors who adjusted Ctesias' stories in line with their own interests and narrative purposes.

Jacobs' and Rollingers' inquiries established the study of Achaemenid violence as an element of imperial legal practice, fundamental to the continued smooth running of the empire. Bruce Lincoln worked from the same premise in his interpretation of the punishment known as the 'Ordeal of the Troughs' in *Religion, Empire and Torture* (2007). According to Plutarch's account, this punishment was used by Artaxerxes II (404-358 BCE) against a Persian soldier named Mithridates in the aftermath of the Battle of Cunaxa.[56] I query Lincoln's conclusions and methodology in Chapter One;[57] here I will focus on the general impact of this study, which advanced the thesis that the Achaemenids relied on violence in the maintenance of imperialism.

In *Religion, Empire and Torture,* Lincoln examined the mechanisms of Achaemenid imperialism at length, and dealt with the 'Ordeal' in the final chapter, entitled 'The Dark Side of Paradise'.[58] In this, he argued that Plutarch and Ctesias had missed the symbolic importance of the punishment, in an Achaemenid imperial milieu, and therefore presented it merely as 'a spectacular theatre of cruelty,' and not as a serious legal procedure.[59] Following this chapter, he included a postscript on the abuse of Iraqi

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[53]   See Lenfant 1996, who gives a history of scholarly comparison between Herodotus' and Ctesias' narratives.
[54]   Rollinger 2010, 621.
[55]   *idem,* 610.
[56]   Plut. *Artax.* 16.
[57]   See Chapter 1, Section 1.2.1.
[58]   Lincoln 2007, 83-96 see also Lincoln 2009.
[59]   Lincoln 2007, 94.

prisoners at Abu Ghraib by US troops between October and December 2003.[60] Here he compares the actions of the Americans with those of the Artaxerxes II in Plutarch's report:

> The maintenance of imperial power depends on their ability to sustain or regenerate certain core beliefs, in spite of brutal experiences that threaten to demolish everything they have been taught to hold dear. To repersuade themselves in extremis, they may stage all manner of spectacles emphatically reasserting the conventional, but severely embattled, articles of faith. Some of these demonstrations are, no doubt, elegant, sincere and aesthetically appealing: the paradisal side of the story. Others, like those at Abu Ghraib and the late Achaemenian ordeal of the troughs, are infernal exercises in circular logic the results of which are desperately construed as confirmation of their increasingly shaky presuppositions.
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> Lincoln 2007, 105-106

Achaemenid historians Michael Kozuh and Henry Colburn reviewed *Religion, Empire and Torture* unfavourably.[61] Kozuh lamented the association Lincoln made between late Achaemenid kings and George Bush, 'the lazy, incompetent scion of a president, incurious in life, impudent in power, and not even remotely self-aware', which he argued would present itself all too readily to 'casual readers of this book'.[62] Colburn's criticisms were more serious. He condemned the work, especially Lincoln's explanation of the 'Ordeal', for 'the severe methodological flaws that inform in, and their potentially insidious consequences', further stating 'Lincoln has not interrogated his sources sufficiently, with the result that he draws his conclusions on the basis of a distorted, outmoded, prejudiced view of the empire.'[63] Colburn also criticised Lincoln's reliance on Ctesias, via Plutarch, for the 'elaborate and outlandish tortures that figure in his argument'.[64]

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[60]   *idem*, 97-107.

[61]   However, reviewers were by and large positive about the contribution of the book to religious studies and to the study of the Achaemenid Empire. See Skjaervo 2008, Gushee 2008, Gronnvoll 2009, and Hyland 2009.

[62]   Kozuh 2009, 290.

[63]   Colburn 2011, 87-90.

[64]   *idem*, 91.

Lincoln referred to those involved in the new wave of Ctesian analysis in his response to Colburn's criticisms. He suggested that Herodotus' and Ctesias' works could be considered 'something like a pre-modern post-colonialism inspired genre of history.'[65] In short, he argued, it was no longer necessary to hold the historian to account in the way that those involved in the *Workshop* had advocated, stating that Colburn 'transforms a once-necessary intervention into a rigid orthodoxy that guards against the dialectic progress of historical research.'[66]

Putting to one side questions around the authenticity of Ctesias' *Persica*, the violent episodes it contained, discussed above, and the validity of Lincoln's interpretation,[67] the Lincoln/Colburn dispute marks a key moment in the development of Achaemenid violence studies. It revealed the tension between seeking to evaluate the more questionable, or sensitive, aspects of imperial practice, and avoiding accusations of 'orientalising' the subject. This was revealed so starkly in the reaction to Lincoln's work because it was not intended solely for an audience of ancient historians or even academics, but also for the 'general public'.[68] Concerns about the wider reception of the Achaemenid Empire were highlighted by those who criticised Lincoln's case study because it revolved around a highly controversial account of a rarely attested and particularly gruesome punishment.

Two studies have appeared since Lincoln's which consider the meanings of types of violence used by the Persians as attested in Greek sources: Francesco Mari's 2014 evaluation of the removal of Cyrus the Younger's hand after his death at the Battle of Cunaxa,[69] and Yannick Muller's 2016 analysis of the religious significance of post-mortem decapitation in diachronic Iranian religious perspective, taking the cases of Leonidas and Cyrus the Younger.[70] Both studies, like Lincoln's, note that the classical

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65   Lincoln 2013, 263.
66   *idem*, 263.
67   See Chapter One Section 1.2.1.
68   Lincoln 2013, 255.
69   Xen. *An.* 1.10.1; Plut. *Artax.* §17; Photius p. 43b3-44a19 §64.
70   Leonidas' decapitation reported by Hdt. 7.238 and Cyrus the Younger Plut.*Artax.*13.2.

authors failed to understand the symbolism of violent acts in an Achaemenid imperial context.[71]

Mari argued that the removal of Cyrus' hand was a means of restoring order after internal rebellion, considering the importance attributed to the right hand in Achaemenid royal ideology.[72] Though Mari relied primarily on classical sources, he carefully deconstructed these, acknowledging that accounts of Persian violence derived from Ctesias must be received cautiously. The study marks something of a turning point in the way that classical sources are used to understand Achaemenid violence, they are not rejected out of hand, but rather considered on a case by case basis.

Muller notes that decapitation is the most frequently attested Persian mutilation in Greek writers.[73] He includes a lengthy excursus on the cult of Anāhitā derived from later Iranian source material.[74] Summarising the evidence, he suggests that Leonidas' and Cyrus the Younger's decapitations were actually a religious ritual: 'they ordered the head of the leader of the defeated army killed on the battlefield to be cut off as a thanksgiving offering to Anāhitā.'[75] Muller's reliance on classical sources was somewhat mitigated by the fact that he placed these accounts in an Iranian religious context, albeit not a strictly Achaemenid religious context.

The key methodological problems in studies of Achaemenid violence until now revolve around their dependence on Greek accounts of Persian violence, and the conspicuous disregard of the Behistun Monument as a source. The latter is surprising not only because it offers an unparalleled Persian perspective on the use of violence, but of imperial ideology in general. Until now, the Behistun Monument has been examined in numerous studies which are not focused specifically on 'violence'. The historicity of Darius' account has been a major concern,[76] especially the king's claim that 'Gaumata'

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71   Lincoln 2007, 94; Mari 2014, 94 and Muller 2016, 200.
72   Mari 2014, 84-86 and 93.
73   Muller 2016, 198.
74   *idem*, 200-209.
75   Muller 2016, 212.
76   Tuplin 2005; see references throughout Chapter Four to scholarship evaluating the casualty figures and chronological data in the inscription.

was an impostor and not Bardiya, son of Cyrus.[77] The relationship between Darius' and Herodotus' accounts of the end of Cambyses' reign, the imposture of the magus, and Darius' ascension to the kingship has also been considered.[78] Possible precedents for Darius' representational choices at Behistun have also been considered in detail.[79] New translations of the inscriptions on the monument have also appeared in the 171 years since Rawlinson's translation of the Old Persian appeared.[80]

Two studies have dealt with the violent aspects of the Behistun inscriptions. Lincoln's 'Rebellion and the Treatment of Rebels in the Achaemenian Empire' (2005) considers the rationale behind the variation in punishments of the rebel leaders, taking as primary evidence not the main texts from the monument, but the identifying inscriptions for the rebel leaders (DBa-k). He concludes:

> The eight men who assumed the title 'King' according to the historical narrative were regarded as rebels and were executed when defeated and captured… there is some evidence to suggest that the more formidable the challenge they posed to Darius the more terrible their punishment was.
>
> Lincoln 2005, 177

Other studies have confirmed the general validity of these statements,[81] and Lincoln's conclusions suggest the value of an integrated study. This should take into account all aspects of Darius' characterisation of the rebel leaders, the rebellions and the punishments, in the identifying inscriptions and the main inscriptions, as well as the relief image.

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[77]   Balcer 1984; Bickerman and Tadmor 1978; Zawadski 1994.

[78]   Young 1988; Beckman 2018

[79]   On the text: Balcer 1994, Pongratz-Leisten 2002 and Hyland (forthcoming). On the relief image: Root 1979 194-222 and 2013; on Elamite and Mesopotamian prototypes; Feldman 2007; Rollinger 2016 primarily focussing on Mesopotamian prototypes. On Elamite precedents for Achaemenid representational style see Álvarez-Mon 2018 and 2019.

[80]   See above n. 7.

[81]   This was also recognised by Nylander 1980, 331-332 and Young 2004, 281. I discuss the relative severity of the punishments in Chapter 6, Section 1.2. However, see Chapter 6, n.479 on Lincoln's methodology in this study, which is undermined by the fact that he only refers to the Old Persian version of the inscriptions DBa-k and DB.

Hyland's 'The Casualty Figures in Darius' Bisitun Inscription' (2014) provides a useful perspective on the violent rhetoric in the Behistun inscriptions. The casualty figures appear in the Akkadian and Aramaic versions of the text. Hyland studied the numbers of enemies Darius stated were killed or captured at the culmination of each battle. I will examine this study, and the inclusion of the figures, in more detail in Chapter Four.[82] The major general contribution of this study was in highlighting the way that Darius deployed violent rhetoric in the construction of an Achaemenid mode of imperialism which depended on acknowledgement of the king's violent potential.

An overview of present scholarship on Achaemenid violence reveals that classical sources still dominate the field. In the first place, this can be explained by the proliferation of references to Persians using violence in these sources. In short, they offer a tantalising opportunity to explore the symbolism of a wider range of violent action than any other corpus of sources for Achaemenid history. As we have seen, these have allowed studies to consider the symbolic importance of hand removal, decapitation, and other striking forms of Achaemenid torture.

Scholarship on Achaemenid historiography over the past four decades has advanced our understanding of the underlying difficulties in this material. Rollinger's study, which uncovers the motivations of Herodotus and Ctesias in including and framing this type of information in their histories is a good example of this. Harrison suggests that we are now able to understand the complexities of Greek sources for Achaemenid violence, explaining simply that:

> In a number of cases, what are presented, or appear as, excessive or barbaric acts in the Greek sources can be explained, in a Near Eastern context, as actions whose symbolism has been (wilfully or unintentionally) misunderstood.
>
> Harrison 2010, 60-61

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[82]   See Chapter 4, Section 1.

This comment encapsulates what Lincoln, Mari and Muller set out to achieve in their studies: to identify the symbolic importance of violent actions described in the works of classical authors.[83] But our understanding of the symbolic importance of violence in the Achaemenid Empire is still rudimentary, because we lack a full understanding of the concerns, contexts and debates which shaped these accounts. Closer evaluation should still depend on a more accurate contextualisation of the sources. Greek narratives may be more useful when they are used to deduce the nature of Greco-Achaemenid relations, Greek receptions of violence, or the author's personal interests and those of his audience. While these enhance our understanding of the society in which the narratives were created, they do little to elucidate the actual practice of violence in Persian society and that of the Persian Empire.

My thesis seeks a Persian perspective on the use of violence in imperial construction and maintenance. Acknowledging that the monument is an artefact of Darius' image-making practices, and that the accounts contained in the image and inscriptions offer only an idealised of events, I will *not* attempt to reconstruct the historical reality of 522-519 BCE from the king's narrative. Instead, I consider the monument an outstanding source through which to gain a Persian perspective on the use of violence, especially on the role of violence in imperial ideology.

4. <u>Structure of the Thesis</u>

This thesis is divided into two parts, made up of six substantive chapters. In the first part, I outline the methodological principles of the study and explain my choice of the Behistun Monument as the primary source. In the second part, I conduct a case study of violence in the monument.

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[83] Lincoln 2007, 94; Mari 2014, 80: 'in the following pages, I examine the treatment of Cyrus' spoils, and its symbolic value from the point of view of its political significance'; Muller 2016, 197 states that he was motivated to carry out his study of mutilation because 'alteration of the self is almost always linked to the way civilisations consider the body and religion is hardly ever absent from this conception.'

In Chapter One, I outline my approach to 'violence' throughout the thesis, which I have drawn from the debate around violence in the social sciences. Ancient historians have yet to engage fully with the outputs of these discussions, despite the inherent ambiguity and typological range of our sources for violence. I analyse examinations of various sources as evidence for violence, including studies of skeletal remains, ancient literature, administrative documentation and imperial representation in text and image. This investigation exemplifies the benefits and disadvantages of studying 'narrow' and 'wide' violence in historical perspective.

In Chapter Two, I contextualise and justify my decision to focus on the Behistun Monument as the central source for a case study of the use of 'wide' violence in the construction of Achaemenid hegemony. In brief, despite the range of source material available for the study of the empire, none offers a comparable Persian perspective on the violent dimensions of Achaemenid power. My reasons for rejecting accounts of Persian violence created by Greek authors will be clear from the literature review above. Meanwhile, of the material emanating from the imperial centre, only the Behistun Monument includes a ruler's own description of violent action. Besides official imperial representation post-dating Darius' victory monument, there are sources which tell of critical moments of Teispid conquest from the perspectives of Persian subjects, and Achaemenid sources which illuminate the conceptualisation of conquest beyond the Behistun crisis. These attest to the importance of violent ability throughout the empire's lifetime but offer less information about the precise ideological role of violence than the Behistun image and inscriptions. The overview of sources in this chapter also offers useful context for the case study of the monument.

The case study of the Behistun Monument occupies Part Two in which I examine the monument in detail, moving from a macro- to a micro-level analysis. In Chapter Three, I consider the figurative aspects of the monument: the relief image and inscriptions. The violence of the relief image has been overlooked since Darius' representational programme eschews a dramatic narrative basis; he does not depict any acts of violence in progress. Despite this it is a highly evocative image, suggestive of the acts of violence Darius inflicted on the rebel leaders. I focus on the king's physical characterisation of his enemies, which provided visual justification for the violence he wrought against them. I

also consider the inscriptions as part of the visual programme at Behistun, since they were illegible when viewed from the ground. As part of this analysis, I consider the violent impact of Darius' co-option of subject languages to create a multilingual imperial declaration, focussing on the significance of this in the context of the crisis.

Despite their illegibility, the inscriptions must occupy the bulk of any consideration of violence in the monument, owing to the relative proliferation of violent content in them, and the distribution of versions of their content throughout the empire. In Chapter Four, I begin by analysing the relationship between representation and reality in the inscriptions. I evaluate a remarkable aspect of the inscriptions: the inclusion of precise details about the progress of the revolts and their suppression. Throughout the battle narratives, Darius gives chronological and geographical data about the revolts, as well as casualty figures in the Akkadian and Aramaic versions. These have attracted much attention since decipherment because they offer the potential to reconstruct the whole progress of events between 522-521 BCE. [84] The accuracy or otherwise of the information Darius provides is a secondary consideration in this chapter. Instead, I focus on the motivations for including such details, and how Darius used them to emphasise Persian violent ability through examination of the patterns of omission and arrangement.

Chapter Four sets up the parameters for examination of 'violent rhetoric' in the inscriptions – descriptions of battles fought and punishment inflicted – in Chapters Five and Six respectively. In Chapter Five, I examine more closely Darius' admission that he attended only three out of a total 19 battles he describes taking place between 522-521 BCE, and commanded Persian and non-Persian subordinates to attend the rest. In addition to this, in his second regnal year he sent Gaubaruva to suppress the Elamite rebellion. The king's decision to rely so heavily on his subordinates, or rather the admission that he did so, was not motivated solely by practical considerations – even if he could not possibly attend each of the rebellions, he could at least in his report claim more credit for the victories. I suggest that by conceding his subordinates' pre-eminent role in the crisis, Darius aimed to construct a 'network of violence': a web of loyal allies positioned all over the empire who acted as extensions of his violent ability where he himself could not be present. In the chapter, I interrogate Darius' presentation of his

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[84]   On this see further Chapter 4, discussion and references throughout.

subordinates' activities, which ensured above all that they did not detract from narration of his own achievements and provided collaborators in the newly founded imperial project with a model of behaviour to follow, which revolved around the appropriate use of violence.

In Chapter Six, I analyse the punishments Darius says he inflicted on the rebels. Again, these descriptions are formulated to illustrate a new conception of imperial order and the violent dimensions of Achaemenid kingship. They are not a historical account of the punishments used in the wake of the rebellions. As such, they offer a limited perspective on the use of punishment outside the circumstance of empire-wide civil war. The modes of punishment he describes are impalement, facial mutilation, and decapitation, each of which were familiar in the empire's cultural landscape. Consideration of precedents for the use of these types of punishment in the second part of the chapter illuminates Darius' adaptation of conventional modes of punishment to suit the situation confronting him between 522-521 BCE.

In the conclusion, I summarise and reflect on the findings of the thesis. Reflections bear on the new insights my thesis offers on the violence of the Behistun Monument as an artefact of imperial representation, and the violent dimensions of Achaemenid imperialism and kingship as shown through the deployment of violent rhetoric in the inscriptions. I also evaluate the impact of this study for our understanding and further study of ancient violence.

Summary

In view of the pervasiveness of violence, in myriad forms, in human social relations, and burgeoning interest in it in the social sciences and historical studies, which ancient historical studies have yet to fully engage with, closer consideration of the role of violence in the construction and maintenance of Achaemenid imperial power is timely and necessary. In my thesis, I move away from treatment of the instrumental and practical aspects of physical violence in the Achaemenid Empire and towards an understanding the use of non-physical violence to order and maintain social and political structures. The

Behistun Monument offers an invaluable Persian perspective on the mechanisms of non-physical violence, and therefore an excellent starting point for re-orienting discussion of violence in the ancient world.

Part One: Methodological Principles and Sources

1. Defining Violence for Ancient Historical Studies

Virtually all writers attempting to come to grips with the phenomenon of violence find the concept either under- or over-defined, or both. They also report in other writers (if they not display it themselves) an amazing reluctance, or ineptitude, to resolve this confusion and put things straight.

Bauman 1995, 139

The problems of violence may be cardinal to a proper understanding of political life, yet the concept of violence remains elusive and often misunderstood. It was 1906 when Georges Sorel (1961, p. 60)… remarked: 'the problems of violence still remain very obscure'. Writing 60 years later, Arendt (1969, p. 35) commented: 'what Sorel remarked sixty years ago… is as true today as it was then.' We can confidently say that what Arendt remarked 40 years ago is also as true today as it was then.'

Bufacci 2005, 199

Introduction: What is 'Violence'?

What is 'violence' and how should we study historical violence? My method for examining violence in the Behistun Monument draws on attempts to define the concept in the social sciences. The proliferation of violence throughout the 20th century led to a surge in social scientific discourse about it. For my thesis, the debate around the definition of the term is most pertinent.

The quotations at the head of this chapter signal the difficulties that social scientists have encountered attempting to settle on a categorical definition of violence. Ancient historians are beginning to engage with the outputs of the debate, and the application of social scientific theory in ancient historical studies is not new.[85] It is, moreover, especially apt for the study of Achaemenid history, owing to the diversity of our sources. A recent call for papers, appealing to historians of the Persian Empire to engage with social scientific approaches, described our source material as: 'both frustratingly immense and too restrictive, with extant evidence often not directly answering the questions we wish to ask of it.'[86]

While borrowing from the social sciences to improve an understanding of violence in Achaemenid royal ideology, I aim to make a reciprocal contribution to the social scientific debate. The first of these is general; a further addition to the existing pool of violence studies moves us closer to a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. This is in line with Riches' suggestion:

> Violence is best understood when it is examined over a range of cultural settings, and in a full variety of social settings… a balanced account of violence in any one society is enhanced through the knowledge that violence in 'other cultures' can have a variety of purposes and take on a variety of meanings.
>
> Riches 1986a, vii-viii

A more specific contribution is in stimulating fresh debate about the possible cognitive effects of memorialising past violence through the creation of victory monuments. Close analysis of its image and inscriptions, in Chapters Three through Six, suggest that the Behistun Monument was indispensable in the foundation and stabilisation of the

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[85] A stand-out example is the use of Social Network Analysis (SNA) to improve our understanding of a range of historical periods, including the Achaemenid period. Waerzeggers 2014a, introduces SNA to cuneiform studies, and 2014b her study of Marduk-Remanni; see also Wagner et al. 2013; Troy-Samuels 2016, on the application of SNA to the Persepolis Fortification Archive. There is also a website devoted to the application of SNA in historical studies, which offers a full bibliography: http://historicalnetworkresearch.org/.

[86] https://www.helsinki.fi/en/news/language-culture/call-for-papers-the-persian-empire-the-social-sciences-and-ancient-historiography-helsinki-9-11-jan.-2019.

Achaemenid Persian Empire in the wake of a major crisis. In this sense, it is inherently 'violent' because it was an ineffaceable reminder of the Persians' violent victory. Moreover, Darius circulated his account of the crisis throughout the empire. This was a carefully constructed reminder of the violence with which he established an Achaemenid regime of power. In all, the monument and its message are the pre-eminent marker of the controlling and coercive aspects of Achaemenid dominance.

I have divided this chapter into three sections, each guided by one of three central propositions about the 'definition' of violence from the social scientific debate:

1. We should define violence 'narrowly' – as physical harm.
2. Violence can be defined more 'widely' to include structural, psychological, and metaphorical types.
3. A unitary conception of violence is not useful for its examination across a range of social and cultural contexts.

In the first section, I question whether examination of 'narrow' violence is always the most productive line of enquiry in ancient historical studies. The major disadvantage is that most such studies do little to enhance our understanding of the broader socio-cultural contexts in which the violence examined took place. I examine the outputs of studies considering bioarchaeological data and literary sources for the use of physical violence in the ancient world.

In the second section, I consider the concept of 'wide' violence, which places emphasis on the importance of structural, figurative and psychological violence. In the first part of this section, I establish the utility of a wide concept of violence for ancient historical studies, by examining select developments in Babylonian archival studies and scholarly approaches to the representation of violence in Neo-Assyrian palatial artwork, which rejects a view of these artefacts as documents of practice. The focus of these studies – the prospective audience for violent representations – uncovers Assyrian use of figurative violence in the creation of empire.

Finally, I consider the third proposition, which suggests that we allow ourselves to formulate and re-formulate our approach to studying violence depending on context. For ancient historical studies the defining factor, as it were, is the type of historical source at our disposal. Analysis of the Behistun Monument can reveal the role of figurative violence in the construction and maintenance of the Achaemenid imperial regime.

1. Violence is 'narrow': the use of physical force causing or intending to cause harm

'Narrow' violence is the most familiar definition of violence, which limits it to the use of direct physical force causing or threatening to cause bodily harm. The advantages of maintaining this definition of violence is that it furnishes us with clear boundaries to follow, and acts of physical violence are also easier to recognise and more difficult to mistake. In defence of 'narrow' violence, as the only definition of violence, Coady highlighted the absence of political overtones or authorial motivations stating that 'I think myself that it is the most politically neutral of the definitional types.'[87] For the study of ancient history, Riess proposed: 'only the application of a narrow definition of violence enables the historian to analyse a vast body of sources under a coherent set of questions.'[88] Finally, Imbusch stated that the 'narrow' definition is favoured, since it 'has no cultural preconditions, is universally effective, and does not first have to be understood', in other words, this definition is cross-culturally applicable as an analytical concept to identify 'violence'.[89]

The disadvantages of a restricted definition are less obvious. In the first instance, taking this restricted definition of violence, we are more easily side-tracked by questions of legitimacy. As Blok noted, misconceptions about the use of violence throughout history arise from 'the emotional value attached to violence in modern societies', and the dominant instinct to understand the 'instrumental' or technical, rather than the

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[87]   Coady 1986, 4. Is the strongest proponent of this definition; see also Riches 1986a who defends the restricted definition of violence on the basis that it is not easily mistaken, but in incorporating questions legitimacy complicated judgements of what constitutes even 'narrow' violence.

[88]   Riess 2012, 2.

[89]   Imbusch 2003, 23.

'expressive', or ritual and symbolic, aspects of violence.[90] He argued that it should be considered 'as a historically developed cultural form or construction'.[91] Malešević also argued that 'rather than being senseless and irrational activities driven by sadistic impulses or 'animalistic savagery'… extreme forms of violence were in fact a product of social development'.[92] Bufacci highlighted simply that a narrow conception of violence 'fails to appreciate the complexity of violence… not all violence is physical.'[93]

Ancient historical studies have so far privileged the concept of 'narrow' violence. Below, I consider two types of study which have attempted to locate physical violence in the historical record through bioarchaeological data, and through analysis of literary sources. The profitability of these studies has been varied, especially in providing more than anecdotal information about the use of physical violence in the past rather than making a substantial contribution to our understanding of violence in society. On the other hand, the Behistun Monument cannot be considered in the same category of evidence for historical acts of violence as the sources taken by these researchers, as it constitutes a representation of violence through which we are therefore able to study Darius' use of figurative and psychological violence in the wake of the crisis.

1.1.   Bioarchaeological Investigation of Physical Violence

Technological advances over the past few decades have significantly improved the capacity of paleo-forensic examinations to detect and explain signs of traumatic injury on skeletal remains. Having identified signs of trauma, bioarchaeologists may also ascertain whether the injuries occurred ante-, peri- or post-mortem. Walker claimed that the study of skeletal remains offers the only direct, and therefore most valuable, evidence for interpersonal violence in history, while by contrast:

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[90]   Blok 2000, 26-27.
[91]   *idem*, 26.
[92]   Malešević 2013, 7.
[93]   Bufacci 2004, 170.

Historical documents and ethnographic records provide a narrow view of the spectrum of human capacities for selfless kindness and utter cruelty… when historical descriptions of warfare and violence are available, it is difficult (some say impossible) to disentangle their factual basis from the observer's cultural biases concerning this highly emotionally and politically charged aspect of human life.

Walker 2001, 574

Interpretation of data obtained from paleo-forensic examinations is exempt from some of the difficulties associated with the analysis of figurative sources, such as literary and artistic representations of violence. However, it is subject to its own set of limitations which negatively impact its contribution to a better understanding of the wider implications of physically violent behaviour in the past.

The most significant limitation is the relative dearth of skeletal remains which make this type of investigation possible in the first place. Related to this, many paleo-forensic studies rely on a highly circumscribed dataset – as few as two, or even one, set of skeletal remains. This is an integral methodological flaw, though results obtained from such small samples of material continue to be used to draw conclusions which purport to have broad implications for our understanding of ancient societies.

A most striking example of this was Pinker's assertion in *The Better Angels of our Nature* that the prehistoric past 'was a place where one had a high chance of coming to bodily harm'.[94] This statement was based on a selection of five different paleo-forensic studies, each sampling a single set of skeletal remains, separated in date by at least 5,000 years and discovered in five different locations across the globe.[95] His assertions about violence, that it was more prevalent in the past and is in decline in modernity, have been extremely influential; his was not the only study to defend this stance, though it is the

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[94]   Pinker 2011, 60.
[95]   *idem*, 54-60.

most well-known.[96] Pinker drew on the work of bioarchaeologists to support his thesis, without addressing the possible limitations of this kind of analysis.

As I noted above, bioarchaeologists are now often able to identify whether an injury occurred ante-, peri- or post-mortem. Walker outlined how bioarchaeologists assess skeletal remains for signs of interpersonal violence in a flow diagram:
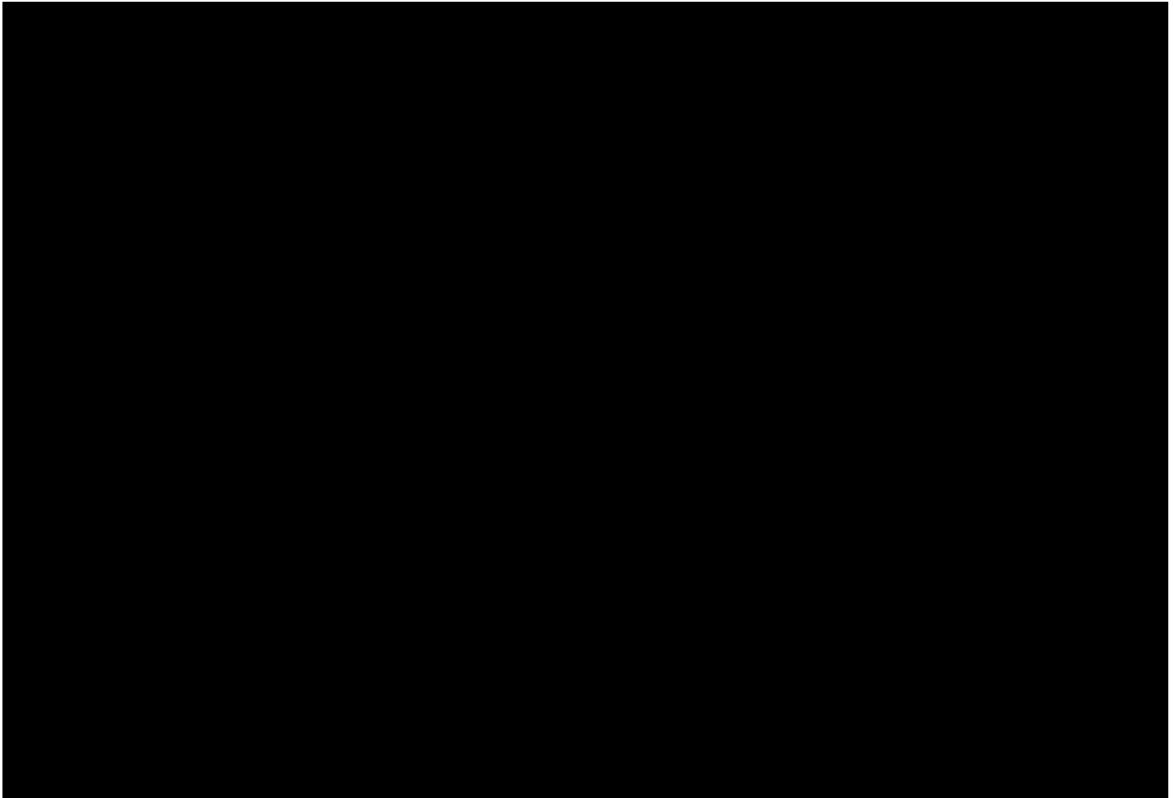
Figure 5 Flow diagram showing the process through which skeletal remains are assessed for evidence of interpersonal violence after Walker 2001, 577 (emphasis my own)

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[96] See especially Mueller 2004 and 2010, Spierenburg 2008 and Goldstein 2011. The most concise critique of this thesis by Malešević 2013, 1-2: 'these studies tend to emphasise the stark contrasts between the past and the present, whereby pre-modern social relations are usually depicted as being embodied by uninhibited expressions of emotion and the unrestrained use of violence … much of these popular and academic representations of the past are either inaccurate or de-contextualise the role violence played in the pre-modern world.' Matthews and Goodman 2013, 4-5 criticise Pinker's approach on the basis that it 'fails to take into account that ways in which violence has changed or adapted over time.'

The diagram shows that even where an injury is identified as 'peri-mortem' it is not always possible to establish incontrovertibly that it was the cause of death, nor whether it was an accidental injury or the result of homicidal violence.[97] Larsen asserted that 'confusion' between these two causes of injury is *the* primary challenge in using bioarchaeological investigations to study historical violence.[98] The ability to distinguish between ante- and peri-mortem injuries is fundamental: without a clear result in this respect, we cannot even say for sure that historical violence took place, let alone interpret the results in a meaningful way. In the following sections I present case studies which demonstrate the implications of these limitations for understanding of historical violence.

1.1.1. Cohen et al. 2015. 'Assyrian Attitude Towards Captive Enemies: A 2700-year-old Paleo-Forensic Study' *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 25: 265-280

Cohen et al's study sought confirmation that the forms of violence depicted in Neo-Assyrian representations of the aftermath of battles in text and image were really carried out. They examined an adult male skeleton, which was discovered in burial cave in Israel.

Having identified signs of traumatic injury on the skeleton, the authors established that these represented peri-mortem wounds,[99] and presented three possible scenarios to explain them.[100] They considered 'Scenario 3' to be the most likely explanation for the wounds: 'a commonly practiced violent attitude of Assyrian soldiers towards a captive combatant'.[101] Acknowledging the difficulties in attributing skeletal remains to particular conflicts,[102] they support their conclusion with the assertion that the remains they examined date to the Iron Age IIIB period (the second half of the 8th century BCE), while the area in which the skeleton was found was under Assyrian domination. In addition, they note the similarities between the 'boasts' of Neo-Assyrian kings found in royal

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[97]   Walker 2001, 574 also admits, on the example of arrow points found embedded in a person's spine: of course, an infinite number of more-or-less likely alternative explanations could be given for such injuries.
[98]   Larsen 2015, 116.
[99]   Cohen et al. 2015, 270.
[100]   *idem*, 276-278.
[101]   *idem*, 278.
[102]   *idem*, 265.

iconography and inscriptions about the types of tortures they inflicted on captive enemies and the injuries they discovered on the skeletal remains.[103]

Though we may find this conclusion persuasive at least in theory, the study exemplifies a key drawback of bioarchaeological examination of physical violence: reliance on a set of assumptions to draw conclusions. In this case, the central assumption was that the injuries were inflicted by the Assyrians.[104] Although the find spot and dating of the remains may hint in this direction, the truth is that the injuries could have been caused by anyone.

The study was based on a limited sample size. The authors conclude that 'this skeleton may therefore be… the *sole tangible physical evidence* for the veracity of the Assyrians' post-battle behaviour' (my italics).[105] We should consider very carefully whether the knowledge that the Assyrians *may* have tortured and killed one person in a manner resembling iconographic and textual depictions of such behaviour improves our understanding of historical violence, or the use of violence by the Assyrians in post-battle situations.

Analysis of a single set of skeletal remains invalidates attempts to draw any wider conclusions about the significance of these acts of violence. The authors themselves acknowledge that 'the motives behind these actions are debatable', they conjecture that they were meant to act as a deterrent against future rebellions, and/or that they may have had a 'symbolic, magical or religious value.'[106] Often the motivations for violent behaviours identified through paleo-forensic examinations remains obscure. Here, the authors rely on the results of other studies of pictorial and textual representations to clarify the results of their bioarchaeological investigation.

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[103]   *idem,* 278 give several diachronic examples of Assyrian representations of violence throughout the study.
[104]   *idem*, 266.
[105]   *idem*, 278.
[106]   *idem*, 278.

1.1.2. Ghezal et al. 2019. 'Embalmed heads of the Celtic Iron Age in the south of France' *Journal of Archaeological Science* 101: 181-188

In a recent study of 11 cranial fragments from excavations at the Iron Age settlement Le Callar, Ghezal et al. suggested that Greek accounts of a Celtic practice of embalming and displaying severed heads attested by Strabo and Diodorus may have some basis in truth:

> The heads of enemies of high repute… they used to embalm in cedar oil and exhibit to strangers, and they would not deign to give them back even for a ransom of an equal weight of gold.
>
> Strabo *Geography* 4.4.5.

> The heads of their most distinguished enemies they embalm in cedar oil and carefully preserve in a chest, and these they exhibit to strangers, gravely maintaining that in exchange for this head some one of their ancestors, or their father, or the man himself, refused the offer of a great sum of money. And some men among them, we are told, boast that they have not accepted an equal weight of gold for the head they show, displaying a barbarous sort of greatness of soul; for not to sell that which constitutes a witness and proof of one's valour is a noble thing, but to continue to fight against one of our own race, after he is dead, is to descend to the level of beasts.
>
> Diodorus Siculus 5.29.5

The skull fragments were selected from an assemblage of human remains discovered close to the walls of the ancient settlement, possibly its gates, and the authors noted that this must have been close to where the heads were originally displayed.[107] Based on chemical analysis of the skull fragments, the authors concluded that at least some of the

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[107]   Ghezal et al. 2018, 2-3.

heads were embalmed with a pine resin, to ensure that the faces of the enemies were recognisable during the time they were displayed.[108]

Celtic decapitation practices have been considered in a number of paleo-forensic studies, and the literary evidence above means that we can draw some conclusions about the purpose of such practices.[109] The authors tentatively suggested that the display of enemy heads was: 'possibly an expression of the bravery and strength of the community and its warriors'. [110] The conclusions drawn by these authors are strengthened by their ability to contextualise their material among further archaeological discoveries, and paleoforensic examinations conducted on cranial remains discovered throughout the south of France.

Summary

Bioarchaeologists have asserted that paleo-forensic studies offer the only 'direct' evidence for physical violence in the ancient world. However, such studies suffer from significant limitations which render them, in the worst case, merely anecdotal evidence for historical acts of violence. In the best case, they may offer confirmation for the literary or documentary record and, combined with studies of further samples, provide a more complex and nuanced view of events. In other words, as it stands, paleo-forensic studies are less informative *on their own* than when *combined* with further relevant source materials.

Al this is not to say that archaeological evidence cannot be indispensable in understanding instances of violence or violent death in the ancient world. Pickworth's interim report on a group of skeletal remains, including those of a horse, excavated the Halzi Gate area of Nineveh provides a view of how important contextualisation of finds

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[108]   *idem*, 7.
[109]   Further studies of cranial remains conducted by Ciesielski et al. 2011, Armit 2012 and Boulestin and Henry-Gambier 2012. Also, Arcelin 2011: a study of a sculpture of a warrior on a horse with a severed head hanging around its neck.
[110]   Ghezal et al. 2018, 7.

can be in this respect.[111] This preliminary report was composed before full paleoforensic examination of the skeletal remains had been carried out, though the author was able to give a great deal of information regarding the identities of the people whose skeletons were found.[112] Since the remains were examined *in situ,* the author could be more confident in her suggestion that these were Ninevites, killed while fleeing from the Median/Babylonian invasion of Nineveh in 612 BCE.

My comments above represent a worst-case scenario, of course the conclusions of the Cohen et al. study may yet prove to be correct. The development of the discipline – the presentation of more paleo-forensic studies – may remedy some of the drawbacks. This is in line with Larsen's suggestion:

> The placement of these few skeletons within their larger, contextualised settings where various lines of evidence about society at a particular place and time offers important insights into circumstances and causes surrounding violent encounters.

> Larsen 2015, 131

1.2.   Interpreting Literary Sources for Narrow Violence

Until now, Achaemenid violence has primarily been examined through Greek and Roman literary accounts. The major obstacle to holistic examination of Achaemenid violence through these sources is that they are not a monolithic corpus, and so analysis comes with the concomitant necessity to interrogate various authorial biases and literary aims. Hengel noted, for example, that the perception of 'crucifixion' as an ancient punishment used mostly by 'barbarian' peoples may be attributed to its portrayal in Greek and Roman literature, although it was used as a punishment throughout antiquity.[113] Although this is

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[111]   Pickworth 2005.
[112]   *idem,* 310-311 gives information including height, age, ethnic affiliation, injuries, illnesses, and conjectures professions for two of the assemblages (both in military occupations).
[113]   Hengel 1977, 22 and 24.

a rather generalising statement, it is a reasonable explanation for the overwhelming attribution of violent acts to foreign peoples in Greek literature.

Rollinger established that Herodotus and Ctesias, whose works are most pertinent to a thesis about Persian violence, were prone to attribute acts of violence to non-Greek peoples and especially autocratic rulers. [114] And further, established a divergence between the way that Herodotus and Ctesias reported Persian use of extreme violence.[115] In short, the types of violence Herodotus attributes to the Persians conform more closely to those attested in ancient Near Eastern sources.[116] However, Rollinger also noted that both authors had in common a tendency to base stories on 'hearsay, assumptions and sensationalism' resulting from a fascination with the royal court, rather than the running of the empire at large, and 'supposedly absolute royal will.'[117]

On the other hand, it has been noted that certain types of violence, including the mutilation of enemy dead and mass killing in the aftermath of warfare, were used by the Greeks themselves in the archaic and classical periods.[118] The propositions of these studies and Rollinger's conclusions, exemplify just how multifaceted classical authors' literary presentations of violence can be, and therefore the necessity of considering their accounts on a case by case basis. To add to this, like paleo-forensic data, literary accounts are subject to significant limitations in the form of missing information. And, of course, in examining these types of sources, we also contend with the fact that they do not, and were likely not intended to, represent 'historical' accounts, along the lines of 'history' as we intend to write it today.

Lemos' *Violence and Personhood in Ancient Israel and Comparative Contexts* shows a keen awareness of social scientific discourse around violence and its possible definitions.[119] In the introduction, Lemos states that her study is designed to elucidate

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[114]   Rollinger 2010, 563-575. See also Muller 2014 on the portrayal of mutilation attributed to foreign peoples in Greek literature.
[115]   Rollinger 2010.
[116]   *idem*, 618.
[117]   *idem*, 609-618.
[118]   On this view see especially van Wees 1992, 1995, 2010 and 2011 and Kucewicz 2016. On mutilation carried out against living subjects in Greek literature, see Muller 2014.
[119]   Lemos 2017, 16; also Riess 2012.

the use of physical violence and the construction of (elite) personhood as presented in the Hebrew Bible, and that she will also engage indirectly with questions of 'structural violence'.[120] Use of accounts of physical violence in the Hebrew Bible to explain broader social phenomena in ancient Israel is made possible by the fact that the Bible forms a relatively unitary corpus of material, at least in the sense that it is a canonical selection of texts. Therefore, the conclusions that Lemos draws relating to physical violence are not anecdotal. She locates them firmly within the cultural context under study, parsing them for what can be drawn out of the role of physical violence played in the construction of personhood and how elite actors used interpersonal violence in constructing their identities.

Below, I examine analyses of a Persian act of violence which was first reported by Ctesias in the *Persica.* This illuminates the challenges associated with using classical literature as evidence for Persian violence.

1.2.1. The 'Ordeal of the Troughs'

In the *Life of Artaxerxes*, about the Persian king Artaxerxes II (r. 404-358 BCE), Plutarch tells that the following punishment was inflicted on the soldier Mithridates following the Battle of Cunaxa (401 BCE):

> They take two boats that have been made to fit on top of each other and make the man who is to be punished lie down in one on his back. Then they put the other boat on top and fasten it so that the man's head, hands and feet are left projecting outside and the rest of his body is entirely concealed, and they give the man food – and if he is uncooperative they force him to eat by pricking his eyes. Once he has eaten, they give him a mixture of milk and honey to drink and pour it both into his mouth and all over his face. Then they keep turning him so that he is constantly facing the sun and swarms of flies come and sit on his face,

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[120]   Lemos 2017, 16. On the concept of 'structural violence', see Galtung 1969, discussed below Section 2.

completely covering it. And since he performs the bodily functions that men who eat and drink have to perform, maggots and worms swarm out of the excrement, which decays and putrefies and these pass into the body and consume it from the inside. For when the man is clearly dead and the upper boat is removed they can see that the flesh has been completely eaten away and that around the entrails swarms of these animals are feeding and clinging fast. After being consumed in this way for 17 days, Mithridates finally died.

Plutarch *Life of Artaxerxes* 16 (trans. Perrin, 2002)

The account occupies the mid-point of *Artaxerxes,* among descriptions of the other rewards and punishments distributed after the decisive battle of the civil war between Artaxerxes and his brother Cyrus the Younger. It is widely believed that Plutarch drew this account from Ctesias' *Persica*, composed after 400 BCE. *Artaxerxes,* on the other hand, dates to between five and six hundred years after the events he describes, in the 2nd century CE. This is the fullest description we have of this form of Persian torture, but Photius also made brief reference to it in his 9th century CE summary of Ctesias for the *Bibliotheca*. According to Photius' summary, Artaxerxes I (465-424 BCE) used the punishment against Aspamitres who was 'killed by being exposed to the full sun in a trough.' [121] And Photius tells us that in the aftermath of Cunaxa, Mithridates was 'subjected … to a painful death' without elaboration.[122] In the 10th century CE, Zonaras also included a description of the punishment in the *Annalium,* as proof that 'the Persians have the most atrocious punishments of all barbarians, tortures which are especially severe and drawn out.'[123] His account differs from Plutarch's in that Parysatis (the king's mother) carries out the punishment, against an unnamed victim.

Lincoln analysed Plutarch's account of the 'Ordeal' in his work *Religion, Empire and Torture*. As I discussed in the introduction, according to Lincoln, this did not simply represent 'a spectacular theatre of cruelty' as per Plutarch' presentation – it was a real 'legal procedure … grounded in religious principles'.[124] In his analysis, he suggested that

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[121]   F14. Photius p.40a5-41b37 (§34).
[122]   F16. Photius p.43b3-44a19 (§67).
[123]   Zonaras *Annalium* III.6.5, my translation.
[124]   Lincoln 2007, 94. The suggestion that Achaemenid punishments were supported by their religious belief system has been a popular means of interpretation, see also Muller 2016 for an

the various processes involved in the Ordeal had a deep significance, as a form of 'interrogation' meant to 'differentiate liars and the truthful.'[125]

Almagor's analysis of the episode diverges from this, focussing instead on Plutarch's motivations for including the story in *Artaxerxes*.[126] He suggests that the author aimed to exemplify Artaxerxes' role in bringing about the eventual demise of the empire, and the spawning worms are an allegory for its decay, and the 'elimination of the king by his own offspring'.[127] These suggestions are more persuasive, since they do not rely on the assumption that Plutarch's was an accurate retelling of an originally truthful Ctesian story, as Lincoln's suggestions did. [128] Almagor's summation also indicates how unprofitable Greek accounts of Persian violence can be in identifying historical instances of physical violence and how much more useful they are in telling us about Graeco-Roman audiences' fascination with acts of extreme violence.

Again, I chose this example as a worst-case scenario, to demonstrate the myriad issues associated with the interpretation of literary accounts of violence. I am not the first to criticise Lincoln's interpretation of the Ordeal, though the criticisms of earlier reviewers focussed on both the methodological flaws of this part of Lincoln's study, and the problematic association he makes between the Achaemenid Persian Empire and Bush's war on terror – I discussed these in the introduction. Though I agree with some of these criticisms, Lincoln's work certainly contributed to opening up the conversation about Achaemenid use of violence and, potentially, by *deliberately* adopting a provocative tone. His interpretation of the punishment is not wholly unconvincing, though it relies on an unstable premise and critical methodological flaws, as observed above. All this being acknowledged, following a close analysis of this account of torture, we find ourselves no closer to a concrete understanding of the broader cultural or social significance of the

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analysis of the religious symbolism attributed to decapitation under the Achaemenid Empire and in later Iranian religious contexts.

[125]   *idem*, 90-93.
[126]   Almagor 2011.
[127]   *idem*, 10-11 and 16, also that the Persian Empire in *Artaxerxes* was meant to stand as an allegory for the Roman Empire and its demise.
[128]   See Introduction, Section 3 for an overview of responses to *Religion, Empire and Torture*; Kozuh 2009 and Colburn 2011. And Lincoln 2013 a response to these reviewers. Jacobs 2009, 125 suggested that we need not be overly sceptical about the existence of a punishment like the Ordeal and even that it may have been 'professionalised' via the production of a trough invented specifically for the purpose.

Ordeal, whether in a Greek or a Persian cultural context, even if we were to accept that Plutarch's account was based on a real historical scenario.

2. Violence can be Defined 'Widely' to Include Structural, Psychological, and Metaphorical Types

In 1969, Johan Galtung introduced the concept of 'structural violence', asserting that:

> Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisations… it will soon be clear why we are rejecting the narrow concept of violence… if this were all violence is about, and peace is seen as the negation, then too little is rejected when peace is held up as an ideal… hence, an extended concept of violence is indispensable but that concept should be a logical extension, not merely a list of undesirables.

> Galtung 1969, 168

Galtung's theory of structural violence, and the propositions supporting it, led to the development of what is known as a 'wide' conception of violence. This conceives of violence as 'violation' rather than merely as 'excessive force'.[129] Thus, it incorporates less tangible, or immediately visible, forms of violence, including for example 'psychological' violence, 'metaphorical' violence and 'symbolic' violence, among others. Taken together we might term these 'indirect' forms of violence, while narrow violence is 'direct'. Wide violence does not supplant narrow violence entirely, but incorporates it in an extended conception of violence,[130] whereas narrow conceptions of violence exclude types of harm beyond the physical.

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[129]   Bufacci 2005, 197.
[130]   Imbusch 2003, 23 who elsewhere advocates the advantages of 'wide' conceptions of violence (see above n. 88) cautions: 'direct physical violence aimed at harming, injuring or killing other people indubitably stands at the centre of the whole issue of violence.'

A political distinction has been drawn between proponents of wide and narrow conceptions of violence. Coady notes that the wide conception:

> Tends to served the interests of the political left by including within the extension of the term 'violence' a great range of social injustices and inequalities. This not only allows reformers to say that they are working to eliminate violence when they oppose, say, a government measure to redistribute income in favour of the rich, but allows revolutionaries to offer, in justification of their resort to violence, even where it is terrorist, the claim that they are merely meeting violence with violence.

Coady 1986, 4

On the other hand, he concedes that 'we must not ignore the possibility of their use by the right'.[131] The merits of the wide conception of violence have been debated. The primary disadvantage of wide violence is that it can become an amorphous concept. With this in mind, Bufacci gave the following definition of violence for his own study:

> (Wide violence) would appear to offer only a more obscure and less precise definition of violence ...[132] An act of violence occurs when forceful physical and/or psychological injury or suffering is inflicted upon a person or animal by another person who knows (or ought reasonably to have known), that his actions would result in the harm in question.

Bufacci 2004, 171.

In the following section, I argue that Assyriological research has begun implicitly to grapple with the concept of wide violence. Below, I consider Babylonian archival and archaeological studies which have shed light on Xerxes' response to the Babylonian

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[131]   Coady 1986, 4.
[132]   See also Bufacci 2005, 198. For major critiques of Galtung's concept of 'structural violence', still the most 'popular' form of 'wide' violence, see Coady, 1986 and above and Keane 1996.

revolts in 484 BCE, and how these improve our understanding of the 'structural violence' involved in the maintenance of Achaemenid imperialism in Babylon. Following this, I consider developments in scholarship into Neo-Assyrian brutality scenes.

2.1.   Xerxes: 'destroyer of sanctuaries'?

In recent years, studies of Babylonian archival documentation and archaeological discoveries have started to build a picture of the long-term qualitative changes in Babylonian society resulting from the maintenance and reinforcement of Achaemenid primacy in the region. Put simply, these studies support an interpretation of Achaemenid rule in Babylonia as 'structurally violent'.

Waerzeggers' examination of the Babylonian revolts against Xerxes and the 'end of archives' are central to this argument. She concluded that the abrupt cessation of a number of Babylonian archives composed by the northern Babylonian temple administration was directly linked to Xerxes' suppression of the Babylonian revolts against Persian rule in 484 BCE.[133] This indicates that, as a consequence of their resistance against Persian rule, a large number of traditional urban elites lost 'the repute and income derived from cultic and administrative functions in these temples' – positions which these families had held for centuries.[134] They were replaced by a group of *homines novi* who were distinguished by their association with, and willingness to cooperate with, the Persians.[135]

For my purposes, the stand-out result of Waerzeggers' study was in confirming that the 'end of archives' phenomenon was rooted in political causes, as were the extensive re-staffing of temples, and the abolishment of the post *šakin-tēmi* (provincial governor of Babylonia). The social and cultural consequences of these had not been fully appreciated in previous works but, as Waerzeggers established, these events amounted

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[133]   See also Kessler 2004
[134]   Waerzeggers 2003/4, 158.
[135]   *idem*, 159-160.

to a major disruption in traditional Babylonian cultural, social and religious structures.[136] Robson has since classified Xerxes' reprisals for the Babylonian revolts as one of two 'survival bottlenecks' for cuneiform scholarship: 'near catastrophic events that threaten a population's survival through significantly reducing its size and diversity.'[137]

The 'end of archives' may mark a watershed in Perso-Babylonian relations in the 5th century BCE, but the revolts themselves should be interpreted as a symptom of growing dissatisfaction with Persian rule. Jursa's study of cuneiform documentation bridging the transition from Neo-Babylonian to Achaemenid rule in Babylonia demonstrated that continuity marked the first two generations of Persian rule,[138] but a gradual increase in taxation and service obligations inaugurated during Darius' reign 'probably led to a qualitatively new system in the end', and crucially to the Babylonians bearing a progressively heavier tax load which became unsustainable.[139]

This study marked something of a turning point in the way historical scholarship perceived Achaemenid rule in Babylonia, especially that of Xerxes. This debate has long revolved around Xerxes' use of physical violence in response to the rebellions. Böhl first suggested that Greek and Roman accounts of Xerxes' sacrileges in Babylon could reflect the real life sanctions the king carried out in the wake of the revolts against him.[140] Kuhrt and Sherwin-White offered the most strenuous refutation of this interpretation, stating:

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[136]   *idem*, 161.

[137]   Robson 2018, 13.

[138]   Crawford 2007, 4, this is not peculiar to the transition between Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid rule in Babylonia; continuity marks the first generation or two following regime change before social and economic change sets in.

[139]   Jursa 2007, 83 and 89-90; *idem* 2011, 434.

[140]   Böhl 1962. The passages in question: Aelian *VH* 13.3, Arrian 7.17.2, Diodorus 17.112.1-3, Strabo 16.1.5. and destruction may also be referred to in BM 36613, an Astronomical Diary which possibly refers to Alexander's planned rebuilding of the Esagila, though it is extremely fragmentary. The impression of Xerxes' impiety towards the gods of others is compounded by further references in Greek and Roman authors to other Persian kings' impiety: Hdt. 6.19 Darius at Branchidae after the Ionian revolt; Ctesias FGrH 688 F13, 21 Darius' destruction of Scythian temples; Hdt., 3.27-29, Cambyses' madness in Egypt, during which he kills the Apis bull and punishes the priests; Plut., *De Is. Et Os.* 368F, Cambyses kills the Apis Bull. See Chapter 2, Section 2.2, and Posener 1936 and Bresciani 1985 504-505 on Cambyses in Egypt. Hdt., 1.187 Darius I opens Nitocris' tomb; Diod. Sic., 16.51.2., Artaxerxes III plundered Egyptian shrines and carried off the records following his victory; Plut., *De Is. Et Os.* 363C, Artaxerxes III slaughters the Apis bull; Ael., *NA* 10.28 and *VH* 4.8, Artaxerxes III slaughters the Apis bull and deifies an ass in its place; Ael., *VH* 6.8 the same king committed many sacrileges, especially in Egypt; Xerxes' destruction of temples during the Greek campaign: Hdt., 6.19, 6.96, 8.32-3, 8.53-54, 8.109, 8.144. See on the other hand Hdt. 6.97: Persian sacrifices to the gods at Delos.

> While certainly having to contend with two revolts in Babylonia, (Xerxes) did not avenge himself on this trouble spot by deliberately destroying temples and/or removing the statue of Bel Marduk.

> Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1987, 77

In her paper, Waerzeggers did not focus on the use of physical violence, but she did offer comment on a passage from Herodotus at the centre of the debate:

> At the time of Cyrus' conquest this precinct (of the Marduk temple) also contained a statue of solid gold, twelve cubits high… Darius the son of Hystaspes had designs on the statue, but did not have the effrontery to take it; however, his son Xerxes did take it, as well as killing the priest who was telling him not to touch it.

> Herodotus *Histories* 1. 183

She suggests that despite uncertainty about whether this story relates a repercussion of or the provocation for the revolts,[141] that in the course of the large scale re-staffing of temples which took place, 'it should not be ruled out that some of the major officials were violently disposed of; the passage in Herodotus about the murder of a priest… could be interpreted in that way.'[142]

Although Waerzeggers did not focus on the physical violence of Xerxes' repercussions against the Babylonians, further studies, building on her interpretation, have highlighted suggestions from the archaeological record that the response to the revolts was physically violent. Baker's 2008 study examined the destruction and abandonment of houses in the residential Merkes district in Babylon.[143] She concluded that all of this could be taken as evidence that the elite living in this area were violently punished in the

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[141]   Waerzeggers 2003/4, 161.
[142]   *idem*, 162.
[143]   Baker 2008, 108-114.

aftermath of the revolts, and further that 'the possibility surely has to be entertained that the destruction of the Ištar of Akkad temple (Emašdari) may also be connected with these events.'[144]

George's 2010 article used archaeological evidence to suggest a historical basis for Greek and Roman stories about the destruction of sanctuaries. This revolved around the discovery of a foundation inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 BCE) during French excavations at the citadel of Susa and, during German excavations at Babylon, the discovery of deliberate damage to the ziggurat Etemenanki's superstructure. He suggested that the foundation cylinder found at Susa could only have been acquired during the demolition of the building whose foundation it was made to commemorate since it would have been built into it. Meanwhile, he argued, 'it is indeed difficult to find an explanation for the huge hole… found in the ziggurat's side that does not attribute it to deliberate violence'.[145] The destruction, he suggested, may not have been merely symbolic – for instance as an attack on the city's principal deity – but that it may also have been motivated by strategic concerns: to ensure that the temple could not be used as a place of refuge or defence.[146]

Baker's conclusions about destruction and abandonment in the Merkes district, and George's interpretation of the hole in the ziggurat stump and therefore the cylinder's find spot are necessarily tentative. At the outset of her study Baker offered the caveat that 'we cannot reconstruct from the available sources what precisely happened to them (the urban, archive-holding population) at this time,' meaning that it is not possible to accurately describe the violence that may have been inflicted on this segment of the population.[147] She notes that two interpretations of the circumstances accompanying the 'end of archives' are available: 'either incidental, sudden deposition as a result of violent destruction, or deliberate deposition in a climate of fear.' In other words, we cannot be sure whether families were (physically) forced to dispose of their archives, or that the

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[144]   *idem*, 114.
[145]   George 2010, 476-477.
[146]   *idem*.
[147]   Baker 2008, 109.

Persians carried this out themselves, or that families decided to do so before they could be forced to.[148]

George offered the explicit qualification that his conclusions are merely offered as 'an hypothesis: a reading of history that in my mind makes the most coherent sense of all the information we have at our disposal.'[149] In summary, both of these studies deserve serious consideration, but the uncertainty surrounding their conclusions is symptomatic of the difficulties involved in examination of 'narrow' violence through the archaeological record.

However, I suggest that, by comparison with some of the studies of physical violence outlined in an earlier section, the drawbacks associated with Baker's and George's studies of 'physical violence' in the form of building destructions, are less pressing. This is primarily because both studies interact with an existing framework of studies which have examined the cultural, religious and social impact of the transition between Babylonian and Achaemenid rule in Babylonia.[150]

The problem is that there is more at stake than an enhanced understanding of 'wide' violence in Achaemenid imperialism. George's study especially was criticised on the basis that it re-asserts 'deep-seated assumptions about Xerxes' character derived from

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[148]   *idem.* Conversely, Henkelman, Kuhrt, Rollinger and Wiesehofer 2011, 452 stress that 'the orderly and careful deposition of these archives indicates that this was not the result of some overhasty action taken in the context of the city's devastation.' The archaeological context of the documents in question is however uncertain.

[149]   George 2010, 480.

[150]   Kessler 2004 a further interpretation of the 'end of archives' phenomenon. Studies which deal with other aspects of the structural violence of Achaemenid rule, which I have not examined in detail here: Ragen 2006 evidence for a power struggle between the temple administration and the monarchy in Uruk; Jursa 2007 the expansion of existing taxation and service demands on Babylonia; Jursa 2013 the withdrawal of prebendary income in the Ezida temple in Borsippa; Jursa 2014 Persian curtailment of Babylonian prosperity which had developed during the period of Neo-Babylonian rule; Jursa 2015 the replacement of hereditary *qipus* with those linked to the crown; Jursa 2017 the unsustainable levels of taxation levied from the Babylonian elite from Darius' reign onwards and interference in temple affairs; Kleber 2008 a case study of the relationship between the Eanna temple at Uruk and the palace; Robson 2014 on the impact of the 'end of archives' on Babylonian economic, religious and literate activity.

his Greek campaign'.[151] Aside from this, the particulars of the criticisms levelled at Baker's and George's studies highlight first of all that examinations of physical violence in historical perspective are bound to be contested, as well as the misplaced privileging of physical violence in historical studies. Consideration of Kuhrt's proposition from a 2014 paper may be useful in realigning the debate:

> While there is not, and never has been, any evidence whatever for Xerxes' (or, indeed, Persian) destruction of Babylonian temples and cults,[152] apart from this ambiguous material, we do now have more material that allows us to begin to reassess his reign constructively, as a time of profound change, marked by considerable tightening of Achaemenid grip on its imperial territories. Xerxes is emerging more and more as one of the most important architects of a stable and successful Persian Empire.
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> Kuhrt 2014, 169.

On the one hand, Kuhrt puts quite succinctly the problems with evidence for physical violence in the study of ancient history. However, we must also reflect on how a 'stable and successful Persian Empire' could be achieved without the use of structural violence, for which we now have compelling evidence. Although my interpretation may constitute a subversion of Kuhrt's original meaning, the statement can be read as a neat summary of the problems with the study of physical violence in the ancient world, which I considered in the first part of this chapter.

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[151]   Henkelman, Kuhrt, Rollinger and Wiesehöfer 2011, 453-465 offer an extended critique of George's argument, based on his reliance on Aelian's account and perceived methodological flaws in his interpretation of the archaeological remains; Kuhrt 2014, 164.
[152]   However, there *is* unambiguous evidence for Xerxes' destruction of cults, if by that one means the wholesale removal of personnel and the cessation of function of temples such as Eanna and Ebabbar; also the dismantling of the prebendary system elsewhere.

2.2.   Neo-Assyrian Brutality Scenes

The rulers of the Neo-Assyrian Empire are best remembered for the practice of depicting acts of violence in their palatial relief imagery. Along with this, a huge corpus of state correspondence survives, which confirms that, besides recourse to violence, the king and his magnates adopted a range of strategic responses to ensure subjects' obedience.[153] Fales summarised the strategy: 'persuasion aided by a moderate show of force as a deterrent.'[154] Thus, public opinion characterises the Assyrians as having been as especially brutal imperial power, best exemplified in this opinion given in a review of the recent British Museum exhibition 'I am Ashurbanipal: king of the world, king of Assyria':

> Whether wrestling lions or skinning prisoners alive, the Assyrian king ran a murderously efficient empire.
>
> Jonathan Jones, 2018
> https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/nov/06/i-am-ashurbanipal-
> review-british-museum (accessed 23rd June 2019.)

On the other hand, academic estimations note that this is merely a superficial impression as the Assyrian kings' artwork was Owing to the availability of state correspondence giving a view of the everyday life of the empire, the brutality scenes are not construed as documents of practice. Instead, as Reade put it, we should view these as 'a self-censored selection of things that happened in reality.'[155]

To what end did the Assyrian kings choose to represent their brutality in their palatial relief imagery? Over the empire's lifetime, representations of violence varied. Most recently, undertaking a qualitative analysis of the types of violence the kings included in

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[153]   These have been published under the auspices of the 'Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project' as the 'State Archives of Assyria' (SAA): http://www.helsinki.fi/science/saa/publicat.html (accessed 8.8.2019).
[154]   Fales 2008, 23.
[155]   Reade 2005, 7.

their representations, Bagg highlighted that Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE) and Ashurbanipal (668-ca. 627 BCE) are distinguished from other Assyrian kings by the extreme acts of violence they chose to represent.[156] Variations in representations of violence may be construed as a response to the political circumstances confronting these kings throughout their reigns. For instance, in times of greater instability or imperial expansion, rulers may have invested more in 'advertising' their violent abilities.

However, such an interpretation relies on an understanding of the audience for Assyrian relief imagery. Bagg has argued that it was meant to be viewed only by the king himself, the future kings who inhabited the palaces and the principal deity of the Assyrian pantheon, Ashur, and that even others allowed access to the palace would not have entered the rooms in which they were on display.[157] This is a radically minimalist view, considering how many different groups of people may have been allowed access to the palaces.[158] On the other hand, Reade and Collins both noted that the artwork was not especially prominent as it was originally displayed.[159] In short, as Collins noted 'this was art that was difficult to see.'[160]

Thus, questions around access to the palace, and the overall visibility of the relief imagery prevent us from drawing concrete conclusions about the possible psychological effects of the Assyrian king's memorialisation of violence. In brief, if it were seldom viewed, the kings could not have been using it to intimidate their subjects into submission by emphasising their violent potential to a wide audience.

Scholarly interpretation of Assyrian brutality scenes, which has benefited from the availability of a large corpus of documentary source material, highlights essential considerations when it comes to studying violence through representation. In the first place, we should make a sharp distinction between the *representation* of violence, and the *practical use* of violence. In the Assyrian case, observation of the relief imagery and

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[156]   Bagg 2016, 60; Fuchs 2009, 68 also highlighted the uneven distribution of violent acts in royal representations and Olmstead 1918 an earlier evaluation of the extreme cruelty depicted in Ashunasirpal II's artwork.
[157]   Bagg 2016, 65-66.
[158]   Russell 1991, 223-240 gives suggestions on various potential audiences for the reliefs.
[159]   Reade 1979, 335-339.
[160]   Collins 2014, 621.

inscriptions tends to suggest that violence was the pre-eminent way of administering the empire, while the large documentary text corpus suggests otherwise. Thus, we do not seek historical information from these depictions, but suggestions of the tenets of imperial ideology and changing political circumstances which might lead rulers to emphasise their violent ability.

Questions of the use of figurative and psychological violence perpetrated by the Assyrians are complicated by the fact that we do not know who the viewers of violent relief imagery were. Thus, we see that identification of audience is of primary importance when using violent representation to determine the use of wide violence in the administration of empire.

3. A unitary conception of violence is not useful across a range of historical, social and cultural contexts

The third proposition arising from the social scientific debate revolves around the lack of agreement on a unitary, or shared, definition of violence. The quotations with which I opened this chapter exemplify this difficulty, which Stanko suggested was due to the fact that 'despite an assumed, almost self-evident core, 'violence' as a term is ambiguous and its usage is in many ways moulded by different people as well as by different social scientists to describe a whole range of events, feelings and harm.'[161] To resolve this, she suggested that a 'standard definition' is not useful; 'what violence *means* is and will always be fluid, not fixed.'[162]

By supplementing the arguments for and against narrow and wide conceptions of violence from social scientific discourse with examples drawn from a variety of ancient

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[161] Stanko 2005, 2-3: with these comments opened an edited volume arising from the ESRC funded 'Violence Programme' involving multiple researchers examining violence across a range of social contexts. The project description: https://www.researchcatalogue.esrc.ac.uk/grants/L133341003/read (accessed 8.8.2019).
[162] Stanko 2005, 3, see also Matthews and Goodman 2013, 3; who identify the usefulness of a fluid conception of violence for examining representations of violence.

historical studies, I have demonstrated the significant limitations that ancient historical source material can place on our ability to examine any one 'type' of violence. But a lack of agreement about what violence *is* may not necessarily hinder attempts by ancient historians to understand it.

For the purposes of this chapter, I arranged the ancient historical studies into two groups: those that are used to decipher either narrow or wide violence. This is a false categorisation, since most of the authors did not engage explicitly with the social scientific debate. With this in mind, and to demonstrate the extreme fluidity of possible conceptions of violence for ancient historical studies, further possibilities for categorisation of source material should be noted.

The first of these, which I already raised in the case study of bioarchaeological data, is to consider sources as either 'direct' or 'indirect' evidence for the use of physical violence. Into the former category we would place bioarchaeological and archaeological data which indicates the use of violent action, notwithstanding the difficulties of reconstructing a precise historical scenario from this. In the 'indirect' category we should place literary accounts of violence and Neo-Assyrian imperial representational practice. We could easily re-label this category as 'representational' or 'figurative' violence.

We should also differentiate for example between Graeco-Roman literary accounts of Persian violence and Assyrian imperial depictions of their own violence on the basis that the former is 'external' and the latter 'internal'. Above, I argued against the assumption that literary evidence is always useful for historical examination of physical violence, and that the problem is especially acute when we engage with literary accounts of 'other' violence. These tell us more about *perceptions of violence* among the audience for literary works, than about the *use of violence* among the protagonists in the stories. Although Neo-Assyrian brutality scenes offer an 'internal' perspective, they are self-censored accounts. For this reason, although they have been used to examine imperial

use of physical violence,[163] their main value is in the exceptional view they offer of the construction of Assyrian imperial identity through metaphorical violence.

4. Conclusion: A Definition of 'Violence' for the Behistun Monument

The foregoing case studies have established the profitability of 'wide' conceptions of violence, which are adapted to the source material at hand. A case study of the Behistun Monument's violent implications occupies Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six. This study is based on the premise that 'violence', widely defined, was the central means via which Darius sought to create the Achaemenid regime of power following the crisis of 522-519 BCE. Thus, its creation and the message encoded in the monument's relief image and inscriptions, are inherently, though not directly, violent acts.

I am anxious to move away from examining Persian physical violence. Close studies of this are not straightforward, as I suggested in this paper through my critique of Lincoln's analysis of the 'Ordeal of the Troughs'. Imbusch's description of physical violence, in which he argued that physical violence is not subject to cultural preconditions, could very well stand for the impression of Persian violence in Graeco-Roman literature.[164] Contrary to this, when we turn to the only *Persian* account of Persian violence (the Behistun image and inscriptions) we see that cultural preconditions are extremely important. The presentation of physical violence is inextricably wrapped up in the social and cultural context of the Achaemenid empire. Put simply, external literary accounts do not correlate with Darius' careful reporting of the violence he used to destabilise resistance against him in 522-519 BCE, which attests to the dynamism with which he used violence in representation, if not in reality. Finally, as analysis of documentary evidence from the Neo-Assyrian period has shown, physical violence is only one part of the story of how ancient empires were established and maintained.

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[163]   For example, see Radner 2015 and Ussishkin 2003, both examining the practical aspects of Assyrian use of impalement. On these see further Chapter 6, Section 2.1.

[164]   I use 'tradition' in the loosest possible sense, as we should of course consider the heterogeneity of influences on and distortions in Graeco-Roman literature.

In the sense that the message of the monument constituted a public declaration of Achaemenid imperial ideology, and the violence involved in establishing it, it differs from Neo-Assyrian brutality scenes, for which the question of circulation beyond the palace is still contested. Besides the placement of the monument in a politically contested landscape, at the site of Darius' major victory over Gaumata, the king's message circulated beyond the mountainside. Confirmation of this has been found in the existence of fragments of an Aramaic copy, believed to date from over a century after the original monument was erected, at the beginning of Darius II's reign (424-404 BCE). Two fragments of a stele bearing a Babylonian local variation of the monument, including an abbreviated text and image were also discovered on the Processional Way in Babylon.[165] Thus, Darius' narrative of events was sent to peoples all over the empire, confirming Darius' own statements in the Old Persian and Elamite inscriptions that he had another text made which was 'sent… among all the peoples.'[166]

Outside the palatial context, Assyrian artistic and textual representation employed overtly violent themes less often, providing a static view of kingship,[167] which is more readily associated with Achaemenid representational practice after Behistun. At the same time, the 'violence' of Achaemenid representational practice may also have been underestimated, for instance in ignoring the impact that depictions of armed Achaemenid soldiers decorating the outside of palaces at Susa and Persepolis (Fig. 11). These constitute an extremely legible allusion to Persian violence potential. Meanwhile, depictions of the Persian hero battling wild animals can be interpreted as an indication of the violence of 'Persian man' broadly defined and therefore embraces all Persians, beyond those occupying the highest positions of power (Fig. 12).

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[165]   See Introduction, Section 1. Seidl 1999.

[166]   DB OP 70 = DB AE 55. Bae 2001, 40-44 concluded that these unilingual versions constituted 'diplomatic' versions of the text which were composed from a different *Vorlage* to those on the mountainside.

[167]   For example the images accompanying the Bavian rock inscription – in which he describes his military achievement against Babylon – which represent instead Senncherib's achievements in domains of imperial governance beyond the military; also the Kition stele of Sargon II (VA 968) which is also inscribed with details of this king's military achievement, but an image of the king worshipping the Assyrian gods; as well as a stele of Ashurbnipal excavated at Babylon (BM 90864) depicting the king as the royal builder, commemorating the restoration of the Esagila in Babylon.

I would argue that explicit graphic and textual descriptions of violence were *deliberately* dulled in Assyrian imperial representations which were accessible to a larger audience than those admitted entry to the palace. A sharp differentiation between Assyrian and Achaemenid representational practice, based on subject matter and narrative technique as markers of (real, physical) violence draws us away from critical question of audience and therefore metaphorical concepts of violence. This also fits with a shift in focus, in recent scholarship on the Behistun Monument, away from questions of the historicity or otherwise of Darius' account and onto broader and more pressing questions about the construction and cohesion of Achaemenid hegemony.[168]

The representational choices Darius made when creating the monument are 'violent' from two perspectives. Firstly, and most obviously, because they memorialised and overtly glorified violence as an aspect of imperial dominance and second, because their creation involved significant manipulation of historical, social and political memory. Thus, in the monument we can observe Achaemenid use of figurative and psychological violence in the construction and cohesion of the empire. This conceptualisation of the Behistun Monument is comparable to current understandings of how Neo-Assyrian brutality scenes can be used to understand the construction of Assyrian imperial power.

In the following chapters, I examine Darius I's use of 'violence', broadly defined, to effectively establish and ensure the survival of the Achaemenid Empire in the wake of a major crisis via the creation of the Behistun Monument. Here, I have argued that narrow concepts of violence are less useful to ancient historians than wide concepts. The findings of such studies too often constitute merely anecdotal evidence that violent action may have taken or took place, without contributing to wider debates about the societal and cultural contexts we seek to understand. Meanwhile, more pertinent to this study, the relative proliferation of fictionalised accounts of Achaemenid use of physical violence versus the dearth of 'direct' evidence for it means that examination of physical violence

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[168]   For example, Finn 2011, 236 discusses the impact of Achaemenid trilinguals which she suggests was meant to express 'the power of Persian domination' over all their subjects. Hyland 2014 analyses the casualty figures not for their historicity, but rather for their role in the construction of Achaemenid elite identity.

in the Achaemenid imperial sphere is more challenging than examination of the same for some other historical periods.

A wide, non-unitary, conception of violence allows us to obviate some of the difficulties associated with analysing historical narratives, which are semi-fictionalised or self-censored, for information about the creation and perpetuation of Achaemenid imperial structures. My analysis uses the concepts of figurative and psychological violence to interrogate the monument and its contents, interpreting the memorialisation of past violence to coerce imperial subjects and collaborators to participate in an idealised vision of empire as an inherently violent act.

2. The Behistun Monument in Context – The Language of Conquest (550-331 BCE)

Introduction

In this chapter, I contextualise the Behistun Monument and justify my decision to use it as the central source of my case study of the use of figurative violence in the construction of Achaemenid power.

In the first part of the chapter, I give an overview of the key sources of information about Teispid and Achaemenid official representational practice, which contextualises the monument within the extant corpus of material. A Persian mode of imperial representation began to appear under the Teispid kings, Cyrus and Cambyses. Its central tenets are exemplified in finds from the imperial capital Pasargadae, in northern Fars. The extant material suggests that Teispid representational practice was formulated with especial reference to Elamite cultural heritage, though the few architectural and sculptural remains discovered at the site mean that fewer studies have been made of this important early site than the more well-known imperial capitals Susa and Persepolis.

Excavations at Susa and Persepolis have brought to light most of the known corpus of Achaemenid official representation, to which we can also add Achaemenid rock cut monuments outside the imperial centres, at Naqš-i Rustam, Gandj Nameh and Lake Van. In the creation of their iconography of empire, Achaemenid kings drew on cultural precedents from all over the empire. In images and texts, kings tended to eschew references to historical events, and therefore to explicit references to historical violence which are characteristic of the Behistun Monument.

In the second part of the chapter, I consider references to conquest and violent military ability in artefacts from the Teispid and Achaemenid periods, pre- and post-dating the construction of the Behistun Monument. Examples of Teispid representational practice offer no explicit references to conquest. On the other hand, objects created by subjects

of the Persians survive which preserve critical moments of Teispid conquest. The Cyrus Cylinder and the Nabonidus Chronicle, inscribed Babylonian objects, preserve literary accounts of Cyrus' conquests in Media, Urartu, and Babylonia between 550-539 BCE, actions through which the Persian Empire was initially established. In his autobiographical inscription, the Egyptian noble Udjahorresnet alluded to Cambyses' conquest of Egypt in 525 BCE and the Persian policy of restoration in the aftermath. Each of these sources provides a view of the Teispid policy of accommodation with their subject peoples' cultural and religious norms and have been studied primarily as evidence for this. However, I will consider how these also offer a view of the role of violence in the subjection of Babylonia and Egypt, primarily through statements within narrations of the Babylonian and Egyptian conquests which evoke the Teispids' reputations as violent conquerors.

The Behistun Monument is exceptional for Darius' narration in inscriptions and imagery of historical acts of violence. Later Achaemenid representation incorporates 'violence' in allusions to the military dimensions of Achaemenid kingship and Persian identity. Where references to conquest appear in inscriptions, these refer to unspecified military victories as well as non-military achievements, such as the completion of large-scale building works. I will consider these allusions and references, and motivations for a move away from specific references to conquest.

Examination of artefacts in this chapter demonstrates that although we can trace the use of violence in different forms throughout the period, the Behistun Monument provides the most fertile ground to begin exploring the use of figurative and psychological violence in the construction and cohesion of Achaemenid imperialism. Viewed in the context of the rest of the material surveyed here, it offers the fullest Persian perspective on these aspects of imperial hegemony.

1. An Overview of Official Persian Representation from Cyrus to Artaxerxes III (550-338 BCE)

The city of Pasargadae was established as the Persian imperial capital during Cyrus' reign. It has been studied less than Susa and Persepolis, since fewer examples of architectural and sculptural remains have been discovered there. In this section, I focus on artefacts created by Cyrus, though the site continued to be used throughout the Achaemenid period, until Alexanders' conquests.[169]

Among the structures at Pasargadae, Cyrus' tomb (Fig. 6) is the most well-known. This is earliest example of Persian funerary architecture: a stepped platform topped with a chamber and attic. It is of monumental proportions, measuring 13.75m by 12.25m, and 11m in height. The tomb is not heavily ornamented, a quality which Stronach suggests allows it to communicate 'a rare sense of dignity and integrity', though it does not lead us closer to the personage of Cyrus himself.[170] Though the tomb lacks ornamentation, examples of Teispid era relief imagery have also come to light. A depiction of a winged figure wearing a headdress and an Elamite robe decorated the inside of a structure known as 'Gate R' – the main entrance to Pasargadae from the plain (Fig. 7). This is a clear example of Elamite cultural precedents in Teispid Persian imperial representation. Even before the first excavations at Pasargadae Herzfeld noted the possible association between the Teispids and the Elamites, [171] and the theory of Elamite-Persian ethnogenesis had been expanded in numerous papers in recent years.[172]

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[169] Hallock 1969, 676 recommended the identification of Elamite 'Batrakataš' with 'Pasargadae', which is referred to in several tablets in the Fortification archive, dated between 497-491 BCE, as the location of a royal treasury and royal stores, and a place to which rations were sent for sacrifices.

[170] Stronach 1971, 155, though this remark opens a study of a newly recognised rosette symbol carved on the tomb, which he interprets as a Zoroastrian symbol, testament to Cyrus' worship of Ahuramazda, and therefore of religious continuity between Cyrus and Darius.

[171] Herzfeld 1908, 64.

[172] See Henkelman 2008, and papers in Álvarez-Mon and Garrison (eds) 2011 *Elam and Persia*, and more recently on Achaemenid borrowing from Elamite representational practice Álvarez-Mon 2018 and 2019.
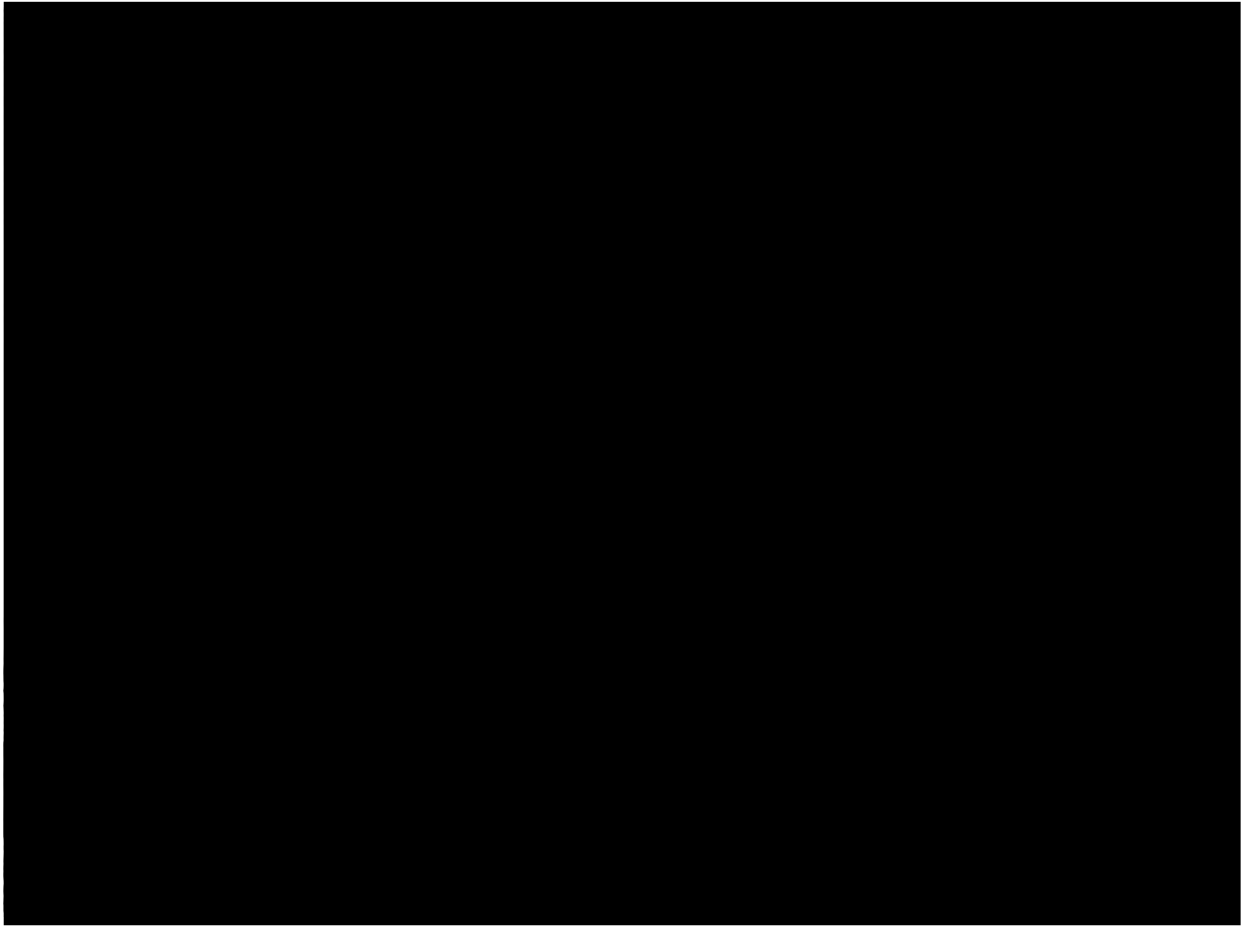
Figure 6 Tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae (Stronach 1978)
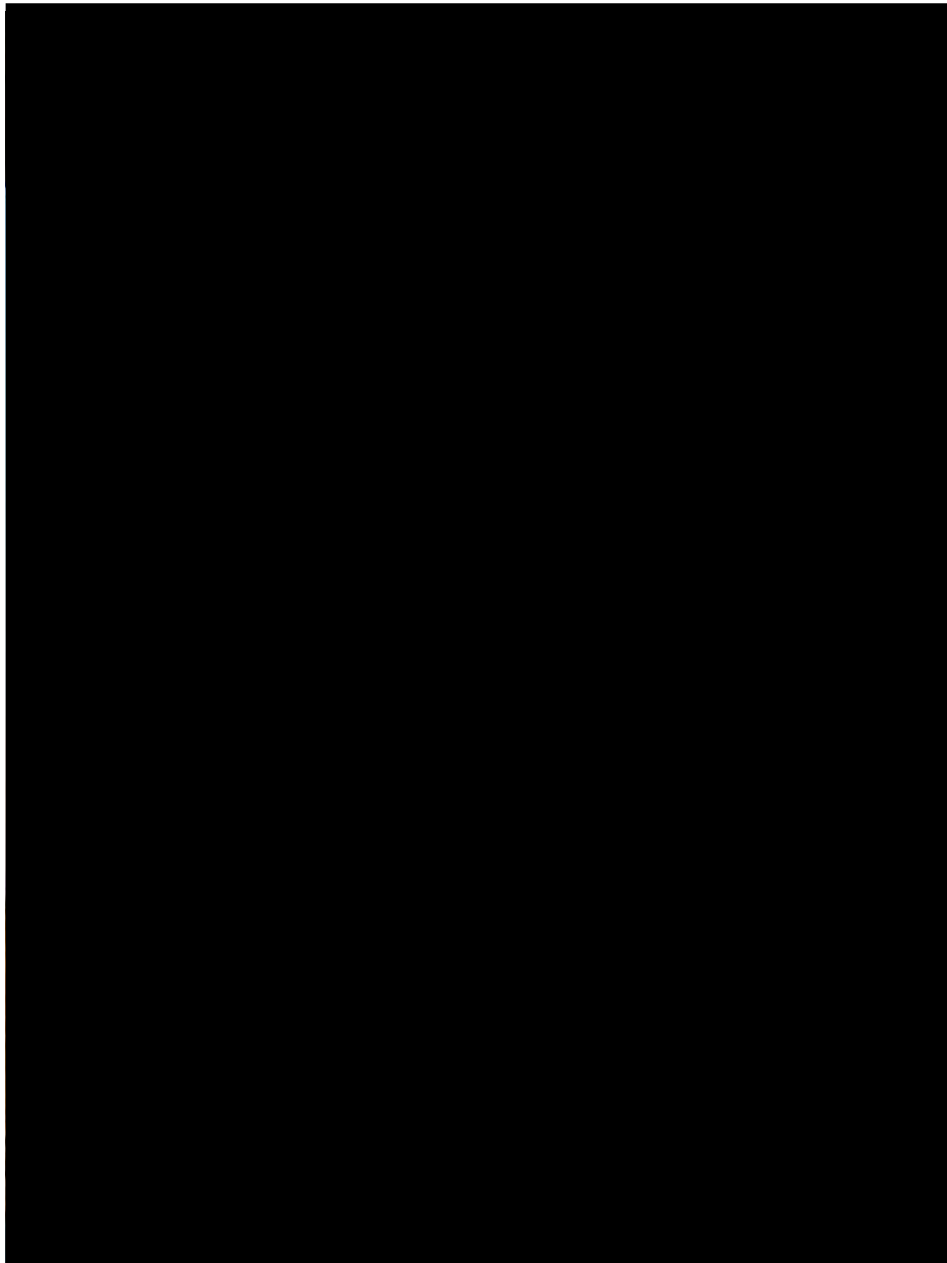
Figure 7 Relief of Winged Figure wearing an Elamite robe from 'Gate R' at Pasargadae
(https://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Images2/Achaemenid/Pasargadae/Cyrus_Figure.jpg
accessed on 19.7.2019)

Trilingual inscriptions, written in Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian, were also
discovered at Pasargadae, known as CMa, CMb and CMc.[173] CMa was engraved on

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[173]   Strabo 15.3.7 reports claims of early Greek travellers Aristobulus and Onesicritus that
Cyrus' tomb was inscribed, according to the latter in Greek language written using Persian
characters! These claims are unsubstantiated. Aristobulus, according to Strabo, also observed
the objects which were once placed inside the tomb, which had been stolen by the time of his

stone pillars in 'Palace P', five copies survive, reading: 'I am Cyrus, the king, an Achaemenid' (trans. Kent 1953, 116). CMb was engraved above the relief of the winged figure in the gatehouse, though the inscription is now lost. It read 'I Cyrus the Great King, son of Cambyses, an Achaemenid. He says: When… made…' (trans. Kent 1953, 116). Ker Porter and Flandin and Coste made drawings of this inscription before it was lost (Figs 8 and 9). CMc was engraved on representations of the king, in the folds of his garments in three doorways of Palace P, reading 'Cyrus the Great King, an Achaemenid' (trans. Kent 1953, 116). There has been considerable debate over the attribution of these inscriptions – whether Cyrus or Darius created them – which depends on interpretation of the passage DB OP §70 = DB AE §55, and whether Darius claims to have invented the Old Persian script in these passages.[174] Early assessments of the inscriptions did not consider the possibility that these inscriptions could be attributed to anyone but Cyrus.[175] However, more recent scholarship favours the attribution of the inscriptions CMa-c to Darius' reign, along with the creation of Old Persian script.[176]

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second visit. Kent 1946, 210 suggested that these may be interpreted as proof that the tomb was inscribed originally, although we should not trust the identifications of the languages.

[174] See Introduction, Section 1 for interpretations of the passages DB OP §70 and DB AE §55.

[175] See especially Herzfeld 1908, Kent 1946, Ghirshman 1965 and Hallock 1970.

[176] Stronach 1985, 845 n. 7, 1990; Schmitt 1990, 56-60; 1991, 73 and Huyse 1999, 58. Bahari 2001 offers a counterview to this consensus as well as an overview of the main points of discussion.
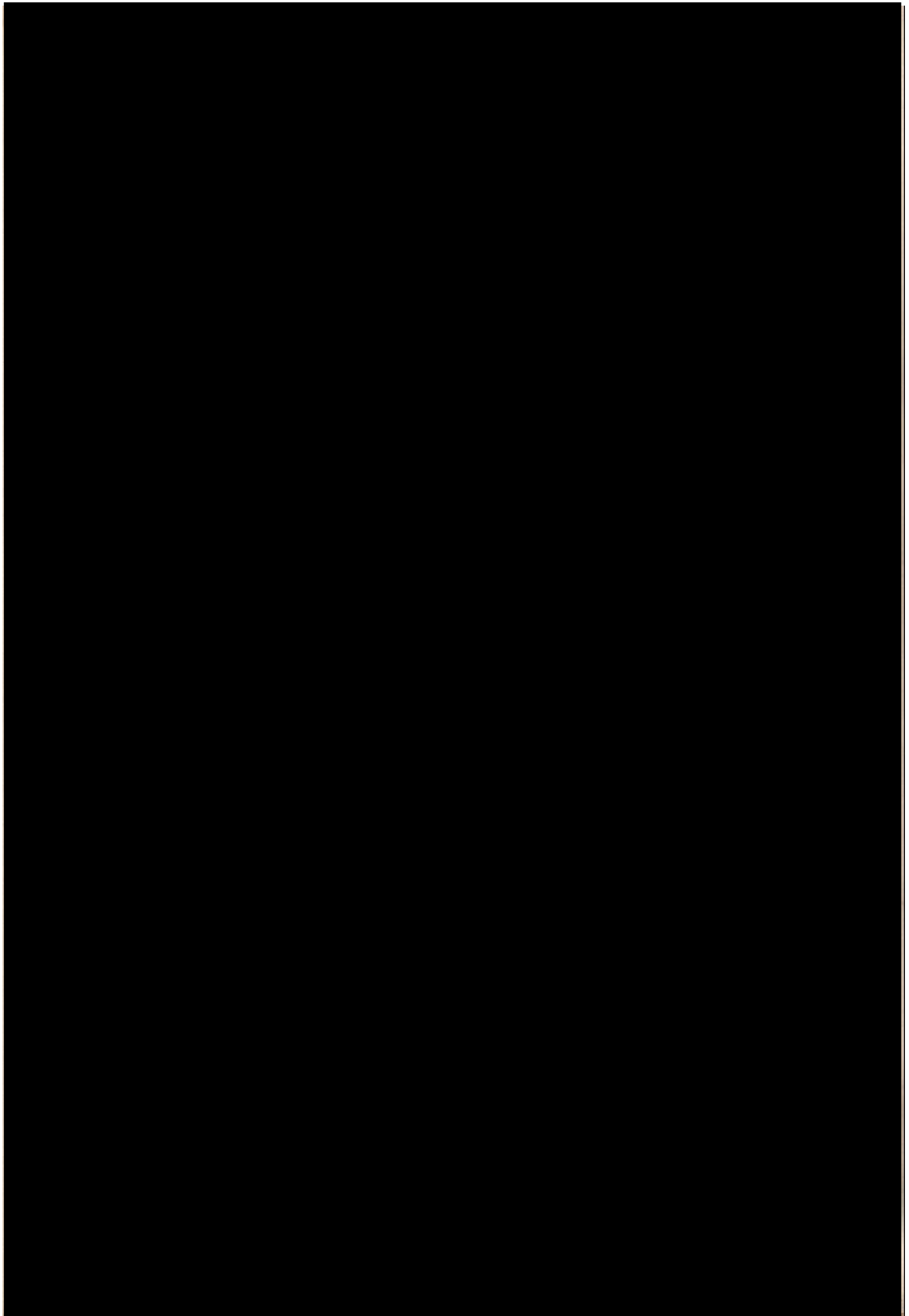
Figure 8 Drawing of CMb above the winged figure by Sir Robert Ker Porter 1821, vol. 1, pl. 13
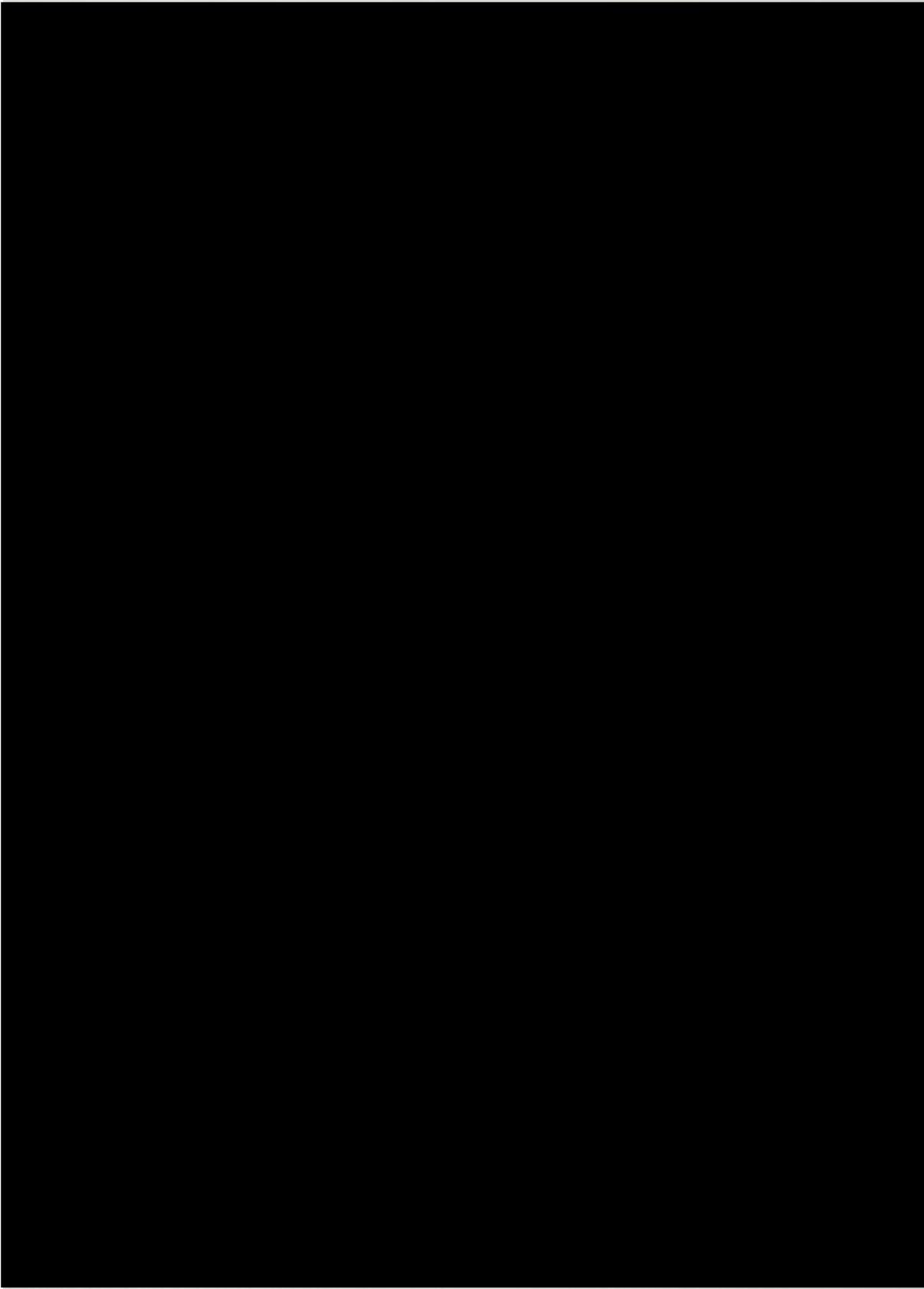
Figure 9 Drawing of CMb above the winged figure by Flandin and Coste 1851, vol. 4, pl, 198

The construction of Pasargadae reveals the importance Cyrus attributed to creating an artistic scheme of imperial representation, even if he cannot be credited with the invention of an imperial script. Later examples of Achaemenid representational practice developed in dialogue with the precedents set by Cyrus and Cambyses, and Pasargadae remained a focal point of imperial activity under Achaemenid rule. Though it does not represent the original whole, the extant material does not suggest that 'violence' was important in official Teispid representation.

The Behistun Monument marks the earliest stage in the development of Achaemenid representational practice, but major conventions in this practice are displayed more clearly in a range of relief artwork and inscriptions discovered at Persepolis and Susa. I will not give a full catalogue of images used to decorate the imperial capitals here.[177] Broadly, Root noted that Achaemenid artwork 'emphasises a notion of harmonious world order in which reciprocal benefits between king and subjects were expressed metaphorically'.[178] Barjamovic noted that official Persian artwork 'projected an image of static power and voluntary integration.'[179] Imagery post-dating Behistun is devoid of references to specific historical events, including past violence.

On the other hand, in Achaemenid imagery stress is laid upon the military dimensions of kingship and Persian identity. Persian figures frequently bear weapons as in Figure 10 below showing Persians and Median courtiers from the Persepolis Apadana, in which the Persians bear undrawn swords, and a repeated pattern of Persian guards bearing spears as well as bows and arrows in brickwork from Susa (Fig. 11). The royal hero is also depicted in active combat against wild animals (Fig. 12).

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[177]   See further Chapter 3, Section 1.
[178]   Root 2000, 21. *Idem* 1979 the seminal work on representations of the king and the ideology of kingship in Achaemenid artwork. Briant 2002, 165-203 gives an introductory overview of Achaemenid representations of empire.
[179]   Barjamovic 2012, 46.
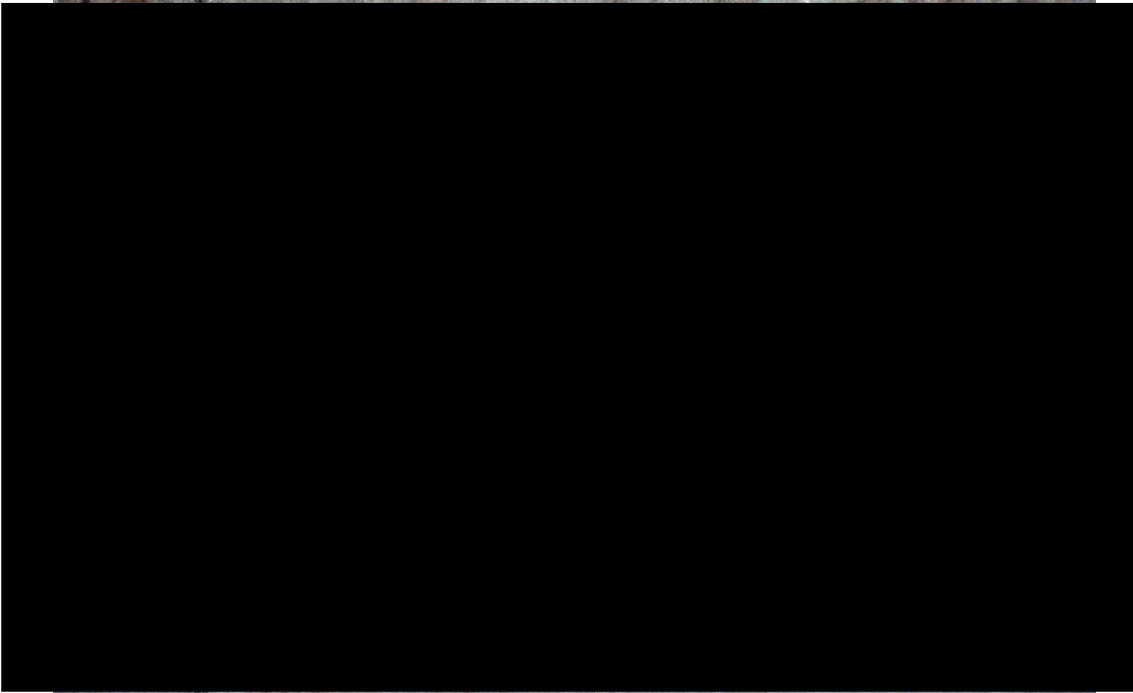
Figure 10 Persian and Median Courtiers Depicted on the Apadana East Stairs (livius.org accessed 12.08.19)
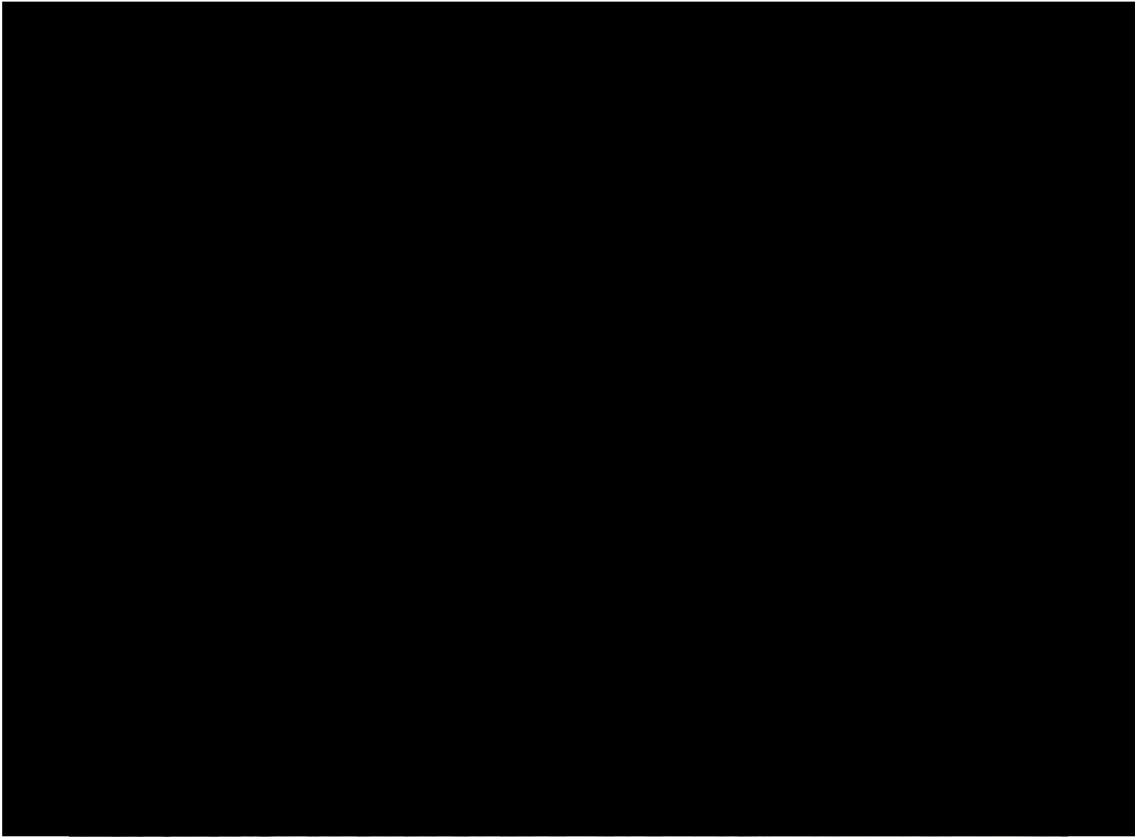
Figure 11 Depiction of weaponised guards in brickwork from Susa (photograph author's own)
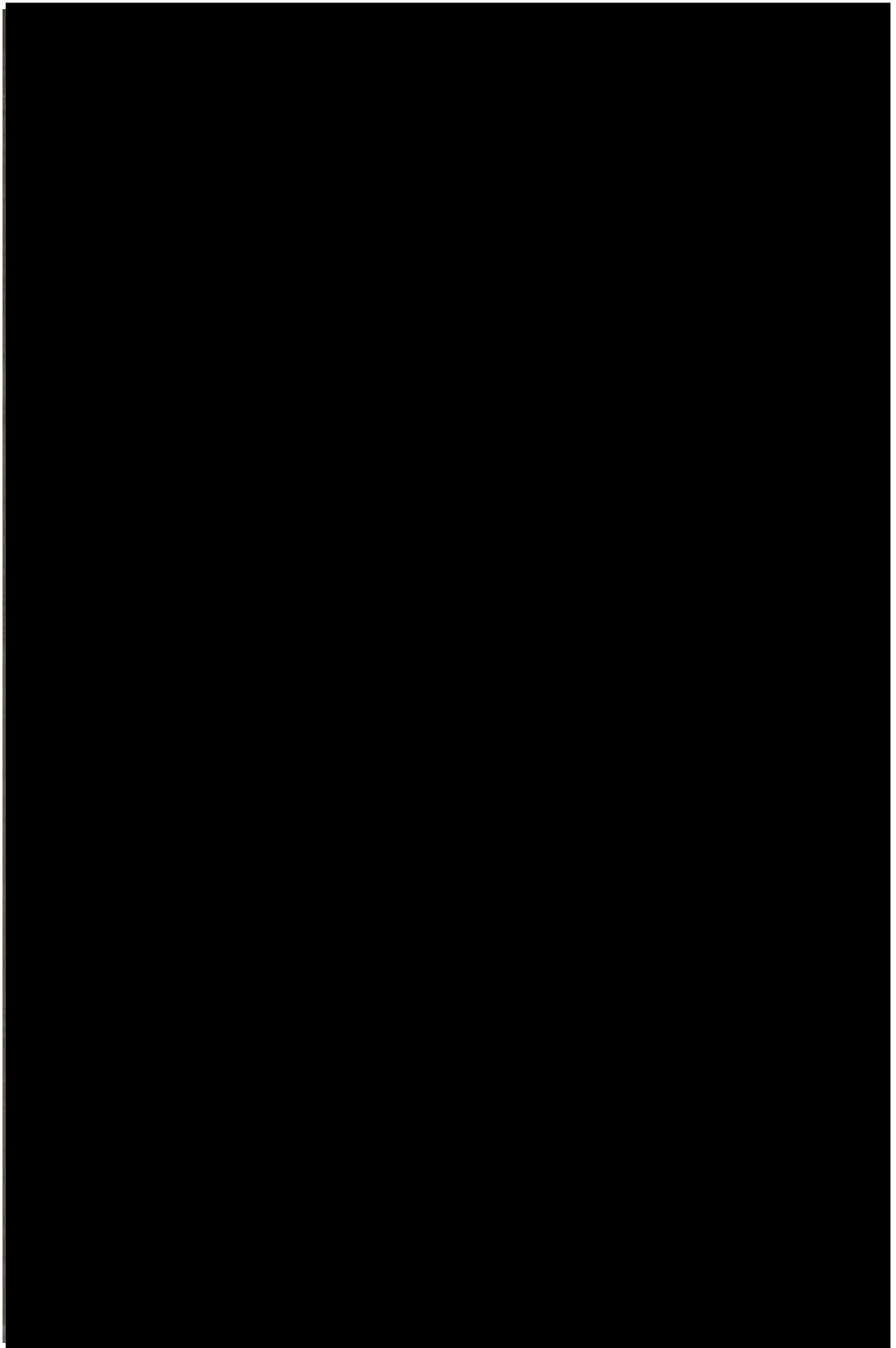
Figure 12 The Royal Hero battling a Lion Palace of Darius, Persepolis (livius.org accessed 12.08.19)

Images of the so-called 'heroic encounter' are defined by Garrison and Root as 'one (image) in which a protagonist exerts power or control over animals or creatures in a manner that explicitly transcends the plausible.'[180] In the Persepolis Fortification Archive, they note, around 27% of seal designs are some form of the heroic encounter (Fig. 13).[181] Wu also noted the prominence of warfare scenes in Achaemenid period glyptic imagery, stating that 'in contrast to the lack of warfare scenes on monumental art, more military representations are found on seals of the Achaemenid period than any other periods in ancient Near Eastern history.[182] These scenes show the aftermath of battle or ongoing military action, and some, she suggests, refer to actual historical instances of combat.[183] Evaluation of seal imagery illuminates the properties of elite social identity – and these studies suggest that violent ability was at the heart of this, despite the conspicuous lack of violent representation in official artwork.
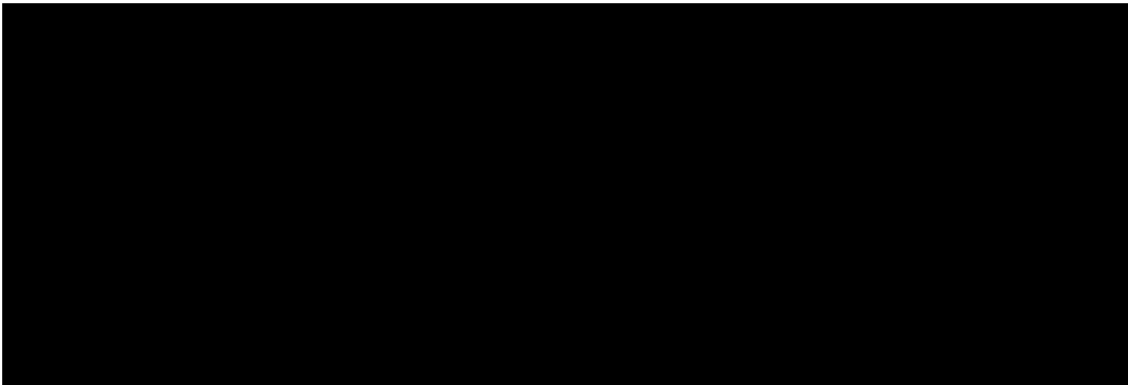
Figure 13 Examples of the 'Heroic Encounter' Motif in Seal Imagery (Garrison and Root 2001, 2)

The corpus of extant Achaemenid inscriptions is substantial, comprising inscriptions of various lengths on a variety of materials, many of which are inscribed in the three languages of the Achaemenid trilingual: Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian.[184] The majority of these have been discovered at Persepolis and Susa, though others have been unearthed in diverse parts of the empire, for instance the Babylonian version of the Behistun Monument, Darius' Canal Stelae discovered in Egypt, and a fragmentary inscription discovered in Phanagoria, southwestern Russia which has also been

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[180]   Garrison and Root 2001, 42.
[181]   *idem*, 42.
[182]   Wu 2014, 217.
[183]   *idem*, 232.
[184]   Finn 2011, 254-260 provides a table including each Achaemenid trilingual inscriptions with a short description of the content.

attributed to Darius.[185] Examples include short 'signature' inscriptions on household objects and building materials such as bricks, column bases and window lintels, and lengthier inscriptions on stone and precious metal which were either displayed or buried as foundation deposits at the imperial capitals. As in the case of Achaemenid imagery, inscriptions eschew a historical basis – except for building inscriptions in which constructions and the king(s) responsible for them are identified.[186]

Besides inscriptions discovered at Persepolis and Susa, Achaemenid kings also carved inscriptions into living rock around the empire. Among these, we count the Behistun inscriptions (DB OP, AE and AA, and DBa-k), inscriptions on Darius' tomb at Naqš-i Rustam (DNa-f) 12km northwest of Persepolis, inscriptions of Darius and Xerxes at Elvend (DE and XE) near Ecbatana, the inscription of Xerxes on the citadel at Tušpa, former capital of the Urartian Empire (XV) in modern day Armenia, and identifying inscriptions for subjects on the tomb of Artaxerxes II or III (r. 404-358 BCE and 358-338 BCE) at Persepolis ($A_{2/3}Pa$).

The existing known examples of Achaemenid rock cut inscriptions share the common features of being inscribed trilingually and being inaccessible to the point of being illegible. Multilingualism was not employed in these cases to ensure that the contents were communicated to a wider audience – for example of (literate) Elamites, Persians and Babylonians. Instead it served figuratively to highlight the impressive range of resources the Persians were able to draw upon as an expression of the reach of Persian power. Rock cut inscriptions also stand out from the rest of the corpus because they lay claim to the empire's natural landscape, demarcating Achaemenid territory outside the imperial heartland. The major concern was to communicate the power and majesty of the Persian monarchs, using the signature Achaemenid trilingual, but the content of the inscriptions was aimed at a divine cosmic, rather than a human, audience.[187]

The chronological distribution of extant Achaemenid inscriptions is very uneven. Table 2 shows the distribution of different inscriptions by ruler, without counting inscriptions of

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[185]   Shavarebi 2019 offers the most recent reconstruction of the Old Persian text of DFa.

[186]   DPa, DPf, XPa, XPc, XPd, A_3Pa, DSd, DSg, XSa, XSd, D_2Sa, D_2Sb, A_2Sa, A_2Sc, A_2Sd.

[187]   Finn 2011 proposes a cosmic audience for Achaemenid inscriptions, Khatchadourian 2016, 151 suggests the same for the audience of XV. See further Chapter 3, Introduction.

Ariaramnes and Arsames which may be forgeries dated to the time of Artaxerxes II (404-358 BCE),[188] and trilingual inscriptions of Cyrus from Pasargadae which may also be attributed to Darius I, discussed above. Most, over 80%, were created during Darius' and Xerxes' reigns (522-465 BCE). Several different factors may have influenced the uneven distribution of the material, including the Achaemenid penchant for inscribing building materials, which might have been reused for later building projects, and the effects of political resistance which resulted in the iconoclastic destruction of imperial objects. In the modern day the happenstance of archaeological discovery may also result in items being missed.[189] It is unlikely that the chronological distribution of the extant inscriptions is representative of the original corpus, or that it indicates a lack of interest in inscribing in the later Achaemenid period.
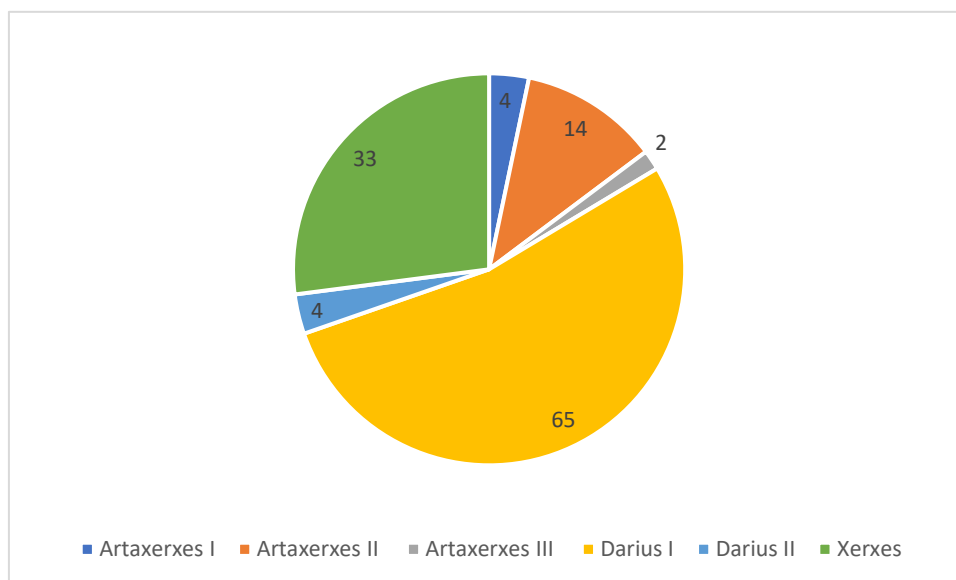
Table 2 Distribution of Extant Achaemenid Inscriptions Post-Dating Behistun by Ruler

Of the later inscriptions, those of Artaxerxes II (404-358 BCE) have garnered the most interest, for his veneration of the gods Anahita and Mithra alongside Ahuramazda, an apparent innovation in inscriptional practice.[190] However, owing to the uneven spread of

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[188]   Schaeder 1931 and Kent 1946.
[189]   See also Root 2010, 179-180 on the difficulties in archaeologically contextualising the extant inscriptions, for which she takes exemplars of DSf as a case study.
[190]   A2Ha, A2Hb, A2Sa and A2Sd. Berossus *FGrH* 680 F11 attributes the founding of cult worship of statue to Artaxerxes II, and the establishment of a cult of Anahita among the Susians, Ecbatanians, Persians, Bactrians, Damascans and Sardians. Kuhrt 2007, 499 n. 4 suggests that Anahita was associated especially with Susa, and therefore appears in inscriptions from these centres.

the material, it is not possible to say definitively whether this was an innovation or a continuation of his predecessors' practice. One of the two royal tombs at Persepolis, attributed to either Artaxerxes II or III, is the only Achaemenid tomb, besides Darius I's, to have been inscribed. These later examples suggest a possible resurgence of interest in inscribing under Artaxerxes II, which may have continued under Artaxerxes III (358-338 BCE).

The majority of the extant Achaemenid rock cut inscriptions also date to Darius' and Xerxes' reigns, and Darius appears overall to have been the most prolific creator. This suggests that the king attributed an especial value to rock cut inscriptions and monuments to reorder and control the newly founded Achaemenid empire. However, the recent discovery of the inscription DNf, an identifying inscription for the figure of a Persian noble on Darius' tomb, previously obscured by moss and shadow, cautions that objects from the original corpus of rock cut inscriptions are missing.[191]

In the whole corpus of inscriptions post-dating Xerxes' reign, there are no references to military ability in royal and elite identity, or to conquest. Therefore, in the section below, I examine Darius' and Xerxes' inscriptions, which offer a view of how conceptualisation of these themes developed between their reigns. In all, the analysis below covers the first 85 years following Cyrus' conquest of the Median kingdom, and the reigns of the first four Persian monarchs taking in several critical moments in the empire's history.

2. Teispid Violence

2.1.   Cyrus in Babylon

The Cyrus Cylinder (Fig. 14) is a traditional Babylonian object: a barrel shaped cylinder that was buried in the foundations of the Esagil temple in Babylon, with an inscription describing Cyrus' building activities in Babylon. Ahead of this description, the inscription contains details of Cyrus' conquests in Media and his entry into Babylon in October 539

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[191]   On DNf, see Delshad and Doroodi 2019.

BCE. The Nabonidus Chronicle (Fig. 15) is a Hellenistic period (323 BCE-31 CE) edition of a literary account of events from Nabonidus' accession (556 BCE) until Cyrus' first regnal year (538 BCE). Both sources offer descriptions of Persian conquest – Cyrus' victories in Media, Urartu and Babylonia.
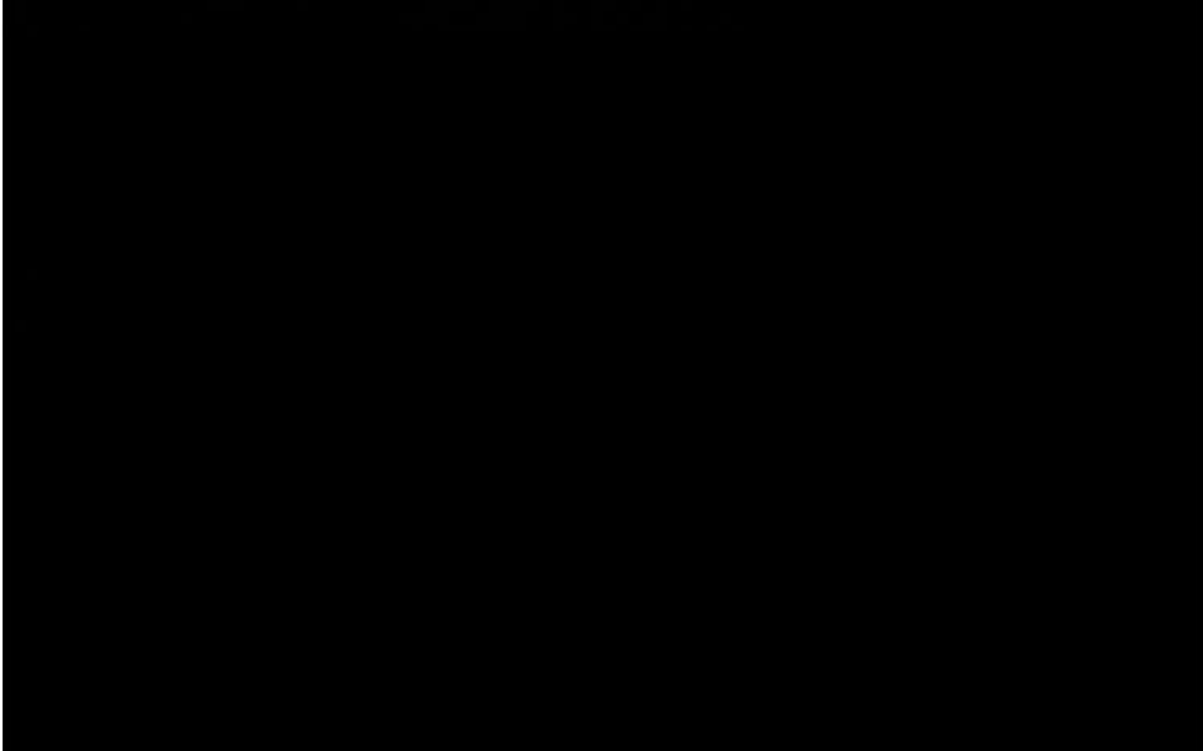
Figure 14 The Cyrus Cylinder (BM 90920)
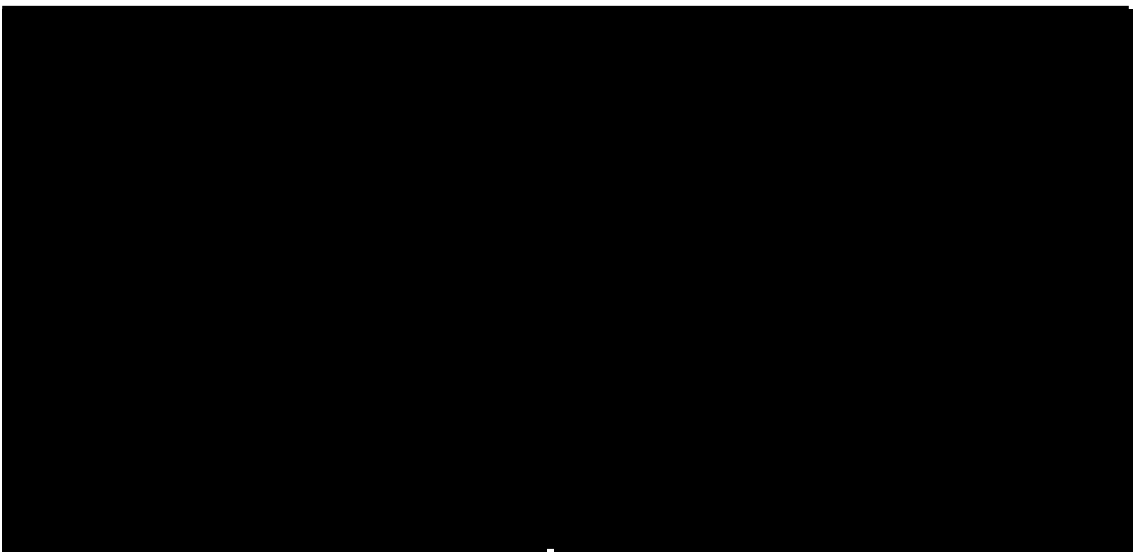
Figure 15 The Nabonidus Chronicle (BM 35382)

According to both the Cyrus Cylinder and the Nabonidus Chronicle inscriptions, Cyrus' entry into Babylon was peaceful:

ana ālišu Babili alakšu iqbi ušaṣbitsuma harrānu Babili kīma ibri u tappê ittallaka idāšu ummānīšu rapšātim ša kīma mê nāri lā ūtaddû nībašun kakkīšunu ṣandūma išaddihā idāšu balu qabli u tāhāzi ušēribaš qereb Šuanna ālišu Babili īṭir ina šapšāqi Nabium-na'id lā pālihišu umallâ qātuššu nišī Babili kalîšunu napharu Šumeri u Akkadi rubê u šakkanakka šapalšu ikmisā unaššiqū šēpuššu

He (Marduk) commanded that he (Cyrus) should march against his city, Babylon. He made him take the road to Babylon and, like a friend and companion, he marched at his side. His widespread troops, whose number, like the water of a river, cannot be ascertained, marched fully armed at his side. Without a fight or battle, he allowed him to enter Šuanna, his city (Babylon). He (Cyrus) saved his (Marduk's) city, Babylon, from hardship. He delivered Nabonidus, the king who did not revere him, into his hands. The people of Babylon, all of them, the entirety of the land of Sumer and Akkad, (as well as) the nobles and governor(s), bowed down before him (and) kissed his feet.

CB §15-18

ummānīya rapšātim ina qereb Babili išaddihā šulmāniš naphar Šumeri u Akkadi mugallitim ul ušarši

My widespread troops marched peacefully inside Babylon. I did not allow the whole of the lan[d of Sumer] and Akkad to have troublemakers.

CB §24

On the sixteenth day, Governor Ugbaru of Gutium, and the army of Cyrus made their entrance into Babylon without fighting. Later, having returned, Nabonidus was taken in Babylon. Until the end of the month, the shield(-carriers) of Gutium encircled the gates of the Esagila, but there was no interruption (of rites) of any kind in the Esagila or in any other temple and no (festival) date was missed. In the month of Araḫsamnu, the third day, Cyrus entered Babylon. (Drinking) straws

(?) were filled up before him. Peace reigned in the city; Cyrus decreed peace for all Babylon.

ABC 7 iii.15-20 (trans. Glassner 2004, 237-239)

Outside references to Cyrus' entry into Babylon, the Cyrus Cylinder inscription is most preoccupied with the building works, offerings, and rituals the Marduk clergy wished their new ruler to contribute towards. The inscription is not an historical account of Cyrus' conquest or his actions in the aftermath, nor a statement of imperial policy.[192] The building works described would have been in very early stages when the cylinder was created.[193] Considering that the extant example of the Nabonidus Chronicle dates from the Hellenistic period or later, Waerzeggers proposed that it should be defined as 'historical literature', despite the detached and linear way that events are reported in the text – noting the partiality which characterises the account.[194]

Despite the suggestions in the narratives that Cyrus' entry to Babylon was peaceful, there are indications elsewhere that this caused significant disruption. According to Herodotus, Cyrus and his army ambushed the Babylonians while they were celebrating a festival, though he does not refer explicitly to the violence involved in the conquest.[195] Tolini examined a receipt for building works, *Cyrus* 10, which gives details of works carried out at the Gate of Enlil shortly after the Persian conquest.[196] This was a possible entry point for invaders from the north of the city, and combined with the chronological proximity to Cyrus' entry, Tolini suggested that the repair works were for damage caused by the invading Persian army – contrary to the narrative of the Cyrus Cylinder and the Nabonidus Chronicle.

Although Tolini's interpretation of *Cyrus* 10 is only tentative, it is easy to imagine the level of disruption caused by a large army entering a city, even in a 'peaceful' manner. Besides

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[192]   On the relationship between the Cyrus Cylinder inscription and Achaemenid imperial policy, see further Kuhrt 1983.
[193]   Porter 1993, 43.
[194]   Waerzeggers 2015, 96, 100 and 108.
[195]   Hdt. 1.191.
[196]   Tolini 2005.

this, the Nabonidus Chronicle gives the following summaries of the aftermath of Cyrus'
conquests of Ecbatana, Urartu,[197] and Opis:

> Cyrus <marched> on Agamtanu (= Ecbatana), the royal residence, and took to
> Anšan the silver, gold, goods, valuables, [and…] that he had taken as plunder
> (in) Agamtanu. The goods and valuables that the troops […].
>
> ABC 7 ii.3-4 (trans. Glassner 2004, 235)

> In the month if Nisan, King Cyrus of Persia mustered his army and cross the
> Tigris downstream from Arbēla and, in the month of Iyyar, [march]ed on Urartu.[198]
> He put its king to death, seized its possessions, [and] set up his own garrison
> [there]. After that, the king and his garrison resided there.
>
> ABC 7 ii. 15-17 (trans. Glassner 2004, 237)

> In the month of Tešrit, Cyrus having joined battle with the army of Akkad at Opis
> on the [bank] of the Tigris, the people of Akkad fell back. He pillaged and
> massacred (*idūk*) the population. The fourteenth, Sippar was taken without a
> struggle. Nabonidus fled.
>
> ABC 7 iii.12-14 (trans. Glassner 2004, 237)

Lambert and Waters have both discussed the semantic problems associated with the
use of the verb *dâku* (*idūk*) in the final passage above.[199] Glassner's translation states
that, after the battle, Cyrus pillaged and *slaughtered* the people of Opis. While the verb
has the sense 'kill' or 'slaughter', it is also commonly used to denote 'defeat'. Lambert
suggested, therefore, that the passage tells us that 'Cyrus did battle with the Babylonian
army at Opis, that army retreated, Cyrus looted their camp, then he caught up with them

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[197] There has been much discussion about whether this part of the Chronicle refers to Lydia
or Urartu, which seems to have been resolved by Oelsner 1999/2000, 378-379 who collated a
missing part of the tablet, which should read -*ú* -, and therefore it must refer to the capture of
Urartu in 547 BCE. See Rollinger 2008, 56 for an outline of the main points of the discussion.

[198] See above, n. 195 on the identification of 'Urartu' here as Cyrus' destination, rather than
Lydia, which Glassner gives in his translation, and I have here changed.

[199] Lambert, 2007 and Waters 2019, 27.

and defeated them.'.[200] The question of the level of violence accompanying each of these conquests aside, these passages confirm that, by the time Cyrus entered Babylon, he had been at war for 11 years, and his violent potential was by then well-known. We should reconsider the Babylonians' decision to surrender to Cyrus in light of this fact.

The Cyrus Cylinder inscription also contains reflections of Cyrus' violent potential. In the excerpts above, allusions to the enormous size of his army, 'my widespread troops' *ummanīya rapšātim* are juxtaposed with statements about Cyrus' peaceful entry into Babylon. Though oblique and formulaic, these statements hint at the central role of military ability in the construction of Cyrus' identity. References to violent potential and peace in quick succession allude to the king's ability to control his forces, despite their massive size.

During Ashurbanipal's reign, there was a four-year civil war (652-648 BCE) between the king and his brother Šamaš-šuma-ukin, regent of Babylon (667-648 BCE). Ashurbanipal recounted his actions in the aftermath of the civil war in a prism inscription from Nineveh. He tells that he restored the temple and the city streets, removing the corpses left by war, purified the gods' daises and the city streets, reinstituted rituals and regular offerings, and had mercy on the rest of the region who had been in revolt and did not punish the people any further.[201] Although this is not a Babylonian but rather an Assyrian inscription, its content is familiar from the Cyrus Cylinder inscription, where the king claims to have undertaken similar actions for the temple, the gods and the people more generally following his campaign.[202] Overall, the Cyrus Cylinder inscription reflects an

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[200]   Lambert 2007.

[201]   RINAP 5 Ashurbanipal 11 iv 77-95.

[202]   CB §30-43. Harmatta 1971, identified a connection between the literary patterns in inscriptions composed during Ashurbanipal's reign and the Cyrus Cylinder inscription. This was reinforced by the discovery of a further fragment of the Cyrus Cylinder, published by Walker 1972, which refers to the discovery of an Ashurbanipal inscription during excavations for Cyrus' building works at Babylon. However, the Ashurbanipal inscription with which Harmatta compared the Cyrus Cylinder was found at Nineveh, not Babylon, suggesting that it was aimed at an Assyrian audience, rather than a Babylonian one and moreover dated from a century before Cyrus' entry into Babylon and the composition of the Cyrus Cylinder. We should be cautious in accepting conclusions which assumed that contemporary peoples were privileged with a panoptic view of Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions from all periods, as we are now. On the other hand, BM 113249, a letter from Uruk, constitutes a royal messenger's order to 'show me any inscribed stelae of former kings which are being kept in Eanna' dated to the reign of Cambyses – indicating a royal interest and awareness of Babylonian literary/epigraphic traditions.

attempt on the part of the Babylonian elite to induce the new Persian ruler to refrain from violence and to support them.

To summarise, the Cyrus Cylinder and the Nabonidus Chronicle both present Cyrus' entry into Babylon as a straightforward and peaceful affair. The Hellenistic era composers of the Nabonidus Chronicle did not shy away from recording the extreme violence which accompanied Cyrus' conquests elsewhere between 550-539 BCE. Despite their terseness, references to the huge size of Cyrus' armed forces in the Cyrus Cylinder, underline how Cyrus' violent abilities and potential facilitated his 'peaceful' entry into Babylon and the pacification of Babylon in the wake of the conquest. Ultimately, however, none of the available sources show that Cyrus tended to exploit his violent ability through official modes of representation.

2.2.   Cambyses in Egypt

Several sources have been used to evaluate Cambyses' conquest and the tenor of his rule over Egypt. According to the extant material, the conquest itself was a straightforward affair, because the king took advantage of political discord within Egypt to launch his campaign.[203] Herodotus attributes acts of sacrilege and violence to Cambyses in the aftermath of the conquest, including stabbing the Apis Bull.[204] These sacrileges are not corroborated by the Egyptian evidence, and Bresciani suggested that Herodotus' narrative was based on anti-Persian propaganda created by the Egyptian priesthood, after Cambyses' reforms in temple policy led to reductions in their revenue.[205] He stated too that these measures were dictated by economic necessity, rather than intolerance for Egyptian religious beliefs.[206]

The statue of Udjahorresnet (Fig. 16) is a naophorous statue, a personal funerary offering, which was originally placed in the temple of Neith at Sais. Udjahorresnet was an Egyptian noble, who lived through Cambyses' conquest and its aftermath, and into

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[203]   Ruzicka 2012, 16.
[204]   Hdt. 3.27-29, also reported by Strabo 17.1, Plut. *De Is. Et Os.* 368F.
[205]   Bresciani 1985, 506.
[206]   *idem*, 506.

the reign of Darius, and acted as a political and cultural advisor for Egyptian matters to both kings.[207] The statue bears a long autobiographical inscription in hieroglyphs, commemorating Udjahorresnet's many achievements throughout his lifetime, including his role in the restoration of Sais in the aftermath of the Persian conquest.
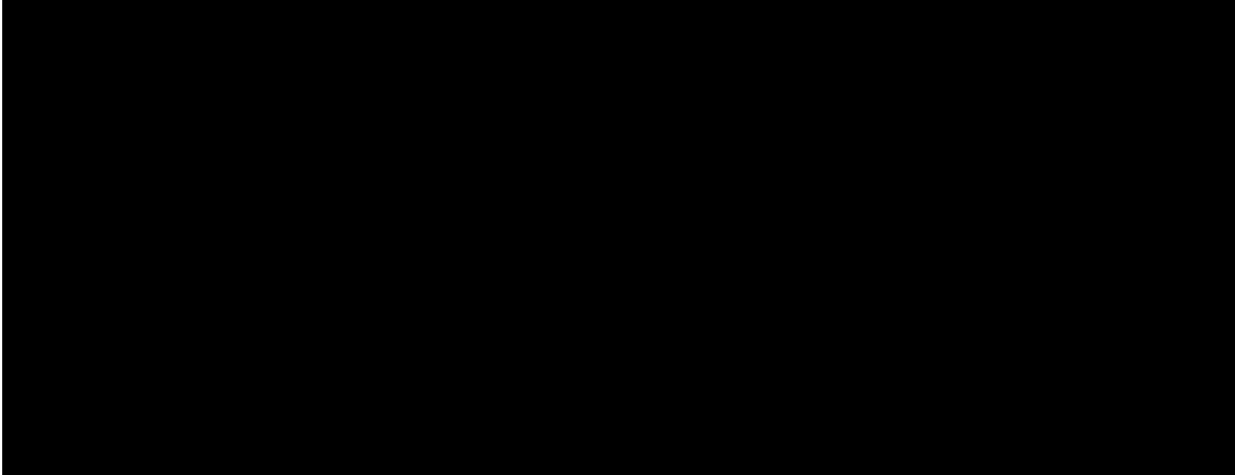
Figure 16 Statue of Udjahorresnet (MV 22690)

Within the inscription, Udjahorresnet refers to Cambyses' conquest of Egypt in 526 BCE,[208] and describes events in the aftermath:

> The great king of all foreign countries Cambyses came to Egypt, taking the foreigners of every foreign country with him. When he had taken possession of the entire country, they settled themselves down therein, and he was made great sovereign of Egypt and great king of all foreign countries.
>
> Statue of Udjahorresnet B, §L-P (trans. Posener 1936, 7)

The conquest was straightforward, but Udjahorresnet goes on to outline the disruption caused by the Persian conquest at the temple of Neith in Sais:

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[207]   Ruzicka 2012, 19; Lloyd 1982 described Udjahorresnet as a 'collaborator'.
[208]   Quack 2011 argued that the date of the conquest had to be re-dated from 525 BCE to 526 BCE, taking into account the relatively recent discovery that Amasis reigned for only 44, and not 45, years, and the possible maximum length of Psamettichus III's reign.

I complained to his majesty Cambyses king of Upper and Lower Egypt about the foreigners who had settled in the temple of Neith, that they should be driven out, so that the temple of Neith could be restored to its former splendour. His majesty ordered the removal of the foreigners who were settled in the temple of Neith, and the removal of all their dwellings and refuse which was inside the temple.

Statue of Udjahorresnet §a-d (trans. Posener 1936, 15)

'Foreigners' – Persian troops – were squatting in the temple, and had to be removed with their belongings before it could be restored and the usual inhabitants returned. In light of these statements, Bresciani suggested that 'it is probable that the Persian troops, in the initial violence of a military takeover, behaved more or less everywhere as they did at Sais.'[209] Securing the restoration of the temple was Udjahorresnet's first act in his illustrious career as advisor to the Persian kings. In the rest of the inscription, he carefully credits each of Cambyses' decisions to his own initiative. His reference to the chaotic aftermath of the Persian invasion was part of Udjahorresnet's strategy to elevate his own achievements.

Udjahorresnet's reference to the Persian invasion as 'the great turmoil' (*nšn*) has also been interrogated. Lloyd noted that *nšn* denotes the negative aspects of the Persian conquest, since the semantic core of the word 'clearly lies in the notion of a manifestation of daemonic and destructive power'.[210] Thus, he suggested, the Persian invasion was treated as 'the archetypal cosmic catastrophe.'[211] This marks a significant departure from the otherwise positive portrayal of Persian rule Udjahorresnet gives, according to which both Cambyses and Darius won the support of the Egyptian people by presenting themselves as traditional Egyptian pharaohs. Kuhrt suggested, by contrast, that we should not read too much into the choice of language, it was a formulaic appeal which appeared frequently in autobiographies,[212] emphasising the importance of context in parsing the meaning of the description.

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[209] Bresciani 1985, 505.
[210] Lloyd 1982, 177.
[211] *idem,* n. 34.
[212] Kuhrt 2007, 120 n. 14.

The precise meaning or sense of the word aside, we should remember again that Udjahorresnet's account was constructed to emphasise the value of his own achievements. The account of Cambyses' conquest in the inscription poses similar issues of interpretation as the Cyrus Cylinder and Nabonidus Chronicle inscriptions. Each of these texts was composed to further the interests not of the Persian conquerors, but those living under Persian rule. Udjahorresnet's allusions to the violence accompanying the Persian invasion, and the resolution of this situation were included to offer examples of his own extraordinary piety. While I tend to agree with Bresciani's reading of the statement about Persian occupation of the temple at Sais – that violence accompanied the Persian invasion everywhere in the country – the inscription itself does not offer concrete evidence for this.

In all, discussion of the Cyrus Cylinder, Nabonidus Chronicle and Udjahorresnet narratives shows again the difficulties associated with locating acts of physical violence through literary sources. Each of these narrations was affected by the composer's personal narrative aims. For example, Udjahorresnet's references to Persian violence following the conquest were predicated on a wish to elevate his own achievements in guiding Persian policy in Egypt. On the other hand, each of these sources testifies to the Persian kings' use of their military ability, or violent potential, as an inducement to obtain their subjects' obedience. This is the 'wide' violence involved in Teispid imperialism, though we have no sources to suggest that they exploited this in a more official capacity.

3. Military Ability and Royal Identity in the Achaemenid Period (522-331 BCE)

In official Achaemenid representation post-dating the creation of the Behistun Monument, explicit references to acts of violence are conspicuously absent. As I noted above, in official representational practice throughout the period, kings continued to stress the centrality of military ability in Achaemenid kingship and Persian identity. Above, I outlined the ways in which this was expressed through Achaemenid imagery. Darius also included a statement of the militaristic qualities required of the Persian king in his funerary inscription at Naqš-i Rustam, which Xerxes later copied:

Moreover this (is) my ability, that my body is strong (and that) as a battle fighter I am a good battle-fighter, At once my intelligence stands in its (proper) place, whether I see a rebel (before me) or not. Both by intelligence and by command at that time I regard myself as superior to panic, when I see a rebel (before me) just as when I do not see (one). I am fervent in counter-attack with both hands as well as with both feet; as a horseman I am a good horseman; as a bowman I am a good bowman, both on foot and on horseback; as a spearman I am a good spearman, both on foot and on horseback. These are the skills which Ahuramazda bestowed upon me, and I was strong enough to bear them.

<div align="right">DNb §2 = XPl §2 (trans. Schmitt 2000, 40-41)</div>

These passages contain the most 'violent' rhetoric of any inscriptions apart from the Behistun inscriptions: direct reminders of the kings' military abilities. The Behistun Monument aside, no Achaemenid inscriptions refer to historical conquests. The inscriptions considered in this section refer to conquest only obliquely. These references offer compelling evidence to suggest that ability in conquest remained a central tenet of Achaemenid ideology of kingship but offer little elucidation as to the role of physical violence in these conquests. As outlined in the overview of Achaemenid inscriptional practice above, the best evidence for this comes from the reigns of Darius and Xerxes, whose inscriptions make up the bulk of the extant corpus. In the following section, I consider developments in the conceptualisation of conquest in kingship ideology between Darius' and Xerxes' reigns, beginning with references to conquest in Egyptian objects created by Darius.

4. Conceptualising conquest between Darius and Xerxes

4.1.   'Conquest' in Darius' Inscriptions

Upon his accession, Darius inherited the kingship of Egypt, established during Cambyses' reign. According to the inscription on the Udjahorresnet statue, the transition between Cambyses' and Darius' reign in Egypt proceeded smoothly.[213] During his reign,

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[213]   Briant 2002, 473.

Darius completed major construction works on the Suez Canal, which would facilitate communication between the Persian heartland and Egypt. This was a major achievement, a feat of engineering which had been attempted by Necho II (610-595 BCE). Redmount proposed on the balance of the textual and archaeological evidence that Darius either re-excavated the canal begun by his predecessor, which started at Wadi-Tumilat and extended to Tell al-Maskutah or the Red Sea, or that he may simply have reinstated a section, from Tell al-Maskutah to the Red Sea.[214]

Upon completion of the works, Darius commemorated this achievement on monuments known as the 'canal stelae', which are known today from four examples.[215] The 'Maskhoutah Stele' and the 'Suez Stele' survive in fragments, and fragments of a further stele, the 'Serapeum Stele', originally placed between the Timsah and Amer Lakes, were excavated in the 19th century and subsequently lost within two years of transportation to the Louvre. The 'Chalouf Stele' is better preserved than these others (Fig. 17).
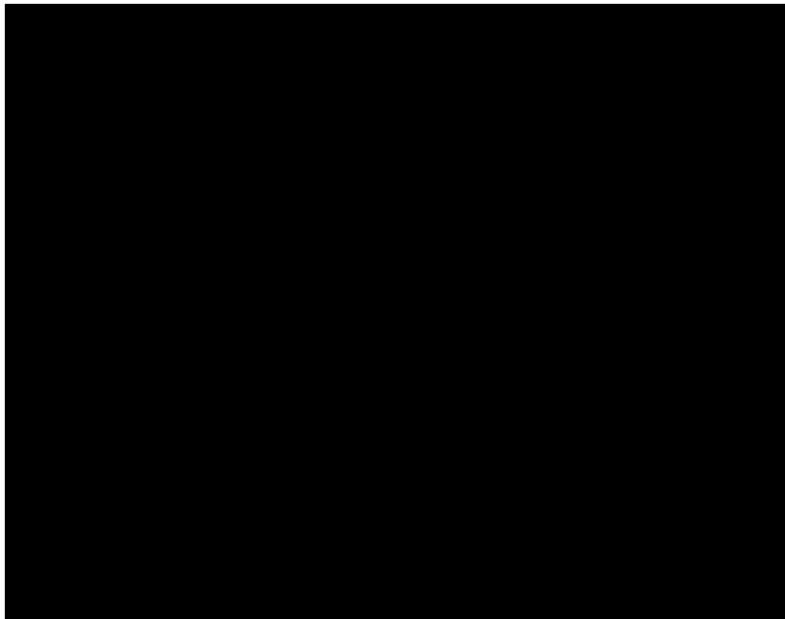
Figure 17 Reconstruction of the Chalouf Stele Cuneiform Side (livius.org accessed 12.08.19)

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[214]	Redmount 1995, 135. The works are referred to by Hdt. 2.158; Diod. 1.33; Strab. 17.1.25; Plin. *HN* 6.165; Arist. *Mete* 1.15. The latter three each state that Darius did not complete work on the canal, citing assorted reasons for this. Redmount 1995, 131 states that the classical accounts are 'hopelessly contradictory and can only be use cautiously as a primary historical source.'
[215]	Ray 1988, 263 proposed that originally there may have been as many as twelve stelae marking the course of the canal, though provides no substantiation for this assertion.

According to Posener's reconstruction of the stelae, each measured around 3.15m in height and 2.10m in width, and were placed on the right hand bank of the canal on high ground so that they could be viewed from boats passing by.[216] Each of the stelae was decorated with a hieroglyphic inscription on the obverse and a trilingual cuneiform inscription on the reverse, commemorating the canal's construction. The hieroglyphic inscription described the building of the canal in more detail than the shorter cuneiform inscriptions. In the cuneiform inscription of the Chalouf Stele, the Old Persian version of the inscription is the best preserved. In this inscription, Darius states:

adam Pārsa amiy hacā Pārsā Mudrāyam agarbāyam

I am a Persian; from Persia I seized Egypt

DZc §3 (trans. Kent 1953, 147)

This statement appears as a reference to Darius' personal conquest of Egypt, though, as noted above, Cambyses incorporated Egypt into the Persian Empire, and Udjahorresnet's inscription suggests that the transition between the two kings proceeded smoothly. The Behistun inscriptions, however, contain a reference to a revolt in Egypt at the beginning of Darius' reign, though the king does not tell in the inscription how he eventually overcame the revolt. Wijnsma has analysed this lacuna and proposed that the Egyptian revolt at the beginning of Darius' reign was 'the worst… of the Bisitun crisis'.[217] According to her evaluation, it lasted up to three years before Darius eventually suppressed it in 518 BCE.[218]

Does Darius' statement refer to his victory over the Egyptian rebellion? This could be confirmed by the date of the stele's creation, which remains uncertain. Posener suggested a date early in Darius' reign,[219] which would recommend that the canal stelae inscriptions were a response to Darius' re-conquest of Egypt following the Behistun

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[216]   Posener 1936, 48-49.
[217]   Wijnsma 2018, 158. Earlier interpretations of the Egyptian revolt mentioned in the Behistun inscription: Parker 1941; Cameron 1943; Kienitz 1953; Ruzicka 2012, 23; Kaper 2015.
[218]   Wijnsma 2018, 173.
[219]   Posener 1936, 50, based on the list of countries given on the stele.

crisis. Ray noted that the 'late' form of Darius' name used on the stele first came into use around 497 BCE.[220] Root noted that propositions, made by a number of scholars including Hinz and Yoyotte,[221] that the stelae (and Darius' Egyptian statue, discussed below) were created in the last years of Darius' reign are based on 'a series of assumptions', for which we lack definitive evidence, and proposes that both artefacts may be dated earlier, at the time of Darius' first royal visit in 519-518 BCE.[222]

Root noted that Ray's conclusion 'based upon a series of assumptions deliberately tailored to suit his acceptance of Yoyotte's chronology'. She suggested that Darius' order for the canal to be dug should be placed early in his reign, during his first royal visit, against suggestions made by other scholars, Yoyotte among them [223]

The stelae were created to commemorate the completion of the Suez Canal. As Redmount noted, 'the magnitude of the planning, technical skill, and labor involved in the excavation, and, equally important, the constant maintenance of a large-scale navigation canal should not be underestimated.'[224] We cannot rule out that the labour force used for the project was coerced, as was the case in most ancient building projects. Tuplin also noted the importance of the construction not only in improving communication within the empire, as well as providing commercial advantage, and besides this, the prestige associated with the completion of a project begun by his predecessor.[225]

The extant corpus of Achaemenid inscriptions contains many 'building inscriptions', which record the manufacture of certain items to be used in construction works,[226] the construction of buildings on the terraces at Susa and Persepolis,[227] and make more general allusions to building activities.[228] The creation of building inscriptions had a long

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[220]   Ray 1998, 263 n. 15.
[221]   Yoyotte 1972, 262 and Hinz 1975, 115-121.
[222]   Root 1979, 66-68 and 70-72.
[223]   Yoyotte 1972, Root 1979, 71.
[224]   Redmount 1995, 134 to illustrate this, she noted the enormous numbers of labourers needed for the building if Muhammad Ali's Wadi Canal in the 19th century.
[225]   Tuplin 1991, 270.
[226]   DPc, DPi, DSac, XPi.
[227]   DMa, DPa, DPf, DSa, DSd, DSe, DSf, DSg, DSj, DSz, DSaa, XPc, XPl, XPs, XSb, XSc, D2Sa, D2Sb, D2Sc, A1Pa, A1Pb, A2Ha, A2Hb, A2Hd, A2Sa, A2Sc, A2Sd, A3Pa.
[228]   DSo, XIa, XPa, XPb, XPe, XPf.

history in the Middle East by the time Darius came to the throne, particularly in Mesopotamia, where prisms and cylinder shaped objects were inscribed and buried in the foundations of buildings, to ensure their 'effectiveness'.[229]

Achaemenid building inscriptions in the imperial centres differed from these earlier examples in that they were used to protect the constructions, and to record the achievements of their builders. Comparison between the content of the canal stele inscription and rhetoric in other Achaemenid building inscriptions, usually deposited in the imperial centres, suggests that we should categorise the canal stelae among Achaemenid 'building inscriptions'. Consider the following statements in the Old Persian inscription on the Chalouf Stele and a building inscription relating to the construction of the platform at Susa:

> I ordered to dig this channel from – Pirāva by name (is) a river which flows in Egypt – to the sea that comes from Persia; to there, this channel was dug as I ordered, and ships from Egypt went through this channel to Persia, as I [wished].
>
> DZc §9-12 (trans. Kent 1953, 147)

> This palace which I built at Susa, from afar its ornamentation as brought. Downward the earth was dug, until I reached rock in the earth. When the excavation had been made, then rubble was packed down, some 40 cubits in depth, another (part) 20 cubits in depth. On that rubble the palace was constructed.
>
> DSf §3 (trans. Kent 1953, 144)[230]

According to Posener's reconstruction, the hieroglyphic inscription contained further details relating to the process of constructing the canal.[231] Preoccupation with building works in both the hieroglyphic and cuneiform inscriptions suggests that we need not

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[229] Ellis 1968, 160 and 168. See Novotny 2010, 109-140 on Assyrian building inscriptions and Ambos 2010, 221-238 on building rituals in ritual texts from the first millennium BCE.
[230] Variants of this texts are DSaa, the Akkadian version, and DSz, the Elamite version.
[231] Posener 1936, 76.

interpret Darius' statement about conquest as referring to a military conquest,[232] but rather to his 'victory' in constructing the canal. Its building and completion was a conspicuous statement of Persian power, comparable to a military victory over the region – particularly as it physically connected Egypt with the imperial heartland.

Darius created further Egyptian artefacts, including an over life-size statue of the royal figure (Fig. 18). This was made from Egyptian stone, and may originally have been erected in Egypt, at Heliopolis, and possibly moved to Susa for safekeeping following the Egyptian revolt at the beginning of Xerxes' reign.[233] Excavators at Susa also hypothesised about the existence of at least one, if not three, more statues of Darius which were originally erected around the Gate of Darius.[234] There is no firm evidence for the date the statue was moved from its original location, and it is also possible that it was a duplicate of originals placed (and left) in Heliopolis.[235]

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[232]   Tuplin 1991, 244 notes that if the statement did refer to a military victory, it would be impossible to know which.
[233]   Suggestion by Vallat 1974, 168; Hdt. 7.1 tells of the outbreak of an Egyptian revolt just before Darius died, which Xerxes had to deal with as soon as he became king.
[234]   Muscarella 1994, 219-220.
[235]   TAD A 6.12 a letter of the satrap Arshama which refers to making duplicates of the same image, a horse with a rider, to be sent around the empire.

Figure 18 Egyptian Statue of Darius discovered at Susa (National Museum of Iran)

Like the canal stelae, the statue bears inscriptions in four languages – a cuneiform trilingual and a longer hieroglyphic inscription. References to the Persian conquest of Egypt appear in both inscriptions:

> This is a statue of stone, which Darius the king ordered to be made in Egypt, so that whoever sees it in time to come will know that the Persian man holds Egypt
>
> DSab §2. (trans. Lecoq 1997, 246-7)

(The statue has been made) so that there should be a durable monument of Darius so that he will be remembered before his father Atum, Heliopolitan Lord of the Two Lands, Re Harakhte, for the whole extent of eternity… he has ordered him to conquer each of the Two Lands and the goddess Neith has given him the bow she holds, to throw back all his enemies… so that he might be effective in repelling the rebel against him, to reduce those who rebel against him in the Two Lands.

(trans. Yoyotte 1972, 257)

The first of these excerpts is comparable with Darius' statement in his funerary inscription:

But if you shall think: 'How many (are) those countries which Darius the king held?' Look at the sculpted figures which bear the throne platform. Then you shall perceive, then it shall become known to you: 'The Persian man has repulsed the enemy far away from Persia.'

DNa §4 (trans. Schmitt 2000, 30)

The inscription is engraved on Darius' tomb at Naqš-i Rustam, with an accompanying relief image. This shows the king standing before a fire altar on a podium, which is supported by personifications of each region incorporated into the Persian Empire – 'the images who bear the throne'. The relief and the statue are connected figuratively with one another as subject peoples appear on both (Fig. 22). Neither inscription makes explicit reference to military conquest, the rhetoric serves to confirm the extent of the empire. The longer hieroglyphic inscription on the statue gives a fuller description of Darius' conquest of Egypt, couched in traditional Egyptian rhetoric – depicting Darius as a conqueror who had the support of the Egyptian gods, and would protect the country against rebellion.

There is no doubt that the canal stelae and the Egyptian Darius statue were meant to serve a figurative purpose – as symbols of Persian hegemony over Egypt. The

statements surveyed above serve to indicate that Darius was the original conqueror of the region for the Persian Empire. Tuplin suggested that Darius' representational choices in Egypt were deliberate, and aimed at denigrating the memory of Cambyses, the actual original conqueror of Egypt, and positioning himself as the 'real' conqueror.[236] At the same time, references to conquest in the canal stelae inscriptions may refer to Darius' 'victory' in completing work on the Suez Canal – worth celebrating as a challenging construction project which his Egyptian predecessor had failed to complete.

4.2.   Conquerors and Kings

'Country Lists' – enumerations of the peoples subject to Achaemenid rule – appear in several inscriptions of Darius: DB §6, DPe §2, DNa §3, DSe §2, DSm §2 and DSv §2, as well as Xerxes' XPh §3. In each, the country list is preceded by an introductory statement, in which the king claims that the lands listed were acquired by conquest, or that he reigned over them as king:

Inscription (OP)	Introductory statement
DB §6. 13-14	These are the countries which came unto me; by the favour of Ahuramazda I was king of them
DPe §2. 7-10	These are the countries, of which I took possession together with this Persian people, which feared me (and) brought tribute to me (trans. Schmitt 2000, 61)
DNa §3. 16-22	These (are) the countries which I seized outside Persian; I ruled them; to me they brought tribute. What has been said to them by me, that they did. The law that (was) mine, that held them (stable) (trans. Schmitt 2000, 30)
DSe §2	These are the lands I have seized outside of Persia; I have ruled over them; they brought me tribute; what was told them by me, they did; the law that is mine, they held (firm) (trans. Kent 1953, 142)
DSm §2	These are the countries over which I became king (trans. Kent 1953, 145)
DSv §2	These are the countries where the people live, they bring me tribute, Ahuramazda gave them to me (trans. Lecoq 1997, 242)
XPh §3. 14-19	These (are) the countries of which I was the king outside Persia; I ruled them; to me they brought tribute. What was said to them by me, that they did. The law that (was) mine, that held them (stable) (trans. Schmitt 2000, 92)

Table 3 Introductory Statements for Country Lists in the Extant Inscriptions of Darius and Xerxes

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[236]   Tuplin 1991, 269.

The kings' characterisations of themselves as either 'king' or 'conqueror', I suggest, are not entirely random. In the inscription DSm, the country list is virtually identical to that in the Behistun inscriptions (DB).[237] This may also be true of DSv, although it is heavily damaged, and parts are broken away, and so it is impossible to tell definitively. In the parts that can be read, it appears identical. This suggests that Darius described himself as 'king' because had achieved no further conquests.

On the other hand, although the country list in DSe is identical to that given in the Behistun inscriptions, Darius describes himself as 'conqueror'. It is possible, however, that this country list was also composed in commemoration of Darius' accession to the kingship, and the suppression of the conquests described in the Behistun inscriptions. Work at Susa began early in Darius' reign (ca. 520 BCE), and the composition of this inscription, which elsewhere describes the rebuilding of a city wall at Susa, may have been close in date to the composition of the Behistun inscriptions.

The country list in DNa adds India, the Amyrgian Scythians, the Scythians beyond the sea, Thrace, and shield bearing Greeks, Libyans, Nubians and Carians to the lists at Behistun. DSm adds Sardis, Sind, Skudra and the 'petasos-wearing' Ionians. Finally, DPe adds Sardis, Sagartia and Sind. In each of these cases, Darius names himself 'conqueror', to commemorate recent conquests of new regions for the Persian Empire. In short, variation between the use of 'king' and 'conqueror' in Darius' inscriptions may have been predicated on the king's intent to emphasise his enlargement of the empire at one time or another.

Xerxes' inscriptions offer only one example of a country list, in XPh. Ahead of this, Xerxes states that he was 'king' over the countries listed. His characterisation of himself as 'king' in this inscription is out of step with Darius' tendency to forefront his ability in conquest as he enlarged the empire. The country list in XPh adds two further peoples, unattested in earlier inscriptions of Darius: the Dahae and Akaufaka. Xerxes' decision to

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[237]   Vogelsang 1998, 209 on the organisation of the country in DB which differs from that found in later inscriptions. This, earliest country list include the name *Māda,* which is followed lands which used to belong to the Median Empire, and preceded by lands which the Medes had previously failed to incorporate.

characterise himself as king is especially surprising, since this part of XPh is a virtual copy of Darius' DNa, except for the statements: 'these are the countries *of which I* (Xerxes) *was king* outside Persia', where Darius favoured 'these are the countries *I* (Darius) *have seized outside* Persia'. The overall similarity between the inscriptions suggests that this variation was deliberate. Kuhrt suggested that Xerxes sought to present a 'smooth takeover of an existing populous and diverse empire.'[238] Accepting that the variation was deliberate, it appears that Xerxes' conceptualisation of conquest was a development on Darius', according to which he no longer presented himself as a 'conqueror' but instead as 'king', in order to emphasise the overall stability of the empire upon his accession and throughout his reign.

4.3.   The *daiva*-inscription: Xerxes' Conquest in XPh

XPh is the so-called *daiva*-inscription, of which there are five extant examples, two in Old Persian and one each in Elamite and Akkadian from Persepolis, and a further copy of the Old Persian from Pasargadae.[239] As noted, much of the inscription XPh copies the content of DNa, as Abdi summarises:

> XPh §1-2 are identical to DNa§1-2, while the beginning of XPh §3 is almost identical to DNa §3 and XPh §5 to parts of DNa §5.

> Abdi 2006-7, 54

Xerxes' decision to move away from a characterisation of himself as 'conqueror' in XPh, is also striking in light of an apparent reference later in the inscription to what may be an historical instance of rebellion against him, and his suppression of it:

> When I became king, there is among those countries which (are) inscribed above (one, which) was in turmoil. Afterwards Ahuramazda brought me aid; by the favour

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[238]   Kuhrt 2007, 305 n. 4 and 5.
[239]   Stronach 1965, 19-20 documents the discovery of the third example of the Old Persian text at Pasargadae.

of Ahuramazda I defeated that country and put it in its proper place. And among those countries there were (some), where formerly the *daivas* had been worshipped. Afterwards by the favour of Ahuramazda I destroyed that place of the *daivas,* and I gave orders: 'The *daivas* shall not be worshipped any longer!' Wherever formerly the *daivas* have been worshipped, there I worshipped Ahuramazda at the proper time and in the proper ceremonial style.

XPh §4 (trans. Schmitt 2000, 93)

Upon the discovery and translation of the versions of XPh from Persepolis, these passages were interpreted as providing an unparalleled view of Achaemenid religious policy under Xerxes. According to Cameron, XPh was 'perhaps the most important religious document discovered at Persepolis.'[240] The passage appeared to confirm the religious intolerance attributed to Xerxes by Herodotus and in later sources.[241] Central to the debate around Xerxes' religious policy was the identity of the unnamed *daiva*-worshippers. The first candidate put forward was Babylonia, since two Babylonian revolts were known to have taken place at the beginning of Xerxes' reign.[242] Other suggestions were put forward and, over the course of the debate, most regions of the empire have been considered as the possible home of the *daiva*-worshippers.[243]

Sancisi-Weerdenburg argued that the passage was neither a reflection of imperial religious policy, nor a reference to a specific historical event and pointed out that it appears to be elaboration of Darius' summarising statements in Column Five of the

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[240] Cameron 1959, 470.

[241] Chapter 1, Section 2.1 gives a fuller overview of the debate around Xerxes' as 'destroyer of sanctuaries', a characterisation originally based on Hdt. 1.183, in which he states that Xerxes stole a golden statue and murdered a priest in the process.

[242] Waerzeggers 2003/4, 151-156 established beyond doubt that the revolts of Bēl-šimânni and Šamaš-erība took place in Xerxes' second regnal year; Kent 1937, 305 lists the reasons for placing the events described, and the creation of the inscription, between the years 486-480 BCE, and posits the likelihood that Xerxes was referring to the Babylonian revolts; Hartmann 1937, 159 suggested that the reference to 'the place of the *daivas'* referred to the temple of Marduk in Babylon, based on Hdt. 1.183.

[243] Lévy 1939, 117-122 referring to Hdt. VIII.85 suggested that the temples destroyed were in Athens, Herzfeld 1932, 27; 1936, 74-77 and 1947, 401 that the text was about an uprising of the Median Magi and the temples destroyed were in Media and Persia; Olmstead 1948, 231-232 suggested Bactrian or other Iranian deities, Frye 1984, 172 suggested Iranian cults, most likely Elamite in origin.

Behistun inscription.[244] There, Darius also referred to the Elamites' and Scythians' failure to worship Ahuramazda:

> Those Elamites/Scythians were disloyal, and by them Ahuramazda was not worshipped. I (however) worshipped Ahuramazda. By the favour of Ahuramazda, as (was) my desire, so I treated them.
>
> DB OP §72 and §75 (trans. Schmitt 2000, 75-76)

In this case, the subjects' failure to worship Ahuramazda is a euphemism for their status as rebels against Persian hegemony, rather than as religious deviants. Darius' statements do not describe a religious policy, they offer figurative justification for his use of violence against the leaders of the rebellions. We know this because, prior to these statements in the Behistun inscription, Darius describes the rebellions and their suppression including the punishments of the rebel leaders. Most recently, Abdi reasserted the argument that the inscription constituted a religious policy, a prohibition against the burning of dead matter, because this was against Zoroastrian belief.[245]

Discussions of XPh as a document of religious policy or otherwise have not usually taken into account a major inconsistency between descriptions of the 'revolts' in the Old Persian and Akkadian versions of the inscription. According to Lecoq, where the Old Persian reads: 'there is among these countries which are inscribed above (one which) was in commotion', the Akkadian reads: 'The *countries* inscribed above revolted.'[246] In the latter version, Xerxes says that all countries of the empire revolted. Lecoq noted further that at this point in the inscription 'the syntax of the Old Persian… is quite awkward, even ambiguous. Here we should probably follow the Akkadian version.'[247] Thus, the possibility is introduced that in XPh, Xerxes was referring to revolts breaking out in diverse regions of the empire. Although he appears to offer a tantalising description of a rebellion during his reign, and his actions in suppressing it, this may be construed as a figurative statement confirming Xerxes' legitimacy to punish *anyone* who

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[244]   Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1980, 35.
[245]   Abdi 2006-7, 56-61.
[246]   XPh AA §4 trans. Lecoq 1997, 257.
[247]   *Idem* my translation.

transgresses against Persian hegemony. Uncertainty surrounding the identity of the *daiva*-worshippers may, to this end, have been a conscious stylistic decision.

This interpretation of the *daiva* passage in XPh may be reinforced by Xerxes' use of Old Persian terminology to describe the revolts. He refers to the *daiva* worshipping country (or countries) as being 'in commotion', using the verb *yaud-*:

> *yaθā tya adam xšāyaθiya abavam astiy atar aitā dahyāva tyaiy upariy nipišta ayauda pasāvamaiy*

<div align="right">XPh §4 (translation above)</div>

The word also appears in two extant inscriptions of Darius:

Auramazdāhā yaθā avaina imam būmim yaudatim pasāvadim manā frābara mām xšāyaθiyam akunauš adam xšayaθiya amiy vašnā Auramazdāhā adamšim gāθavā niyašādayam tyašām adam aθaham ava akunava yaθā mam kāma āha

Ahuramazda, when he saw this earth in turmoil, after that he bestowed it upon me; me he made king; I am king. By the favour of Ahuramazda I put it in its proper place. What I have said to them, that they did, as was my desire.

<div align="right">DNa §4 (trans. Schmitt 2000, 30)</div>

vasiy tya duškartam āha ava naibam akunavam dahyāva ayauda aniya aniyam aja ava adam akunavam vašnā Aurahazdāhā yaθā aniya aniyam naiy jatiy cinā gāθavā kašciy astiy dātam tya manā hacā avanā tasatiy yaθā hya tauvīyā tyam skauθim naiy jatiy naiy vimardatiy

Much which was ill-done, that I made good. Provinces were *in commotion*; one man was smiting the other. The following I brought about by the favour of Ahuramazda, that the one does not smite the other at all, each one is in his place. My law – of that they feel fear, so that the stronger does not smite nor destroy the weak.

In the Behistun inscription, Darius' funerary statement (DNb) and Xerxes' later copy of this (XPl), the king refers to 'rebellions' using the Old Persian *hamiçiyā.* Kuhrt proposed that Xerxes' use of *yaud-* in XPh was a conscious move towards the representation of 'non-specific turmoil demanding royal action… a generalised restlessness threatening to disturb the imperial tranquillity rather than the king reporting on a specific act of rebellion in his realm.'[248] By eschewing reference to any specific acts of rebellion, Xerxes highlights the overall stability of the empire but also his ability to violently counter *any* difficulties which might arise. The phrases 'I smote that people and put it down in its place… I destroyed that temple' clarify that this retribution could be enacted against both human bodies and their social institutions.

4.4 Explaining the Conceptualisation of Conquest in Achaemenid Representation Post-Dating Behistun

The move towards general statements about conquest, the use of ideological statements about the importance of military ability and figurative allusions to this in Achaemenid artwork were meant to evoke the kings' abilities as conquerors and worthy kings of a stable empire. This contrasts with Darius' stylistic decisions for the Behistun Monument, where he decided to forefront the violence involved in suppressing the revolts. At this point, the situation was so critical that the king could not afford to leave out precise descriptions of his violent actions.

Darius introduced the practice of privileging ahistorical subject matter in Achaemenid inscriptions. In images and inscriptions post-dating Behistun, he eschewed reference to specific military conquests. In cases where conquest is mentioned it can apply to a range of royal activities, for example to Darius' 'victory' in constructing the Suez Canal, and not only military victory. According to the extant inscriptions, Xerxes followed his father's practice of referring only to historically unspecified events.

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[248]   Kuhrt 2007, 306 n. 6.

Xerxes was focussed on developing precedents in inscriptional practice inaugurated by his father, as he did in many areas of representational practice. For instance, XPl is almost a word for word reiteration of DNb, omitting only the final paragraph. There is a pair of rock cut inscriptions at Gandj Nameh side by side, known as DE and XE, which are identical except for the names of the monarchs. The rock cut inscription XV at Lake Van was a father-son collaboration, as Xerxes tells:

> King Darius who was my father by the favour of Ahuramazda built much good (construction), and this niche he gave orders to dig out, where he did not cause an inscription (to be) engraved. Afterwards I gave the order to engrave this inscription.
>
> XV (trans. Kent 1953, 153)

Xerxes also composed inscriptions to mark Darius' building works at Susa (XSa and XSd) and to refer to building works in Persepolis started during Darius' reign, and completed during his own (XPa, XPc, XPf and XPg).

As we know, the creation of the Behistun Monument was motivated by the especially critical circumstances confronting Darius upon his accession. In turn, Xerxes' conceptualisation of conquest was no doubt motivated by political circumstances particular to his reign. Was his emphasis on the stability of the empire a reflection of the reality in which he found himself? Or was it a calculated response to the reality of *in*stability within the empire, or rejection of his legitimacy to exercise the kingship?

We know that Xerxes weathered significant challenges to his kingship and to Persian hegemony over the course of his reign. When he first came to the throne, he had to deal with an Egyptian rebellion which had started in 487 BCE. [249] Powerful northern Babylonian elite factions were also vying for independence from Persian rule, and revolts

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[249]   Hdt. 7.1.1-3.

against him eventually broke out in 484 BCE.[250] Besides these rebellions, Xerxes is best known for embarking on an expedition against the Greek city states, engendering a spate of wars lasting between 490 and 449 BCE – throughout the rest of his reign and into that of Artaxerxes I (465-424 BCE). The 'Greco-Persian wars' loom large in European imagination for the perceived importance of the Greek victory against the autocratic Achaemenid regime.[251] However, they do not indicate instability within the empire, as the battles were not against rebellious peoples, and the fact that Xerxes was able to raise such an expedition does actually indicate a greater stability in areas already subsumed into the empire and the strength of Achaemenid military force.

The ease of Xerxes' transition to kingship is unknown. Estimations rest on Herodotus' statements that Darius chose Xerxes as his successor before going to war against Athens and Egypt, and that Xerxes was the most handsome of Darius' sons, and therefore the worthiest.[252] Justin's narrative challenges this story, noting that Darius' sons were disputing the succession after his death.[253] These stories await substantiation from the Persian evidence, which is limited to Xerxes' own account of his succession:

> Darius had also other sons; (but) thus was the desire of Ahuramazda: Darius my father, made me the greatest after himself. When my father Darius went to his (allotted) place (in the beyond), by the favour of Ahuramazda I became king in my father's place.
>
> XPf §4. 28-32 (trans. Schmitt 2000, 84)

Here, Xerxes claims that he was chosen as crown prince before Darius' death, and the succession proceeded in a straightforward manner. Briant posited that although XPf depicts a smooth transition to power, the 'very fact that Xerxes inscribed such a

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[250]　See Chapter 1, Section 2.1.
[251]　Herodotus was motivated to conduct his enquiry in order to establish the causes of the conflict (1.1). More recently, Green 1996, 3 stated 'the great conflict between Greece and Persia – or, to be more accurate, between a handful of states in mainland Greece and the whole might of the Persian empire at its zenith – must always remain one of the most inspiring episodes in European history.'
[252]　Hdt. 7.2-3 and 187; Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 11.20 also states that Xerxes was a worthy successor of Darius, because 'he held the Jews in the highest esteem'.
[253]　Justin 2.10.10.

statement (which has no parallel) and the fact of his insistence on his 'victory' over his brothers also seem to confirm that he had overcome some form of resistance.'[254] Against Briant's summation, we might consider whether this brief statement really indicates any significant anxiety on Xerxes' part over his legitimacy to exercise the kingship. Commentary on XPf has focussed primarily on the statement about Darius' succession plan,[255] but this inscription it also incorporates the properties of a typical Achaemenid building inscription. Xerxes underscores the general proliferation and quality of building works carried out during his and Darius' reigns:

> When I became king, much that (is) superior I built. What had been built by my father, that I took into my care and other work I added. But what I have done and what my father has done, all that we have done by the favour of Ahuramazda.
>
> XPf §4 (trans. Schmitt 2000, 84)

Examples of Assyrian succession treaties supply a useful comparative context in which to interpret XPf. The Assyrian kings Sennacherib (705-681 BCE) and Esarhaddon (681-669 BCE) both composed inscriptions appointing their heirs before they passed away (SAA 2:3 and 2:6). These are unlike XPf, in that the kings had in mind averting crisis *after* they passed away, while Xerxes intended merely to state his suitability. We know that Sennacherib's succession treaty did not achieve the desired effect; Esarhaddon's brothers contested his succession, despite Sennacherib's insistence that they accept him as their ruler.[256]

Copies of Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty, designating Ashurbanipal (668-ca. 627 BCE) king of Assyria and Šamaš-šuma-ukin (667-648 BCE) king of Babylonia, circulated throughout the empire to secure the support of each region for the king's decree.[257] The treaty is an example of textual mass production from the cuneiform world.[258] Versions of

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[254]   Briant 2002, 519: although in the context of this chapter it is worth noting that Xerxes does not claim a military 'victory' in this inscription.

[255]   Lecoq 1997, 254 suggests that the inscription should be known as 'Darius' succession text'. Kuhrt 2007, 239 suggests that Xerxes had Darius' accession in mind when he composed XPf, and the knowledge that 'securing the succession was both a delicate and vital matter'.

[256]   RINAP 4 Esarhaddon 1, i 8-ii 11.

[257]   Lauinger 2015, 289.

[258]   *idem*, 285.

the treaty, displaying variations according to the intended recipient, [259] have been discovered at Nimrud and Aššur, former capitals of the Assyrian Empire, and Tayinat in modern day Turkey. In sum, Esarhaddon's treaty offers an unparalleled example of mass political propaganda.[260] The succession plan he created was followed, and functioned for 16 years after his death, until civil war broke out between Ashurbanipal and Šamaš-šuma-ukin in 652 BCE.

Struggles over the succession to the throne are also known from the Achaemenid period. The circumstances of Xerxes' death offer a demonstrative example of how severe competition for the throne might have been. A Babylonian lunar eclipse tablet, a document containing information about lunar eclipses arranged in eighteen-year groups, says that Xerxes' son (Artaxerxes I) murdered him between the 22nd July and 21st August 465 BCE.[261]

There are, however, obstacles to proving that XPf was a response to resistance against Xerxes' kingship. In the first place, unlike Esarhaddon's treaties, there is no indication that it was produced for mass consumption and nor is it a legally binding document. Five copies of the inscription have been discovered, written in Old Persian and Akkadian, and it is unclear whether these were meant to be displayed or used as foundation deposits.[262] Display of the tablets might hint that the message had a wider circulation, but would only confirm that Xerxes displayed his legitimacy for the kingship, and not that he was anxious about resistance. What is more, the tablets are undated; they might have been created at any time during Xerxes' reign, and not necessarily at the beginning specifically to counter resistance to his accession.

In short, the mere existence of XPf does not prove that Xerxes' accession was contested and, though new evidence may yet clarify the matter, there is little to suggest that the political situation was inherently unstable at the beginning of his reign. Certainly, Xerxes

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[259]   Watanabe 2014, 147.
[260]   *idem*, 165.
[261]   BM 32234, discussion and translations in Stolper 1988, 196-197 and Walker 1997, 21. F13. Photius, p. 37a26-40a5 (§33), Diodorus 11.69, and Justin 3.1 all attribute Xerxes' death to the machinations of Xerxes' advisor Artabanus.
[262]   Lecoq 1997, 104.

does not appear to have experienced a Behistun-crisis-level disaster. Correspondences between Xerxes' and Darius' inscriptions, including developments in the representation of violence in ideological statements about military ability and conquest, suggest a concerted effort to emphasise a smooth transition to power, and the stability of the empire at large.

Conclusion

Violence was indispensable in the establishment and maintenance of Persian power throughout all periods. The narratives of the Cyrus Cylinder, Nabonidus Chronicle and the Udjahorresnet inscription, have previously been analysed for evidence of the Teispid policy of accommodating their subjects' cultural and religious norms. Here I have analysed what these texts also reveal about the use of violence involved in conquest and aftermath, through which the Persians established their hegemony. Besides committing acts of violence in warfare, the Teispids exploited their reputation for violent ability and military excellence to ensure obedience among their subjects in the aftermath of conquest. However, Teispid representational practice offers no clarification on the ideological role of violence in the establishment and maintenance of the Teispid regime.

In official representational practice post-dating the Behistun Monument, Darius eschewed narration of historical deeds, and therefore historical acts of violence. This tendency was also taken up by his successors, and appears as a convention in Achaemenid representational practice. Violence does appear in inscribed allusions to Achaemenid military strength, as in Darius' funerary inscription, which was later copied by Xerxes. Despite the rejection of historical narratives, references to conquest also appear in inscriptions from Darius' and Xerxes' reigns. The uneven chronological distribution of sources for Achaemenid representational practice prevents analysis of the conceptualisation of conquest throughout the lifetime of the empire, though military ability remained one of the cornerstones of Achaemenid kingship and Persian identity throughout the period. The insistent depiction of armed Persian figures in relief artwork, and the proliferation of scenes of warfare and the 'heroic encounter' in glyptic imagery speak of the importance of military ability in the Achaemenid imperial project overall.

The relative proliferation of inscriptions from the reigns of Darius and Xerxes allows us to detect changes in the conceptualisation of conquest over time. In line with the ahistorical nature of inscriptions, references to conquest are non-specific. This strategy emphasised the overall stability of the empire, and the kings' ability to counter any opposition which might arise. In all, the analysis conducted in this chapter has raised the distinct possibility that violence, both physical and non-physical, played a role in Persian imperial strategy throughout the empire's lifetime. This is expected, but extant sources for Teispid moments of conquest and allusions to military ability and conquest in Achaemenid representational practice do not allow us to move beyond this general statement.

Among the extant sources for moments of Persian conquest, and examples of official Persian representational practice, the Behistun Monument is exceptional for the violence Darius included in the relief image and inscriptions. It offers an unusually detailed Persian account of the physical violence used to suppress the crisis between 522-519 BCE. More than this, it offers a unique view of the use of figurative and psychological violence in the foundation and maintenance of the Achaemenid regime of power. In the rest of this thesis I examine the images and inscriptions on the Behistun Monument and what these reveal about the use of figurative violence in the construction and cohesion of Achaemenid imperialism.

Part Two: Case Study of the Behistun Monument

3 Violence in the Figurative Aspects of the Behistun Monument

Introduction: Violence in the Creation of Imperial Space

In this chapter, I examine violence in the figurative aspects of the Behistun Monument: the relief image and multilingual inscriptions. Violence in Darius' iconographic choices for the monument are usually treated summarily, since the image eschews a dramatic narrative presentation of the violence described in the inscriptions. Meanwhile, for all their inclusion of descriptions of the violence involved in suppressing the revolts, the inscriptions themselves were illegible owing to their placement at great height. This suggests a limited audience for Darius' texts.

According to a wide definition, violence is inherent in the creation of imperial space. Beyond practical functions such as inhabitation and administration, imperial cities, palaces and monuments also demarcate the power differential between ruler and subjects. The creation of an imperial built environment was a key means by which ancient regimes of power created, stabilised, and maintained their territory and subject peoples.

Referring to the material properties of monumental architecture – for example, the consumption of luxury goods, vast amounts of labour and the proportions of such works – Trigger emphasised that these constructions function as 'universally understood expression(s) of power'.[263] On the creation of memorials, Smith noted:

> Memorialisation is the most overt mode of rendering geopolitical relations because it encompasses features whose aesthetics are explicitly directed toward cueing memories of specific events that define a polity's role within the

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[263]   Trigger 1990, 125.

macropolitical order. Memorialisation can thus be a medium for boasting of a polity's political superiority or reinforcing another's subjugation

<div align="right">Smith 2003, 136</div>

Thus, the creation of monuments like the Behistun Monument are intrinsically, though not directly, violent acts.

Darius' choice of location for the monument was an act of memorialisation. The location was chosen for its proximity to the site of the king's victory over Gaumata. The Behistun Monument overlooked a major artery through the empire, which connected the regions of Babylonia, Elam, and Media. Thus, the king ensured a large audience of passers-by for the monument, especially those travelling between the regions which had posed the fiercest resistance to Persian hegemony between 522-520 BCE. It was, therefore, a directed reminder of the efficacy of Persian violent potential in countering subversion.

Beyond their deployment in the articulation of geopolitical relations, Harmansah has argued that we should evaluate rock reliefs as sites of continuous cultural engagement, and consider that these monuments were periodically re-enlivened through the enactment of rituals and celebrations at the sites.[264] Root characterised the Behistun Monument as 'a focal point of social discourse' upon its creation since it remains so to this day, and further that it stood for the presence of kingship in this ancient sacred location:

> To the ancient eye imbued with the cultural sensibilities of Ancient Near Eastern life, the Behistun relief would look from the road like a cylinder seal meticulously rolled deep and secure as on a formal decree of state. Living stone becomes a malleable entity like a clay tablet at the pleasure of the patron-king's command over the natural world.

<div align="right">Root 2013, 47</div>

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[264]   Harmansah 2015, 4-5.

The Behistun Monument is, according to Khatchadourian's conception, a material 'delegate' of imperial power, these are:

> Nonhuman political entities whose material substances and forms matter greatly to imperial agents. Sovereigns rely on delegates for the preservation of the terms of imperial sovereignty and, in turn, in a certain sense, come to be 'governed' by them.
>
> Khatchadourian 2016, xxxv

In a diachronic study of Iranian epigraphic practice, Canepa suggested that, by carving imperial declarations into the living rock, rulers appropriated for their own dynasties the antiquity and immutability of the natural landscape.[265] Besides this, he noted, even when their precise contents were lost to time, 'the inscriptions themselves continued to be powerful visual and topographical features of the landscapes.'[266] This assertion is important to us, because Seleucid, Parthian and Sassanian rulers also inscribed themselves into the landscape around Behistun.[267]

In short, the construction of a memorial to violence in a politically significant location and the co-option of the natural landscape to this end is an implicitly violent act. Darius' creation, moreover, not only drew upon the existing sacred significance of the place but imbued it with further symbolic royal power, which later rulers also exploited in pursuit of their own distinct ideological agendas.

While the mere creation of the Behistun Monument was an act of violence, direct references to imperial violence are also encoded within the monument's figurative

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[265]   Canepa 2015, 30, see also Harmansah 2012, 69-70 who describes Assyrian rock reliefs constructed at the periphery of the empire as a form of 'landscape commemoration… an attempt to capture the temporal power and longevity of geological time.'

[266]   Canepa 2015, 10.

[267]   Parthian reliefs of Mithridates II (124-88 BCE), Gotarzes II (44-51 CE), a relief of one of the Parthian kings named Voloagases, possibly Vologases III (105-147 CE); an unfinished relief of the Sasanian king Khusrau II (590-628 CE).

aspects: the image and inscriptions. Considered among the examples of ancient Near Eastern imperial representations of victory, the relief image is remarkable for eschewing reference to acts of violence *in progress*. On the other hand, it is one of a small number of extant Achaemenid imperial images which allude explicitly to Persian violent potential, and the only one which references this as used against human enemies. In the image, the king and his nobles each bear weapons, the rebel leaders are unmistakeably the king's prisoners, awaiting the king's judgement, and Gaumata lies prostrate before Darius, pinned down under his foot. In the first part of the chapter, I go beyond these explicit references to violence to examine the violent aspects of Darius' characterisation of the rebel leaders' physical appearance.

In the second part of the chapter I consider the inscriptions. Garrison suggested that these should be counted among the visual imagery at Behistun because they were illegible, and therefore their 'primary semantic function would seem to be as a signifier of power via the control/application of specialised knowledge (the written word).'[268] They were an ideological statement of Achaemenid cultural and political superiority. I examine the ideological function of the monumental texts more closely, as well as the significance of Darius' co-option of Akkadian and Elamite, and the use of Old Persian, for his imperial declaration. Finally, I discuss the importance of divergence between the different language versions of the Behistun inscriptions.

1. The Relief Image

The Behistun relief image (Fig. 3) gives a static view of events between 522-519 BCE. The suppression of the rebellions is complete, all the rebel leaders have been taken prisoner, and they await their fates. No such situation is reported in the inscriptions – the king did not collect the rebels together, he executed each of them at different times in diverse locations across the empire. Nimchuk suggested that the image was meant to represent 'the general punishment of the king's enemies', beyond the historical events

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[268] Garrison 2011, 58.

described in the texts.[269] Root described the relationship between the image and the inscriptions:

> The relief may be said to illuminate, rather than to illustrate, DB I-III in the sense that it provides a visual précis (albeit compressed to the point of distorting the facts) of the historical events described.
>
> Root 1979, 187

Composing his victory image, Darius drew inspiration from Mesopotamian and Iranian traditions. King Anubanini's victory relief at Sar-e Pol-e Zahab (c. 2000 BCE), 200 km west of Behistun, is the most oft-noted stylistic prototype for the Behistun relief image (Fig. 19).[270] Along with this, stylistic precedents for Darius' representational choices have been identified in the image on the victory stele of the Akkadian king Naram-Sin (c. 2250 BCE), which was discovered at Susa (Fig. 20).[271]

The Anubanini relief is one of a set of four reliefs carved in the same area which depict Lullubian kings victorious over their enemies – Anubanini's is the best preserved of these. The king holds a bow and axe and places his foot on his enemy's stomach. The goddess Ištar stands opposite him, leading two bound and naked prisoners behind her, and below stand six more naked and fettered captives. Naram-Sin's stele is a monument to his victory over the Lullubians. In the image he stands larger than life wearing a horned helmet, and holding weapons, treading on one of his enemies like Anubanini, while his soldiers look up to him and dying and dead enemies are strewn around.

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[269]   Nimchuk 2001, 13.
[270]   Root 1979, 196-201 and Rollinger 2016, 12-22.
[271]   Feldman 2007 discusses congruences between the styles of Naram-Sin's and Darius' victory reliefs; Rollinger 2016, 7-12 gives a short comparison between the monuments. Head 2010, discusses artistic and textual precedents for the Behistun Monument in Assyrian art.
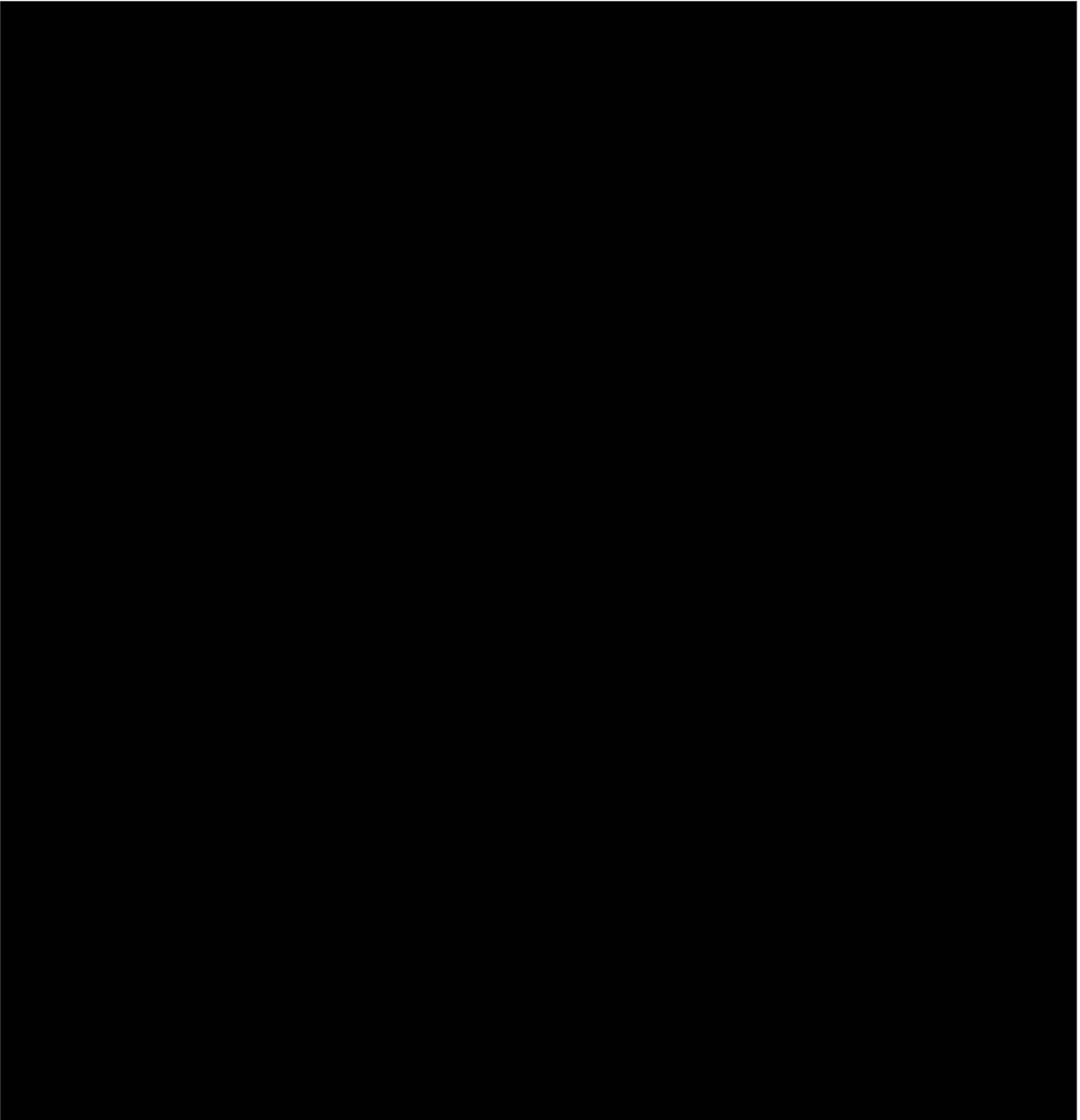
Figure 19 Anubanini Relief (drawing from Vanden Berghe 1984)

Figure 20 Victory Stele of Naram Sin (photograph author's own)

For Root, the primary stylistic divergence between the Behistun and the Anubanini relief is the physical characterisation of the prisoners:

> (On the Behistun relief) the prisoners themselves… remain fully dressed despite their bound hands and necks. There are no signs of demeaning caricatures, no visible indication of physical brutality wrought against them, and no allusions elsewhere in the representational field either to the carnage of war or to the realities of their historical fates as laid out vividly in the narrative DB text.
>
> Root 2013, 35

Although Darius debases his prisoners less obviously than Anubanini and Naram-Sin, the viewer is in no doubt about the rebels' fates – they are shackled to one another by their necks and their wrists are fettered, while Gaumata lies on the floor under the king's foot with his arms outstretched in supplication. This portrait is unique in the corpus of official Achaemenid artistic representation in showing the king victorious over specific human enemies.[272] Overall, explicit violence is uncommon in Achaemenid monumental artwork, and where it appears it has a mythical or allusive quality rather than a realistic one, for instance in the examples discussed in Chapter Two: Persians bearing arms (Figs 10 and 11) and the royal hero in combat with wild animals (Fig. 12). Each of these displays the centrality of violence in the Achaemenid imperial project, though without elaboration.

In the Behistun relief image, degradation of the rebel leaders is also achieved through subtle means – via the careful articulation of physical difference between the king, Ahuramazda and the Persian nobles on one hand and the rebel leaders on the other. Darius looms over the rebel leaders, at a height of 1.72m to their 1.17m.[273] Davis-Kimball's study established that the Achaemenids used proportional guidelines when depicting the human body, and that 'the political message contained in the Bisitun inscriptions is thus illustrated by the relative sizes of the figures in the relief.'[274] Moreover, the rebels hunch over, while the king and his subordinates stand upright. This difference

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[272]   There are extant Achaemenid seal images which are thematically related to the Behistun image, see Root 1979, 182: on the Moscow seal of Artaxerxes and further seals, known from bullae impressions from Persepolis which show a figure leading bound captives.
[273]   Davis-Kimball 1989, 385 also notes that the relative sizes of the figures in the relief is part of the political message; Luschey 1968, 68 With the exception of Skunkha, who measures 1.80m, including his hat.
[274]   Davis-Kimball 1989, 385.

in posture seems negligible, though Cifarelli's study of gesture and posture in Assyrian artwork alerts us to the importance of even the *subtle* visual idiom.[275]

Llewellyn-Jones emphasised the physical prowess of the Achaemenid king in extant images:

> Notice how perfect the monarch is. His body emanates strength and vitality, his posture encodes military prowess and sportsmanship; his hair and beard are thick and luxuriant and radiate health and vitality; his face, with its well-defined profile, large eye, and thick eyebrow, is as powerful as it is handsome.

> Llewellyn-Jones 2015, 211-212

The Achaemenid conception of ideal physical appearance was related to the king's military ability, as Darius and Xerxes stated in the inscriptions DNb and XPl (excerpted in Chapter Two Section 3).

Along with differences in stature and posture between the rebels and the Persian figures, the rebels' clothing, hairstyles, beardstyles, and facial characteristics vary according to their ethnic affiliation. The leaders of the Median revolts, Fravartiš and Cicantakhma, are distinguished from each other by their facial features, beards, and headgear because, according to Darius, Fravartiš was a Mede, but Cicantakhma was a Sagartian. Physical differentiation based on the ethnic characteristics of each rebel suggests an attempt to make the image legible – for example we can tell which figures represent the Babylonian rebels because they look like Babylonians.[276] But these are also powerful indications of

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[275]   Cifarelli 1998, 214.

[276]   The Babylonian rebels' facial features are similar, though not identical. Olmstead 1938, 401-402 noted differences between the depictions of the rebels' faces at Behistun. Nidintu-Bel 'an old man whose deeply seamed cheeks, short upper lip, and outpointing beard served as a foil to the short nose with enormous bulge.' And Arakhu 'his flat nose, narrow, half-closed eyes, straight hair, and spiked, outthrust beard show that he came from this older (Haldian) stratum'. It is difficult to tell whether these apparent differences were deliberate or not, though it has occurred to me that less care was taken to depict the rebel leaders' facial features than was expended on the Persian figures. I cannot say whether the faces of the Elamites depicted on the relief image

each rebels' unsuitability to exercise the *Persian* kingship, because they do not conform to an Achaemenid ideal of physical appearance.

By depicting his enemies, not as an undifferentiated crowd, but as identifiable representatives of different ethnic groups, Darius showcased the myriad ways these men, and others of their kind, were excluded from exercising the kingship. This physical differentiation also acts as a visual counterpart to the descriptions of the corporal punishments used against the latter in the inscriptions since, in the ancient Near Eastern cultural context, images were perceived as the counterpart of the person they represented.[277] Both the physical use of corporal punishment, and the depiction of one's enemies according to a pre-determined scheme were strategies which allowed the king to demonstrate his control over the rebels through his ability to alter their bodies.

Cifarelli and Collins have examined enemy individualisation in Assyrian imperial artwork. The practice increased gradually, from the Ashurnasirpal II's reign onwards (884-859 BCE) owing, as Collins suggested, to imperial expansion over the period.[278] Both authors concluded that the characterisation of enemies physical differences from the Assyrian ideal provided visual justification for violent conquest in various regions.[279] I suggest that Darius' characterisation of his enemies at Behistun was composed with a similar intention. Each was unsuitable to exercise the kingship, as shown by careful physical differentiation in the relief image, and this was visual justification for the reincorporation of their regions into the empire, as well as for the physical violence Darius wrought against them.

Throughout the empire's lifetime, Achaemenid kings paid careful attention to the articulation of ethnic difference when depicting their subjects. For example, in 'Tribute Procession' reliefs on the north and east stairs of the Apadana at Persepolis, ethnic groups are differentiated by their clothing, the gifts they bear, their beards, hair and headgear, and facial characteristics. These portraits are, overall, dignified: the subject

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are similarly comparable, since one (Martiya) is too heavily damaged, and the same goes for comparisons between the faces of the Persian rebels (Gaumata and Vahyazdāta).

[277]   Bahrani 2008, May 2010, 2012, 2014a.
[278]   Cifarelli 1998, 210; Collins 2006, 6.
[279]   Cifarelli 1998, 225, Collins 2006, 7.

peoples are of a height with the Persian and Median attendants who lead them forward, and they stand upright, as for example in Figure 21.

Figure 21 Lydians led forward by a Persian attendant from Persepolis Apadana, East Stairs
(livius.org accessed 12.08.19)

Depictions of the diversity of Achaemenid subjects are a figurative representation of the reach of Persian power. Root argued that the depiction of tribute ceremonies 'carried with them an implicit statement of the power of the king over the specific lands represented by the tribute bearers.'[280] Though their commitment to display their subjects' ethnic diversity suggests that Achaemenid kings were interested in, or even respectful of, ethnic difference, this display was above all a means of encoding relationships of power between the Persians and their subjects. This power relation is most apparent in cases where subject peoples are depicted literally below the king, as in the following

[280]   Root 1979, 229.

images from Xerxes' tomb at Naqš-i Rustam (Fig. 22) and the base of the Egyptian statue of Darius discovered at Susa (Fig. 23):
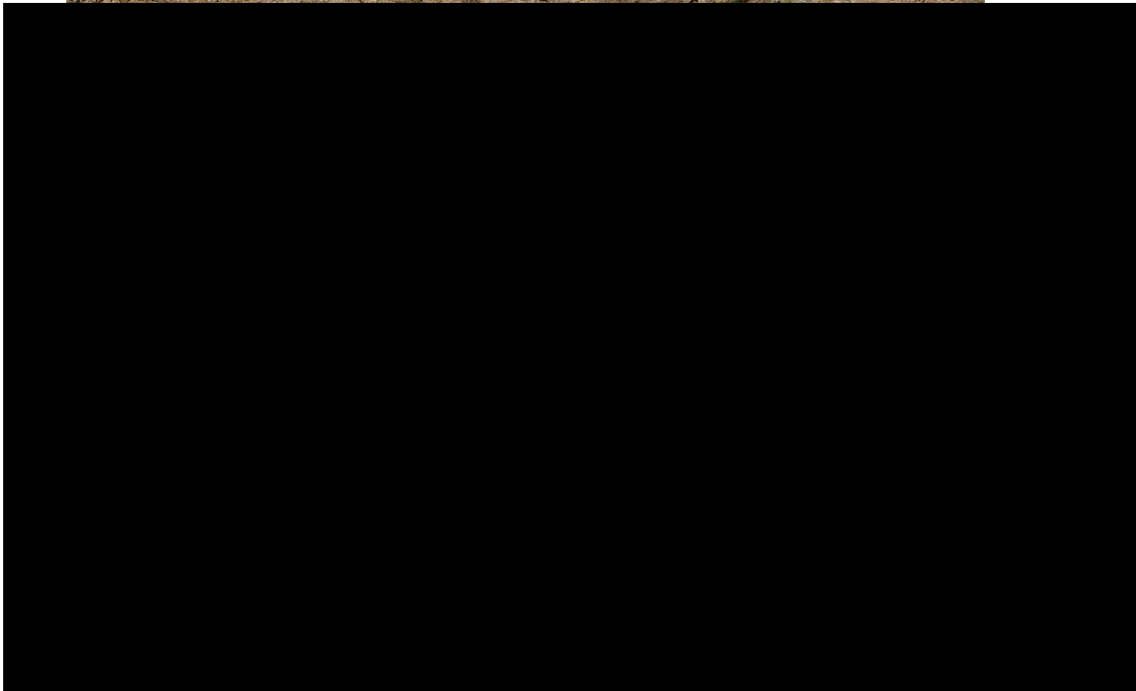
Figure 22 Upper Register Relief Image from Xerxes' tomb at Naqš-i Rustam (Wikipedia accessed 12.08.19)
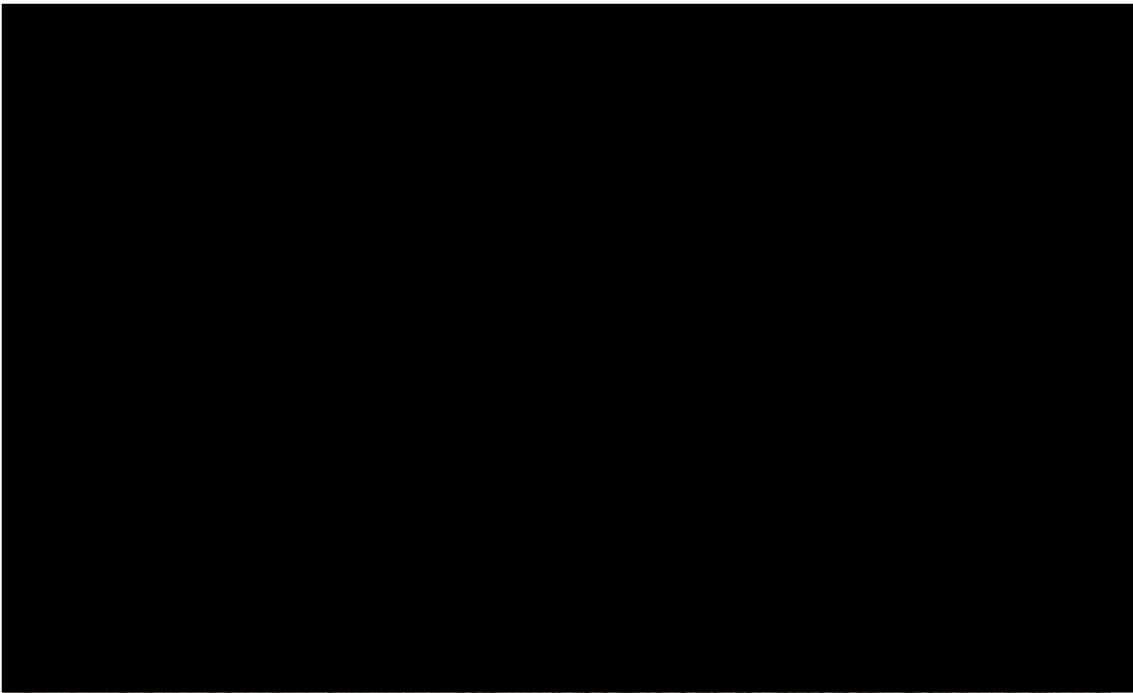
Figure 23 Subject peoples on the left hand side of the base of the statue of Darius discovered at Susa (livius.org accessed 12.08.19)

In both examples, part of a wider repertoire of depictions of subject peoples as throne bearers in Achaemenid artwork,[281] the subjects are small, by comparison with the figure of the king. The image on Xerxes' tomb is a representative example of six identical relief images adorning the tombs of six different Persian kings (Darius-Artaxerxes III). In the image, the subjects are smaller than the king. On the base of the statue, the subjects are miniscule by contrast with the colossal king and, while they do not hunch over as the rebels do at Behistun, their kneeling posture is in striking contrast with the king's upright stance.[282]

The portraits of the Persian nobles in the Behistun relief image are also contrived to highlight the king's superiority. These men conform to Persian standards of proper dress and physical appearance. But although they stand upright, they do not match the king in height; this is visual confirmation of their subordination to him. Their beards are rounded and close cropped, without detail unlike the king's long square beard on which the curls are carefully outlined.[283] They have been identified as Darius' spear- and bow-bearer, since they carry these weapons. However, they are the only figures on the relief aside from Ahuramazda who lack identifying inscriptions. Thus, they stand for the nobility at large rather than for instance one of the named subordinates who, according to the main inscription, played a pre-eminent role in suppressing the rebellions – over and above that of the king himself.[284]

Non-royal Persians are also figuratively subordinated to the king in imagery post-dating the Behistun relief. We can see this, for example in Figure 22, above, in which Persian nobles are depicted in the margins of the image. On Darius' tomb image, which was identical that on the tombs of five of his predecessors, at least three of the Persian nobles depicted are also given identifying inscriptions (DNd-f). These men are 'Gaubaruva' (Gobryas), 'Ašbazana' (Aspathines) and a member of the Pātišuvariš tribe, whose name is illegible. The king's willingness to identify his most honoured subordinates on his funerary monument projects a greater sense of imperial stability and of the king's position. The empire was by this time well established, and the critical crisis of Darius'

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[281]   See Root 1979, 147-161.
[282]   Roaf 1974, on the Egyptian precedents for the depiction of subject peoples on the statue base, and close analysis of the appearance of each subject depicted.
[283]   Root 1979, 186; Davis-Kimball 1989, 404 and Llewellyn-Jones 2015, 220.
[284]   See Chapter 5.

first years dealt with. Elsewhere, non-elite Persian figures are depicted as an undifferentiated mass, as for example in depictions of Persian soldiers in brick work from Susa (Fig. 11). This is evocative of an ideal of Persian appearance, the tenets of which I discuss in Chapter Six, and the imposition of a certain model of behaviour upon the king's subordinates. According to this, they could not elevate themselves above the king.

Several important elite persons are depicted on the 'Treasury Relief' image (Fig. 24). Among them the king, the Grand Vizier and the Crown Prince.
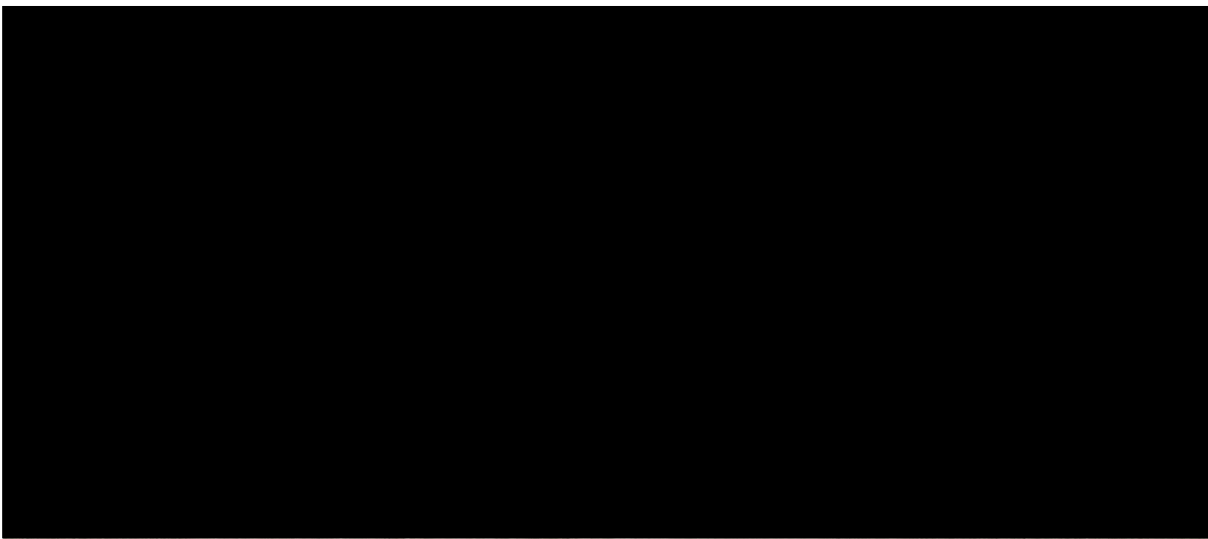
Figure 24 The Treasury Relief, from the Central Section of the North Stairs of the Apadana, Persepolis (livius.org accessed 12.08.19)

Davis-Kimball notes the proportional relationships between the figures depicted on the Treasury Relief:

> The Grand Vizier may have wielded extraordinary influence in the court, as his face, equal in size with the King's is also placed on the same plane. The Crown Prince's is also on the same plane as the King's. Both the King and Crown Prince are elevated above the other images in the tableau, and therefore visually appear larger. At first glance the Crown Prince appears equal in size and stature to the King, yet the King, although seated, is implicitly taller than his heir apparent.
>
> Davis-Kimball 1989, 357

Thus, in Achaemenid representation, elite and non-elite Persians were always figuratively subordinated to the king – subtly, as in the Treasury Relief and more overtly, as at Behistun.

The overt subordination of the Persian nobles in the Behistun relief image is related to their pre-eminent role in the battle narratives. According to Darius' account, they attended 16 out of 20 battles narrated, and the king only attended four.[285] In Chapter Five, I examine the inscriptions to explore the narrative techniques Darius employed to dull the impression that his subordinates played a more vital role than he did in physically suppressing the crisis.

In sum, the narrative strategy is contrived so that, at the same time as lauding their military abilities, the king ensured that none could elevate themselves to a heroic status on a par with his. The lack of identifying inscriptions for the nobles is related to this. In DBa-k, the rebels' and the king's names are given, thus identifying each of them, along with the claims they made to the kingship, and the justifications the rebels provided for their claims, according to Darius.[286] Each of these claims are presented as speech acts, which are the province of the king himself in the main inscriptions, allowing him to remain in control of the action whether he is physically present or not. Lacking identifying inscriptions, the Persian nobles in the relief image are silent and make no claim to the kingship. Physical characterisation of the Persian figures was part of the king's strategy to provide a model of behaviour for his collaborators in empire, in the formulation of an explicitly Achaemenid mode of imperialism.

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[285] The battles I include in this count are all those fought between December 522 BCE and November/December 521 BCE, and those described in Column Five. I exclude Gaumata's demise.

[286] On this, see Chapter 5, Section 3.4 on speech and commands in the inscriptions.

2. The Inscriptions

The positioning of the Behistun Monument, 100m high on a steep cliff, rendered the inscriptions illegible from the ground. The fact of their illegibility poses an obstacle to their interpretation, since it implies that there was no audience for their precise contents. Despite this, we know that versions of the inscription circulated beyond the mountain, as Darius says that he sent out copies of the inscriptions, and the truth of this statement is shown by the existence of an Aramaic version discovered at Elephantine,[287] and the Babylonian stele.[288]

At the outset, it is worth noting the distinction between the use of multilingualism in monumental contexts, and multilingualism in the Achaemenid imperial strategy more broadly. The kings addressed their subjects in their own languages as a matter of communicative expedience and showed no interested in imposing a state language upon the peoples of the empire. Tavernier notes that in the pre-Achaemenid period 'multilingualism exists but is somehow uncontrolled and not systematically dealt with' but that the Achaemenids were the first to attempt to 'manipulate the existing multitude of languages and turn it into an administrative system.'[289] Howard proposed that the Achaemenid Empire was 'hypertextual': 'obsessed over the production of records, gripped by bureaucratic fervour and generally engaged in writing to excess.'[290]

The inaccessibility of the monument raises questions about Darius' intentions in composing a multilingual inscription. If the inscriptions could not be read, why invest in creating different language versions? Diodorus' description of the monument, which he

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[287]   Granerød 2013, 471-478 classifies the Aramaic version as an article of Achaemenid propaganda, and discusses the purpose behind the promulgation of the text in Elephantine during the reign or Darius II.

[288]   See Introduction, Section 1.

[289]   Tavernier 2018, 317. By contrast see Fales 2007 for a review of Assyrian responses to linguistic diversity in their empire. The greatest amount of evidence suggests that Aramaic was the imperial *lingua franca*. He proposed that 'the propaganda effort of the Assyrians in still unsubmissive regions could well have benefitted from the redaction of official inscriptions in local languages and scripts, and especially Aramaic' – though none of the available evidence suggests this happened.

[290]   Howard 2010, 4.

may have derived from Ctesias' *Persica*, hints at the perils associated with deciding on this placement for the monument:

> Mount Bagistanus is sacred to Zeus and on the side facing the park there are sheer cliffs stretching up to a height of 17 stades (3000m). She (Semiramis) smoothed off the lowest part of the mountain and engraved it with her own image, with 100 spearmen by her side. She also inscribed Syrian letters on the rock saying that Semiramis piled up the packsaddles of the attendant beasts in the plain in a heap as big as the aforementioned precipice and had, by means of these, climbed to the very top of the mountain.
>
> Diodorus Siculus 2.13.1

The most spurious aspects of the description aside, the fact that Diodorus, and perhaps Ctesias before him, attributed the monument to Semiramis, a Babylonian queen and not the Achaemenids, let alone to Darius, is most striking. More than this, the possibility that the description was drawn from a Ctesian original raises the prospect that the inscriptions' contents were forgotten by the time of Artaxerxes II's reign (404-358 BCE) when Ctesias was living at the Persian court, just 125 years after the monument was engraved. In the first place, taking an extremely negative view of Ctesias' *Persica*, we may consider that Ctesias never actually saw the monument, or never resided at the Persian court. Tuplin suggested that we might resolve this discrepancy by considering that stories involving rival brothers may have become contentious in the wake of Cyrus' rebellion against Artaxerxes II, or that Ctesias' informants were non-Persian or '(unusually) ill-informed and retreated into evasive invention'.[291] Whatever the reason for Ctesias' ignorance on these matters, the description at least highlights the limitations Darius imposed on the circulation of his message into posterity, even while versions of the inscriptions were circulating in more portable forms throughout the empire. The Aramaic version, for example, has been dated to the beginning of Darius II's reign (424-404 BCE). Balcer stated simply that the inscriptions on the mountain were 'private… not for the dissemination of information to the public.'[292] Finn argued that the 'only one 'true'

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[291]   Tuplin 2005, 237.
[292]   Balcer 1987, 28; Zimansky 2006, 259 described inaccessible inscriptions of Urartian kings as 'writing for an audience but not for readers'.

reader of all three of the Bisitun texts' was the god Ahuramazda,[293] a persuasive suggestion considering that he is named 69 times in the inscription and depicted in the relief image.

As noted above, Garrison suggested that the creation of a multilingual inscription for Behistun was not motivated by a wish to make the precise contents of Darius' declaration known; it signified his control over the written word.[294] Writing was a valuable commodity among the peoples of the empire, as exemplified the joint ubiquity of image *and text* destruction as a means of political protest.[295]

The use of multilingualism for Achaemenid inscriptions is analogous to boasts of the multiplicity of exotic materials and foreign labour that the king used to complete building projects,[296] enumerations of the lands held by the Persians,[297] and depictions of their subject peoples (Figs 22 and 23). In each case, control over a foreign commodity served as an allegory for the extent of the empire, the control exercised by the Persians and the obedience of their subjects. As Sebba proposed, writing systems are a significant element of social practice, and they can be used to 'create a common identity, reject an identity, or construct boundaries and divisions.'[298] The Achaemenids' use of their subjects' languages was an intrinsic element of their empire-building strategy, which demarcated the boundaries between ruler and ruled.

The languages used for the Achaemenid trilingual (Akkadian, Elamite and Old Persian) are meaningful. As Nimchuk proposed, these were selected because they addressed: 'the past kingdoms (Babylonian and Elamite) and the present and future (the

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[293] Finn 2011, 227. In line with this, Khatchadourian 2016, 151 said of XV, Xerxes' inscription on the citadel at Tušpa (Urartu): 'There can be no doubt, this was not a monument meant for mere mortals.'

[294] Garrison 2011, 58-61.

[295] May 2012, 15-16. Lamberg-Karlovsky 2003, 63-64 also outlined the affective properties of writing in the ancient Near Eastern context.

[296] DSf §7-13, DSz §6-12, DSaa §3-4; Root 2010, 185-186 the purpose of these 'Foundation Charters' was to convey the ideological message of the extent of Darius' power, rather than to give a record of construction.

[297] DB §6, DPe §2, DNa §3, DSe §2, DSm §2, DSv §2 and XPh §3. See also Chapter 2, Section 4.2.

[298] Sebba 2009, 39.

Persians).'[299] Beyond this, the appropriation of languages written in the cuneiform script evoked Achaemenid cultural superiority over regions with histories of imperial greatness, who had already been using this writing system for millennia.

As discussed in Chapter Two, we are still unsure if it was Darius or Cyrus who inaugurated the use of trilingualism for inscriptions.[300] However, the extant material suggests that the trilingual was first used for long expositions of imperial ideology under Darius – as the evidence suggests that Cyrus used these only for short signature inscriptions. In addition, Darius was the first to display the Achaemenid trilingual outside Fars, as Finn notes: '(the creation of the Behistun inscriptions) marks the development of a new phenomenon in the record: the deployment of trilingually inscribed royal texts as a strategic and systematically orchestrated manifestation of imperial ideology.'[301] On the other hand, the Behistun Monument only marks the first step in the creation of such a recognisable scheme of imperial representation,[302] and the political use of the imperial trilingual necessarily varied with the political circumstances attending the creation of texts.

> I am Darius, the Great King, king of kings, king of the lands of all languages.
>
> DE AA §2 (trans. Lecoq 1997, 218)

The excerpt above comes from the multilingual inscription Darius engraved near the waterfall at Elvend and highlights the importance he invested in his ability to co-opt the languages of his subjects, here as a marker of the great reach of his hegemony.[303] In all, under Darius, the 'Achaemenid trilingual' acquires new significance; not merely as a communicative strategy but as a display of political hegemony. This is especially the case when the language choices for the Behistun Monument are considered in the context of the crisis as the king tells it. The regions Babylonia and Elam presented the fiercest resistance to Persian rule – and Darius' use of the languages of these regions in

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[299]   Nimchuk 2001, 40.
[300]   See Introduction, Section 1.
[301]   Finn 2011, 220.
[302]   Root 2010, 180 suggests this.
[303]   This phrase also used in the Akkadian inscriptions: DNA AA §2, DPa AA, DSe AA §2, XE AA §2, XPa AA §2, XPb AA §2, XPd AA §2, XPf AA §2, XPh AA §2, XV §2.

the imperial trilingual at Behistun therefore appears as a directed assertion of Persian superiority over the Babylonians and the Elamites.

2.1. Achaemenid Elamite

The first inscriptions engraved on the monument were the Elamite version of DBa, the king's identifying inscription, followed by the original Elamite version of DB,[304] and the Elamite version of DBb-j, the identifying inscriptions of the rebel leaders. The fact that the Elamite versions of each of these texts were inscribed before the Akkadian or Old Persian texts suggests that Elamite was the original Achaemenid imperial language. Schmitt also suggested that Darius' original intention was to engrave the inscription in Elamite only.[305] It is also noteworthy that Elamite was used as the primary language of administration at Persepolis.[306] In fact, most extant examples of Elamite language emanate from the Achaemenid period, and it is from the Behistun texts and later Achaemenid inscriptions that most of our understanding of Elamite has arisen.[307]

In 1979, Gershevitch outlined a theory of 'alloglottography' between Old Persian and Achaemenid Elamite.[308] Surveying the evidence, he suggested that royal inscriptions were dictated by the king in Old Persian language, written down by scribes using the Elamite cuneiform script, and then read back to the king for approval in Old Persian.[309] According to this interpretation 'Achaemenid Elamite' was not a real language, but a vehicle for writing Old Persian. Tavernier has rejected this theory on linguistic grounds: there are not enough Iranian verbal forms in Achaemenid Elamite to prove this, and Old Persian endings were not added to the Elamite words in texts – both factors would have

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[304]   Later erased and recarved elsewhere to make space for the figure of Skunkha at the end of the line of rebel leaders. The compositional stages of the monument were outlined in the introduction, based on Bae 2001, 31-57.

[305]   Schmitt 2000, 18.

[306]   On the Persepolis Fortification Tablets see Hallock 1969; and Henkelman 2003 and 2013, Henkelman and Stolper 2009 and Briant, Henkelmen and Stolper (eds) 2008. On the use of Elamite in the Achaemenid Empire, in monumental and administrative contexts see Henkelman 2011, 586-595.

[307]   Bae 2001, 61-62 gives references to studies of Elamite grammar, including those of Achaemenid Elamite.

[308]   Gershevitch 1979.

[309]   Gershevitch 1979, 116-117; see also Rubio 2006 on alloglottography throughout Mesopotamian history.

to be present to confirm Gershevitch's theory.[310] In all, since a majority of examples of Elamite were created in the Achaemenid period, it is difficult to identify the variations in the language between earlier forms of Elamite and 'Achaemenid Elamite'. This has proved more straightforward in the case of Achaemenid Akkadian, examined below.

The character of Perso-Elamite relations, viewed through the lens of the Behistun narrative, is also more obscure than Perso-Babylonian relations. Darius' descriptions of the Elamite revolts are far more laconic than those for other revolts, especially in Media, Babylonia and Persia itself, suggesting that Elamite resistance was too negligible to gain any momentum. This has been suggested by several commentators,[311] though the possibility remains that Darius used his narrations to deliberately mask the severity of Elamite resistance against him. In support of this, we may consider first of all that more Elamite uprisings are recorded in the Behistun inscriptions than for any other region,[312] and that Elamite resistance continued into Darius' second year. The first two uprisings required no armed response, but in his second regnal year, Darius sent his foremost subordinate Gaubaruva to subdue Athamaita's rebellion – a response which evokes the severity of this revolt.[313] Besides this, several scholars have emphasised the vitality of Elamite civilisation at the outset of the Achaemenid period. Contrary to the narrative of sharp decline following the Assyrian sack of Susa in 646 BCE, Carter noted that the city recovered rapidly, albeit not to its former greatness.[314] Evidence for this revival is found especially in the use of Elamite language for royal inscriptions, and Tavernier notes not only a resurgence in the creation of royal inscriptions after the Assyrian attack, but also that these are 'now without exception recorded in Elamite'.[315] This came, he adds, with the abrupt cessation of the use of Akkadian for royal inscriptions, which had been the primary *lingua scripta* in Elam since the beginning of the Old Elamite period (ca. 2300

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[310]   Tavernier 2008, 76. Henkelman 2011, 586 also rejects Gershevitch's proposal.

[311]   Hallock 1960, 38 suggested that the 'casual references' made to the Elamite revolts suggests contempt for the people on Darius' part; Dandamaev 1989, 114 concluded that the revolt in Elam was not widespread, and was therefore easily suppressed; Lincoln 2005, 175 these revolts were not on a par with resistance presented elsewhere, where rebels made a credible claim to the kingship: 'Elamite independence was lost so far in the past that no political capital could be gained by attaching one's self to the last king'; Potts 2015, 316 thinks that the fact that the rebel leaders were handed over (and killed in one instance) by the Elamites themselves indicates that the revolts did not gain broad support.

[312]   Except Media when the offshoot rebellions are counted.

[313]   On Gaubaruva, see Chapter 5, Section 3.4.

[314]   Carter 2007, 155.

[315]   *idem*, 154-156; Tavernier 2018, 311-312.

BCE).[316] This signals Elamite rejection of Assyrian cultural practice in the wake of the crisis, and the re-assertion of Elamite cultural identity.

On the other hand, viewed as part of the whole, the laconic descriptions Darius supplies of the Elamite rebellions could equally tie in with his wish to emphasise his own military achievements, first against Nidintu-Bēl and later against the Scythian rebel Skunkha.[317] We may also consider the role of the Elamite people in suppressing the first two rebellions. In the first case, they handed over the rebel, Açina, to the Persian messenger who then transported him to the king for execution.[318] The Elamites also killed the second rebel, Martiya, themselves.[319] This presentation of events was surely meant to highlight the strength of Elamite *support* for Darius in the region – and is analogous to Darius' use of non-Persian subordinates to counter rebellions in their native regions.

In light of the resurgence of writing in Elamite among Elamite rulers following the Assyrian sack of Susa, Carter suggests that we view Darius' use of Elamite as 'a means of gaining control of the Elamites' "cultural capital".'[320] Put differently, Achaemenid use of Elamite for the imperial declaration on the Behistun Monument was an act of cultural appropriation designed to emphasise Persian cultural and imperial hegemony. In contrast, assuming that Cyrus was the first Persian king to use the imperial trilingual, his use of Elamite may be seen as part of the overall debt of Teispid representational practice to Elamite precedents, and a greater blurring of the distinction between 'Persians' and 'Elamites' as separate entities in the Teispid period.[321]

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[316]   Tavernier 2018, 311-312.
[317]   Description of the first Elamite rebellion under Açina directly follows Nidintu-Bēl's revolt, which was countered by Darius himself, and described in more detail than any of the other revolts. Gabaruva's suppression of the Elamite rebellion was also contrived to provide a favourable comparison with Darius' actions in Scythia. On Darius as commander of troops, see further Chapter 4, Section 1.
[318]   DB OP §17 = DB AE/AA §16.
[319]   DB OP §23 = DB AE/AA §21.
[320]   Carter 2007, 147 and 155.
[321]   Consider for instance, the reference to Cyrus wearing an 'Elamite' garment in the Nabonidus Chronicle (ABC 7, iii 24-28) for Cambyses' investiture ceremony. Álvarez-Mon 2009, 23 highlights that this strengthens the impression of Cyrus' Elamite background – and should not be interpreted as a Babylonian mix-up between 'Persian' and 'Elamite'. On Elam and the Teispids see Chapter 2, Section 1.

Darius' use of Elamite for the Behistun Monument may also have been motivated by expedience – the deployment of a pre-existing language and script which could easily be deployed for a lengthy monumental text. Old Persian script may not have been sufficiently developed at this stage. Analysis of later Achaemenid Elamite texts may prove more enlightening in terms of the explicitly political use of the language. Root characterised the use of Elamite for the inscription DPf, for example, 'as a vehicle for inventing the (Persepolitan) landscape as a new one: a Persian one' and also notes that in the Susan Foundation Charter DSf Darius conspicuously avoids reference to the Elamite antiquity of Susa.[322] The use of Elamite language in these inscriptions post-dating the Behistun inscriptions may reasonably be construed as a calculated statement of Persian hegemony, and a concomitant rejection of past Elamite cultural supremacy in the imperial heartland, while the political motivations behind the use of Elamite at Behistun remain more obscure.

2.2. Achaemenid Akkadian

Between Cambyses' death in 522 BCE and the consolidation of Darius' power between 520-519 BCE, Babylonian kingship changed hands five times: first to Bardiya, to Nebuchadnezzar III, to Darius, to Nebuchadnezzar IV, and finally back to Darius.[323] Both Babylonian rebels claimed to be the son of Nabonidus (556-539 BCE), the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, and once in power took the throne name Nebuchadnezzar – successful appeals to the region's past greatness under self-rule.[324] When the first Babylonian rebel arose, Darius himself attended to the threat and, in the inscription, this revolt and its suppression are narrated in greater detail than any others.[325] The Babylonian revolts bookend the narrative of the original inscriptions (before the addition of Column Five to the Old Persian version).

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[322]   Root 2010, 195.
[323]   Frahm and Jursa 2011, 19 reconstructed the sequence from dating on tablets discovered in the Eanna temple at Uruk. See also Lorenz 2008 and Bloch 2015.
[324]   Beaulieu 2014, 19 on the prestige attached to the throne name 'Nebuchadnezzar'; Nielsen 2018, 131-132 argues that Nidintu-Bel and Arakhu, as well as the Babylonian rebels against Xerxes Šamaš-erība and Bel-šimânni, and the prebendary families supporting their rebellions drew on the memory of Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104 BCE) as a figure representing the zenith of Babylonian greatness under self-rule.
[325]   See also Chapter 5, Section 1.1 on the king's narration of this revolt.

Following the crisis, Darius was tasked with re-asserting Persian hegemony urgently to a Babylonian audience. Besides composing an Akkadian version of the inscription for the monument itself, Darius erected a smaller scale monument on the Processional Way in Babylon (Fig. 4). This version was tailored especially to appeal to a Babylonian audience; it gave details only of Darius' victories over Gaumata, and the Babylonian rebels, the figure of Ahuramazda was replaced with signifiers of the Babylonian deities Marduk and Nabu and it was inscribed with a monolingual Akkadian inscription.[326] This presented the Babylonian people with an explicit reminder of Persian dominance and the consequences of any further attempts at revolt.[327] Its creation marks the fractious nature of Perso-Babylonian relations in this period, and the critical need for Darius to re-assert his hegemony specifically to a Babylonian audience.

Beaulieu described Achaemenid Akkadian as a 'translation language', noting also that it was more closely related to Late Babylonian vernacular, used to compose letters and administrative documentation, than to official literary Standard Babylonian.[328] Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions were written in the latter, which had been used to compose literary works after the Old Babylonian period (2003-1595 BCE). It was used to forge a connection between the kings and the divine world, and reflects the compositional debt of their royal inscriptions to literary works.[329] Beaulieu suggests that rejection of the archaising script Babylonian rulers had adopted for their royal inscriptions 'signals an implicit rejection, perhaps even an intentional one, of the official culture of the preceding empire, with its antiquarian nurturing of a prestigious inherited past.'[330] Stolper compared Achaemenid use of Akkadian with the use of Latin in medieval Europe:

> The use of Akkadian in the Achaemenid inscriptions conveyed prestige in at least two sense. As the language of learning that was ancient, manifold and still productive, Akkadian connoted high civilisation. As the language of the Assyrian and Babylonian kings who had conquered western Asia, and whose lands were

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[326] Seidl 1999, 109 and 112. See Introduction, Section 1.

[327] Tolini 2012, 275.

[328] Beaulieu 2006, 204. Malbran-Labat 1994, 15-92 for a grammatical analysis of the use of Akkadian in the Behistun inscription.

[329] Da Riva 2012, 24-25.

[330] Beaulieu 2006, 204.

now subject in turn to the Achaemenids, it connoted dominion over the world beyond Iran.

<div style="text-align: right">Stolper 2005, 21</div>

Put simply, Darius' use of the vernacular version of the Akkadian language as his own imperial language appears as a calculated insult to centuries of Babylonian cultural primacy in the area now ruled by the Persians. This although, for the Babylonian version of the Behistun Monument placed on the Processional Way, Darius exchanged the god Ahuramazda for the Babylonian deities Nabu and Marduk. In this context, a rejection of the Persian supreme god for those of the Babylonians themselves appears as an appeal to Babylonian cultural sensibilities, to aid understanding and transmission of the overall message of his kingship. This is in contrast with what we know of Cyrus' strategy, at least at the beginning of his regin, in Babylon. The first ruler of the Persian Empire allowed the Babylonian clergy themselves to prepare a statement of what Cyrus' kingship would look like, and as a result this was broadly in line with established Babylonian modes of kingship and religious practice.[331]

2.3.   Old Persian

I have already discussed the debate about whether Cyrus or Darius invented the Old Persian script.[332] The question of whether Darius invented the imperial script himself or not is less important than the fact that the Old Persian version of the Behistun inscription is the earliest example of its use for a lengthy official statement, where Cyrus' use of the script, as far as we know, was limited to signature inscriptions.

Old Persian can be described as the 'imperial language' for royal inscriptions.[333] It is written in a quasi-alphabetic script, while Akkadian and Elamite were both written using

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[331]   See Chapter 2, Section 2.1.
[332]   See Chapter 2, Section 1.
[333]   Stolper and Tavernier 2007, 5-15, though one administrative tablet in the Persepolis Fortification archive was written in Old Persian and the authors suggest that this may be part of an as-yet-undiscovered or lost group of documents written in Old Persian. For now, the authors' more modest suggestion that 'in the reign of Darius I, at least one Persian in Persia wrote Persian

syllabic scripts. It is also differentiated from these as it used a whole new set of signs, and far fewer of these than Akkadian or Elamite. The invention of a cuneiform script for the imperial language may be construed as an act of cultural appropriation designed to refute the cultural superiority of Babylonia and Elam.

The use of Old Persian was instrumental in the creation of Persian imperial identity. The addition of Column Five only to the Old Persian version of the Behistun inscription, and not to the Elamite or Akkadian versions, indicates that Darius recognised the value of composing imperial declarations in his *own* imperial language, rather than borrowing from others. This may also reflect the king's desire to project the image that, following the chaos of his first regnal year, the situation was less critical, and did not require exposition in three different languages. This is analogous to the re-assertion of Elamite identity in the wake of the sack of Susa via the rejection of Akkadian and the uptake of Elamite for official royal inscriptions. As a key symbol of Achaemenid identity, Old Persian can be construed as a marker of the power differential between ruler and ruled.

There are more extant examples of Achaemenid inscriptions in Old Persian than in either Elamite or Akkadian. As the extant corpus of material is not representative of the original whole however, it is not possible to say whether this truly means that the kings used Old Persian more than they used Elamite or Akkadian. Difficulties in corroborating the find spot of certain exemplars with their original position during the Achaemenid period also means that, in many cases, we cannot say whether the kings also privileged the *display* of Old Persian inscriptions above Akkadian or Elamite inscriptions. Taking the extant examples of DSf as a case study, Root remarks:

> Some of the extant exemplars of DSf no doubt were originally buried in foundations. But we do not know this archaeologically. Of the exemplars that probably *were* originally deposited in this way, there are various reasons why they may not have been recorded *in situ.* Some may have been moved to a secondary location in Achaemenid times. Some may have been disturbed in post-Achaemenid time through a combination of casual pilfering, systematic dismantling, gradual site decay,

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language in Persian script and expected someone else to know, if not how to read it, then at least where to file it' may be upheld.

and military destruction. Finally, it is possible that the early excavators may in some cases have inadvertently exposed (and broken into fragments) some of the entities, displacing them as debris.

<div align="right">Root 2010, 179-180</div>

The examples of DSf, as Root notes, were foundation texts, rather than display texts. However, the multitude of possibilities for the displacement of texts which were originally meant to be buried alerts us to the possibilities of this for texts which were on display. These were more vulnerable to attack than inscriptions which were hidden in the ground. Although it seems likely that Old Persian was gradually privileged over Akkadian and Elamite as a means to write imperial statements, the evidence is ultimately too sparse to definitively state that this was the case. It is however possible to discuss variation between different language versions of inscriptions where this occurs, and this does provide some indication of the ideological value attached to Old Persian, over and above that attributed to Elamite and Akkadian.

2.4. Divergence between Versions of Achaemenid Multilingual Inscriptions

A majority of Achaemenid trilingual inscriptions convey the same basic information three times. Minor variations occur for example where scribes and translators adjusted inscriptions to fit the conventions of each language. Kozuh noted that 'monumental writing at Persepolis was not only a means to convey a message but also an element of architectural design'.[334] Put differently, the aesthetic value of the inscriptions was prized over the ability to read their specific contents. Since Akkadian and Elamite were both written in syllabic scripts, they took up less space than quasi-alphabetic Old Persian cuneiform.[335] Kozuh noted the case of XPc, a trilingual in which the royal titles are augmented throughout the Akkadian version, by contrast with those given in the Old Persian and Elamite versions, to fill the space given for it.[336] Where scribes had only a

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[334]   Kozuh 2003, 269.
[335]   *idem.*
[336]   *idem,* 269-270.

limited amount of space to work with, they sacrificed matching rhetorical content between the versions to the preserve a physical aesthetic.[337]

Such were the design challenges imposed by Darius' decision to create trilingual inscriptions for display. But Achaemenid inscriptions do not usually show major qualitative variations between different language versions – by which I mean significant omissions or additions of information from one version to another.[338] The inscriptions DPd-g are the only example in the extant corpus of inscriptions in different languages with entirely different content.

This group of four inscriptions were displayed together on a large stone tablet at the original entrance to Persepolis, in the southwest corner of the terrace. Schmitt suggested that these inscriptions were the oldest of those discovered at Persepolis, because of the differences in content between inscriptions, and because they lack the stereotyped features which appear in other inscriptions.[339] DPd-e in Old Persian, proclaim the primacy of the Persian people and the protection given by Ahuramazda to their imperial enterprise. DPf, the Elamite inscription, describes Darius' construction of the terrace at Persepolis. Finally, DPg, in Akkadian, proclaims the king's rulership over each corner of the empire.[340] These inscriptions are not 'versions' of one another; each takes up wholly different subject matter. The qualitative variation and prominent display of DPd-g, as well as the privileging of Old Persian language over Elamite and Akkadian (its use for more than one inscription) suggest that Old Persian inscriptions were perceived as having a greater value in the dissemination of Achaemenid imperial ideology than their Akkadian and Elamite counterparts.

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[337]   *Idem,* 269; the primary example he examines is the interchange of the Akkadian versions of XPb and XPd because the display context of XPd afforded more space to fit the longer Akkadian XPb.

[338]   Root 2010, 178-186 highlights the fact that DSf-DSz and DSaa, which are often considered as an undifferentiated groups of texts should be groups as two different texts: DSf and DSz/DSaa, the differences between these texts are key in her study of foundation deposits in Achaemenid Iran.

[339]   Schmitt 2000, 27 and 56.

[340]   Delshad 2019 gives a new translation and commentary of this inscription.

2.5. Divergence between Versions of the Behistun Inscriptions

The variation between DPd-g is without parallel in the rest of the corpus of inscriptions; as Root states 'each text in the dossier is conceived as a discrete entity.'[341] However, the different language versions of the Behistun inscriptions display variations of a lesser order:

1. Extra details in the violent rhetoric in the Akkadian version: addition of casualty figures and more information about rebel punishments.
2. Darius' statement about the invention of Old Persian appears in the Elamite and Old Persian versions (DB OP §70 = DB AE §55), but not in the Akkadian version.
3. The addition of an extra column to the Old Persian detailing the events of Darius' second and third regnal years (Column 5).

I am most concerned with the addition of extra violent details in the Akkadian version, which affects my analysis of the inscriptions' 'violent rhetoric' in Chapters Four, Five and Six. As Kozuh established, variations between different language versions can be explained by the fact that Akkadian cuneiform takes up less space than either Elamite or Old Persian.[342] Hyland proposed that this was a plausible explanation for the inclusion of the casualty figures in the Akkadian version only, which added in total an extra 23 sentences.[343] The addition of details about rebel punishments in the Akkadian versions has been less remarked upon. We know from the Akkadian that:

1. Nidintu-Bēl and his nobles were impaled – the Old Persian and Elamite versions say that Nidintu-Bēl was 'killed'.[344]

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[341]   Root 2010, 193.
[342]   Kozuh 2003, 269-270.
[343]   Hyland 2014, 191.
[344]   DB OP §20 = DB AE/AA §19.

2. Fravartiš' foremost followers were decapitated – a detail which is missing from the Old Persian version but included in the Elamite.[345]

3. The nameless leader of the Margians and Parthians who followed Fravartiš, and Parada the Margian were executed – these events are omitted from the Old Persian and Elamite versions.[346]

The initial impetus behind the addition of these details to the Akkadian version may have been the practical consideration of having more space to fill. However, we should consider why Darius chose to fill this space by expounding further on his violent abilities, with further information about Persian killing capacity. The inclusion of these violent details took precedence in the Akkadian version over the inclusion of the extra paragraph about the dissemination of the texts added to the Old Persian and Elamite versions (DB OP §70 = DB AE §55), for example, although there was space to include it.[347]

The decision to privilege the inclusion of extra violent details for the Akkadian version therefore presents the possibility that Darius aimed to compose an especially violent message for a Babylonian audience. However, the inaccessibility of the inscriptions suggests that their content was not directed at a human audience. Moreover, the version composed specifically for a Babylonian audience, the stele erected on the Processional Way, omits details of most of the violence carried out between 522-521 BCE. In all, it does not appear that Darius' violent message was aimed explicitly at a Babylonian audience, but the provision of extra violent details still speaks of the importance Darius attributed to his violent abilities. This, in turn, hints at the importance of violence in the construction of Achaemenid kingship. Which is also shown through the inclusion of casualty figures in the Aramaic version of the inscription, the version meant for circulation throughout the empire.[348] As a very literal expression of Persian *killing capacity,* the inclusion of casualty figures in the version of the text meant for wide circulation highlights the ideological value attached to violent ability in the conceptualisation of Persian kingship.

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[345] DB OP §32 = DB AE/AA §25. Gershevitch 1979, 124-125 attributed the absence in the Old Persian version to scribal error.

[346] DB OP §36 and 38 = DB AE/AA §29 and 31.

[347] Kuhrt 2007, 157 n. 115.

[348] Greenfield and Porten 1982, 3.

Conclusion

Darius' decision to create a monument to his victories between 522-519 BCE should be construed as an act of violence – a means of demarcating the power differential between the Persian ruler and his subjects via the memorialisation of violence. The monument was placed conspicuously at the convergence of trade routes between Babylonia, Media and Elam, areas which had caused Darius the most trouble during the crisis.

On the other hand, among the extant examples of imperial victory monuments from Mesopotamia and Iran, the Behistun Monument's image and inscriptions are less explicitly violent. Although the king incorporates references to the violence inflicted on the rebel leaders, his portrait of these men appears more dignified than his predecessors' images of their enemies. It is not moreover, in the manner of Neo-Assyrian representations of warfare, a narrative image which follows the historical progress of events described in the texts.

Nonetheless, along with direct allusions to violence in the image, Darius employed more subtle means to debase his enemies. Careful differentiation between the physical appearance of the rebel leaders and the Persian characters in the image showcased the various ways in which the former were unsuited to exercise the kingship. Differences in posture and stature as well as the depiction of ethnic difference offer visual justification for the violence wrought against the rebel leaders. The depiction of ethnic differences between Persian subjects in later examples of Achaemenid representation are overall more dignified, but these were also meant to exclude non-Persians from the highest positions within the imperial hierarchy. This served as visual representations of the unprecedented reach of Persian power, and encoded relationships of power between the Persians and their subjects.

The Persian nobles on the Behistun relief image are also visually subordinated to the king by their stature. Besides this, they are the only human figures on the relief to lack identifying inscriptions; an expression of their silent obedience to the king. According to

the inscriptions on the monument, the king's subordinates had played the pre-eminent military role in suppressing the crisis while the king himself entered battle only a handful of times. Following the crisis, Darius was tasked with asserting his position at the top not only of the empire at large but, equally critically, of the court hierarchy. Visual subordination of the Persian nobles in the relief image at Behistun was part of the king's strategy to ensure that none of his collaborators dared elevate themselves to a heroic status equal to the king. I discuss this strategy further in Chapters Five and Six.

As they were illegible from the ground, I have included the inscriptions on the mountainside in this chapter among the 'figurative' aspects of the monument. Overall, these expressed Persian cultural superiority, by taking ownership of the written word for official imperial declarations. I have evaluated Darius' use of Elamite, Akkadian and Old Persian in light of the political circumstances attending his accession, especially the severity of resistance in Elam and Babylonia. The use of these subjects' languages for the king's inaugural statement of power appears as a rejection of past Elamite and Babylonian imperial and cultural supremacy. Questions remain over the invention of Old Persian; whether this can be attributed to Darius or Cyrus. However, Darius' use of Old Persian for the Behistun monument diverged from Cyrus' apparently limited use of the language for signature inscriptions at Pasargadae. Under Darius, Old Persian acquired greater significance as a key symbol of Achaemenid power, and as a statement of Persian cultural supremacy.

Finally, I discussed divergence between different language versions of Achaemenid multilingual inscriptions. As far as we can tell, given the uneven distribution of extant material, most of the time inscriptions conveyed essentially the same information in different languages. However, in a minority of cases, significant variation has been found – DPd-g provide a concrete example of this. The Behistun inscriptions display lesser but ideologically significant variations: extra violent details in the Akkadian version, and the addition of an extra paragraph detailing events in Darius' second and third years to the Old Persian. The former is most pertinent to the analysis of the following three chapters, and it appears that some of these violent details were also included in the version of the inscription which circulated around the empire. In all, this is concrete evidence for the ideological value of violent ability in Persian conceptions of kingship.

4. Violent Potential - Representation and Reality in the Behistun Inscriptions

Introduction

For the rest of the case study, occupying this chapter, as well as Chapters Five and Six, I focus on the contents of the Behistun inscriptions. In this chapter I evaluate Darius' inclusion of precise details: casualty figures for enemy losses, as well as chronological and geographical details about the events he describes. These are among the most remarked upon features of the inscriptions, because they amplify the 'historical' character of the king's account, and historical subject matter is absent in later Achaemenid inscriptions. However, it is well-known that the Behistun inscriptions are neither a truthful nor an objective version of events, despite the historical presentation. Tuplin described Darius' version of 'historiography' as 'narrative self-projection'.[349]

Why did Darius include precise details about the events described in the Behistun inscriptions? In the first place, they augment the impression that his account is truthful. Throughout the inscription, Darius was preoccupied with truth and lies; he states each of the rebel leaders falsely claimed the kingship by telling the people lies, while he upheld the truth and therefore acceded to the throne. Thus, Darius is the protector of the realm, against the destructive forces of the 'Lie'.[350] His pursuit of credibility, meanwhile, is most apparent in statements made in the inscriptions' epilogues, in which the king repeatedly exhorts his audience to believe that his account is truthful.[351] He hints at the reason for this:

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[349] Tuplin 2005, 235.

[350] DB OP §54-67 = DB AA/AE §42-52. Pongratz-Leisten 2002 on 'lying' as a rhetorical device in the inscriptions of rulers of the ancient Near East especially 233-235 for the Behistun inscription.

[351] DB OP §56-70 = DB AA/AE §42-55.

atta qīpi ša anāku ēpušu u amātu kīttu ana uqu qibi ul tapessin kī dibbī annûtu lā tapessinu u ana uqu taqabbu Urumazda lusaddidka lū mādu lira'amka u zērka limīd ūmīka līrikū u kī dibbī annûtu tapissinu ana uqu lā taqabbu amātu kittu ša ina libbi šaṭru Uramazda līrurka zērka lū yānu

You, believe what I did and tell the truth to the people. Do not conceal (it). If you do not conceal these matters, and you tell the people, may Ahuramazda protect you. May he abundantly bless you, and may your descendants be numerous, your days long-lasting. But if you do conceal these matters (and) you do not tell the people the truth inscribed here, may Ahuramazda curse you and may you have no descendants.

DB AA §49[352]

If the people believe him, they are more likely to circulate his account. In pursuit of credibility and realism, the king also tells that he was selective in his choice of material:

lū mādātu anāku ēpuš ša ina šaṭāri ša asumittu ul šaṭru ana libbi agâ ul šaṭru mannu ša ina arki immaru šaṭari ša ina asumittu šaṭru mala anāku ēpušu lā iqippi iqabbi umma pirṣātu šina

I did more which is not inscribed on the stele, it is not inscribed for the reason that anyone who later reads the inscription does not believe all that I have done and will says that it is a lie.

DB AA §47[353]

While we may doubt that Darius managed to achieve much more than the reconquest of the entire empire in his first year, and consider this statement an empty boast, its

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[352]   = DB OP §60 = DB AE §49.

[353]   = DB OP §58 = DB AE §47.

importance lies in the king's apparent awareness that his audience would be sceptical of such a soaring rise to power in the face of such great obstacles. It is impossible to know which, if indeed any, achievements Darius left out of the Behistun narrative. The most obvious candidates for this are descriptions of the revolt in Egypt, for example, which is acknowledged but not described. In this chapter I am more concerned with the ways that Darius modified the information he did include, and his motivations for doing so.

In the following sections, I examine Darius' inclusion of two kinds of precise detail in the inscription, focussing on the limitations built into the king's account:

1. Casualty Figures: In the Akkadian and Aramaic versions of the inscription, Darius includes statistics for the number of enemy soldiers killed, captured and executed following battles.
2. Chronological Details: dates for some of the events described, which are almost uniform across each version of the inscription but are not included in Column 5 of the Old Persian inscription.

Darius also included geographical details throughout the inscription: the locations where battles were fought and executions were carried out. I examine these in the analysis of Chapters Five and Six, as their significance is inextricable from Darius' wider narrative aims when composing the battle narratives and punishment episodes. Suffice to say here that these details formed part of a strategy to emphasise the great extent of the empire, and to figuratively reclaim the rebellious regions.

1. <u>The Casualty Figures</u>

Table 4 gives the casualty figures, derived from the Akkadian and Aramaic versions of the inscription:

Section Number (DB AA = DB OfA	Battle Location	Commander	Akkadian (killed, captured)	Aramaic (killed, captured)
17 = N/A	Tigris, Babylonia	Darius	'we killed all of them'	lost
18 = N/A	Zazanu, Babylonia	Darius	'we killed all of them'	lost
22 = 3	Māru, Media	Vidarna	[3][827], 4329	[5827?], 4329(?)
23 = 4	Zuzahya, Urartu	Dadarši	No figures	2+]6x100+27 (=827), [1]06
23 = 5	Tigra, Urartu	Dadarši	546, 520	504[6], [520]
23 = 6	Uyavā, Urartu	Dadarši	472, 525	[472], 202
24 = 7	Izalā, Assyria	Vaumisa	2034, no figures	2034, no figures
24 = 8	Autiyāra, Urartu	Vaumisa	2045, 1558	2046, [1578]
25 = 10	Kunduru, Media	Darius	[34425], [xxxx]	[34,420]+5 (=34,425), 18000+10+xx
26 = N/A	Media?	Takhmaspada	[447] (killed and captured)	lost
28 = N/A	Vishpauzāti, Parthia	Hystaspes	[6346], [4346]	lost
29 = N/A	Patigrabanā, Parthia	Hytaspes	6570, 4192	lost
31 = 13	Margiana?	Dadarši	[552--?], 6572	[50,000]+5000+220[+23] (=55243), 6972
34 = 16	Rhages, Persia	Artavardiya	4404, 2xxx	30,000+3000(1000/2000/3000 +4]x1000 [+4 (=34,404/35,404/36,404), no figures
34 = 17	Paishiyāuvādā, mount Parga, Persia	Artavarziya	[6246?], [4464]	lost, lost
37 = 20	Kāpishakāni, Arachosia	Vivāna	lost, lost	{[2]+2x1000}+{[1]+4x100}+70[+9] (=4579), {[2+]1x100}+76 (=376)
37 = 21	Gandutava, Sattagydia	Vivāna	4579 (killed and captured)	3[+1x1000]+579(=4579), 300[+76] (=376)
37 = 22	Arshada, Arachosia	Vivāna	[42-?] (killed and captured)	+]5 (killed and captured)
39 = N/A	Babylon, Babylonia	Vindafarna	2497 (killed and captured)	lost

Table 4 Comparison of Casualty Figures in Aramaic (DB OfA) and Akkadian (DB AA) versions of the Behistun Inscription, based on Bae 2001

Damage to the Akkadian version of the monument, as well as the Aramaic papyri, and disparities between the figures in each mean that any analysis of the casualty figures must proceed with caution. However, some have accepted the numbers at face value, for instance as a means of interpreting the severity of certain rebellions.[354] The most common justification for doing is that they may have been derived from 'war diaries.'[355]

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354   Dandamaev 1989, 126 to calculate the severity of the Margian revolt; Farrokh 2007, 54 the casualty figures show how severe the Median rebellions were.
355   Dandamaev 1989, 116, 120-122, 124, 128 and 133; Bae 2001, 51-52.

Hyland noted that the relative 'modesty' of Darius' figures and particularly the use of 'exact' numbers has led to the assumption that they were precisely calculated, and that they are therefore accurate.[356]

Interpretations of figures in Assyrian royal inscriptions may illuminate the motivations behind Darius' inclusion of the casualty figures in the Behistun inscriptions. It has been suggested the Assyrians derived figures from the reports of scribes who accompanied the king on expeditions and were tasked with keeping an accurate count of those killed, wounded, or captured, though no such records have been preserved. [357] Dolce suggested that the Assyrians piled up the heads of defeated enemies, a practice shown occasionally in Assyrian pictorial representation, in order to precisely quantify the numbers of enemy dead.[358] On the other hand, on deportation figures recorded in royal inscriptions, Oded noted that the extent of historical distortion one way or another is unknowable, [359] and Fouts also cautioned against accepting any figures in official inscriptions at face value, especially large ones.[360] Essentially, no agreement on the veracity or otherwise of the use of numbers in Assyrian inscriptions, or the provenance of these, has yet been struck.

Hyland's examination of the casualty figures for enemies killed and captured in battle demonstrated that Darius' numbers cannot be accurate.[361] His key observation was that the numbers display 'suspicious patterns': when they are arranged in size order it becomes clear that they were chosen to 'rank the military effectiveness of the King and his supporters and the importance of their respective victories.'[362] Hyland illustrated his conclusion by organising the casualty figures in descending order of size:

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[356]   Hyland 2014, 174; de Odorico 1995, 86-88 considers the use of 'particularly high 'exact' numbers' in inscriptions of the Sargonid period, arguing that these were made 'exact' to increase their credibility; Potts 2006-2007, 135 the accuracy of the Behistun figures is suggested by the fact that they were 'odd', unlike figures included in Assyrian inscriptions which were usually round numbers in the hundreds and thousands or multiples of six.
[357]   Millard 1991, 214; de Odorico 1995, 117.
[358]   Dolce 2018, 24-25.
[359]   Oded 1979, 18-19.
[360]   Fouts 1994, 211.
[361]   Hyland 2014, for discussion of the historical plausibility of the figures see especially 183-190. He uses von Voigtlander 1978 reconstruction of the Akkadian inscription.
[362]   Hyland 2014, 192.

Commander	Battle	Killed	Captured	Total	Line
Darius	Kundur	[34],[4]25	Lost (space for five characters)		59
Hystaspes	Vishpazatu	[6],3[46]	4,[3]46		66
	Patigrabana	6,570	4,192		67
Dadarši (Persian)	Margiana	4,2x3 or [55],2xx[363]	6,572		70
Artavardiya	Rakha	4,404	2,xxx		75
	Mount Parga	6,[2]46	[4],464		77
Vivana	Kapishakana			Lost	81
	Gandatamaki			4,579	82
	Arshada			4,[2]xx	83
Vidarna	Maru	[3],8[27]	4,329		47
Vaumisa	Izalla	2,034	None listed		55
	Utiyari	2,045	1,558		56
Vindafarna	Babylonia			2,497	89
Dadarši (Urartian)	Tigra	546	520		51
	Uyama	472	[5]25		53
Takmaspada (Median)	Sagartia			[447]	64

Table 5 Casualty Figures in the Behistun Inscription after Hyland 2014, 196

Casualty figures for Darius' confrontations with Nidintu-Bēl's forces do not appear in this table, since in the course of the two confrontations, Darius claims that his army killed all the rebels. These are the only two battles described in which the king makes such a claim. Hyland refutes the claim on three counts:

[363] If this is the correct reading; if there were originally five figures in this space, Dadarši's casualty figures were higher than Darius' at Kundur. Von Voigtlander 1978, 31 interpretation of these figures agrees with the reading in King and Thompson 1907, 187 and also with Cowley 1923, 258 in the Aramaic version. Voigtlander states 'the number of dead seems excessive for a tribal engagement. It may have resulted from the sack of a city, perhaps Merv.' Rawlinson 1870, 40 read 42x3. I cannot resolve this inconsistency here, which may be clarified by the Bisotun epigraphic expedition. Of course, of any of these interpretations, Rawlinson's best fits with the pattern identified by Hyland. Hyland 2014, 194 put forward three possible interpretations of the higher figure: 1. This is scribal error, 2. Dadarši claimed to have killed this many of his enemy or 3. Darius' figures from Kundur should be higher (there is an error in Voigtlander's restoration). See further Chapter Six Section 1.1, on Dadarši's privilege as the only subordinate who executed a rebel leader and a group of his closest supporters.

1. Other evidence suggests that few ancient battles ended with a 100% casualty rate on the losing side

2. The second battle's very occurrence casts doubt on the annihilation of the enemy on the first occasion

3. The subsequent text contradicts it, stating that the rebel king fled the field of Zazannu 'with a few horsemen'

<div align="right">Hyland 2014, 185</div>

Even if the Behistun figures were accurate reflections of enemy losses during the crisis, we are missing crucial comparative data regarding *Persian* losses. There are no exact indications of size of Persian forces in the inscriptions, only assertions in two cases that they were 'small'.[364] Since Darius was elsewhere at pains to emphasise the immense reach of his armies, it is remarkable that he also alludes to their small size. Briant noted the propagandistic value of these statements.[365] He is referring to a common literary trope in accounts of ancient battles: the suggestion that although one's own forces were small, they vanquished a (numerically) greater enemy. Notable examples of this tendency include the Egyptian Poem of Pentaour in which Ramesses II claims to have defeated the enemy force single-handed at the Battle of Kadesh. A variant of this can be seen in Neo-Assyrian campaign descriptions which are presented in the first person, giving the impression, though not explicitly stating, that the king was alone when he achieved his victory. Sennacherib's account of the Battle of Kiš is a good example of this tendency; according to his retelling he arrived at the last minute to vanquish his enemies singlehanded after his subordinates failed to do so.[366] Thus, Darius' claims that his forces were 'small' may have been motivated by his wish to emphasise Persian military superiority.

The first time the king says that he had only a small force with him, he notes that it comprised both Persian and Median troops. Thus, at the same time as admitting that he has only a few troops, he highlights that they come from different regional contingents. This is not the force he sends to take care of Fravartiš' revolt; he dispatches a different

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[364]   DB OP §25 = DB AA/AE §22 and DB AA §34.
[365]   Briant 2002, 119.
[366]   RINAP 3 Sennacherib 001.20-23; I consider this excerpt in more detail in Chapter 5, Section 2.

Persian force led by his subordinate Vidarna. Each of the details Darius gives in this episode highlights his fearlessness and dynamism; he is willing to divide his troops to engage with multiple opponents – a strategy which eventually leads him to success.

The second time Darius claims to have few troops is after Vahyazdāta rebels, taking with him many of the king's troops so that he is left with only a small contingent of loyal Persians. In this case he sends Median reinforcements to his subordinate Artavardiya who will face Vahyazdāta. [367] This is one of two instances in which Darius sends reinforcements, the second time it is for his father Hystaspes.[368] These instances attest to Darius' ability to divert resource wherever needed, and so to face rebellion wherever it arises.

In summary, inclusion of the casualty figures enhance Darius' apparent commitment to accuracy, but it is unlikely that the figures themselves are accurate. As Hyland suggested, by manipulating this information, the king enhanced the impression of his own military achievements above his subordinates'. [369] Omission of Persian casualty figures prevents full reconstruction of the events, and further underlines Persian military strength, essentially giving the impression that no Persian soldiers were lost in the course of the battles. That these have continued to confound modern scholars highlights the effectiveness of Darius' propaganda.[370] Finally, by making occasional claims to have 'small' forces, and instances in which he had to divert troops to act as reinforcements elsewhere, Darius also underlined his daring and skill as a military commander.

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[367]   DB OP §41 = DB AA/AE §34.
[368]   DB OP §35-6 = DB AA/AE §28-29.
[369]   See Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, Section 1 for further discussion of Darius' adjustments to narrations of his own and his subordinates' military achievements to foreground his own military prowess.
[370]   See above n. 340. As has Darius' 'one year' claim, discussed below.

2. Chronological Details

Dates are included for most of the battles described in the inscriptions, as well as Gaumata's rebellion, usurpation, and death at the hands of Darius and a few nobles. The king gives the day and the month of each event, using Babylonian month names in the Akkadian, and Iranian month names in the Elamite and Old Persian versions. In 1938, Poebel established the order of the Iranian months based on comparison with corresponding Babylonian month names in the inscription as well as Elamite dating in the (then) recently discovered Persepolis Fortification Tablets, [371] and from this the chronology of the dated events in the Behistun inscriptions.[372] The following table gives the chronology of events between 522-521 BCE as far as it can be reconstructed based on the details in the inscription:

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[371]   Hallock 1969, 1: the fortification tablets were excavated at the north-eastern corner of the terrace during Herzfeld's excavations at Persepolis between 1933/4 and made available for study in 1937.

[372]   Poebel 1938a, 1938b, 1938c and 1939. The latter is a response to Olmstead 1938, who contested Poebel's assertions regarding the reigns of Bardiya (Gaumata) and Nebuchadnezzars III and IV. Poebel was able to establish the dates for the reigns of the Elamite and Babylonians using Herodotus, several Egyptian sources and Babylonian tablets dated to these kings' reigns alongside the Behistun inscription. See further Hinz 1942. Justi 1897 an earlier attempt at reconstructing the Old Persian calendar.

11th March 522	Gaumata rebels	DB OP §11 = DB AA/AE §10
1st July 522	Gaumata takes the kingship	DB OP §11 = DB AA/AE §10
29th September 522	Darius kills Gaumata	DB OP §13 = DB AA/AE §12
10th December 522	Dadarši (Persian) defeats Parada in Margiana[373]	DB OP §38 = DB AA/AE §31
13th December 522	First battle in Babylonia against Nidintu-Bel	DB OP §18 = DB AA/AE §17
18th December 522	Second battle in Babylonia against Nidintu-Bel	DB OP §19 = DB AA/AE §18
December 522 (no precise date given, 'while I was in Babylon', countries listed in order of seniority)	Revolts in Persia, Elam, Media, Assyria, Egypt, Parthia, Margiana, Sattagydia and Scythia.	DB OP §21 = DB AA/AE §20,
29th December 522	Vivana defeats Vahyazdata in Arachosia	DB OP §45 = DB AA/AE §37
31st December 522	Vaumisa fights first battle against rebellious Armenians in northern Assyria	DB OP §29 = DB AA/AE §24
12th January 521	Vidarna fights against Fravartiš's supporters in Media	DB OP §25 = DB AA/AE §22
21st February 521	Vivana defeats Vahyazdāta's followers in Arachosia	DB OP §46 = DB AA/AE §37
8th March 521	Hystaspes fights rebellious Parthians and Hyrcanians, supporters of Fravartiš	DB OP §35 = DB AA/AE §28
7th May 521	Darius defeats Fravartiš in Media and 'later' executes him in Ecbatana	DB OP §31 = DB AA/AE §25
21st May 521	Dadarši (Armenian) fights first battle against rebellious Armenians	DB OP §26 = DB AA/AE §23,
24th May 521	Artavardiya fights second battle against Vahyazdāta	DB OP §41 = DB AA/AE §34
31st May 521	Dadarši fights second battle against rebellious Armenians	DB OP §27 = DB AA/AE §23
11th June 521	Vaumisa fights rebellious Armenians in Armenia	DB OP §30 = DB AA/AE §24
21st June 521	Dadarši fights third battle against rebellious Armenians	DB OP §28 = DB AA/AE §23,
12th July 521	Hystaspses defeats Fravartiš' supporters in Parthia	DB OP §36 = DB AA/AE §29
16th July 521	Artavardiya defeats Vahyazdāta, executed by Darius	DB OP §42 = DB AA/AE §34
12th October 521	Takhmaspada (Mede) fights battle against Cicantakhma	DB AA §26
27th November 521	Vindafarna fights battle against Arakha, captures and executes the rebel	DB OP §50 = DB AA/AE §39
28th December 521	Dadarši (Persian) defeats Parada in Margiana	DB OP §38 = DB AA/AE §31

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[373]   Kuhrt 2007, 155 n. 83; 'the uncertainty arises from the fact that we do not know whether the battle occurred in Darius I's accession year or first regnal year'. Hallock 1960, 37-38, favours the later date, since immediately after slaying Gaumata, Darius was in no position to send troops to 'remote Margiana'; Borger 1982, 118-122 also prefers the later date.

Table 6 Chronology of Revolts after Kuhrt 2007, 140-141

In the initial stages of decipherment and translation of the inscriptions, it was assumed that the events described therein had taken place over a number of years.[374] In 1907, Weißbach drew attention to the king's repeated claim in the inscription's epilogue that all the battles were completed within 'one year':[375]

agâ ša anāku ēpušu ina ṣilli ša Uramazda ina ištēt šattu arki ša anāku šarru attūru 19 ṣalātu anāku ētepuš… agâ ša anāku ēpušu ina ṣilli ša Uramazda agâ anāku ētepuš ina ištēt šattu… šuma ša Uramazda anāku ušelle kīnātu šina lā pirṣātu ša aqbû agâša anāku ēpušu ina ištēt šattu… ina šarrāni ša ina pānātūa ibšû mamma yānu ša ītepušu mala anāku ētepušu ina ṣilli ša Uramazda anāku agâ ētepuš ina ištēt šattu… agâ ša anāku ēpušu anāku ina ištēt šattu ina ṣilli ša Uramazda

This is what I did. Under the protection of Ahuramazda, *in one year* I became king and fought nineteen battles… This what I did under the protection of Ahuramazda – this I did *in one year*… By the name of Ahuramazda I take the oath (that) they are truths, not lies, which I have spoken. This is what I did *in one year*… Among the kings who went before me, none has achieved what I achieved under the protection of Ahuramazda in one year… This is what I did. I did (it) *in one year* under the protection of Ahuramazda.

DB AA §41-50[376]

The one year claim derives from a literary convention, according to which the 'warrior-king… performs mighty deeds in a single year, which has to be his first "term of office."'[377]

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[374] Rawlinson 1848, 188-194 suggested that the events described at Behistun took place over several years, the monument was made as late as 516 BCE. Olmstead 1938 also worked under this assumption.

[375] Weißbach 1907, 730.

[376] = DB OP §52-62 = DB AE §41-50.

[377] Tadmor 1981, 16. On the literary device see Bickerman and Tadmor 1978, 240 and Head 2010, 120 at DB OP §59 = DB AA/AE §48 Darius even claims to improve upon the epic-heroic

Poebel was later criticised for attempting to align the dates given in the inscription with Darius' 'one year' claim because this invested too much in the literal veracity of the account.[378] As Hallock noted: 'in searching for these events (the first and last of Darius' 'one year') we need to be concerned much more with reading the intent of Darius than with establishing substantial facts'.[379] Vogelsang suggested that Darius' timing was too tight at several points, in an article examining the distribution of power in the Iranian plateau, through the Behistun inscriptions – even suggesting that many of the rebellions were catalysed not by Darius' usurpation but had begun already under Bardiya.[380] Recently, Kosmin suggested that we interpret Darius' one year claim as an attempt to establish 'a recurring cycle of historical victory anniversaries'.[381] This is plausible, since we know that Darius' inscription was still being copied in Elephantine up to a century after the crisis. Having considered the careful patterning of various aspects of the inscription, I tend to agree with Hallock's contention that we should not take the chronological data in the inscription at face value.

It is not possible to corroborate the dates themselves with contemporary evidence from the various regions of the empire involved in the revolts – except in the Babylonian case. Babylonian sources, commercial and legal tablets, confirm the general chronological progression Darius puts forward for the final phases of Cambyses' reign and Gaumata's rebellion.[382] Tablets from Babylon, Uruk and Bīt-Našar suggest that the dates Darius gives for the revolts and defeats of Nidintu-Bēl and Arakhu (Nebuchadnezzars III and IV)

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convention by claiming that he had done more than any of his predecessors in his own 'one year'; Briant 2002, 116. On this literary device in Assyrian royal inscriptions see de Odorico 1995, 6 and 17-18 especially, in which he notes kings' use of low numbers to designate time periods in inscriptions to enhance the impressiveness of their achievements, completed in short period of time. He contrasts this with the use of high numbers, more commonly used for enemy casualty figures.

[378]   Hallock 1960, 39; Shahbazi 1972, 610 was also critical of Poebel, though also attempts to reconcile the chronology in the inscription with the 'one year' claim, proposing that the seizure of Açina should be seen as the first event and the execution of Arakha as the last.

[379]   Hallock 1960, 36.

[380]   Vogelsang 1998.

[381]   Kosmin 2018, 4.

[382]   Bloch 2016, 2; as reconstructed from the Āl-Yāḫūdu tablets published by Pearce and Wunsch 2014.

could be accurate.[383] Thus, while we may doubt the one year claim, we need not automatically assume that the precise dates given are entirely misleading.

Although Darius gives chronological details, the narrative is not arranged chronologically. In the inscriptions, events are grouped according to geographical order, [384] an arrangement which Darius also followed in his summarising statement.[385] For the relief image, it seems most likely that the rebel leaders are arranged according to the order in which their revolts began, though it would make more sense to arrange them according to the order they were captured and executed as these events marked the effective end of each rebellion.[386] However, no execution dates are given in the inscriptions, and the order of the final dated battles does not match the order of the rebel leaders in a row on the relief image either. Table 7 compares these different arrangements of information in the monumental texts and images with the chronological order of events according to Darius' dating.

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[383]   Bloch 2016, 11-13 provides a table comparing the dates given in the Behistun inscriptions, and tablets dated to the beginning and end of the rebels' reigns in Babylonia. See also Lorenz 2008, 87-88 for tablets dated to the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar III and IV.
[384]   Levine 1972, 28 this narrative arrangement had been the norm also for Neo-Assyrian inscriptions from Sargon onwards.
[385]   DB OP §52 = DB AA/AE §41.
[386]   As Poebel 1938b, 162 supposes. Root 1979, 191 and Briant 2002, 116 both suggests that the rebels were arranged in 'chronological order', but I am unsure whether they are referring to the chronological order of the beginning or the end of the revolts.

Order of Battles, according to Reconstruction of Chronology[387]	Order of Battles in the Inscription	List of Rebellions in the Summarising Statement (DB OP §52 = DB AA/AE §41)	Image	Order in which Rebellions were Suppressed*
Gaumata	Gaumata	Gaumata	Gaumata	Gaumata
Parada?	Açina	Açina	Açina	Parada?
Nidintu-Bēl x 3	Nidintu-Bēl	Nidintu-Bēl	Nidintu-Bēl	Açina?
Vahyazdata	Martiya	Martiya	Fravartiš	Nidintu-Bēl
Armenians	Fravartiš	Fravartiš	Martiya	Martiya
Supporters of Fravartiš	Armenia	Cicantakhma	Cicantakhma	Fravartiš
Supporters of Vahyazdāta	Fravartiš	Parada	Vahyazdāta	Vahyazdāta
Supporters of Fravartiš	Cicantakhma	Vahyazdāta	Arakha	Cicantakhma
Fravartiš	Supporters of Fravartiš	Arakha	Parada	Arakha
Armenians	Parada		Skunkha	Parada?
Vahyazdāta	Vahyazdāta			
Armenians x 2	Supporters of Vahyazdāta			
Supporters of Fravartiš	Arakha			
Vahyazdāta	Athamaita			
Cicantakhma	Skunkha			
Arakha				
Parada?				

? Dates absent or uncertain

*Ordered according to the date given for the final battle, i.e. the last dated event for each rebellion

Table 7 Comparison between the arrangement of events in the Behistun inscriptions and relief image

The confusion these arrangements generates is apparent from a cursory examination of Table 7. Put briefly, none matches with another. This is exacerbated by the absence of the following dates which would allow us to reconstruct the chronology in full:

1. No dates are given for the beginning of any revolts except Gaumata's.
2. No dates are given for the executions of any of the rebels except Gaumata.

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[387] Since no dates at all are given for Açina's rebellion, I have excluded him from this list, though his rebellion could be safely placed prior to Nidintu-Bēl's

3. Several revolts broke out in December 522 BCE, surmised from Darius' statement that these countries revolted 'while I was in Babylon' (fighting Nidintu-Bēl),[388] but none are precisely dated.
4. The first two Elamite revolts are undated.
5. There are no dates in Column V of the Old Persian inscription, Darius tells us only that the events described therein occurred in the second and third years after he became king (520 and 519 BCE).[389]

Table 8 gives the closest estimates for the length of the revolts that can be made based on the information in the inscription:

Name of Rebel*	Region	Dates	Length
Gaumata	All the lands	11th March-29th September 522 BCE	ca. 7 months
Acina	Elam	*no dates*	*unknown*
Nidintu-Bēl	Babylonia	? – after 18th December 522	≅6 weeks
Vahyazdāta	Persia	December 522 – after 16th July 521	>7 months
Martiya	Elam	December 522 - ?	*unknown*
N/A	Urartu	31st December 522 – 21st June 521**	>6 months
Fravartiš	Media	December 522 – after 7th May 521	≥5months
Cicantakhma	Media	? – after 12th October 521	*unknown*
Supporters of Fravartiš	Parthia	December 522 – after 12th July 521	>7 months
Parada	Margiana	December 522-December 521?	*unknown*
Arakha	Babylonia	? – 27th November 521	<2 months

* Listed according to order of narration

** Dates of earliest and latest battles Darius narrates, which may not correspond to the beginning and end of the uprising

Table 8 Dates and Lengths of Rebellions

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[388]   DB OP §21 = DB AA/AE §20; Revolts in Persia, Elam, Media, Assyria, Egypt, Parthia, Margiana, Sattagydia and Scythia.
[389]   DB OP §71.

Owing to the significant omissions from the chronological information, we cannot be certain of length of any of the revolts, apart from Gaumata's.

What were Darius' motivations in generating confusion regarding the timing of events and omitting important details about the length of the revolts? The obvious answer is that he wished to obscure the severity of the resistance against his rise to the throne. The formulaic nature of the inscriptions suggests that events progressed in an orderly manner, as does the static image of the rebel leaders lined up before the king on the relief. However, variation in the arrangements of information throughout the inscriptions and in the image, demonstrates that Darius implemented a concerted strategy to prevent his audience from focussing on the chronological progression of events, while still wishing to elevate his achievements by composing a lengthy narrative of the crisis.[390]

Evaluation of Darius' descriptions of the Elamite and Urartian revolts provide further food for thought. As I outlined in Chapter Three, by describing the Elamite revolts laconically, Darius may have been attempting to obscure the severity of the resistance against him in this region, or at least to highlight that he maintained a strong following there.[391] The Urartian revolt arose on two fronts and, as far as Darius' report tells us, lasted for six months at a minimum – the first battle was fought on the 31st December 522 BCE and the last on 21st June 521 BCE. The most striking aspect of the Urartian revolt, however, is that we do not know the outcome! No Urartian rebels are depicted on the relief image, nor are the leaders named in the inscription. Despite this, even from the limited detail Darius gives, the Urartian independence movement appears to have been one of the longest-lived and most geographically diverse of those described.[392]

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[390] Darius' contemporary audience would undoubtedly have had less trouble than the modern reader in following the progression of events. As I have outlined, the major obstacle to modern understandings of the timing of events in the Behistun inscriptions was caused in the first place by ignorance of the modern equivalents for the Iranian and Babylonian month names he gives. This would of course have been less of a problem for contemporaries who were used to these calendrical systems.

[391] Discussion in Chapter 3, Section 2.1, and Chapter 6, Section 1.2.

[392] According to Darius' inscription, the first battle against the Urartian rebels took place in Zūzu Urartu, and the last in Izalā, Assyria. Poebel 1938b, 157-159 also put forward this possibility, but may go too far in suggesting that all references to 'Urartu' in the inscription were meant to have been 'Media' to explain the obscurity of the Urartian revolts; Rollinger 2008, 61 suggests that 'Media' was made up of three different territories, one of which was Urartu, and therefore unproblematically sees the Urartian uprising and the Median revolts as one and the same; Khatchadourian 2016, 117 also posits a Median/Urartian confederation against Achaemenid rule.

The only extant Achaemenid inscription in Urartu was carved during Xerxes' reign. This was placed on the slope at Tušpa, the former capital of the Urartian kings (ca.860-ca.640-590 BCE). This suggests that Urartian resistance to Persian rule continued throughout Darius' reign or at least that Persian hegemony in this area was unstable.[393] In the inscription, Xerxes notes that although his father had a niche cut out of the rock, he did not place an inscription there.[394] The late date of the inscription, and the fact that we do not know whether the Urartian revolt of 522-521 BCE was suppressed during Darius' 'one year', if at all, present the possibility that resistance against Achaemenid rule extended into Xerxes' reign. Khatchadourian considers that XV served to:

> Rebrand Tušpa's mountain bluff as a landscape of submission to a foreign power. In carving the niches and inscription at this fortress, the heart of the former Urartian Empire, Darius and Xerxes were making a claim on the foundations of authority that had long prevailed in the region, now remade as a *dahyu* of empire.
>
> Khatchadourian 2016, 151

In her study, she considers the appearance of material 'delegates and proxies' for Achaemenid imperialism in Urartu and settlement patterns throughout the period. She suggests that observation of the, albeit meagre, evidence hints at concerted Urartian resistance to imperial control.[395] Thus she notes, even into Xerxes' reign, Urartu was still 'a place where Ahuramazda's protection in realising the aspirations of Achaemenid sovereignty *was still very much in need*.'[396]

To summarise, the inclusion of chronological details in the Behistun inscription was a representational choice predicated upon Darius' wish to conform with the 'one year' claim – an archaic literary convention. According to this, he aimed to present the re-settlement of the empire as having taken place within a year. Despite the king's literary pretensions,

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[393] Poebel 1938b, 157-159 considers that Darius failed to put an end to these hostilities with the one year time frame he allotted himself. Chapter 2, Section 1.
[394] XV OP §16-25.
[395] Khatchadourian 2016, 120-152.
[396] *idem*, 152.

there is little reason to presume that the dates are entirely misleading, and some can be partially corroborated with the dating of Babylonian documentation from the same period. However, Darius only tells about, and gives dates for, battles which resulted in Persian victory and enemy defeat. Thus, the dates are part of Darius' narrative strategy which emphasised Persian military prowess and diminished that of the rebels.

The various arrangements of events in the inscriptions and the image on the monument seem predicated to generate confusion, or detract focus from, the chronological progression of events. Absences from the chronological data mean that it is not possible to reconstruct the length of any of the rebellions with outright certainty. I suggest that, through the arrangement and omission of chronological information, the king sought to obscure the chaotic reality of the period, presenting instead a version of events which suggested he was in control in spite of the ferocity of resistance against him.

Conclusion

Darius included casualty figures and chronological details in his account of the events between 522-521 BCE to make it seem more credible, and thereby to ensure the circulation of his message. As Hyland's study demonstrated, the casualty figures cannot be correct; they were likely constructed based on Darius' wish to express his own military ability. Therefore, they cannot be used to establish historical facts about the crisis, for instance, the severity of each rebellion. On the other hand, while individual chronological details may have been accurate, Darius' dating is suspicious because he designed his account to conform to the 'one year' literary trope. Besides this, the arrangement of information in the inscriptions and the image was contrived to engender confusion about the chronological progression of events.

Examination of the limitations Darius built into these details shows that he presented his account carefully, according to what he wanted his audience to remember and to forget about his rise to the throne. His attempts to magnify his armies' successes by quantifying, and inflating and deflating accordingly, enemy casualty figures, while simultaneously concealing the strength of resistance against him, were ambitious. The success of

Darius' strategy in this respect is best exemplified by the proliferation of modern-day attempts to explain anomalies in the details of the inscription. Nevertheless, the limitations obviate our ability to reconstruct the historical progress of events, leaving us with an idealised, rather than a realistic, outline of events.

In all, the foregoing analysis leads me to conclude that Darius included precise details in his inscription to highlight Persian military supremacy and violent potential. In the first place, we must read the quantification of the enemy dead as a demonstration of Persian killing capacity. The 'one year' claim was a literary convention specifically used to evoke the speed with which the king vanquished his enemies, by crowding many significant military achievements into a short space of time. The careful use of these figures to highlight Persian military capacity denote the overall centrality of violent ability in the establishment of Darius' rule.

Manipulation of the details of the crisis should be construed as a form of structural violence as Darius used the inscription to order the present and the future of the empire. In the following two chapters, I examine manipulation of the violent rhetoric in the inscriptions – the 'battle narratives' and 'punishment episodes' – and how these accounts were designed to control the behaviour of each echelon of imperial society. The analysis of the present chapter provides the context in which to consider these parts of the inscriptions.

5. The Battle Narratives – Darius' Network of Violence

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the 'battle narratives' in the Behistun inscriptions. This is the first of two chapters focussed on what I term the 'violent rhetoric' of Darius' proclamation which includes:

1. 'Battle Narratives': descriptions of battles fought to regain hegemony over the various regions of the empire which revolted when Darius came to the throne.
2. 'Punishment Episodes': descriptions of, and references to, the punishments inflicted on the rebel leaders.

These types of violent rhetoric appear in the 'historical' part of the narrative, in DB OP §10-51=DB AA/AE §10-40 for events in Darius' first regnal year, and DB OP §71-76 (Column 5) in his second and third regnal years. A third kind of violent rhetoric appears in the prologues and epilogues of the inscriptions, threats of violence rather than descriptions of it. This includes curse statements made in the epilogue:

> *u kī dibbī annûtu tapissinu ana uqu lā taqabbu amātu kittu ša ina libbi šaṭru Uramazda līrurka zērka lū yānu*

If you conceal these matters (and) you do not tell the people the truth inscribed here, may Ahuramazda curse you and may you have no descendants.

DB AA §49[397]

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[397] = DB OP §61 = DB AE §49.

Kī asumittu šuātu tammaru u ṣalmānu aganûtu u tubbatušunūtu ul tusaddidušunūtu adi kiššūtka ibaššû Uramazda līrurka u zērika lū yānu u mimma mala teppušu Uramazda ultu qātīka lissuḫ

If you see these sculptures and you destroy them and do not preserve them as long as you have power, may Ahuramazda curse you and may you have no descendants, and may Ahuramazda snatch from your hands whatever you do.

DB AA §53[398]

Together with the inaccessible placement of the monument, these statements were meant to ensure the dissemination of Darius' message, and to deter destructive hands. These kinds of statements were common in the inscriptions of earlier rulers, owing to the prevalence of text destruction as a means of political resistance.[399] Darius also threatens the wrongdoer in the inscriptions' prologues:

ina birīt mātāti agannêtu amēlu pitqudu ana šâšu anāku lū mādu usaddid amēlu ša libbi bīšu altatālšu

Within these lands the trustworthy man I fully protect. I thoroughly investigate the man of evil intent.

DB AA §8[400]

This statement invokes the king's ability to anticipate and punish dangerous transgressive behaviour even before any wrongdoing has taken place. This revolves around the Akkadian wording (*ša libbi bīšu*) 'of evil *intent*', where in the curse statements above, the victim of the king's wrath has already committed a crime. In Darius'

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[398]   = DB OP §67 = DB AE §53.
[399]   May 2012.
[400]   = DB OP §8 = DB AE §8.

programmatic statement opening the inscription, he begins to cultivate an image of himself as omnipresent and omniscient, and an aura of fear. This is reinforced by later statements, in the historical part of the narrative, in which the king relates that the Elamite people arrested and killed Martiya because the king was approaching and they feared him.[401]

It is important to acknowledge the presence of these statements in a discussion of the role of violence in Achaemenid imperial ideology. However, they may be classed among allusions to the violent dimensions of Achaemenid kingship and Persian identity. Allusive statements like this also appear in some inscriptions post-dating the Behistun Monument – I examined these in Chapter Two. I will not dwell on these in detail here, as in this chapter and the next I focus more closely on the unusual aspect of the Behistun inscriptions, by contrast with other extant inscriptions: references to *specific historical* conquests.

As I discussed in Chapter Four, Darius' narrative does not reflect the historical reality of events between 522-519 BCE, but rather provides an idealised version of events with emphasis on the strength of Persian military power. In this chapter and the next, I show how Darius' careful deployment of the violent rhetoric in the inscription promoted the new Achaemenid political regime he wished to impose on both Persian and foreign subjects of empire.

In this chapter, I consider the pre-eminent role Darius assigned to his subordinates in the battle narratives. According to the inscriptions, the king delegated to his subordinates, Persian, and non-Persian, for 16 out of the 20 battles described. A total of 13 subordinates are credited with military success in the Behistun inscriptions. The men who were with Darius when he assassinated Gaumata are described as 'noblemen' (Akkadian: *mār-banûtu*),[402] and are listed by name and patronymic in the inscriptions' epilogues with a request for future kings to protect them and their families.[403] Most of the

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[401]   DB OP §23 = DB AE/AA §21.
[402]   Their presence is noted only in the Akkadian version of the inscription DB AA §12.
[403]   DB OP §68-69 = DB AA/AE §54-55.

men mentioned in this passage were also known to Herodotus,[404] and some are known to have occupied notable positions in imperial governance once Darius' status was fully established.[405]

Figure 25 shows the involvement of Darius' subordinates in the military action of the Behistun inscriptions:
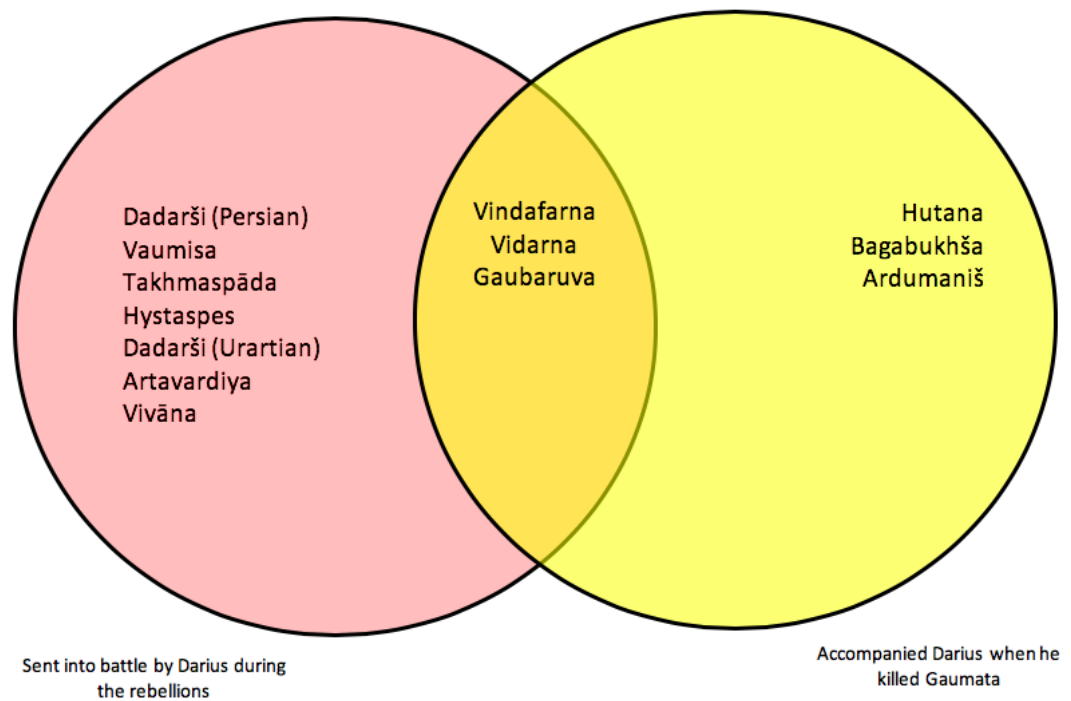
Figure 25 The Involvement of Darius' Subordinates in the Crisis between 522-519 BCE

Out of all the subordinates, I am most concerned with those who led armies against rebel troops. The king refers to these men as *bandaka* (Old Persian), *qal-la-a* (Akkadian) and *libar* (Elamite). The Old Persian word *bandaka* carries the connotation of 'servant' or

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[404]   Comparison of the data yields the following agreements between DB OP §68 = DB AA/AE §54 and Hdt. 3. 70. 2: Vindafarna = Intaphernes, Vidarna = Hydarna, Gaubaruva = Gobryas, Hutana = Otanes, Bagabukhša = Megabyzus. The anomaly is 'Ardumaniš', who Herodotus misses out, including instead Aspathines, who is 'Ašbazana' depicted with an identifying inscription on Darius' funerary monument (DNd). See further below.

[405]   DB OP §38 = DB AA/AE §31 Dadarši is satrap of Bactria, DB OP § 45 = DB AA/AE §37 Vivāna is satrap of Arachosia. Waters 2004, 98 Some may have occupied political positions in the empire under the Teispids, though we can only confirm this for Hystaspes, Vivāna and Dadarši. On Hystaspes and Gaubaruva before Darius' rise to power see Hyland 2018.

'slave', which Cook preferred because 'all men under the King's rule were slaves.'[406] Others have preferred to translate these terms using 'loyal subject' or 'bondsman', at least in the context of the Behistun inscription, since each of the men ranked among the imperial elite.[407] I have decided to follow Henkelman's translation of the Elamite equivalent *libar* as 'subordinate',[408] as a term which most neutrally acknowledges their position beneath the king in the imperial hierarchy.

Eight Persian and two non-Persian subordinates led Persian and Median forces against the rebellions detailed in the central part of the narrative and Column V.[409] Three of these men also accompanied Darius to Gaumata's assassination: Vindafarna, Vidarna and Gaubaruva. In their roles as military leaders, Darius' subordinates lead forces against rebellious troops and some also executed rebels: Hystaspes, Dadarši, Vivana and Vindafarna.[410] The two non-Persian subordinates are another Dadarši, an Urartian, and Takhmaspāda, a Median. These men led Darius' forces against rebellions in their home regions. The subordinates help Darius achieve his objectives in a number of different regions: Urartu, Media, Babylonia, Elam, Parthia, Arachosia and Bactria. By contrast, Darius' actions are circumscribed to the central areas of the empire: Media, Persia and Babylonia.[411] In effect, the bulk of the inscription narrates the actions of the king's subordinates, rather than the king himself. This is a significant departure from the existing conventions of imperial inscriptional practice, according to which rulers attributed most, if not all, heroic action to themselves. Despite this unusual admission, the role of Darius' subordinates in the inscription has not been subject to a focussed analysis.

On one hand, Darius' admission that his subordinates achieved a majority of the military objectives between 522-520 BCE was part of his strategy to provide a realistic version of events. This is analogous with the incorporation of casualty figures, and chronological and geographical details, which supplied a veneer of realism and thereby credibility. Consideration of these details allows some insight into the chaotic reality of the period, during which multiple revolts broke out on several different fronts simultaneously.

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[406]   Cook 1985, 224-225.
[407]   Borbor 2015, 15-16 'loyal servant'; Lincoln 2005, 176 gives 'bondsman'.
[408]   Garrison 2017, 384 n. 1002 was alerted to this definition in a personal communication from Wouter Henkelman.
[409]   DB OP §25-50 = DB AA/AE §22-39 and DP OP §71.
[410]   See Chapter 6, Section 1.1.
[411]   In Column Five, Darius travels outside of this sphere, to counter the Scythian threat.

According to the dates and place names given in the inscriptions, within two months of Gaumata/Bardiya's assassination, a total of eleven revolts broke out among subject peoples, on at least ten different fronts, and majority in December 522 BCE. In short, the timing and spread of the revolts created a situation in which it was impossible for Darius to be present at all theatres of war, and he gave up hope of convincing his audience otherwise.

The Behistun inscriptions are a convincing statement of the strength of Persian military force. In Chapter Four, I discussed how Darius concealed Persian setbacks for example by including only casualty figures for the losing side. Besides, he only describes battles in which the Persian forces were victorious. That being said, it is still surprising that the king so readily admits that he was only present for only four out of 20 battles he describes. The necessity to emphasise the stability of Persian hegemony, and with this the strength of Persian military force, was one of two chief motivations for creating the monument in the first place. The other was the necessity to prove Darius' legitimacy to exercise the kingship, and for this, among other qualities, he had to emphasise his own *personal* military ability.

Why did Darius admit his was so reliant on his subordinates, and risk lessening the impression of his military prowess? Narrations of his subordinates' military action enhance the impression of Persian military superiority by assuring his audience that the king oversaw a loyal network of allies who could act in his stead. To temper the impression of his subordinates' personal military prowess, Darius manipulated the narrative, crediting all successful military operations to his own initiative and command, even when he was not personally present.[412]

In the first part of the chapter, I evaluate Darius' narrative strategies in the battle narratives. First, I consider Darius' descriptions of the battles in which he personally took part. After this I consider appearance of non-royal actors in Neo-Assyrian inscriptions and battle narratives to illuminate the historical and political circumstances which motivated the kings to include the achievements of others beside themselves in their

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[412]   I summarise this narrative strategy on p. 198.

royal inscriptions. Both these sections offer context for the third part of the chapter, in which I analyse Darius' 'delegation strategy': his presentation of the subordinates' role in the crisis. The narrative's formulaic and repetitive nature means that it is quite straightforward to extract certain episodes for analysis. In turn, variations in Darius' reports of different episodes appear deliberate and are therefore meaningful for our understanding of the construction of Persian royal and elite identity, and the role of violence in it. Variations are made depending on whether the king or one of his subordinates was leading the Achaemenid forces.

1. Darius Commands in Person

According to the Behistun narrative, Darius personally enters battle four times. The first two confrontations described in the inscriptions are between himself and the Babylonian pretender Nidintu-Bēl.[413] He was also present at the decisive battle against the Median rebel Fravartiš.[414] Finally, in Column Five, he describes his campaign against the Scythians led by Skunkha.[415] In the context of the Behistun inscriptions, the descriptions of Darius' battles against Nidintu-Bēl and Skunkha are remarkable among the battle narratives for the amount of detail included.[416]

1.1. The Babylonian Campaign (DB OP §18-20 = DB AA/AE §17-19)

Dariyamuš šarru kiam iqabbi arki anāku ana Bābili allikma ana muḫḫi Nidintu-Bēl … uqu ša Nidintu-Bēl ina kišād Tiglat ušuzzū nāra kullū Idiglat mali arki anāku uqu ana libbi eleppēti ša mašku ušēli itti sisê ibilī Idiqlat nītebir Urimizda issēdannu ina ṣilli ša Urimizda Tiglat nētebir addūk ana uqu ša Nidintu-Bēl UD.26.KAM ša Kislīmu ṣeltu nītepuš gabbīšunu niddūk u balṭūtu ul nuṣṣabbit

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[413]   DB OP §18-20 = DB AA/AE §17-19.
[414]   DB OP §31-32 = DB AA/AE §25.
[415]   DB OP §74-75.
[416]   Nevertheless, considered alongside battle narratives in Neo-Assyrian royal annals for example, the Behistun inscriptions are remarkably laconic and formulaic.

*Dariyamuš šarru kiam iqabbi arki anāku Bābili attalak ana Bābili lākašādu ina Zazanu šumšu ša kišād Purattu ina libbi Nidintu-Bēl … ana tarṣīya ittalak itti uqu ana epēšu tāḫāzi arki ṣeltu nētepušu Urimizda issēdanni ina ṣilli ša Urimizda uqu ša Nidintu-Bēl addūk ana libbi nāri iḫliqūma nāru ubilšunūtu nētepuš ṣeltu UD.2.KAM ša Ṭebētu gabbīšunu niddūk u balṭūtu ul nuṣṣabbit**

Dariyamuš šarru kiam iqabbi arki Nidintu-Bēl agāšû ina ṣābū īṣūtu eli ṣēri ša sisê iḫliqma ana Bābili īttalak arki anāku ana tarṣīšu ana Bābili attalak … ina ṣilli ša Urimizda Bābilu aṣṣabat u Nidintu-Bēl aṣṣabat arki anāku ina Bābili ana Nidintu-Bēl agāšû u mār-banûtu ša ittīšu altakan ina zaqīpi addūk napḫar 49 agâ ša anāku ēpušu ina Bābili

King Darius states: Then I came to Babylonia and went in pursuit of that Nidintu-Bēl … the forces of Nidintu-Bēl were stationed on the bank of the Tigris canal. They had control of the canal. The Tigris river was in flood. Then I embarked troops upon boats (made) of skins. We crossed the Tigris river together with horses (and) camels. Ahuramazda supported me. Under the protection of Ahuramazda we crossed the Tigris canal. I defeated the army of Nidintu-Bēl. On the 26th day of Kislīmu we fought the battle. We killed all of them and took no prisoners.

King Darius states: Then I proceeded towards Babylon. Before reaching Babylon, in a town Zazannu, by name, which is on the bank of the Euphrates – there Nidintu-Bēl … advanced towards me with an army to attack. Then we fought the battle. Ahuramazda supported me. Under the protection of Ahuramazda I defeated the army of Nidintu-Bēl. They fled into the river and the river carried them away. We fought the battle on the 2nd day of Tebētu. We killed all of them and took no prisoners.

King Darius states: Then that Nidintu-Bēl with a few soldiers mounted on horseback fled and went to Babylon. Then I went to Babylon after him… Under

the protection of Ahuramazda I took possession of Babylon and captured Nidintu-Bēl. Then I impaled that Nidintu-Bēl and the nobles who were with him. I executed 49. This is what I did in Babylon.

DB AA §17-19

The Persian and Babylonian troops first confronted each other in December 522 BCE on the banks of the Tigris, where Nidintu-Bēl gained control of the canal. To reach the pretender and his men, Darius had his own troops, along with their horses and camels, ford the flooded river on inflated animal skins. They defeated Nidintu-Bēl and his troops and killed all the enemy and took no prisoners. The second battle takes place in a town called Zazannu, on the banks of the Euphrates. Darius was again victorious, and surviving troops of the defeated Babylonian army fled into the river and drowned. Again, the king claims that he killed all the enemy troops and took no prisoners. These are the only battles for which the king claims that all the enemy troops were killed.[417] The final confrontation between Darius and Nidintu-Bēl was a pursuit, rather than a battle, of the rebel king and his few remaining horsemen to Babylon, where Darius captured the city and executed the leader.

The composition creates a simple opposition between Darius' and Nidintu-Bēl's military abilities which emphasises the superiority of the king's forces. The Persian army successfully fords the flooded river before the first confrontation, while the Babylonian troops drown after the second. In her study of the Tigris crossing, Filippone noted that, according to the dates Darius gives, the river could not have been in full spate.[418] She suggested instead that Darius was employing a literary topos of 'crossing a swollen river', also employed by Assyrian kings.[419] In conclusion, she proposed that the aim was:

To make known that Darius, showing his usual extraordinary bravery and leadership abilities, thanks to the support of Ahuramazda and notwithstanding

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[417] This claim is discussed in Chapter 4, Section 1.
[418] Filippone 2016, 8.
[419] *idem.*

the challenging environmental condition, managed the cross the Tigris successfully and succeeded in routing the opposing troops. To achieve this aim, a faithful account of the way things really happened was not required.

Filippone 2016, 17

This interpretation is persuasive, since other aspects of the description are keyed to demonstrate Darius' mastery over the Babylonian landscape, by contrast with Nidintu-Bēl. I discussed Hyland's key finding on the casualty figures in Chapter Four, that these were patterned to portray Darius as the most effective killer and cannot therefore be taken at face value. In this case, Darius' claims to have killed all the enemy troops and taken no prisoners. During the Babylonian campaign, Darius successfully moves his troops through the region, taking in both the Tigris and the Euphrates, as well as Babylon itself, the former capital of the Neo-Babylonian Empire to which Nidintu-Bēl claimed to be heir.

Darius' describes his campaign against Nidintu-Bēl in more detail than any other single campaign in the narrative. The inclusion of landscape details is particularly striking, as part of Darius' strategy to emphasise his ability to violently subject not only the people of the empire but also its natural landscape.

1.2. Darius vs. Fravartiš (DB OP §31 = DB AA/AE §25)

Dariyamuš šarru kiam iqabbi arki ultu Bābili anāku uṣâmma attalak ana Madāya ana kašādi ana Madāya ina Kunder šumšu ina Madāya ana tarṣīya Parumartiš … itti uqu ittalak ana epēš tāḫāzi arki nītepuš ṣaltu Uramizda issēdannu ina ṣilli ša Uramizda uqu ša Parumartiš niddūk UD.25.KAM ša Nisānu nītepuš ṣaltu niddūk ina libbīšunu [34?] līm [4?] meat 25 u balṭūtu nuṣṣabitu [xxxxx]

Arku Parumartiš agāšû itti ṣābū īṣūtu eli ṣeri ša sisû iḫliqma illikma ina Raga šumšu ina Madāya arki anāku uqu ana tarṣišunu ašpurma Parumartiš agāšu u ṣābū ša ittīšu iṣṣabtūma ana pānīya išpurū arki anāku appīšu uznīšu lišānšu

ubattiq ištēn īnšu unappil šū ṣabtu kullu ina bābiya uqu gabbi immaruš arki ina zaqīpi ina Agamatanu altakanšu mār-banêšu addūk napḫar 47 bīrit Agamatanu qaqqadātīšunu ālul ultu kilīli ša birtu

King Darius states: Then I went out from Babylon and proceeded to Media. When I reached Media, in the town Kundur, by name, in Media, that Fravartiš … went toward me with troops to attack. Then we fought the battle. Ahura Mazda supported me. Under the protection of Ahura Mazda, the army of Fravartiš we defeated. On the 25th day of Nisannu we fought the battle. We killed [34425?] of them and took prisoner (number illegible).

Then that Fravartiš fled with a few soldiers mounted in horseback and came to the territory of Ragā, by name, in Media. Then I sent troops after him. They captured that Fravartiš and the soldiers who were with him and sent (them) to me. Then I cut off his nose, his two ears, his tongue (and) blinded one of his eyes. He was held in fetters at my gate. All the people could see him. Then I impaled him at Ecbatana. I executed his nobles, a total of [47]. I hung their heads inside Ecbatana from the battlements of the fortress.

DB AA §25[420]

Darius does not describe his confrontation with Fravartiš at Kundur, in May 521 BCE, in much detail. This is surprising, given the importance of this victory over the Median rebellions, which posed a much more severe existential threat to Persian hegemony than the other rebellions.[421] The critical nature of the threat must have motivated Darius to choose to attend to this rebellion, and no others, until he resurfaced again to lead his troops on the Scythian expedition in 519 BCE. Providing only a brief summary of events, Darius misses an opportunity to expand on his landscape conquests in Media, which he took care to include in narrations of his Babylonian and Scythian campaigns.

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[420]   = DB OP §31 = DB AE §25.
[421]   Chaptner 6, Section 1.2.

The brevity with which he describes the battle against Fravartiš may have been dictated by the king's narrative strategy for this portion of the inscriptions (DB OP §10-§51 = DB AA/AE §10-§40), and Column 5 of the Old Persian version. These can be divided into four different 'episodes', separated according to the chronology of the events:

> *Episode 1:* The rise and fall of Gaumata, Darius' restoration of the status quo (DB OP/AA/AE §10 - DB OP §13 = DB AA/AE §12) (11th March-29th September 522 BCE)

> *Episode 2:* Suppression of the first Babylonian and Elamite rebellions (DB OP §16-§21= DB AA/AE §15-§20) (October –December 522 BCE)

> *Episode 3:* Suppression of rebellions which broke out while Darius was in Babylonia (DB OP §22-§51 = DB AA/AE §21-§40) (December 522 BCE – November/December 521)[422]

> *Episode 4:* Suppression of the third Elamite rebellion and Darius' Scythian expedition (DB OP §74-§75). (521-519 BCE)

As we know, Gaumata's rise and fall occurred earlier than the rest of the events described in the historical portion of the inscriptions. This was followed, after Darius' attempt at restoring the status quo, by the first Elamite and Babylonian rebellions. Once these had been dealt with, several regions rose up simultaneously in revolt against the Persians, and the 'third episode' is occupied with the suppression of these rebellions. The events of Column 5 took place in Darius' second and third regnal years.

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[422]   Dates uncertain.

As we saw in Chapter Three, when narrating 'Episode 3', Darius creates significant confusion surrounding the chronology of these events. There is incoherence between the order in which he narrates them, and the 'actual' chronological order, according to the dates he gives.[423] In addition to this, descriptions of battles in Episode 3 are characterised by an overall lack of detail. Together, these characteristics have the effect of 'speeding up' the progress of events, rhetorically emphasising the efficiency with which Darius dealt with the various threats against him. Thus, Darius' commitment to this rhetorical strategy for Episode 3 motivated him to include little detail when narrating his own confrontation with Fravartiš.

Though he does not describe the confrontation in much detail, he does promote his victory over the rebel leader above that of his subordinate Vidarna who had faced Fravartiš troops first. The re-subjection of Media takes two battles, and Darius appears for the decisive second engagement. When Vidarna first fights the rebels, the king tells that 'he who was in command of the Medes was not there'.[424] The image is of an easy victory since the troops lacked their lead commander. Following this engagement, Darius tells us that Vidarna waited for the king to arrive rather than continuing on his own.[425] The When Darius fights against the Median forces, he faces a greater threat, since Fravartiš has returned to lead the troops. The casualty figures for this confrontation are the highest of all those included in the inscription.

1.3. The Scythian Expedition (DB OP §74-75)

King Darius says: Afterward with an army I went against Scythia; after that the Scythians who wear the pointed cap, these came against me, when I had come down to the sea. By means of a tree trunk with the whole army I crossed it. Afterwards I defeated those Scythians; another (part of them) they captured; that was led to me in fetters. And (the man) who was their chief, Skunkha, by name,

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[423]   See especially the first two columns of Table 7.
[424]   DB OP §25 = DB AA/AE §22.
[425]   DB OP §25 = DB AA?AE §22. Darius also tells that his subordinates Dadarši and Vaumisa waited for him during the Urartian rebellion DB OP §28 and 30 = DB AA/AE §23 and 24. I discuss this below p. 195-196 and n. 438.

him they captured (and) led to me in fetters. There I made another (their) chief, as was my desire. After that the country became mine.

DB OP §74 (trans. Schmitt 1991, 76)

Darius describes his Scythian campaign in Column Five. This revolt took place between 520-519 BCE and the matter was concluded, according to Darius, after a single confrontation between his troops and the Scythian forces. The description is less detailed than that given for the Babylonian expedition. However, this is the only other battle description to involve a water crossing.[426] This detail demonstrates Darius' mastery over the Scythian landscape, as the Tigris crossing did in the description of the Babylonian confrontations.

This campaign was so important to Darius that he had the first Elamite inscription effaced to make room for a depiction of the rebel Skunkha at the end of the line of rebel leaders.[427] This is surprising because Darius does not specify that he had Skunkha executed or that he died, as was the case for rest of the rebel leaders depicted on the relief. Instead, he replaced Skunkha with another chief. Furthermore, having gone to the trouble of having the original inscription erased and painstakingly re-engraved, the king did not choose to include a depiction of Athamaita, the Elamite who had been defeated by Gaubaruva and executed by Darius the year before. Darius' description of the latter events immediately precedes his description of the Scythian campaign, but is less detailed:

King Darius says: … After (Athamaita rebelled) I sent forth an army; (there was) one single man, Gaubaruva by name, a Persian, my vassal – him I made their chief. Afterwards Gaubaruva with the army went to Elam (and) fought a battle with the Elamites. Afterwards Gaubaruva defeated the Elamites and decimated

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[426]   Shaverebi 2019, 10 suggests a possible reconstruction of part of DFa, an inscription discovered at Phanagoria on the Black Sea, could be ''… (I) crossed [the sea?]. Then? …' though noting that this is merely a conjecture based on Darius' narration of the Scythian campaign in Column Five.

[427]   Bae 2001, 16-30 gives the most recent reconstruction of the stages of composition.

(them), and he captured their chief and led (him) to me. After that I slew him. After that the country became mine.

<div align="right">DB OP §71 (trans. Schmitt 1991, 75)</div>

This differences between the reports, especially the relatively laconic description of the Elamite revolt and the fact that Darius himself led the Scythian campaign, suggests that greater prestige was attached to the latter. The implications of this campaign for the strength of Darius' claim to the kingship were more consequential than those of the victory over the Elamites.

Lincoln suggested that Darius did not execute Skunkha because he regarded him as 'relatively innocuous: no rebel, liar, claimant to the status of 'King''.[428] The implication is that Darius' victory over the Scythians resulted in their subjection to Persian rule for the first time. In this case, a public execution was either unnecessary, or not worth noting in the inscription because Skunkha was not a 'rebel'.[429] However, the Scythians *are* named among the countries in revolt around December 522 BCE, [430] albeit without the qualification that they 'wore the pointed hat'. Aside from the question of whether the Scythians were in revolt *strictu sensu* or not, we should consider further possibilities behind the 'reality' of these events. For example, Darius may not have considered it important to note in the inscription that Skunkha was killed or indeed, to execute him in reality, since the situation was now less critical than it had been in his first year; fewer revolts were going on.

Murray suggested that during Darius' reign the conquest of the Scythians 'who live beyond the waters at the end of the world' came to represent the 'unlimited reach of the Great King'.[431] The ideological importance of the Scythian campaign may also be derived

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[428]   Lincoln 2005, 179.
[429]   See Chapter 6, Introduction on the limitations of our readings of the corporal punishments inflicted on the rebel leaders – they were suited to the punishment of rebels in very severe circumstances only.
[430]   DB OP §21 = DB AA/AE §20.
[431]   Murray 2015, 53. See also Vogelsang 1998, 213-214 on the importance of the Scythians/Saka in the seventh century BCE and the opposition between the 'Scythianized North and the non-Scythianized South' in the Iranian plateau in the first millennium BCE, and a possible association between earlier Scythian and later Median power in the region.

from Herodotus' narration of Cyrus' death in the *Histories*.[432] The historian's preferred version of this event is that Cyrus died at the hands of the Scythian Queen Tomyris of the Massagetae.[433] Beckman highlighted the Iranian aspects of this story which indicate that it was not entirely an Herodotean invention; the historian had an Iranian informant.[434] He suggests that Herodotus' narrative of Cyrus' death was influenced by contemporary propaganda, created by Darius.[435] This may tie in with the importance of Darius' Scythian conquest in the Behistun inscriptions and image: Darius succeeded in subjecting the Scythians early in his reign, where Cyrus had conspicuously failed. Put another way, it suggests the suitability of the Achaemenid dynasty to rule over and expand the Persian Empire instead of the Teispids.

In summary, though Darius personally attended to relatively few of the uprisings against him, he crafted the descriptions of his few battles to draw attention to his military abilities.The narrations of the Babylonian and Scythian campaigns are especially striking, while the limited amount of detail given about his victory against the Medians fitted with his rhetorical strategy in 'Episode 3'. He employed the motif of 'crossing a swollen river' when describing the Babylonian campaign and he referred to crossing the sea to meet the Saka in an otherwise laconic description of these events. These descriptions emphasised both his military superiority over his enemies, and his ability to overcome natural obstacles presented by empire's physical landscape. These narratives are remarkably detailed by comparison with narrations of his subordinates' victories, which I will come to in the final section of this chapter.

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[432]   Kuhrt 2007, 193-194; this is *not* the Scythian campaign which Darius embarked on later in his reign (ca. 513 BCE), described by Hdt. 4.83-144, which was unsuccessful.
[433]   Hdt. 1.214.
[434]   Beckman 2018, 5-6. See also Munson 2009, 464 claim that a Zopyrus the Younger, grandson of Zopyrus the Elder, son of Megabyzus was Herodotus' Iranian informant on the story of the capture of Babylon; my discussion of this in Chapter Six.
[435]   Beckman 2018, 8. Herodotus suggests that in wishing the conquer the Scythian tribes, Cyrus overstretched himself, by contrast with the earlier depiction of Cyrus as 'wise, pious and a brilliant strategist.'

2. Non-Royal Actors in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions

Examination of precedents for the appearance of non-royal actors in Neo-Assyrian inscriptions may illuminate the political circumstances which could induce Darius to attribute such a significant role to his subordinates in the Behistun inscriptions. The governance of empire requires a huge staff. Neo-Assyrian epistolary evidence shows not only that the king appointed subordinates to take care of matters wherever he could not be physically present, but also that these men were frequently required to make decisions based on their own judgement, without waiting for the king to advise them.[436] However, for the most part the individual members of the imperial elite are conspicuously absent in official royal inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian period. As the kings' personal military prowess was a key element of royal self-representation, their role in military activities is especially muted. The kings' personal military superiority was a key element of royal self-representation; in their inscriptions, Assyrian kings were prone to attribute all heroic action in warfare to themselves.

However, non-royal actors do, on rare occasions, appear in the inscriptions of Assyrian kings.[437] Here I consider examples from Sennacherib (704-681 BCE) and Adad-Nirari III's (811-783 BCE) reigns. Analysis of these suggests the political circumstances in which it was appropriate for the king, whose own personal military prowess occupied a central role in royal ideology and ensured his legitimacy, found it appropriate to refer to the military actions of others.

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[436]   Radner 2014, 75.

[437]   Besides this, in the early Neo-Assyrian period it was not uncommon for the king's magnates, and the queens, to erect their *own* monumental inscriptions in their provinces. May 2017, 502 n. 84 outlines the key features of this practice, which had diminished by the time of Sargon II (722-705 BCE). Comparable practice in the Achaemenid period may be evidenced in a letter from Aršama to his associates, A6.12, in which he orders that his craftsman Hinzani makes several statues. The letter does not elucidate the use to which these would be put, but they may have been decorative rather than 'monumental' per se. However, there is no mention of inscriptions on these, let alone inscriptions valorising Aršama's military achievements. However, Aršama ordered that his statues be decorated with 'horsemen', indicating a possible militaristic symbolism. Besides this, the extant corpus of monumental inscriptions from the Achaemenid period relate to the kings themselves and make no reference to the achievements of non-royal subordinates, except for the Behistun inscriptions. Wu 2014, 221 notes that militaristic subject matter appears more regularly in the seals of elite Persians from the reign of Xerxes onwards, suggesting that violent military ability in this was a key part of elite self-identity.

Sennacherib referred to his subordinates' military action in a cylinder inscription discovered at Nineveh, which relate the events of his first campaign (704-702 BCE):

> I sent (my) chief eunuch and (my) provincial governors to Kiš ahead of me, (saying): 'Take the road to Marduk-apla-iddina (II) (Merodach-baladan), but do not be careless about putting a strong watch on him!' He (Merodach-baladan) saw my provincial governors, then came out of the Zababa Gate with all of his forces and did battle with my magnates in the plain of Kiš. The enemy prevailed over my magnates in the thick of battle and they (my magnates) were unable to withstand him. They sent their messenger to me in plain of Cutha for help. In my rage, I unleashed a fierce assault on Cutha, then I slaughtered the warriors surrounding its walls like sheep and took possession of the city.

> RINAP 3 Sennacherib 001.20-23

Having failed to defeat Merodach-baladan and his forces, the king's chief eunuch and provincial governors are forced to appeal to the king directly for help. Sennacherib refers to his subordinates' military failure in this inscription to emphasise his own superior military ability. In Part Three, I reveal the limitations Darius' portrayal of his subordinates' military abilities. He does not go as far as Sennacherib in imputing military *failure* on them, jeopardising the impression of the overall Persian military superiority; each of the battles described result in a Persian victory, whether Darius is there to personally lead the charge, or not.

There are, however, a few instances in the Behistun narrative which we might compare with Sennacherib's troops sending to him for help. Darius' appearance following Vidarna's two confrontations with Fravartiš, described above, shows his troops' (physical) reliance on him for victory. Along with this episode, there are what could be termed 'freeze-frame' moments in the narrative – points at which, following a victory, Darius' subordinates stop what they are doing and await the king's arrival. Darius tells that at the after their battles, Vidarna, Dadarši (the Urartian) and Vaumisa 'did not

undertake another expedition, they were waiting for me until I should come to Media.'[438] Thus, although it was imperative that Darius did not include any Persian defeats in his account, he does make reference to occasions when his physical presence *was* required to consolidate the victory.

Adad-nirari III referred to the achievements of his subordinates in three of his inscriptions. The men he names in these inscriptions are his field marshal Šamšī-ilu,[439] and provincial governors Nergal-ēriš[440] and Palil-ēriš.[441] Mentions of persons apart from the king in these inscriptions is confounding and appeared to some scholars to indicate the weakness of the king's grip on power. Siddall argued that this was not the case; when these inscriptions are considered along with the political climate distinct to Adad-nirari's reign, we see that his concerted policy of imperial expansion necessitated dynamic changes in the imperial administration.[442] References to the king's subordinates in these inscriptions indicate that *in reality* he relied more heavily on his subordinates to maintain a hold on Assyrian territories,[443] and these inscriptions offer confirmation of these men's loyalty to him. However, as I noted at the beginning of this section, Assyrian conventions in inscriptional practice merely masked the fact that the empire relied on a huge imperial staff, who often made administrative decisions even without consulting the king. Therefore, we are not able to evaluate the quantitative difference between Adad-nirari's reliance on his subordinates, and that of other rulers.

More pertinent here is what Adad-nirari sought to achieve by *officially* acknowledging his subordinates' roles in the imperial administration. In the first place, by naming them in his inscriptions, Adad-nirari honoured and showed his magnates gratitude, to ensure their loyalty. Thus, rewarding them, he induced his subordinates to facilitate control of the new, enlarged version of empire which he now ruled over. Darius' motivations in

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[438]   DB AA/AE §22, 23, 24 = OfA §3, 6, 8. In DB OP §25, 28, 30 Darius simply states that his troops waited for him. These are also problematic, since Darius' victory against Fravartiš in Media took place significantly earlier than the Armenian victories.

[439]   RIMA 3 Adad-nerari III A.0.104.2 §4. Šamšī-ilu is named on an inscription on a boundary marker along with the king for aiding in the division of the city of Naḫlasi.

[440]   RIMA 3 Adad-nerari III A.0.104.7 §7-20 Nergal-ēriš was given 331 cities by the king and tasked with rebuilding them and RIMA 3 Adad-nerari III A.0.104.9 §6-10 Nergal-ēriš is mentioned, but the following section is damaged.

[441]   RIMA 3 Adad-nerari III A.0.104.9 §15ff. Recording that Palil-ēriš is the governor of Raṣappa.

[442]   Siddall 2013, 103.

[443]   Siddall 2013, 132.

detailing the actions of his subordinates had a similar impetus. As I have already stated, in reality, the deployment of his subordinates was a response required by the immediate practical difficulties posed by the chronology and geographical spread of the revolts. Besides this, Darius was committed to providing a realistic, and therefore credible, version of events. However, there were more compelling reasons for Darius to acknowledge the pre-eminent role of his subordinates in dealing with the crisis, and in doing so to risk diminishing the impression of his own personal military prowess.

In the first place, like Adad-nirari, Darius honoured the achievements of his subordinates, thus ensuring their loyalty and the maintenance of Achaemenid hegemony in all regions of the empire. This was the motivation especially to include a paragraph naming each of the men who helped him depose Gaumata and to ask for protection for them. Further, he impressed the reach of Persian power on his audience. In other words, even when the king could not be present to deal with threats to his power, he could depend on a network of loyal allies which extended his rule into the empire's farthest reaches. Seen in this light, Darius' inclusion of his subordinates' achievements in the inscriptions is a dynamic response to the challenge of ruling over the largest and most diverse empire the world had yet seen, and *not* an admission of his own military weakness.

3. Darius' Delegation Strategy: Violence, Royal Authority and Elite Identity

Discussion of descriptions of Darius' own battles in the Behistun inscriptions, and the inclusion of subordinates' actions in the royal inscriptions of Assyrian kings, are a useful context in which to consider Darius' descriptions of battles fought by his subordinates. As we have seen, inclusion of subordinates in royal inscriptions was unusual, though not unprecedented, although the extent of their involvement and their military success was. Despite admitting that his subordinates played the pre-eminent role in suppressing the crisis of 522-519 BCE, the king placed significant limitations on the impression of their military ability and privileged his own.

Darius' narrative strategy ensured that each Persian success was presented as his own personal achievement. The effect can be summed up by consideration of his summarising statements after the suppression of each rebellion. These follow the same formula whether Darius or, more often, one of his subordinates, led the Persian forces: 'This is what *I* did in (name of region).' Where Darius himself led forces against the enemy, at the end of the battle he reports: '*I* defeated the army of (rebel name).' Where a subordinate leads: '*My* troops defeated the rebel troops.' There are two exceptions to this rule: when Hystaspes and Vindafarna suppress rebellions in Parthia and Babylonia, and I will discuss the privileging of these subordinates in due course.[444] Overall, it can be said that Darius mitigates the fact that he was so often absent from the field of battle by rhetorically claiming each Persian victory for himself.

By contrast with the king's exploits, descriptions of the subordinates' battles are devoid of detail. In this section, I examine Darius' narrative strategy, considering the inclusion and omission of biographical details about the subordinates and the rebels they conquer and location details for each of their encounters. Following this, I consider Darius' use of direct speech to give the impression that he was in control of his subordinates' violent actions, and to highlight the presumption of the rebels.

3.1 Biographical Information about the Subordinates

That Darius mentioned each of his subordinates *by name* in his major inaugural inscriptions constituted a significant honour – he 'inscribed' them into the historical record and guaranteed their fame throughout the generations.[445] Beyond their names, however, Darius supplies little information about the subordinates. And, as discussed in Chapter Three, he did not add identifying inscriptions for either of the Persian nobles in the relief image, leaving them to stand for the support of the Persian nobility at large. Table 9 gathers all the biographical information about the subordinates:

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[444]   Hyland 2014, 192 no. 99 also noted this tendency, and these exceptions.

[445]   May 2012, 5-6 discusses the importance of naming in royal inscriptions. See also Radner 2005.

Name	Details
Vidarna	Persian, son of Bagabigna
Dadarši	Urartian
Vaumisa	Persian
Takmaspāda	Median
Hystaspes	Persian, Darius' father, residing in Parthia
Dadarši	Persian, satrap of Bactria
Artavardiya	Persian
Vivāna	Persian, satrap of Arachosia
Vindafarna	Persian, son of Visparu
Gaubaruva	Persian, son of Marduniya, a Pātišuvariš
Hutana	Son of Suhkra, Persian
Bagabukhša	Son of Zātūa, Persian
Ardumaniš	Son of Vakhku, Persian

 'Noblemen' who were with Darius when he killed Gaumata

Table 9 Biographical Information about Darius' Subordinates

We have the most information about Dadarši (the Persian) and Vivāna, respectively satraps of Bactria and Arachosia, and Hystaspes who is Darius' father, and was residing in Parthia. Of all the other generals, we are only told whether they were Persian and, if they were not, where they came from. Waters pointed out that, apart from Hystaspes, Dadarši and Vivāna, we do not know whether any of these men already held political positions under Cyrus and/or Cambyses, or were *homines novi* appointed by Darius.[446] He suggested that Darius noted their positions in Bactria, Arachosia and Parthia to emphasise that he had strong support in central, northern and eastern Iran, so that he could justify greater personal attention to more significant threats in the core regions of Media, Persia, Babylonia and Elam.[447]

The subordinates we know the most about are the noblemen who accompanied Darius to Gaumata's assassination, who are named with their patronymics in the inscriptions' epilogue. The king does not explicitly state their role in Gaumata's death, he simply

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[446] Waters 2004, 98. Hyland 2018, 32 suggests a possible resolution between Herodotus' claim that Hystaspes was the governor of Persis, and his military command in Parthia according to the Behistun inscriptions. He may have held the governorship of Persis under Cyrus, and Cambyses or even Bardiya later sent him to Parthia.
[447] Waters 2004, 98.

states: 'On the 10th day of Tašrītu, accompanied by a few nobles, I killed that Gaumata', and later 'these are the men who were with me when I killed that Gaumata…'[448] Darius delayed the provision of this information, so much so that this paragraph actually closes the Akkadian version. Meanwhile, the king gives less information about the subordinates sent to take care of the rebellions on the his behalf – only their names and ethnic affiliations. In each case he describes them as *bandaka, libar* or *qallu*, denoting merely their status as lesser persons than the king himself, terms I have chosen to translate as 'subordinate' in this thesis. Hystaspes is the exception to this rule, the king describes him as his 'father'.[449] Despite the pre-eminence of Darius' subordinates in suppressing the crisis of 522-519 BCE, by the simple expedient of withholding information about their identities, the king reminded the empire, his Persian collaborators especially, of their subordination.

3.2. Biographical Information about the Rebel Leaders

Darius gives a comparatively large amount of 'biographical information' about the rebel leaders, both in the main inscriptions, and in the identifying inscriptions DBb-k. This can include their 'birth name' (their 'real name' according to Darius), the name of their father and the royal genealogy they claimed (lied about), but it is unevenly distributed. Table 10 collects all the biographical information we have for each rebel, and notes the commander of the battles against them:

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[448]   DB AA §12, their presence at this event is not noted in either the Old Persian or the Elamite version. They are named, after a considerable hiatus, at DB OP §68 = DB AA/AE §54-55.
[449]   See below Section 3.4 for the privileged position of Hystaspes among the king's subordinates.

'Birth' Name	Commander	Biographical Information
Gaumata	Darius (and a few nobles)	Gaumata the Maguš, 'Bardiya, son of Cyrus, king of Persia, and younger brother of Cambyses'
Açina	N/A	The son of Upadaramma, an Elamite 'I am king of Elam'
Nidintu-Bēl	Darius	The son of Kin-Zēr, the zazakku 'I am Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabonidus king of Babylon'
Martiya	N/A	A son of Šinšakriš 'I am Immanešu, king of Elam'
No leader	Vidarna	None
Urartians	Dadarši (Urartian)	None
Fravartiš	Darius	'I am Khašatritti, a descendant of Cyaxares, king of Media
Cicantakhma	Takhmaspāda	A Sagartian 'I am the king, a descendant of Cyaxares'
N/A	Hystaspes	Leader of the Parthian supporters of Fravartiš
Parada	Dadarši (Persian)	A Margian 'I am king in Margiana'
Vahyazdāta	Artamarziya	'I am Bardiya, the son of Cyrus, king of lands'
N/A	Vivāna	he (Vahyazdāta) had sent a certain man who was their leader
Arakhu	Vindafarna	An Urartian, a son of Haldita 'I am Nebuchadnezzar, a son of Nabonidus'
Athamaita	Gaubaruva	Athamaita by name, an Elamite, the Elamites made him chief
Skunkha	Darius	This is Skunkha, the Scythian

■ Rebel confronted by Darius

Table 10 Biographical Information about the Rebel Leaders

In short, Darius provides the most information about the rebels he himself confronted. In doing so, he drew most attention to his own achievements in battle. Despite giving the most biographical information about Dadarši, Vivāna and Hystaspes, the king gives the *least* biographical information about the rebel leaders they confronted. We know nothing about the rebels confronted by Hystaspes and Vivāna, except that they were loyal to Fravartiš and Vahyazdāta respectively, and Darius did not depict the nameless rebels on the relief image. We know even less about Dadarši's opponent Parada, only that he became leader of the rebellious Margians, but nothing of his provenance. Later, in

Darius' summary of the rebellions and in Parada's identifying inscription (DBj), the king states that he claimed to be king in Margiana.[450]

By providing the least information about the rebels confronted by the satraps Dadarši and Vivāna and his father Hystaspes, Darius lessened the impression of the threat they posed, and therefore the relative military prowess of his most favoured subordinates. In two cases he noted that these were merely offshoot revolts catalysed by the Median and Persian revolts, while the origin of the Parthian rebel is uncertain.[451] It must be said also that the omission of details about the rebels was be motivated by Darius' wish to highlight their unsuitability for the kingship – they were not, he assures us, of the royal line. Besides this, omission of biographical details about the rebel leaders his subordinates faced was another of the king's strategies to draw attention away from the military contribution of his subordinates by comparison with his own.

3.3. Omission of Landscape and Geographical Details

Table 11 lists the locations of confrontations between the rebels and the Persian forces:

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450   See Chapter 6, n. 479 for Lincoln's view on Parada's execution, based on DBj.
451   And in the Old Persian and Elamite versions of the inscription, Darius does not include details of Parada's execution, further lessening the apparent severity of the Margian threat.

Protagonists (Rebel Leader vs. Persian forces)	Location
Gaumata vs. Darius (and a few nobles)	Sikubatti, Nissaya, Media
Nidintu-Bēl vs. Darius	Banks of the Tigris Zazannu on the way to Babylon, on the banks of the Euphrates Babylon, Babylonia
Supporters of Fravartiš vs. Vidarna	Marū, Media
Urartian rebels vs. Dadarši (Urartian)	Zūzu,Urartu Digra, Urartu Uyama, Urartu
Urartian rebels vs. Vaumisa	Izalla, Assyria Utiyāri, Urartu
Fravartiš vs. Darius	Kunduruš, Media
Cicantahma vs. Takhmaspāda	Media
Parthians and Margians vs. Hystaspes	Vishpazātu, Parthia Patrigrabanā, Parthia
Parada vs. Dadarši (Persian)	Margiana
Vahyazdāta vs. Artavardiya	Rakhā, Persia Mount Parga, Persia
Followers of Vahyazdāta vs. Vivana	Kapishakana, Arachosia Arshada, the fortress of Vivana, Arachosia
Arakha vs. Vindafarna	Babylon, Babylonia

Table 11 Confrontation Locations in the Behistun Inscriptions (Cols 1-4)

When one of Darius' subordinates leads troops against the rebels, Darius usually lists only the settlement and the region. This contrasts starkly with Darius' description of his major campaign against Nidintu-Bēl, in which the king included the landscape conquests over the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers.

In two cases, the king gives extra location information – about the battles fought by his subordinates Artavardiya and Vivāna. Darius gives precedence to the achievements of these subordinates over those of others. However, he was more likely motivated to include these geographical details to emphasise Vahyazdāta's illegitimacy, which he stressed above that of the rest of the rebel leaders.[452] Engagements with Vahyazdāta's rebel forces take place in Persia and Arachosia, against the Persian rebel himself and his followers, respectively. Vahyazdāta is linked with Gaumata in the inscription by their

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[452] See below Section 3.4. for a further discussion Vahyazdāta's unsuitability for the kingship.

association with Paišiyauvada,[453] whence Gaumata revolted and where Vahyazdāta fled to after defeat at Rakhā to rouse further forces against Darius.[454]

The recurrence of place names in the narrative is unusual, as Table 11 shows – which suggests that Darius included geographical details in the inscription the emphasise the extent of the empire.[455] Babylon and Paišiyauvada are the only places that do reoccur, in the first two and last two battle narratives. Babylon is the location of confrontations between Darius and Nidintu-Bēl, and between Vindafarna and Arakha, and the site of Arakha's execution. In the inscription, Paišiyauvada is a stronghold for the Persian rebels, rather than a confrontation location. Henkelman proposed that this was a town, possibly an administrative centre, which was located within the area of modern day Tal-e Zohāk/Pasā, a settlement which had by the 6th centuty BCE been inhabited since the third millennium BCE.[456] Doroodi and Hajiani proposed an alternative location, in a mountainous region near Pasargadae.[457] Both studies agree that this would have been already an important imperial location before Darius' reign. Certainly, the recurrence of this place name marks them out as important Persian strongholds, which were twice captured by rebels but ultimately reconquered by Darius and his subordinates.

3.4. Speech and Commands

A key method by which Darius limits the violent abilities of his subordinates, and highlights the presumption of the rebels, is through the use of commands in the inscriptions. Put simply, the subordinates rarely perform any military action without the king's command. Besides these speech acts, the king 'narrates' the whole inscription himself –the phrase 'Darius the king says' appears at the start of each new section. Speech continued to feature in the inscriptions of later Achaemenid kings, in which the phrase 'King (name) says…' occurs repeatedly. In the introduction to the Behistun

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[453]   Elamite: Naširma.
[454]   Kuhrt 2007, 152 n. 18 and 91.
[455]   See also Chapter 6, Section 1.3.
[456]   Henkelman 2017, 49-51.
[457]   Doroodi and Hajiani 2018, 273.

inscriptions, Darius highlights twice in quick succession his subjects' obedience to spoken commands:

> *lapānīya attūa iqqabbû lū mūšu lū ūmu šâšu ippušū … lapānīya attūa iqqabbû lū mūšu lū ūmu ana šâšu ippušū*

> What is said by me – whether by night or by day, they (my subjects) do it… What is said by me, either by night or day, they (my subjects) would do it.

DB AA §7-8[458]

As we have seen, Darius takes credit for each of his subordinates' victories. Not only this but, by using commands, the king remains in control of each campaign, no matter how far away from the action he was in reality, and eschews any impression that his subordinates were autonomous agents. Each of Darius' subordinates, except for Hystaspes, Artavardiya and Gaubaruva, receives a spoken command, given in direct speech in the Akkadian, and indirect in the Elamite and Old Persian versions,[459] before going into battle.

In the Old Persian and Elamite versions, some commands are also given to the king's troops *en masse*, for example: 'Then I said to them, 'Go and defeat that Median army, which does not call itself mine!'.[460] Others are referred to the Persian subordinate directly: 'Thus I said to him, 'Go! There is an army which is rebellious (and) does not call itself mine – defeat that!'.[461] Vindafarna impales the rebel Arakha,[462] upon the king's express order: 'As for Arakha and the nobles who were with him, impale them.' One subordinate is exempted from this – Darius' father Hystaspes. When the rebellion arises

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[458]   DB OP and AE §7-8 miss out the second specification that this was 'by night or by day'.
[459]   Old Persian does not have the grammatical construction of 'direct speech', instead speech, commands of the king and of Ahuramazda, is express as 'thought'. Most translations render this in English as direct speech, which is more idiomatic.
[460]   DB OP §25 = DB AE §22, and further DB OP §33 = DB AE §26, DB OP §50 = DB AE §39.
[461]   DB OP §26 = DB AE §23, and further DB OP §29 = DB AE §24, DB OP §38 = DB AE §31.
[462]   The only subordinate execution which is described.

in Parthia and Hyrcania, instead of waiting for a command from Darius, Hystaspes goes straight into battle.[463] Hystaspes is elevated above the other subordinates elsewhere: his casualty figures are second only to the king's,[464] he is one of the few subordinates who carries out an execution and he is not described as a 'subordinate', the king refers to him as 'my father'.[465]

However, Darius is careful not to place even his father above himself.[466] The king does not tell us the name of the rebel leader Hystaspes confronts and executes, and the rebel is not depicted on the relief image at Behistun either. This strategy lessens the impression of Hystaspes' military prowess. In addition, although Darius does not 'command' his father in the same way he does the other subordinates, he does note that he had to send Hystaspes reinforcements from his own troops for the second confrontation against the unnamed rebel.[467] Finally, Darius summarises the outcome of the Parthian rebellion as he does in all other cases, attributing the result to himself: 'Then this land became *mine*. This is what *I* did in Parthia'.[468] On the whole, because of the limitations that Darius places on the portrait of his father, we should interpret his relative distinction by comparison with the other subordinates as a means by which the king elevated his own achievements and, most importantly, emphasised the legitimacy of the Achaemenid dynasty, of which Hystaspes was a part. Mentions of Hystaspes, as Darius' father, also appear in later inscriptions, until the reign of Artaxerxes III.[469]

In Column Five, Darius sends Gaubaruva to take care of the Elamite rebellion for him. He does not give an explicit spoken command in this case, although we may consider this usual in the context of the laconic Column Five, where dates and casualty figures for example are excluded. Gaubaruva was Darius' brother- and father-in-law, but in this case, unlike Hystaspes, the king does not refer to the familial connection, and instead of carrying out the execution himself, Gaubaruva brings the rebel Athamaita to the king for execution.

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[463]   DB OP §35 = DB AA/AE §29.
[464]   See Table 5.
[465]   DB OP §35 = DB AA/AE §28.
[466]   See Hyland 2018 on Hystaspes' position and personal aspirations in the Teispid imperial administration.
[467]   DB OP §36 = DB AA/AE §29.
[468]   DB OP §35 = DB AA/AE §29.
[469]   XPf 3, A2Ha, A2Hc, A2Sa, A3Pa.

With one exception, Darius' subordinates do not speak at all in the narrative, and the Persian nobles on the relief image are deprived of identifying inscriptions,[470] in which they would have speech acts attributed to them, like Darius and the rebel leaders. The exception is at DB AE §39, where Vindafarna appears to give a spoken command to his troops. 'Thus *he* said to them, 'Go and defeat those Babylonian troops, which do not call themselves mine.' (trans. Bae 2001, 187, my italics). This is scribal error, the personal pronoun 'he' should be replaced with 'I', as it appears in DB OP §50 'Thus I said to them: 'Go forth, defeat that Babylonian army which will not call itself mine!'' (trans. Schmitt 1991, 67), and DB AA §39 'I sent (him) an order: 'Go and defeat the rebel troops of Babylonia who do not obey me' (*ina muḫḫīšunu altapar umma alikma dūku ana uqu nikrūtu ša Bābili ša lā išemmû'inni*).

So, apart from Darius himself, the rebels are the only other characters to 'speak' in the narrative. Speech acts attributed to enemies, particularly individual enemies, are extremely rare in inscriptions from the ancient Near East. The examples below come from the inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian king Esarhaddon (681-669 BCE):

> From the midst of the sea, my enemies spoke thus: 'Where can the fox go to get away from the sun?'
>
> RINAP 4 Esarhaddon Nineveh A, v 25

> With entreaty, prayer, expressions of humility, kneeling against the wall of his city, he was bitterly crying 'woe', beseeching my lordship with open hands, (and) saying 'Ahulap!' again and again.
>
> RINAP 4 Esarhaddon *Letter to the God Assur*, i 1-7

> Thus they (the king of Subria's sons) said to me: 'Pu[t the…] … crimes and disobedience on the *asakku* demon. Let me come [to *sing* you] praises. Let me

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a[lone…] … all of the arro[gant] enemies. Let the unsubmissive … […] (and) let the disrespectful honour your lordship.'

RINAP 4 Esarhaddon *Letter to the God Assur*, 4 ii 24

In each of these examples, the enemy bewails their misfortune or effectively asks for mercy, in stark contrast with the commanding voice of the king. Gerardi suggested that direct speech, on the part of the king, the deity, or the enemy, in Esarhaddon's inscriptions, was 'an effort at maximising characterisation in a composition and that when the speaker was the enemy this was meant to 'heighten the conflict' by bestowing on the speaker his own point of view, separate from that of the narrator (the king, in most cases).[471] In the Behistun inscription, the rebel leaders claim their royal legitimacy in speech acts, although they are always said to 'lie' rather than 'speak', for example:

šū ana uqu iparraṣ umma anāku Barziya māršu ša Kuraš šarru ša Parsu aḫu ṣeḫru ša Kambuziya

He (Gaumata) kept lying to the people thus: 'I am Bardiya, the son of Cyrus, king of Persia, and the younger brother of Cambyses'

DB AA §10[472]

agâ Pamartiš ša ipruṣu umma anāku Hašatrēti zēru ša Umakuštar

This is Fravartiš who lied, saying, 'I am Khašatritti, a descendant of Cyaxares'

DBe AA

alla ištēn amēlu Nidintu-Bēl māršu ša Kīn-Zēru zazakku šū ina Bābilu itbâmma ana uqu iparraṣ umma anāku Nabû-kudurrī-uṣur māršu ša Nabû-Naʾid šarri Bābili

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[471]   Gerardi 1989, 257-258.
[472]   = DB OP §11 = DB AE §10

> There was a certain man, Nidintu-Bēl, the son of Kin-zer, the *zazakku.* He arose in Babylonia, lying to the people thus, 'I am Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabu-na'id, king of Babylon'.

DB AA §15[473]

Darius' identifying inscription (DBa) is much longer than those given for the rebel leaders,[474] highlighting the illegitimacy of the claims they make in their speeches. In essence, Darius provides the 'correct' way to stake one's claim to the kingship, and none of the rebels can match this. Pongratz-Leisten examined precedents in ancient Near Eastern sources for the motif of the 'lie' used to construct elite and royal identity, and suggested that 'Darius' rhetoric represents a kind of escalation of the use of the lie because he as a usurper denounces every other throne pretender as a liar.'[475]

There is an instance of rebel speech in the main inscription from Vahyazdāta. In a direct inversion of Darius' 'standard' command, he says: 'Go and defeat Vivāna and the troops who obey Darius.'[476] Vahyazdāta's troops are unsuccessful in their confrontation with Vivāna's Persian side. This is in marked contrast with the efficacy of Darius' commands, which according to our information always result in a Persian victory. A comparable situation pertains for the Urartian rebels, who march into war five times against the Persian forces, chanting 'let's make war' and are defeated every time.[477]

While the king's speech places him in control of violence even when he is far away from the action, the rebels' speech undermines them. They are singled out as being presumptuous, and in the case of Vahyazdāta and the Urartians their use of speech may even determine their eventual failure. Darius' subordinates, on the other hand, silently follow their king's commands, and gain success by doing so. This is presented as a result

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[473]   = DB OP §14 = DB AE §15
[474]   This may be the reason why Darius' identifying inscription is only given in Old Persian and Elamite, the scribes may have run out of space to add the Akkadian version. But the possibility also remains that by the time OP DBa was engraved, additions to the Akkadian version were no longer considered important, as per Tuplin 2005, 223 on the new paragraph DB OP §70 = DB AE §55. See Chapter 3, Section 2.3.
[475]   Pongratz-Leisten 2002, 233.
[476]   DB OP §45 = DB AA/AE §37.
[477]   Only in the Elamite version of the inscription: DB AE §23-24.

of their unfailing loyalty to the king: they make no claims to what belongs to him. As a result of their presumption, the rebel leaders have violence enacted against them, in the form of corporal punishment, which I consider in Chapter Six.

Scarry examined the role of the voice in the construction of power, describing it as a source of 'self-extension',[478] and this is the effect of Darius' use of his own voice in the Behistun inscriptions. The king uses his voice to control a huge area of land and several armies, silencing his subordinates, and drawing them together into a cohesive unit. This is Darius' 'network of violence', in which his subordinates appear not merely as surrogates for the king's power in various far flung regions of the empire but as *extensions* of the king himself.

3.5. Subordinate Hierarchy

It is worth commenting on the possibilities of reconstructing the position of Darius' subordinates in the imperial hierarchy from the Behistun inscriptions. Above, in considering the limitations the king placed on their violent actions, on a few occasions I uncovered the privileges he allowed some subordinates, which may also suggest that these men were privileged within the imperial hierarchy of power. These applied especially to Darius' father, Hystaspes, and the satraps Vivāna and Dadarši.

In Chapter 3, I discussed Hyland's assessment of the casualty figures. He noticed that when the casualty figures are arranged according to size, it becomes apparent that they were meant to elevate Darius' achievement over that of his subordinates.[479] These figures may symbolise the hierarchical order of Darius' subordinates:[480]

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[478]   Scarry 1985, 33 See also Chapter 6, Section 2.2.
[479]   Hyland 2014, 192.
[480]   See Table 5.

1	Darius
2	Hystaspes
3	Dadarši (Persian)
4	Artavardiya
5	Vivāna
6	Vidarna
7	Vaumisa
8	Vindafarna
9	Dadarši (Urartian)
10	Takhmaspāda (Median)

Table 12 Potential Hierarchy of Darius' Subordinates Based on the Casualty Figures

Darius is at the top of this notional hierarchy, and Hystaspes follows him, though with much lower casualty figures (four figures, against Darius' five). The rest of the Persian subordinates come next, with the non-Persian subordinates on the bottom rung. There is no doubt that Hystaspes was privileged, by comparison with the rest of the subordinates, as my analysis has shown on several occasions.[481] I have also explored Darius' insistence on limiting the appearance of Hystaspes' military prowess, by comparison with his own. In all, the privileges which Darius accorded to his father were tempered by limitations which suggest that the king intended in this case to elevate his own achievements by familial and royal association – to emphasise the overall legitimacy of the Achaemenid dynasty.

Six noblemen accompanied Darius to Gaumata's assassination. Three of these men were involved in the battle narratives (Vindafarna, Vidarna and Gaubaruva), and three were not (Hutana, Bagabukhša and Ardumaniš).

Gaubaruva does not appear among the subordinates in Table 12, since Darius does not give any casualty figures for his victory in Elam. Before Darius' reign, he had occupied a prominent position in the Teispid administration, and he was also the king's brother- and father-in-law.[482] Later, Darius depicted Gaubaruva on his funerary monument, holding a spear and a bow and quiver, with a trilingual identifying inscription: 'Gaubaruva, a

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[481]   Hyland 2018, on Hystaspes' and Gaubaruva's political aspirations under the Teispids.
[482]   Hyland 2018.

Pātišuvariš, spear-bearer of Darius the king.'[483] Tablets from the Persepolis Fortification Archive confirm that Gaubaruva was in receipt of very high rations, or wages.[484] He was also known to Herodotus, as Gobryas, Darius' foremost supporter in the conspiracy against the magi.[485]

Hutana, Bagabukhša and Ardumaniš, [486] meanwhile, do not feature in the battle narratives at all, and therefore they do not fit into the scheme of the hierarchy suggested by the distribution of the casualty figures. Nevertheless, they are elevated in status by Darius' inclusion of their names and patronymics in the inscriptions' epilogue, with the exhortation to future kings to protect them and their families. It is unclear why Darius did not exalt each of the men who helped him during the crisis in the same way.

Overall, there is not enough information in the Behistun inscriptions to securely reconstruct the hierarchy between Darius' subordinates. While the casualty figures may give an idea of the relative value of their achievements, this information is limited to the first year of the crisis. I would also argue that it would have been unwise for Darius to elaborate a rigorous hierarchy between these men in his inaugural statement of power, since the inscriptions and the monument were not created to valorise their achievements. Instead, he created a statement in which he did not differentiate between his subordinates based on the power they could individually wield. Rather, he chose to draw them together using their key similarity: that each occupied a position subordinate to the

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[483]   DNc (trans. Schmitt 2000, 45). Delshad and Doroodi 2019, 5 a newly discovered inscription on Darius' tomb at Naqš-i Rustam is an identifying inscription for a further noble, another member of the 'Pātišuvariš' tribe, confirming the pre-eminence of this tribe in the imperial hierarchy.

[484]   Henkelman and Stolper 2009, 286, n. 40, documents PF 0688, NN 0210, NN 1133 and NN 2533.

[485]   Hdt. 3. 78. 4-5 noted his especial bravery. Darius was too afraid to strike the magus in case he also struck Gobryas and injured or killed him. Gobryas allayed his fears: 'Stick your sword, even if it goes through us both.'

[486]   The name 'Ardumaniš' is attested only from the Akkadian version of the inscription, though Voigtlander 1978, 62 n.1 noted that 'the Old Persian is all but illegible at this point and the Elamite completely so… nothing is known about Ardumaniš and the name may have been misread'. This may be instead 'Ašbazana' about whom much more is known. Henkelman 2003, 118-26 established that he was Darius' 'garment-bearer, the title for one occupying the office of 'chamberlain' or 'chancellor' and he served as the 'principle administrator of the Persepolis economic system' from 494 until 483 BCE. See Garrison 1998 115-131 for sources of information about Ašbazana, and discussion of his seals. Waters 2004, 98 suggested that Ašbazana replaced Vindafarna (Greek: Intaphernes) who fell out of favour soon after the resolution of the Behistun crisis. See further discussion of the 'Intaphernes Incident' (Hdt. 3.118-119) in Chapter Six.

king's. Later in his reign, when the empire was not in crisis, and his power was firmly established, he honoured his subordinates Gaubaruva, Ašbazana, and a further as yet unnamed member of the Pātišuvariš tribe, by giving them identifying inscriptions on his funerary monument.[487]

Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered the battle narratives of the Behistun inscriptions, and why Darius acknowledges that his subordinates played such a pre-eminent role in suppressing the crisis of 522-519 BCE. On one hand, we must consider this as part of the king's strategy to offer a realistic and therefore credible account of the events. The situation confronting him was such that he could not have stabilised the empire without the aid of his subordinates. However, by admitting that they played such a vital role in re-subjecting the various regions of the empire – fighting 16 of the 20 battles described – Darius risked diluting the impression of his own personal military prowess, and therefore his suitability for the kingship.

Darius countered any suggestion that he was weak by providing a detailed account of his own efforts in the re-subjection of Babylonia at the beginning of the battle narratives proper, including a prominent reference to a difficult crossing of the Tigris and crediting his own forces with the total annihilation of the enemy troops. He described each of his subordinates' battles in far less detail than his own. Despite his admission of reliance on his subordinates, Darius credited each victory in battle to his own efforts, in summarising statements at the end of each episode, and via his use of commands to take ownership of each of his subordinates' victories. To this end, he withheld geographical details about the battles his subordinates fought, and biographical information about the rebel leaders they confronted. Furthermore, although they occupy a leading role in Darius' version of events, we can gather very little biographical information about the subordinates themselves. In the inscriptions, Darius compensated for his subordinates' prominence via a narrative strategy which placed significant limitations on their use of violent action. In this way, he ensured that he retained control over violent action.

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[487]   DNd-f. See further discussion of this in Chapter 3, Section 1.

My analysis reveals that, far from detracting from the impression of Darius' military prowess, inclusion of the subordinate character type supported the impression of the king's military superiority by presenting him as the 'commander-in-chief' over a network of loyal allies whose violent abilities were at the service of the king. Thus, he assured his audience that, in spite of its unprecedented vastness and diversity, the whole empire was under constant surveillance by men who functioned as extensions of the king's power in all areas. Darius constructed his inaugural official account with a view to the empire's future stability. This was a dynamic response to a situation unprecedented in the history of imperialism until then.

Until now, evaluation of the violent rhetoric in the Behistun inscriptions has not been used to consider the effect Darius intended it to have on the behaviour of his subordinates when the empire had been re-established as an emphatically Achaemenid entity. The narrative strategies I have examined in this chapter suggest that the new imperial elite were a major target audience for the Behistun inscriptions. The battle narratives and the punishment episodes, examined in Chapter Six, were constructed to supply a model of behaviour for both Darius' foreign subjects and the Persian elite to follow.

Figurative violence was therefore intrinsic to the construction of Achaemenid royal authority. The appropriate use of violence, according to Darius' narrative, is the defining characteristic of both the subordinate and the rebel character type. On one hand, we have the loyal subordinate, whose use of violence is wholly in line with the king's wishes. On the other hand, we have the transgressive rebel whose violent actions are unsanctioned. As a result, in their violent pursuits, the former are unfailingly successful, while the latter are punished with defeat, after which further violence is inflicted on them. The role of the rebel leaders in the inscriptions, as narrative tools which allow the king the emphasise his own legitimacy, is well known. My analysis goes beyond this to reveal the centrality of violence in establishing Achaemenid royal authority and imposing an idealised hierarchy upon Persian and non-Persian subordinates occupying positions of power. I will consider the punishments inflicted on the rebel leaders as a result of their disobedience, in the final chapter of this case study.

6. The Punishment Episodes – Distribution, Modes and Meanings

Dariyamuš šarru kiam iqabbi ina birīt mātāti agannêtu amēlu pitqudu ana šâšu anāku lū mādu usaddid [amēlu] ša libbi bīšu altatālšu… amēlu ša ana bīti attūa illaku ana kitrūya anāku lū mādu usaddid amēlu ša uhabbilu anāku lū mādu altāl

King Darius states: Within these lands the trustworthy man I fully protect. The man of evil intent I thoroughly investigate … To the man who aids my house I give full protection. The man who does wrong I vigorously punish.

<div align="right">DB AA §7-51[488]</div>

The man who co-operates, for him, according to the co-operation, thus I care for him; who does harm, according to the harm done, thus I punish him. (It is) not my desire that a man should do harm; moreover that (is) not my desire: If he should do harm, he should not be punished.

The man who cooperates, him I reward according to his cooperative action. Who does harm, him according to the damage thus I punish. It is not my wish that a man does harm; nor indeed is that my desire, if he should do harm, he should not be punished.

<div align="right">DNb §2 = XPl §2 (trans. Schmitt 2000, 40 and 103)</div>

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[488]   = DB OP §7-63 = DB AE §7-51.

Introduction

As attested by statements from Darius' and Xerxes' royal inscriptions, above, ability to reward and punish was a central tenet of Achaemenid kingship.[489]

The 'punishment episodes' in the Behistun inscriptions – references to, and descriptions of, the punishments inflicted on the rebel leaders and their followers during the crisis – are the only sources which offer a Persian perspective on punishment in Achaemenid imperialism. In total, Darius tells us, 13 rebel leaders were punished during the crisis between 522-519 BCE. Between 522-520 BCE all the rebel leaders were killed or assassinated; in 519 BCE, Skunkha the Scythian was replaced with another chief of Darius' choosing. In seven cases, the rebel leader's foremost followers were executed along with them. Numbers for mass executions, along with extra details about the punishments of some of the rebel leaders, are given in the Akkadian inscription.[490]

Although appropriate punishment remained one of the central duties of the Achaemenid king throughout the empire's lifetime, few studies have considered punishment practice in detail. As I outlined in the introduction, scholarship in this area has focussed primarily on accounts of Persian punishment in the works of Herodotus and later authors who drew on the Ctesias' *Persica* when composing their own works, rather than on the Behistun inscriptions. Lincoln's 'Rebellion and the treatment of rebels in the Achaemenian Empire' (2005) is an exception, which examined the identifying inscriptions on the monument (DBa-k) to understand what constituted a 'rebel' according to Achaemenid royal ideology and the appropriate punishment for rebellion.

In the first section, I analyse the distribution of punishment in the narrative, considering who performed each execution, the relative severity of the punishments inflicted on

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[489]   For evidence of Persian kings' use of rewards for good service, primarily from attestations in Greek sources, see Briant 2002, 302-330.
[490]   See Chapter 3 on the addition of violent details to the Akkadian inscription, which demonstrates the centrality of violence in the creation of an Achaemenid mode of imperialism.

different rebel leaders and finally the locations in which the punishments were carried out.

In the second section, I consider the modes and meanings of the corporal punishments described in the inscriptions. Foucault described corporal punishment as 'an exercise in "terror"', which was meant not merely to confirm that justice was done, but was a means for the sovereign to reactivate his power. [491] Geltner also emphasised the political significance:

> In each case, the corporal penal act, which is usually part of a longer penal sequence, primarily communicates to a reference group whose norms have been violated and whose social order it ostensibly protects. It is in this sense a political act since, whatever else they do, punishment in general and corporal punishment in particular buttress claims of legitimacy and cohesiveness by indexing social others.
>
> Geltner 2014, 10

Darius' motivation for punishing the rebel leaders was to refute their legitimacy to exercise the kingship, to signal the definitive end of hostilities, and to reclaim his power. The rebels were punished for committing acts of treason against the regime and the crisis confronting Darius posed the most severe existential threat to the continued existence of the Persian Empire until Alexander's conquests (334-328 BCE). We cannot use the punishment episodes in the Behistun inscriptions to extrapolate the mechanisms of Achaemenid punishment outside the especially extreme circumstances of empire wide civil war during a dynastic crisis.

Darius includes three types of corporal punishment in the inscriptions: impalement, facial mutilation, and decapitation. Each of these was already familiar within the cultural landscape of the regions subsumed into the Achaemenid Empire. Cultural familiarity must have been a significant factor in Darius' decision to use these types of punishments

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[491]   Foucault 1979, 49.

against his enemies, as legible warnings to potential rebels which would therefore discourage further wrongdoing. I will consider the history of each form of punishment in the regions incorporated into the Persian Empire, as well as Darius' innovations in the use of these modes of punishment which made them suited to the political circumstances confronting him upon his accession and in an Achaemenid imperial milieu.

Although, like the rest of Darius' 'historical' narrative, they are of limited value in the reconstruction of events between 522-519 BCE, the punishment episodes are compelling evidence for the central tenets of Achaemenid imperial ideology and ideals of kingship as well as the relationships between the Persians and their subjects in the aftermath of the crisis. Close analysis of these parts of the violent rhetoric on their own terms is long overdue.

1. The Distribution of Punishment

Table 13 gives all the information about the rebels' punishments, from the three versions of the inscription:

	Rebel	Excerpt[492]	Punishment
DB OP §13 = DB AA/AE §12	Gaumata	*addūk itti ˡúmār-banūtu īṣūtu ana ₘGumātu agāšû magušu u ˡúmār-banûtu ša ittīšu ina ᵘʳᵘSikūbattī ina kur Nissāya šumšu ša ina ᵏᵘʳMadāya ina libbi anāku addūkšu*	Killed in Media with his nobles
DB OP §17 = DB AA/AE §16	Açina	*ₘAtrina agāšū ṣabtu ana pānīya išpurū anāku addūkšu*	Brought to Darius and executed
DB AA §19	Nidintu-Bēl	*arki anāku ina Babiliₖᵢ ana ₘNidintu-Bēl agāšû u ˡúmār-banūtu ša ittīšu altakan ina zaqīpi addūk napḫar 49*	Impaled at Babylon with his nobles – 49 in total
DB OP §23 = DB AA/AE §21	Martiya	*ₘMartiya agāšu ša ina muḫḫīšunu rabû ina ramānīšunu iddūkūšu*	Killed by his own people
DB OP §32 = DB AA/AE §25	Fravartiš	*arki anāku appīšu uznīšu lišānšu ubattiq ištēn īnšu unappilšū ṣabtu kullu ina bābīya uqu gabbi immarūš arki ina zaqīpi ina ᵘʳᵘAgamatanu altakanšu ˡúmār-banê-šu addūk napḫar 47 bīrit ᵘʳᵘAgamatanu qaqqadātīšunu ālul ultu kilīli ša birtu*	Nose, ears, tongue and eye cut out/off, held in fetters at Darius' gate, impaled at Ecbatana – nobles executed and heads hung from the fortress at Ecbatana – 47 in total
DB OP §33 = DB AA/AE §26	Cicantakhma	*arki anāku appīšu uznīšu lišānšu ubattiq ištēn īnšu unappil šū ṣabtu kullu ina bābīya uqu gabbi immaruš arki ina ᵘʳᵘArba-il ina zaqīpi*	Nose, ears, tongue and eye cut out/off, held in fetters at Darius' gate, impaled at Arbela
DB AA §29	Leader of the Margians and the Parthians	*arki amēlu ša rabûšunu u ˡúmār banûtu ša ittīšu iddūk napḫar 80 x*	Executed with his nobles – 80 in total
DB AA §31	Parada	*ₘParada u ˡúmār banûtu ša ittīšu iddūk napḫar 46*	Executed with his nobles – [46?] in total
DB OP §43 = DB AA/AE §35	Vahyazdāta	*Arki anāku ₘUmizdatu agāšû u ˡúmār banûtu ša ittīšu gabbi ina zaqīpi aškun ina ᵘʳᵘUbādasaya šumšu ᵏᵘʳParsu ina libbi addūk napḫar 52*	Impaled with his nobles in Persia – [52?] in total
DB OP §47 = DB AA/AE §37	The leader of the troops who sided with Vahyazdāta	*šū ina libbi iṣṣabtsu iddūkšu u ˡúmar banûtu ša ittīšu iddūk*	Executed with his nobles in Arachosia
DB OP §50 = DB AA/AE §39	Arakha	*arki ₘAraḫu agāšu u ˡúmār banûtu ša ittīšu ina zaqīpi ina Bābiliₖᵢ*	Impaled in Babylon
DB OP §71	Athamaita	*utā tayamšām mathištam agrbāyam abi mām pasāvašim adam avājanam*	Brought to Darius and executed

492   Transliterations given in Akkadian for the first four columns of the inscription, since the most complete descriptions of the punishments appear in this version. Old Persian for the punishments in the fifth column, since these are not given in Elamite or Akkadian.

DB §74	OP	Skunkha	*agr̥bāy bastam anaya abi mām kāma āha pasāva*	Replaced with another chief of Darius' choosing

Table 13 Punishments of the Rebel Leaders in the Behistun Inscriptions

1.1. Battle Commanders and Executioners

Table 14 shows the commander and executioner for each rebellion:

Rebel Leader	Commander(s)	Executioner
Açina	N/A	Darius
Nidintu-Bēl	Darius	Darius
Fravartiš	Vidarna, Darius	Darius
Cicantakhma	Takhmaspāda	Darius
Supporters of Fravartiš	Hystaspes, another Persian army	Hystaspes
Parada	Dadarši	Dadarši
Vahyazdāta	Artavardiya	Darius
Supporters of Vahyazdāta	Vivāna	Vivāna
Arakha	Vindafarna	Vindafarna (on the orders of Darius)
Athamaita	Gobryas	Darius

█ Darius is executioner but not the battle commander

Table 14 Rebel, Commander and Executioner in the Behistun Inscriptions

Darius claims that he personally carried out most of the executions between 522-520 BCE – five out of ten, and in two cases he executed a rebel whose forces had been defeated by one of his subordinates' armies. He favoured his role as executioner over that of battle commander. As we have seen, he was content to admit that he personally attended only four out of a total of twenty battles described in the inscriptions.

Cicantakhma was sent to the king for execution after his defeat at the hands of Darius' Median subordinate Takhmaspāda. The king also executed Vahyazdāta after Artavardiya defeated him in battle. Darius' role in combatting Fravartiš' rebellion is one

of the rare instances where the king attended to a rebellion himself, but unlike the Babylonian and Scythian examples, he arrived only for the final confrontation. First, he sent his general Vidarna to take care of the Median threat. Darius arrived later, defeated Fravartiš' forces, captured the leader and the soldiers when they fled, and executed them.

Table 15 gives information about the commander and executioner for each rebellion again, excluding the punishments which are only included in the Akkadian inscription:

Rebel Leader	Commander(s)	Executioner
Açina	N/A	Darius
Nidintu-Bēl	Darius	Darius
Fravartiš	Vidarna, Darius	Darius
Cicantakhma	Takhmaspāda	Darius
Vahyazdāta	Artavardiya	Darius
Supporters of Vahyazdāta	Vivāna	Vivāna
Arakha	Vindafarna	Vindafarna (on the orders of Darius)
Athamaita*	Gobryas	Darius

■ Darius performs the execution but is not the battle commander

*Old Persian Column Five

Table 15 Rebel, Commander and Executioner from DB OP and DB AE

Ten executions are recorded in the Akkadian inscription. The Old Persian and Elamite versions record only eight, although the Old Persian inscription does record Athamaita's execution, in Column Five. In the Old Persian and Elamite, Darius omitted the fates of the 'leader of the Parthians and the Margians' and 'Parada' (also a Margian rebel), executed by Hystaspes and Dadarši respectively.[493] Parada's revolt and its defeat are

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[493]   Lincoln 2005, 177-179 analysed the Old Persian inscription only, thus assumes that Darius permitted Parada to live. His explanation is that according to the main text, Frāda (Parada) made no claims to the kingship, but instead merely became the 'leader' of the Margians and therefore that only those who proclaimed themselves kings were considered true rebels worthy of execution. According to his identifying inscription (DBj), Parada did claim the kingship: 'This Frāda lied; thus he said, 'I am king in Margiana', though not in the main inscription. Wu 2014, 250-253 divides glyptic warfare images according to the enemy depicted, either Greek, Egyptian or Central Asian (the latter including Margiana). She notes the variety of Central Asian ethnic

also detailed in the Aramaic version, but Parada's execution is omitted,[494] suggesting that the execution of the leader of the Parthians and Margians would also be missing in that version. Thus, in the Old Persian, Elamite and, very likely, the Aramaic version of the inscription, Darius omitted all the executions carried out by his subordinates except those of Vivāna and Vindafarna, characterising himself as the executioner in chief.

The executions Dadarši carries out should be considered in more detail, as he is the only subordinate who is said to have executed both the rebel leader and a group of his followers following a successful campaign. Besides being afforded this privilege, Dadarši's casualty figures have been reconstructed as either 4x23, or a higher figure 55,2xx, and may therefore be inconsistent with the pattern Darius created, according to which he killed the greatest number of enemies. The higher figure may be scribal error, but this possibility seems less likely considering the exception Darius made for Dadarši when reporting the execution details. Put differently, we should at least consider the possibility that Darius made both exceptions for Dadarši intentionally, where the patterns for reporting these details are otherwise fairly clear.

At the time of the Margian revolt, Dadarši was the satrap of Bactria, a satrapy which, according to the Behistun inscription, was not in revolt upon Darius' accession, though several Central Asian regions were.[495] Wu has argued that 'Bactria was so strong and wealthy that it formed part of the great power club of the first millennium BC, capable of confronting the Assyrian and Persian empire.'[496] Though she states that Achaemenid evidence for Achaemenid political structures in Bactria after the Behistun declaration is sparse, and classical accounts of Achaemenid/Bactrian relations are often contradictory, through an examination of seal imagery from the Achaemenid period, Wu has established that 'Bactria was of great concern to the Achaemenid ruling elite and … the region was critically important in the Achaemenid power structure.'[497]

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groups depicted in glyptic imagery, compared with the more stereotyped depictions of confrontations between the Greeks/Egyptians and the Persians, and suggests on this basis that depictions of warfare between the Persians and their Central Asian enemies are more likely to be representations of real historical events. With this in mind, the threat represented by Margian resistance, even early in Darius' reign, should not be underestimated.

[494]   DB OfA §13.
[495]   Margiana, the Saka, Sagartia, Parthia, Hyrcania and Arachosia.
[496]   Wu 2017, 261.
[497]   Wu 2017, 263.

Darius' privileging of his satrap Dadarši, a member of the Achaemenid royal family, may therefore be related to his wish to emphasise Achaemenid hegemony over this culturally and militarily important satrapy, the power of which he harnessed in order to subdue a revolt by another Central Asian power (Margiana). In other words, by (possibly) attributing greater casualty figures to Dadarši than to himself, and stating that this subordinate was the only one who executed more than one enemy at the end of the revolt, Darius may have intended to emphasise that Achamenid power in Bactria held firm. We need not necessarily read the king's narrative privileging of Dadarši straightforwardly, for instance as a marker of his relative status within the imperial hierarchy.

When the execution details are given, Darius' subordinate Vindafarna is more obviously privileged than Dadarši: he is the only one who does not merely carry out an execution or killing, but actually impales Arakhu and his followers. It is unclear why the king could not be present to take care of this execution himself. The event took place four months after we last saw the king, executing Vahyazdāta in Persia.[498] So we assume that the king *was* indisposed, but the Babylonian's execution was so central to the reconquest strategy that he had his subordinate carry it out on his behalf.[499] Despite allowing Vindafarna the privilege, Darius takes away any sense of his subordinates' autonomy by assuring the audience that he ordered it:

> *arki anāku ṭēme altakan umma Araḫu u mār banûtu ša ittīšu šuknāšunūtu ina zaqīpi arki Araḫu agāšû u mār banûtu ša ittīšu ina zaqīpi ina Bābili iškun*
>
> Then I decreed, 'As to Arakhu and the nobles who were with him, impale them.' Then he impaled that Arakhu and the nobles who were with him in Babylon.
>
> DB AA §39[500]

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[498]   See Table 6.
[499]   The severity of the Babylonian rebellions was discussed in Chapter 3, Section 2.2 in relation to Darius' decision to include Akkadian in the imperial trilingual, and will be discussed further below.
[500]   DB OP §50 = DB AE §39.

This is in line with limitations the king placed on his subordinates throughout the battle narratives, especially via the use of commands which allowed him to stay in control of events from which he was physically distant. As well as claiming that he personally carried out more executions during the crisis than all of his subordinates put together, Darius describes the modes of punishment he used while he usually states simply that his subordinates 'killed' (*iddūk*) a rebel leader and their followers. The king's insistence on carrying out executions, while his subordinates carried out most of the military action prior to these, and the more detailed accounts of the executions he carried out himself suggest that, according to Achaemenid imperial ideology, violent punishment of traitors was a royal prerogative.

Herodotus' story about the death of Intaphernes hints that the historian was aware of this convention in Achaemenid kingship.[501] He tells that Intaphernes, one of the six conspirators who helped Darius to depose the Magi, died shortly after the resolution of the succession crisis. One of the privileges allowed to the six conspirators was to be able to enter the palace to speak to the king whenever they needed to, except when he was in bed with a woman. Because of this, Intaphernes was refused access to the palace one day. Suspecting that the gatekeepers were lying to him, Intaphernes cut off their ears and noses, threaded them to his horse's bridle and let it gallop away. Hearing of these events, Darius arrested his subordinate along with all his male relatives on suspicion of planning a coup, and executed them all.[502] Kuhrt suggested that the similarities between the mutilations Darius inflicted in the Behistun inscriptions and that which Intaphernes inflicted against the gatekeepers in Herodotus' narrative imply that the king executed him because he had usurped a royal privilege.[503] That Herodotus tells us that Darius was suspicious that Intaphernes was planning a coup supports this interpretation, as does the finding that the king presented violent punishment as a royal prerogative in the Behistun narratives.

[501]	Hdt. 3. 118-119. Intaphernes = Greek 'Vindafarna' and thus perhaps this Vindafarna who Darius privileged in the Behistun inscriptions.
[502]	Apart from his brother-in-law and his eldest son.
[503]	Kuhrt 2007, 175 n. 2.

Herodotus alludes again to a Persian convention of royal prerogative in physical punishment in a conversation he reports which took place between Darius and his subordinate Zopyrus who mutilated himself as part of his plot to capture Babylon after a lengthy siege. On seeing his mutilated state, the king asked who had done it, to which his subordinate responded: 'there is no man… except you, who has enough power to do this to me.'[504]

As I established in Chapter Five, Darius' use of the first-person helped him to claim credit for all heroic actions in the battle narratives, even when he was not present. But would Darius have personally carried out each of the executions? Neither classical nor biblical literature contain any references to the king physically punishing his enemies. Herodotus and Plutarch both refer to professional executioners in service of the Achaemenid king.[505] In the Book of Esther, Ahasuerus (Artaxerxes) orders that Haman is impaled and later gives permission to the Jews to impale Haman's ten sons; he does not personally carry out the impalements.[506] In their inscriptions, Assyrian kings also used the first person to claim personal responsibility for executions and large-scale massacres following battles. Despite these claims, accompanying iconographical representations show only common soldiers physically carrying out punishments. Although Darius claims in the Behistun inscriptions that he impaled and mutilated some of the rebel leaders, he would not in reality have personally carried out the punishments. His first-person claims are a narrative expedient which lends ideological force to the executions: the king punishes his enemies himself.

1.2. Punishment Severity

In Table 16 the punishments are arranged in order of 'severity', which I define here as 'the amount of detail Darius gives about the punishment'. This reflects Darius' narrative

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[504]   See below 2.2 for further discussion of the Babylonian siege in Herodotus.
[505]   Hdt. 7.38-39 Pythius asks the Xerxes to release his eldest son from active military duty, the king refuses and orders 'those who were assigned to do these things' to find Pythius' elder son and cut him in half; Plut. *Artax.* 14.5; 17.5; 29.5 all references to professional executioners at the Persian court, and throughout the narration of the post-Cunaxa punishments (14-17), Artaxerxes and Parysatis order the punishments but they do not personally carry them out.
[506]   Esther 7: 9-10; 9: 14-25.

interest in reporting actions he performed himself in more detail; it is not an indication that the punishments described in detail were actually more severe.

There are few options for punishment: the rebel leaders are either mutilated and then impaled, or only impaled, in several cases along with their foremost men, and there is one instance of mass decapitation. Darius carries out all the 'most severe' punishments, which include mutilation and/or impalement. I have ordered the impalements and executions as 'more' severe if a greater number of the rebels' followers were executed along with them.

	Rebel Leader	Region
1	Fravartiš	Media
2	Cicantakhma	Media
3	Vahyazdāta	Persia
4	Nidintu-Bēl	Babylonia
5	Arakha	Babylonia
6	Gaumata	All the lands
7	Leader of Parthians and Margians who go over to Fravartiš	(Media) Parthia
8	Parada	Margiana
9	Leader of troops who sided with Vahyazdata	(Persia) Arachosia
10	Açina	Elam
11	Athamaita	Elam

Table 16 Rebel Leaders in order of punishment 'severity', Regions

In Chapters 4 and 5, I showed how selective reporting about the crisis inhibits our ability to reconstruct an historically accurate version of events between 522-520 BCE. This rhetorically diminished the severity of each revolt, and the military prowess of Darius' opponents. The casualty figures offer no elucidation on this point; as Hyland showed, they were designed to credit Darius and his favourite subordinates with the greatest successes against their enemies.[507] Meanwhile, although the chronological details give some indication of the progress of events, they are too few to calculate the length of any revolts. Finally, since Darius only reported on battles in which the Persian side was victorious, we do not know how many battles it took to suppress each threat. Table 16,

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[507]   Hyland 2014, 190-196.

on the other hand, shows a clear correlation between the region of the revolt and the severity of the punishment inflicted on the instigators.[508]

The most severe punishments were carried out against the Median, the Babylonian, and the Persian pretenders. According to Darius' narrative, these rebels presented themselves to the people as historically significant contenders to the throne in their region, appealing to nationalistic sentiment. Each of the Medians claimed to be descendants of Cyaxares, father of Astyages - the last king of Media who Cyrus defeated in 550 BCE, fewer than 30 years previously. Although the existence of a Median Empire has been called into question,[509] the fact that the Median pretenders had a rich history of self-rule to draw upon to spur the people to revolt is beyond doubt.

For his part, the Persian rebel Vahyazdāta claimed to be Bardiya, son of Cyrus, as Gaumata had.[510] Both Babylonian rebels claimed to be sons of Nabonidus, the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, whose defeat at Cyrus' hands in 539 BCE, fewer than 20 years previously, was within living memory for some Babylonians. Nielsen presented the possibility that, in their choices of throne names, the Babylonian rebels were drawing on historical memory as far back as the reign of king Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104 BCE), to reclaim a 'political status for Babylon that was consistent with what they considered to be their ideological place within the world.'[511] The Babylonian rebels did not merely claim

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[508]   See also Schwinghammer 2011, 665-683 who suggested that the punishments Darius describes denote the severity of the threat the rebellions posed to the empire.

[509]   Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1988, 197-212 questioned the existence of a Median Empire, which is known to us only through the Greek authors. Hdt. 1. 96-101 describes Deioces' foundation of autocratic rule over the Medes, and Book 4-6 of Ctesias' *Persica* apparently contained his 'Median history'; Brown 1988, 71 states that historical study of the 'Median state' is hampered by the incongruity between Herodotus' Median logos and relevant Neo-Assyrian sources. See also Rollinger 2008, 51: 'the territory loosely controlled by a Median 'confederation' cannot be called an 'empire'. Jursa 2003, 169-179 on the existence of a Median 'Empire' viewed through Babylonian archival sources, concluding that the evidence 'does not support the thesis of a Median empire which transmitted Assyrian governmental and administrative institutions to the Achaemenids', and argues instead for recognition of Neo-Babylonian precedents in Achaemenid imperialism. Essential essays on this subject can also be found in an edited volume: Lanfranchi et al. 2003.

[510]   Zawadzki 1995a suggests that Vahyazdāta presented his reign as a continuation of his predecessor Gaumata, so he was also Bardiya I rather than II.

[511]   Nielsen 2018, 132.

to be king, but were actually accepted as the kings of Babylonia, according to documentation dated to their reigns.[512]

Darius' detailed descriptions of the Median, Babylonian and Persian punishments reflect the magnitude of the existential threat the rebels posed to the empire and explain why the king himself attended to each of these executions. Considering the geographical spread of the revolts, it does appear that Median resistance posed the greatest challenge to Persian rule in Darius' accession year.[513] Therefore, the Median rebels were punished the most severely. The king claimed that Gaumata/Bardiya was a Median,[514] and that Darius eventually caught up with him in Sikubatti in Media.[515] Fravartiš' battles were in Media proper, in Māru and Kundur, the leader was captured in Ragā, and subsequently executed at Ecbatana. But Hystaspes had to confront resistance from an offshoot of Fravartiš' rebellion, involving Parthians and Margians.[516] Darius impaled Cicantakhma, a Sagartian, leader of the second Median rebellion, at Arbela in Assyria.[517]

Darius also sandwiched his description of the Urartian rebellion between descriptions of the revolts in Media and concludes after this long section 'this is what I did in Media'.[518] The composition suggests that Fravartiš' and Cicantakhma's uprisings catalysed the Urartian revolts, as I discussed in Chapter Four. Persian troops attended to this rebellion on two fronts: in Urartu and Assyria.[519] In all, Darius describes ten battles fought to counter the Median threat, over half the total battles which took place in his first year. Thus, according to the narrative, Median resistance affected Media, Margiana, Parthia, Assyria, Sagartia and Urartu. This explains the extreme severity of the Median

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[512]   Frahm and Jursa 2011, 19-20; Zawadzki 1995a, 1995b, 1995c; Dandamaev 1995.
[513]   See Vogelsang 1998, 203-204 and 209 on the apparent extent of the Median uprisings against Darius between 522-521 BCE.

[514]   This detail is added to DB AA §10, it is absent from DB OP and AE, and is not repeated in Gaumata's identifying inscription, DBb. Vogelsang 1998, 211-212 also notes this detail, and suggests that the *magoi* were regarded to be Medes, and outsiders in Persian society.

[515]   DB OP §13 = DB AA/AE §12.
[516]   DB OP §35 = DB AA/AE §28. There was a further Margian revolt under Parada after the Parthian revolt was suppressed, though we cannot be sure that this was also an offshoot of the original Median revolts.
[517]   DB OP §33 = DB AA/AE §26. The location of the battle against Cicantakhma is missing.
[518]   DB OP §34 = DB AA/AE §27.
[519]   Although mostly in Urartu: Zūzu, Digra, Uyama and Utiyāri in Urartu and Izala in Assyria.

punishments; they were contrived to counter the greatest threat to the continued existence of the Persian Empire in Media itself, and in adjoining regions.

Vahyazdāta was the only Persian rebel, after Gaumata/Bardiya. Nevertheless, his revolt had geographically far-reaching consequences. He arose in Tarma, Persia, and Darius' own troops from Anshan, who were with him in Babylon at the time, mutinied and went over to the pretender. [520] Darius sent his subordinate Artavardiya to confront Vahyazdāta's troops in Persia, and the king's forces were victorious after battles at Rakha and Paišyauvada. Later, Vahyazdāta sent troops to Arachosia who were defeated by Darius' subordinate Vivāna, after two further battles. The summarising statement following these events states: 'this is what I did in Sattagydia and Arachosia'.[521] Darius does not describe any of the events that took place in Sattagydia at this time, but lists it as one of the lands which revolted against him while he was in Babylon in December 522 BCE.[522] The Persian rebellion presented a significant threat to Darius' hegemony, even to his primacy in Persia itself. Zawadzki suggested that Vahyazdāta presented his reign as a continuation of Gaumata/Bardiya's, and that tablets dated to Bardiya's reign may be interpreted as proof that Persia was ruled by the 'pretender' from December 522 BCE until July 521 BCE.[523] If this interpretation is correct, the Persian revolt was geographically wide ranging, and chronologically the longest of those described in the inscriptions.

Babylonian resistance arose in northern Babylonia and was limited in geographical spread by comparison with the Median and Persian rebellions. But the critical nature of the rebellions is demonstrated by the fact that both these rebels were crowned as king in Babylonia.[524] In Chapter Five, I outlined the progress of Darius' battles against Nidintu-Bēl – from the Tigris, to the Euphrates, to Babylon, and the significance of Darius' claims of conquest over the very landscape of Babylonia. The second rebel Arakhu arose in Ur, and fought battles against the Persians in Babylon, where he was later impaled. The severity of the first revolt is confirmed by the king's claim to personal involvement in its

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[520]   DB OP §40 = DB AA/AE §33.
[521]   DB AA §38. DB OP §48 = DB AE §38 = DB OfA §23 refer only to Arachosia.
[522]   DB OP §21 = DB AA/AE §20.
[523]   Zawadzki 1995a.
[524]   Frahm and Jursa 2011, 19.

suppression, and the fact that the original Behistun narrative is bookended with descriptions of the Babylonian revolts speak of the severity of Babylonian resistance.

All the battles Darius describes were fought against Median, Babylonian, or Persian resistance, and the most severe punishments were also reserved for the leaders of these rebellions. The positioning of the monument, at the convergence of trade routes between these regions, and the placement of a Babylonian version of the Behistun monument on the Processional Way in Babylon itself, also speak of an urgent need to suppress opposition in these places.

According to the inscriptions, neither of the Elamite uprisings in Darius' first year required armed response.[525] Although Darius says that he killed two of the three Elamite rebels, he describes neither execution, and Athamaita, the Elamite rebel of Darius' second year, is the only rebel leader the king tells was executed in the inscription but did not depict on the relief image. Note by contrast the especial effort Darius made to ensure that the Scythian rebel Skunkha featured on the relief image: the original Elamite inscription was erased and re-engraved elsewhere on the monument to make space for this, although we are not even told that Skunkha was executed.[526] As I discussed in Chapter Three, Darius' description of events in Elam may have been contrived to obscure the amount of resistance he encountered there. The role of the Elamite people in the death of Martiya is akin to Darius' deployment of Urartian and Median subordinates to take care of revolts in Urartu and Media respectively. The Elamites and the native subordinates represent Darius' loyal following in these regions. Thus, the summary treatment of the Elamite rebel leaders' deaths reminds us that the omission, as much as the inclusion, of violent rhetoric could serve the king's narrative aims.

1.3. Execution Locations

[525]   Further discussion of Darius' narration of the Elamite uprisings in Chapter 3, Section 2.1.
[526]   See further Chapter Five, Section 1.3 on Darius' Scythian campaign and the treatment of Skunkha.

Each of the punishments served to denigrate the legitimacy of each rebel leader and to mark the re-subjection of the region to Persian imperial rule. The choice of location for the executions was of paramount importance in ensuring that this message reached the correct audience: those who might re-ignite the resistance movement. Table 17 lists each execution, and the location if known.

Rebel	Executioner	Location
Gaumata	Darius and a few nobles	Sikubatti, Nissaya, Media
Açina	Darius	
Nidintu-Bēl	Darius	Babylon, Babylonia
Martiya	Elamites	
Fravartiš	Darius	Ecbatana, Media
Cicantakhma	Darius	Arbela, Assyria
Leader of the Parthians and Margians	Hystaspes	
Parada	Dadarši (Persian)	
Vahyazdāta	Darius	Ubadasaya, Persia
Leader and the troops sent by Vahyazdāta	Vivāna	
Arakha	Vindafarna (on Darius' orders)	Babylon, Babylonia
Athamaita	Darius	

Location unspecified.

Table 17 Locations of Rebel Executions

Darius' decision to emphasise his own actions over his subordinates' means that he omits location details for any of the executions they carried out. The location information he gives confirms that the king chose to execute rebels by impalement in the region of the revolt, so that the message of the execution reached an audience of would-be dissenters in the same region. He chose important centres within these regions: Ecbatana in Media, Arbela in Assyria, Babylon in Babylonia (twice) and Ubadasaya in Persia. The latter was also known in Elamite as Matezziš and Akkadian as Humadešu, a town established during Cambyses' reign, by this time a populous centre,[527] in what became the Persepolis plain.[528] It was thus a symbolically important Persian location at

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[527]   Zadok 1976, 67-69 gives attestations of the toponym Humadešu in Babylonian documents issued between 526-520 BCE, all of which are dated to either Cambyses or Bardiya.
[528]   Sumner 1986, 29 suggested that the fact that there was an existing populous centre in the Fars region not associated directly with Cyrus, like Pasargadae and Anshan, influenced

which punish the Persian rebel, and for Darius to re-assert his claim to premiership in the region.

Radner noted that according to the extant evidence, Assyrian kings always impaled their enemies at the centre of resistance.[529] Tiglath-Pileser III's inscriptions (r. 745-727 BCE) suggest a reason for this:

> To save his life, he (Rahiānu) fled alone and entered the gate of his city [like] a mongoose. I [im]paled his foremost men alive while making (the people of) his land watch.
>
> RINAP 1 Tiglath-Pileser III 20, 8'-10'

> I impaled Nabû-ušabši, their king, before the gate of his city <while making> (the people of) his land <watch>.
>
> RINAP 1 Tiglath-Pileser III 39, 9-10[530]

By impaling Rahiānu's followers and Nabû-ušabši at their own cities, Tiglath-Pileser guaranteed that the largest possible audience of potential sympathisers witnessed their leaders' punishments.[531]

After mutilating Fravartiš and Cicantakhma, Darius tells that he displayed them at the gates of Ecbatana and Arbela, and 'all the people saw' (*uqu gabbi immarūš*). Gates were used for public executions in the Middle East, from the Kassite to the Neo-Assyrian

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Darius' decision to build Persepolis where he did. And that by founding his new imperial capital at the same location where he executed Vahyazdāta, Darius was drawing a parallel with the heroic legend that Cyrus decided to found Pasargadae at the location where he defeated Astyages. The Behistun location was chosen for its proximity to the location of Gaumata/Bardiya's death.

[529]   Radner 2015, 112. See Section 2.1 below on Radner's conclusions about Neo-Assyrian impalement.

[530]   RINAP 1 Tiglath-pileser III 47, 15b.

[531]   Radner 2015, 122 noted that the practice was meant to ensure that impalement served 'as a lasting deterrent' against resistance.

period. (1595-612 BCE).[532] Darius' actions are a continuation of this well-established practice and they are reminiscent of the excerpts from Tiglath-Pileser's inscriptions, above. However, where his predecessor noted that these cities belonged to his enemies, Darius describes Fravartiš and Cicantakhma's punishments taking place 'at *my* gate' (*bābiya*), in the imperial cities Ecbatana and Arbela. The region of Media, including these cities, had been subjugated by Cyrus before even his conquest of Babylonia, the moment at which the Persian Empire came into existence. The Median punishments took place at *Persian* imperial centres, with the same standing in the Achaemenid Empire as, for example, the city of Assur within the Assyrian Empire. Now, Darius reclaimed these locations by displaying the bodies of his mutilated and impaled enemies at their gates as victory monuments.

Assyrian kings used Arbela as a key punishment location because of its association with the warlike goddess Ištar.[533] The practice of transporting enemies to Assyrian imperial capitals, especially Nineveh and Arbela, appears for the first time in Sennacherib's inscriptions (705-681 BCE). In the current state of evidence, it is not possible to connect Darius' use of Arbela for Cicantakhma's punishment directly to Assyrian practice. By the time Darius came to the throne, Arbela was still a thriving and populous city, but appears to have lost its direct association with the Assyrians. Darius' use of Arbela to punish a Median was firmly meant to send a political message to the Medians, at a city now more firmly associated with the Medians than the Assyrians. [534] In fact, throughout the inscriptions, Darius pays strikingly little attention to the Assyrians, probably because nationalistic sentiment in Babylonia, Media and Elam fuelled by the memories of empire, presented the greater threat at this time. The revolt in Assyria is one of those listed for which Darius does not record an outcome.

Summary

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[532]   May 2014b, 100-104.

[533]   May 2014b, 102 and Fuchs 2009, 89.

[534]   Rollinger 2008, 61. One of the 'Median' battles, during the Urartian rebellions, is fought at Izala in Assyria.

Darius favoured his role as executioner over that of battle commander. Although he notes that some of the executions were carried out by his subordinates, he does not describe any of these in detail apart from the impalement of Arakha and his followers which Vindafarna carried out. Darius retains control over these events by noting that Vindafarna executed Arakha on his express order. In all, the presentation of the punishment episodes recommends a view of violent punishment in Achaemenid imperial ideology as a royal prerogative, and Herodotus may hint at this in his stories about Intaphernes and Zopyrus. The severity of each of the punishments inflicted on the rebel leaders reflects the severity of the revolts, as no other details Darius includes in the inscription do. Finally, execution locations were chosen carefully to ensure a local audience, and to discourage future attempts at rebellion. Each of the cities chosen had already been incorporated into the Empire under Cyrus, and Darius' use of these centres to display his enemies re-confirmed their status as Persian possessions.

2. The Modes and Meanings of the Behistun Punishments

As I have shown, Darius manipulated the punishment episodes to highlight the superiority of his violent abilities, as part of the construction of elite and royal identity at the beginning of his reign and to position violent punishment as a royal prerogative. The analysis above indicates that the Behistun punishments do not accurately reflect the use of physical violence during the crisis. This is in line with general difficulties presented by literary accounts of historical acts of violence, examined in Chapter One; we cannot use these to confirm the incidence of physical violence in history. Moreover, this type of historical reconstruction may not significantly enhance our knowledge of the society or culture we wish to understand. Employing all due caution, the analysis of this section moves into the realm of narrow violence, considering the meanings of the Behistun punishments in the political context of the crisis between 522-519 BCE, and their role in the construction of Achaemenid imperialism.[535]

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[535] Of course, mutilations to other parts of anatomy and in other contexts beyond the Behistun inscriptions are also recorded, however in this discussion I am interested in the Behistun punishments specifically. This is in line with my focus on analysis of the Behistun Monument itself, apart from other artefacts of Achaemenid violence, in Part Two of the thesis. For some analysis of other reported Achaemenid punishments in this thesis, see Chapter One, Section 1.2.1, with accompanying bibliography, chiefly: Lincoln 2005 and 2009, Almagor 2011, Mari 2014 and Muller 2016. Undoubtedly, facial mutilation and decapitation are not meaningful solely in the context of

In the introduction to the thesis, I reviewed a small body of scholarship which has sought to decode the symbolism of Persian punishment using Greek and Iranian sources. A common assumption in these papers is that the punishments had a primarily *religious* significance, relating to Zoroastrian beliefs and doctrine.[536] These studies have the merit of placing attestations of Achaemenid violence into an Iranian cultural context, albeit utilising sources which tell of an entirely different form of Zoroastrianism than that practised by the Achaemenids. On the other hand, they rely on the testimonies of classical authors. The fact that the inscriptions on the mountainside were addressed to Ahuramazda is beyond doubt – as attested by repeated exhortations of the god's favour for Darius throughout and the inaccessibility of the texts. But public executions are meant to provide a legible message to a *human* audience about the consequences of dissent. It is impossible to extricate religious concerns from political imperatives governing Darius' decision making during the crisis. Nevertheless, the symbolic efficacy of the punishments should not be interpreted solely in the context of an Achaemenid religious outlook.

By the time he came to power, each of the forms of corporal punishment Darius claims he used – impalement, mutilation, and decapitation – were part of the cultural landscape of the regions incorporated into the Achaemenid Empire. More specifically, they were established means of punishing rebels and enemies of the state in an imperial context. In the following sections I consider historical precedents for Darius' use of these corporal punishments, and their role in the assertion of a new, explicitly Achaemenid, mode of imperialism and kingship.

2.1. Impalement

Achaemenid facial perfection, which is the focus of my argument in the foregoing analysis of these types of punishment, but focus on this aspect of Achaemenid royal ideology in these sections is logical here, considering that according to the inscriptions they were reserved for use against the foremost challengers to the Persian throne in the aftermath of the crisis.

[536]   Lincoln 2007, 94; Muller 2016, 218.

Impalement is a form of suspension punishment, variations of which have been used throughout history – such as 'crucifixion' and 'hanging'.[537] Radner described the process, according to the Neo-Assyrian pictorial evidence:

> The naked person was positioned on top of a long, probably sharpened, wooden stake that entered the lower body between the legs, presumably at the rectum. This can be described as longitudinal impalement. Death would have been the unavoidable result of this procedure, once set in motion, but dying would have been a protracted, extremely agonising affair that could potentially last hours, if not days. The fact that the dying were set up high above ground and usually in exposed places was meant to guarantee high visibility to the intended audience. We can define impalement as a deliberate extreme form of capital punishment that places premium importance on the spectacle of a highly public killing.

> Radner 2015, 104

The earliest extant textual reference to this type of punishment from the Middle East appears in the Codex Hammurabi (ca. 1754 BCE), where it is prescribed for a woman who has killed her husband to pursue a relationship with another man.[538] In a Middle Assyrian law code inscribed during the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114-1076 BCE), impalement is to be used against a woman who procures an abortion, who is to be impaled whether she survives the abortion procedure or not.[539]

Besides attestations of its use in civil law, impalement had also been used in an imperial context to punish rebels against the regime. The largest amount of evidence for this comes from the Neo-Assyrian period, from which the broad conventions relating to its use at that time have been drawn. Two seminal studies are Ussishkin's examination of impaled figures on wall panels depicting Sennacherib's siege of Lachish (2003), and

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[537] Samuelsson 2011, 295 suggests that 'crucifixion' is an anachronism when applied to the ancient world, since ancient comments on the practice are too diverse to give the idea that 'crucifixion' was a specific type of punishment. He suggests that the term should be applied to a spectrum of suspension punishments instead.
[538] CH §153.
[539] A§53.

Radner's study of all attestations of impalement in Assyrian imperial inscriptions, artwork, and contemporary civil legal practice (2015), from which I have already quoted.

Ussishkin focussed on identifying three men shown impaled in the aftermath of Sennacherib's siege. He proposed that these were the city governor or military commander and his two right hand men, impaled at a location which would guarantee that civilian deportees and other captives would witness the exemplary punishment of their leaders.[540] Based on a range of impalement depictions in text and image, Radner concluded that usual practice was for small groups of men to be impaled during or after military confrontations, while larger numbers of corpses were sometimes impaled around cities during sieges as a form of psychological warfare.[541] Both studies suggested that the Neo-Assyrians were selective and calculated in their use of impalement and mass impalement was not used (or depicted) as a matter of course.[542] Radner characterised the use of impalement in this period as: 'the purposefully public and highly visible execution of select individuals, always a deliberate and conserved act… as an extreme and exemplary way to openly and irrevocably kill.'[543] She described the practice as a 'cumbersome and resource intensive' mode of enemy punishment.[544] Fuchs argued against Assyrian use of mass execution in the aftermath of warfare as, he said, they aimed 'not to destroy the world but to dominate.'[545] The latter interpretation is somewhat in line with Oded's suggestions about Assyrian mass deportation:

> The kings of Assyria were interested that the captives should be delivered to them in good condition, so that they could bring the greatest possible economic, military and political benefit to Assyria… (therefore) the central imperial authority in Assyria exercised control over the deportations, in order to prevent any abuse of authority or exploitation of captives by the officials, soldiers and various governors charged with carrying out the deportations.
>
> Oded 1978, 35

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540   Ussishkin 2003, 210-215.
541   Radner 2015, 122.
542   Radner 2015, 106.
543   *idem*, 121.
544   *idem*, 106.
545   Fuchs 2009, 74-75.

Though the evidence points in this direction, Oded's assessment does overlook the harmful psychological impact of forced deportation. Moreover, despite the lack of references to the use of mass *impalement,* there are descriptions of mass punishment in Assyrian royal inscriptions, for example:

[I captured] alive 174 soldiers. [N I] felled [with the sword], twelve I flayed of their skins, [N I] blinded (and) cut out their tongues, […] 153 I beheaded (lit. cut off their necks), […] I caused [their blood] to flow, 20 […] I impaled on stakes

RIMA 2 Ashurnasirpal II A.0.101.21, 10'

I erected a pile in front of his gate; I flayed as many nobles as had rebelled against me (and) draped their skins over the pile; some I spread out within the pile, some I erected on stakes upon the pile (and) some I placed on stakes around about the pile. I flayed as many throughout my land (and) draped their skins over the walls. I slashed the flesh of the eunuchs (and) of the royal eunuchs who were guilty. I brought Ahi-iababa to Nineveh, flayed him, (and) draped his skin over the wall of Nineveh.

RIMA 2 Ashurnasirpal II A.0.101.1, i 89-93

These are excerpts from inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE), whose representational practice is remarkable for the display of violence, among that of Assyrian kings.[546] Thus, they are not evidence for a general Assyrian propensity to mass punishment or execution in the aftermath of battle. The exceptionality of Ashurnasirpal's violent representation may be construed as a display of the king's power which was most suited to the political circumstances confronting him in these cases. These descriptions were composed in the earliest days of the empire's construction, in the early 9th century when, new to the exercise of imperial power, the Assyrians worked particularly hard to established their psychological and physical dominance. Ashurnasirpal's statements

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[546]   Olmstead 1918 and 1923, 81-97 and Bagg 2016, both note and discuss the exceptional violence in Ashurnasirpal II's depicted in his relief imagery and inscriptions.

above can be construed as acts of 'conspicuous destruction', which van Wees examined in the case of Greek warfare. He described these as terror tactics used to display power in the aftermath of battle, especially in cases where the complete annihilation of the enemy is described.[547]

Neo-Assyrian evidence provides the fullest historical imperial precedent for Darius' use of impalement. By contrast, there is little evidence to suggest that it was used regularly in a pre-Achaemenid Iranian context. A lack of written sources pre-dating the Achaemenid period in Iran may account partially for this. Herodotus included stories of impalements which took place between Cyrus' and Xerxes' reigns.[548] Authors basing their narratives on Ctesias also included stories about impalement, which were ordered in each case by a Persian queen.[549] Jacobs argued that these accounts suggest that 'impalement was now a tradition, not only amongst the Persians but also the Medes.'[550] Despite the relative paucity of evidence for Persian use of impalement, in other studies the Persians have been credited even with the *invention* of impalement as a systematic punishment.[551] Samuelsson attributed this to a relative proliferation of stories about Persian crucifixion in Herodotus, whose work has featured prominently in studies of crucifixion,[552] a punishment which is frequently equated directly with impalement. As we have seen so far, a cursory overview of source material from the reign of Hammurabi onwards discredits the idea that the Persians 'invented' the systematic use of impalement as a punishment for certain types of crime.

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[547] van Wees 2010, 240; van Wees 2011, 104-106.

[548] Hdt. 3. 125 Oroetes impales Polycrates' corpse; 3. 132 the Greek doctor Democedes intercedes on behalf of eleven Egyptian doctors who the king was about to have impaled; 4.43 Xerxes orders Sataspes' impalement for raping Zopyrus' daughter, the king's mother intervenes and Sataspes is told to sail around Africa. He fails in this task and so is impaled after all; 6. 30 Harpagus impales Histiaeus' body at Sardis and sends his head to the king, against the king's wishes; 7. 194 Darius has the judge Sandoces crucified for accepting a bribe, but thinks better of it and has him released; 4. 202 the Libyan queen Pheretime impales the Barcaeans who were responsible for Arcelisaus' death, and also impaled their wives' breasts.

[549] Photius p. 36a9-37a25 (§6) and Tzetzes *Chiliades* 1.90-103 Amytis crucifies Petisacas; Photius p. 40a5-41b37 (§39) and (§45) Amestris impales Inarus and also a Caunian man who threw a stone at Zopyrus; Photius p. 43b3-44a19 (§66) Parysatis has Bagapates flayed and crucified.

[550] Jacobs 2009, 133.

[551] Blinzler 1969, 357; Heid 2001, 7 and Retief and Ciliers 2003, 938 though each of these studies equate 'crucifixion' with 'impalement'. This is a tendency even in Hengel 1977, a seminal work on crucifixion.

[552] Samuelsson 2011, 41.

Hengel noted that the tendency to characterise impalement as a Middle Eastern punishment more generally owed primarily to the mirage created by Roman literature:

> The relative scarcity of reference to crucifixions in antiquity… [553] (is) less a historical problem than an aesthetic one, connected with the sociology of literature. Crucifixion was widespread and frequent, above all in Roman times, but the cultured literary world wanted to have nothing to do with it, and as a rule kept quiet about it.
>
> Hengel 1977, 38

Besides the possible influence of aesthetic literary principles on Herodotus' and Ctesias' narratives, their own literary aims influenced their portrayals of Persian impalement. For instance, Herodotus tells that Astyages impaled several oneiromancers (dream diviners) who predicted wrongly that Cyrus would not be able to usurp the kingship.[554] This is the earliest attestation of impalement in an Iranian cultural milieu. However, in interrogating this story, we should bear in mind this historian's tendency to attribute remarkable cruelty to Astyages, to draw a sharp contrast between the Median king and gentle Cyrus. Herodotus' history of the period preceding Cyrus' conquests relies especially on appeals to mythological precedents. As a result, for example, strong parallels can be drawn between Astyages punishment of Harpagus – who in the *Histories* fails to kill the child Cyrus and is therefore forced to eat his own son –[555] and the myths of Procne and Tereus and Atreus and Thyestes.

According to Photius' summary of the *Persica,* Ctesias' characterisation of Astyages was much milder. After Cyrus' conquest of Ecbatana, Astyages hid himself to avoid capture but eventually revealed himself to save the lives of his family. [556] In the *Persians,* Aeschylus credited the founder of the Median Empire with 'wisdom of spirit', this was the unnamed son of Medus, likely a reference to Astyages.[557]

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[553]   Hengel equates 'crucifixion' with 'impalement' throughout his work.
[554]   Hdt. 1.128.
[555]   Hdt. 1.119.
[556]   F9. Photius p. 36a9-37a25 (§1-8).
[557]   Aeschylus *Persae* 766.

Given Ctesias' preoccupation with the retributive capabilities of Persian queens, we should be cautious in accepting that references to impalement in the Persian court based on the *Persica* are true. Brosius considered that Persian queens would not be able to take precedence over the king in these matters.[558] Taking the example of Parysatis' role in the post-Cunaxa punishments, according to Plutarch's narrative, she states:

> The punishment of high ranking Persian officials or members of the royal family, for whatever reasons, was the duty of the king alone… women could act within well-defined boundaries, but they could not take the law into their own hands.
>
> Brosius 1996, 116-120

This interpretation is persuasive considering my analysis in the first part of this chapter, in which we saw that Darius especially valued his role as executioner, and the likelihood that physical punishment was meant to be a royal prerogative. These sources, and Old Testament stories of Persian use of impalement,[559] deserve fuller interrogation. For the purposes of my own thesis, the critical point is that the Behistun inscriptions offer the only Persian perspective on impalement as an aspect of imperial governance. In the inscriptions, Darius recounts five instances of impalement of the rebel leaders, along with their foremost followers, in the first year of the crisis.

Radner proposed that there was a semantic difference between the two terms the Neo-Assyrians used for the wooden stakes used for impalements: *gašīšu* (literally: 'cutter off') and *zaqīpu* (literally: 'upright'). The *gašīšu*, used in the phrases *ina gašīšu rattû* and *ana gašīšu alālu,* was the stake used for the display of corpses only, while the *zaqīpu* was a

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[558]   Brosius 1996, 112-122. On Persian women in Greek historiography see further Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1983.
[559]   Ezra 6: 11, Darius' directive to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem states that those transgressing the order will have a beam pulled from their own house and they will be impaled on it. Esther 7: 9-10, Ahauserus (Artaxerxes) has Haman impaled on the stake the latter had intended to impale Mordechai on and 9: 14-25 gives the Jews permission to impale the corpses of Haman's ten sons.

tool for execution as well as corpse display.[560] In the Behistun inscriptions, Darius refers to the stake as *zaqīpu* in each case (Table 18). Considering the idiosyncrasies of Achaemenid Akkadian, [561] we may only cautiously assume that Darius deployed Akkadian technical vocabulary in a calculated way. However, from the context – the fact that Darius does not specify that the rebels died in another way – we may assume that he is talking about impalement as a means of execution rather than only corpse display.

DB AA §	Rebel	Akkadian	Translation
19	Nidintu-Bēl	*altakan ina zaqī[pi]*	I placed on a stake
25	Fravartiš	*arki ina zaqīpi ina Agamatanu altakanšu*	Then I placed them on stakes in Ecbatana
26	Cicantakhma	*arki ina Arba'il ina zaqīpi aškunšu*	Then in Arbela I placed them on stakes
35	Vahyazdāta	*ina zaqīpi [aš]kun*	I placed on stakes
39	Arakha	*ina zaqīpi ina Bābili iškun*	He placed on stakes in Babylon

Table 18 Impalement Terminology in DB AA

According to the inscriptions, in some cases the rebels' foremost followers were punished along with them. In the Akkadian version, Darius gives 'impalement figures' along with 'casualty figures':

DB AA §	Rebel Leader	Impalement Figure
19	Nidintu-Bēl	[49]
25	Fravartiš	[47][562]
29	unnamed	80+
31	Parada	[4]6
35	Vahyazdāta	[5]2[563]

Table 19 Impalement Figures in the Behistun Inscriptions, figures taken from von Voigtlander 1978.

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[560]   Radner 2015, 103-104 although she notes that the difference between impaling for execution and of corpses is not so clear cut in the Assyrian terminology, thus they may not have understood the two acts as notably distinct. Dalley 2007, 179 by contrast suggested that *gašīšu* was the Standard Babylonian dialect used for royal inscriptions, and *zaqīpu* Neo-Assyrian dialect used for letters and records.

[561]   Chapter Three, Section 2.2.

[562]   von Voigtlander 1978, 28 this number is uncertain, the area is heavily damaged.

[563]   *idem*, 34 supplied '5' from the Aramaic version.

The impalement figures from the inscriptions have not been reconstructed beyond doubt. Voigtlander's most unequivocal statement on the reconstructions was that in the case of the unnamed leader and his followers, executed by Hystaspes: 'the '80' is clear, and it cannot have been followed by a unit more than four.'[564] In Chapter 4, I discussed Darius' manipulation of the casualty figures, and Hyland's conclusion that they served to highlight the king's own military achievements. Because of the impalement figures' uncertainty, it is not possible to say whether they were also carefully constructed to this end. In any case, this may not be as relevant, since the king carries out most of the mass impalements. It is however notable that, in the context of Assyrian use of impalement, usually reserved for use against two or three enemies, the reconstructed figures from the Behistun inscriptions are exceptionally high. Thus, we can say that, in the first year of the crisis, Darius punished his enemies and their followers by mass impalement. What was behind this innovation in punishment practice? In brief, in the face of the existential crisis facing him between 522-521 BCE, Darius gave a commensurate display of Persian power. These were acts of 'conspicuous destruction', more extreme even than Ashurnasirpal II's reports of mass punishment 350 years before, since, as we know, impalement is also a resource-intensive act.[565]

Among references to Persian use of impalement in biblical and classical literary accounts, the *Histories* contains the only ancient reference to Persian mass impalement of enemies, outside the Behistun inscriptions.[566] According to Herodotus' story, after Darius had been at war with Babylon for a year and seven months, Zopyrus, son of Megabyzus, concocted a plan to help the king capture the city. He mutilated himself, cutting off his nose and ears, shaving his hair and flogging himself, and then shared his plan with the king. First, Zopyrus would approach the Babylonians claiming to be a defector from the Persian side, because the king had unfairly mutilated him. Darius was then to dispatch troops for three confrontations, numbering 1000 in the first instance, 2000 in the second and 4000 in the third. Zopyrus would lead the Babylonians to victory in each of these confrontations, which resulted in the massacre of all 7000 of the Persian troops. Afterwards, Darius impaled 3000 elite Babylonians.

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[564] *idem*, 30.
[565] See above n. 523 van Wees on 'conspicuous destruction'.
[566] Hdt. 3. 152-160.

Herodotus' story shares few precise details with the Behistun narrative, so few that it is impossible to tell whether he is referring to Nidintu-Bēl's or Arakhu's Babylonian rebellion. In fact, it is unlikely that he is referring to either of these. I suggest that Herodotus' report of the 'Babylonian siege' is a direct parodic interpretation of Darius' formulaic battle narratives and punishment episodes in the Behistun inscriptions, or at least of the version of events which reached Herodotus.[567] Aspects of the story appear as transformations of the most striking features of Darius' account:

1. The pre-eminent role of Zopyrus, Darius' subordinate, in conceiving and carrying out the plan to end the Babylonian siege is reminiscent of Darius' extensive use of his subordinates. Herodotus inverts the theme to place all the responsibility for conceiving and carrying out the conquest to the subordinate, where Darius carefully credited himself with the initiative in these cases.

2. The inclusion of 'casualty figures' (7000 Persian troops sacrificed) and 'impalement figures' (3000 Babylonians impaled) is evocative of Darius' insistent inclusion of these in the Akkadian and Aramaic versions of the Behistun inscription. The key difference is that Darius gives no figures for Persian losses, only for enemy losses.

3. The fact that the episode begins with the self-inflicted mutilation of a fanatically loyal follower of Darius is an inversion of two cases in which Darius' battle narratives *end* with the mutilation of rebels.

In all, I suggest that we should interpret the mass impalement in Herodotus' story as a parodic inflation of the impalement figures the king included in the Behistun inscriptions. Certainly, if the Persians were prone to using mass impalement against their enemies, we would expect more comment on this from classical authors.

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[567]   On the possibility that Herodotus has an Iranian informant, see Munson 2009, 464 who suggested that Zopyrus, grandson of Zopyrus, was Herodotus' informant for the Babylonian siege narrative. Beckman 2018, 6 suggests that Herodotus' stories about the death of Cyrus the Great were gleaned from a Persian informant, who gave the narrative of events which was a 'reflection of the 'official party line' put out by the contemporary royal court.' On Herodotus' transformation of Near Eastern motifs more generally, see Rollinger 2018.

To summarise, Darius used impalement as a punishment for rebels and traitors against the empire between 522-521 BCE, and he impaled tens of enemies at a time. This is a significant departure from the attested use of impalement according to Neo-Assyrian sources, which furnish the most detail about the practice in an imperial context pre-dating the Achaemenid period. There is no further indication that mass impalement was regularly used throughout the lifetime of the Achaemenid Empire. The conspicuous absence of references to *any* form of corporal punishment against enemies in Darius' narration of his second and third regnal years reinforces this interpretation. Thus, it appears that Persian use of mass impalement was short-lived and suited to the particularly critical circumstances of Darius' accession and the ensuing civil war.

2.2. Facial Mutilation

According to the Behistun inscriptions, before impaling the Median rebels Fravartiš and Cicantakhma, Darius mutilated their faces:

ašpurma Parumartiš/Šitrantaẖma agāšû u ṣabū ša ittīšu iṣṣabtūma ana pānīya išpurū arki anāku appišu uznīšu lišānšu ubattiq ištēn īnšu unappil šū ṣabtu kullu ina bābiya uqu gabbi immarūš arki ina zaqīpi ina Agamatanu/Arba'il altakanšu

They captured that Fravartiš/Cicantakhma and the soldiers who were with him and sent (them) to me. Then I cut off his nose, his two ears, his tongue (and) blinded one of his eyes. He was held in fetters at my gate. All the people could see him. Then I impaled him at Ecbatana/Arbela.

DB AA §25 and 26[568]

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[568]   = DB OP § 32 and 33 and DB AE § 25 and 26. In the Old Persian and Elamite version, the tongue removal is missing from Cicantakhma's punishment Kuhrt 2007, 155 n. 73 puts this down to scribal error, since the punishments are in all other respects identical. This is a plausible suggestion; in this section I work on the basis that the punishments were identical.

Facial mutilation, by contrast with mutilation of other body parts, is highly visible, and therefore of pre-eminent exemplary value as a punishment. Llewellyn-Jones noted that mutilation of the head or face was construed as a particularly degrading punishment in the cultural landscape of Darius' empire.[569] Referring to the sudden acquisition of facial disfigurement, either through violence or accident, Skinner noted:

> Facial disfigurement challenges basic, encoded human responses, which value symmetry and wholeness, and accounts of violence done to the face signal that something extreme is going on.

> Skinner 2016, 26

By the time Darius came to the throne, punishments involving facial mutilation were part of the cultural landscape in the regions he ruled over. Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions offer evidence for the use of facial mutilation as a punishment. The extant sources suggest that the Assyrians used mutilation more extensively than impalement; there is evidence for the mass mutilation of enemy troops.[570] Examining bodily mutilation in the Hebrew Bible, Lemos highlighted its exceptional and calculated symbolic value:

> It becomes apparent that violently altering the bodies of one's enemies was not a random act of sadistic aggression in ancient Israel but was in fact one that functioned in certain striking and important ways. One of these was that mutilation signalled newly established power.

> Lemos 2006, 225

May highlighted that the mutilation of statues and of flesh and blood counterparts were both used to symbolise the annihilation of power.[571] Darius' use of mutilation against the Median rebels were a physical manifestation of his power over them.

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[569]   Llewellyn-Jones 2015, 226.
[570]   For example RIMA 2 Ashurnasirpal II A.0.101.1, i 115; RINAP 4 Esarhaddon 33, iii 23'.
[571]   May 2012, 703.

Nylander posited that Darius mutilated only the Median rebels because these particular facial mutilations were culturally relevant to a Median audience.[572] This conclusion was based on his proposition that Medians mutilated the 'Copper Head of Sargon' at Nineveh following the Median/Babylonian sack of the city in 612 BCE. The damage to the statue – gouging of one eye, the nose, mouth, and ears – is the same as that which Darius reports inflicting on the Medians in the Behistun inscriptions. This is an attractive theory, which acknowledges the distinctiveness of the Median punishments in the Behistun inscriptions, if not the regional distribution of all the punishments Darius describes, and (implicitly) the importance of legibility in public corporal punishment. However, Nylander's suggestion relied on the unprovable assumption that the Medians inflicted the iconoclastic damage to the statue's head.[573] As established earlier in this chapter, the Medians merited a punishment of such severity because of the severity of the existential threat they posed to the empire. I do not think we need therefore to assume that Darius chose the added facial mutilations for the Medians because they were most legible to a Median audience.[574]

Quintus Curtius Rufus and Arrian reported on Alexander's punishment of the last king of Persia, Bessus/Artaxerxes V (330-329 BCE).[575] According to these accounts, Alexander removed Bessus' nose and ears before impaling him – a punishment which bears striking resemblance to the Median punishments after their revolts. Jacobs explained that Alexander must have been aware of the symbolic efficacy of such a punishment in an Achaemenid imperial milieu; this was the correct way for the rightful king to eliminate pretenders to his throne.[576] Heckel also referred to the removal of ears and noses as the 'customary' means of punishing rebels against the Persian Empire.[577] I would be more cautious in taking this as proof of a long-lived tradition of mutilating rebels in this way, given the chronological distance between the composition of the Behistun inscriptions

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[572]   Nylander 1980, 332.
[573]   As Nylander 1980, 330 himself states at the outset of his study: 'the mutilation (of the copper head) could have occurred, of course, at almost any time during Mesopotamia's tumultuous history.'
[574]   Compelling arguments have also been made that statues and images across the ancient Near East were defaced – through the removal of the sensory organs, to disempower them. See Bahrani 2008 and May 2010 and 2014a. I discuss this further below.
[575]   Quintus Curtius Rufus 7.5.39-41 and Arrian 4.7.3-4.
[576]   Jacobs 2009, 131.
[577]   Heckel 2007, 95.

and these literary accounts, as well as between Alexander's conquests and the composition of these accounts, and finally the existence of different accounts of Bessus' punishment in Plutarch and Diodorus.[578]

Above, I noted the efficacy of facial mutilation as an exemplary punishment because of its inherent visibility. Besides this general advantage, we can consider the specific symbolism of the Median mutilations in the context of Achaemenid imperial values. In Chapter Three, I began to address physical perfection as an aspect of Achaemenid kingship – in the relief image, the king and his enemies were carefully differentiated by differences in posture, stature, dress and facial features. Here, I argue that among the markers of physical perfection, *facial* perfection was a pre-eminent aspect of the Achaemenid ideal of kingly appearance.

Identifying the proportional guidelines governing the composition of Achaemenid relief imagery, Davis-Kimball established that 'images belonging to different social classes were distinguished by the size of their faces.'[579] Higher ranking individuals had larger 'Height to Brickface' ratios: their faces were made proportionately larger than they should be based on the size of their bodies.[580] Thus, in Achaemenid artwork, the face was the primary site of social and political differentiation, as Davis-Kimball put it: 'the magnification of the royal face implied power, created a dramatic image, and stressed the eminence of the king's earthly position.'[581] This was more pronounced in the Behistun Monument relief image, in which the king's face is proportionately larger than it is in any Susian or Persepolitan depictions.[582] These conclusions suggest the importance of facial perfection as a marker of Achaemenid kings' legitimacy and an especially Achaemenid Persian standard of beauty.[583] Facial similarities between the king and the nobles on the Behistun relief image suggest that Achaemenid Persian standards of beauty extended

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[578]   Plut. *Alex.* 43.3 and Diodorus 17.83.7-9.

[579]   Davis-Kimball 1989, 291, see also Azarpay 1994.

[580]   Davis-Kimball 1989, 355. And similarities between the king's facial features, and other Persian figures in Achaemenid relief imagery, speak of a typically Persian standard of facial beauty.

[581]   *idem*, 404.

[582]   *idem*, 384.

[583]   Several relief images from Persepolis are marred by damage to the king's face. The concentration of the damage, and concomitant lack thereof elsewhere on the king's body indicates deliberate attack against this part of the image, which in turn may suggest that the attacker understood the centrality of the royal visage in Achaemenid imperial ideology. On the other hand, the culprits of iconoclastic attacks are impossible to identify.

beyond the kingship into the higher echelons of society.[584] On this point, we may also consider how the kings created the perfect image of the Persian elite soldier, and depicted this in a repeated pattern in palatial imagery (Fig. 11).

In their works, Herodotus and Plutarch also betray some awareness of a Persian royal and elite standard of beauty. Plutarch notes that:

> The Persians, because Cyrus was hook-nosed, even to this day love hook-nosed men and consider them the most handsome.

Plut. *Moralia* 281F

We may be mistrustful of this assertion, since none of the Achaemenid kings portray themselves or their soldiers with hooked-noses, though the comment does relate to the face as a critical site of differentiation for those who would be considered handsome – and those who would not.

According to Herodotus, Smerdis succeeded in posing as Bardiya because the two were physically identical to one another, though crucially the magus had no ears.[585] When this was discovered, his imposture was revealed, and a coup was prepared against him. Setting aside evaluations of the historical validity of Herodotus' account, it does indicate an awareness that physical perfection was a pre-requisite for Achaemenid rulers, and that facial perfection was a pre-eminent aspect of this. I have already discussed Herodotus' narration of a conflict between the Persians and the Babylonians, during Zopyrus, one of Darius' foremost generals, mutilated himself. The tale closes with a reference to Darius' dejection at his generals' appearance:

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[584]   As Root 1979, 186, Davis-Kimball 1989, 404 and Llewellyn-Jones 2015, 220 have noted, they are most significantly differentiated from one another by their beard shapes; the nobles' beards are closer cropped than the king's, and the former are only blocked out, while the king's is rendered in detail.

[585]   Hdt. 3. 69.

There never was in Darius' judgement any Persian before or after who did better service than Zopyrus, except Cyrus, with whom no Persian could compare himself. Many times, Darius is said to have declared that he would rather Zopyrus were free of disfigurement than have twenty Babylons on top of the one he had.

Hdt. 3.160[586]

These stories betray a simple awareness that Persian kings adhered to a certain standard of facial perfection, while offering no real elucidation of what this involved, beyond bodily wholeness.[587] For that, depictions of royal and non-royal individuals in Achaemenid iconography are more illuminating.

The proportional guidelines of Achaemenid art, in which social differentiation is marked by the relative size of different figures' faces, indicate that facial perfection was part of the Persian ideal of physical appearance. Greek sources also betray hints of an understanding of such a principle in Achaemenid ideals of kingship. This suggests that Darius mutilated the Median rebels' faces to deprive them of this critical asset and prevent them from exercising kingship over the empire. He displayed them in their mutilated state to reinforce his own claims to the kingship, by demonstrating that they had lied about their suitability to perform it.

Explanations for the removal of individual facial appendages tend to reside in the figurative connection between the site of the mutilation and the crime committed.[588] For instance, Ashurbanipal claims that he ripped out his enemies' tongues to punish them for uttering blasphemies:

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[586]   See above Section 2.1 analysis of Herodotus' story about the Babylonian siege.

[587]   This may derive from Assyrian and Babylonian requirements for priests to be bodily whole, which applied to the Assyrian king as he was Assur's representative on earth, and the Babylonian king as Marduk's chief priest. See Waerzeggers 2008, 4 in order to be ordained, priests had to be pure of body, 'measured by the absence of imperfections', and on purification rituals Löhnert 2010.

[588]   See for example Porter 2009 on iconoclastic attacks against the noses of Assyrian figures in imperial representation, and the symbolic efficacy of this as a particularly demeaning punishment in an Assyrian cultural milieu. Skinner 2014, on medieval nose-cutting; Loktionov 2017 on nose and ear removal in the Egyptian New Kingdom. Bahrani 2008, 75-100 discusses the semiotics of body parts in Mesopotamia.

As for Mannu-kī-aḫḫ[ē]… and Nabû-uṣalli… who had uttered grievous blasphemies against (the god) Assur, the god who created me. I tore out their tongue(s and) flayed them.

RINAP 5 Ashurbanipal 4, vi 77; 6, vii 29'; 7, vii 21

Throughout the Behistun inscriptions, emphasis is laid on the importance of the king's speech,[589] and on differentiating between those who speak the truth (the king) and those who lie (the rebels). In this context, the removal of the Medians' tongues may be construed as a punishment for lying, or a preventive measure against them continuing to do so. However, despite the possibility to assign a semiotic value to each of the rebels' facial appendages, the Behistun mutilations should be considered as a whole – as indeed they affect the whole of the rebels' faces: ears, nose, mouth, and eyes. With Achaemenid ideals of facial perfection in mind, the significance of the total annihilation of Darius' enemies' faces may be said to represent nothing more than the total annihilation of their claims to the kingship. The king's decision to carry out such a complete mutilation may have been predicated on the empire's cultural diversity; to make the punishment legible to all those who witnessed or heard about it. This, rather than appealing to cultural values assigned to different facial appendages in different regions.

Although the mutilations affect the whole of the rebels' faces, Darius claims only to have removed one of each of their eyes. This is conspicuously rare in ancient accounts of facial mutilation, in which gouging out both eyes, causing blindness, is more common. Evaluating sources for the iconoclastic destruction of images, May noted that the eyes were the least often mutilated facial features.[590] Lemos examined a reference in the Book of Samuel, to Nahash the Ammonite's threat to remove one eye of each of the people of Jabesh-Gilead.[591] In his speech, Nahash notes that this mutilation would bring shame upon the whole of Israel. Lemos suggests that, in biblical texts, mutilation is often inflicted with the goal of bringing shame on the person affected; in this case the shame of the mutilation inhered in the deprivation of bodily wholeness, and the asymmetry of this

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[589]   Chapter 5, Section 3.4.
[590]   May 2014a, 702.
[591]   1 Samuel 11:1-2.

punishment made it worse, as it could preclude the Israelites from participating in their religious duties.[592]

While there is no doubt that Darius intended to bring shame on his enemies through these mutilations, I suggest that the removal of one eye, or the preservation of the other eye, may have aimed at extending the punishment's visibility. In short, this allowed the rebels themselves to view their own humiliation. Both the Medians were displayed at Darius' gates in their mutilated states for all to see, and later executed by impalement, death from which could take several days. In Fravartiš' case, we know that the heads of his foremost followers were hung around his impaled body. Retaining the use of one eye during these events, the Median rebels witnessed their own punishments.

I do not think, as per Nylander's suggestion, that the Median rebels were singled out for extra punishment because facial mutilation was relevant to a 'Median' audience. In part, this is because, starting with the Behistun inscriptions, Darius was inaugurating an Achaemenid mode of imperialism, the representation of which, as discussed in Chapter Two, developed in line with the various challenges faced throughout the lifetime of the Achaemenid Empire. It was imperative, at this stage in the empire's history, that as part of this, the king entrenched an understanding of the methods of punishment faced by rebels against the empire. Moreover, the message of the inscriptions was meant to be legible to an empire-wide audience. As facial perfection was a prerequisite for those wishing to exercise Achaemenid kingship, facial mutilation was an effective means of delegitimising the claims of rebels. Sources suggest that the use of this type of punishment was conserved for those who posed the greatest threat to imperial stability, in this case the Median rebels who catalysed the most severe revolts of Darius' first regnal year.

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[592]   Lemos 2006, 230-232, here she draws on Olyan 1996, 103 on blemishes in biblical texts. 2 Samuel 10. 2-4 the Ammonites inflict further asymmetrical mutilation on the Israelites. Hamun, son of Nahash accuses David's envoys of being spies from their king, and 'shaved off half the beard of each (and) cut off their garments in the middle at their hips.' The envoys are ashamed, and when they present themselves to the king he sends them into hiding in Jericho until their beards grow back.

2.3. Decapitation

The decapitations are the most frequently overlooked punishments in the Behistun inscriptions. References to the decapitation of Fravartiš' foremost followers appear in the Elamite and Akkadian versions:

And then, (as for) his (Fravartiš's) foremost men, his followers, I cut off their heads at the fortress in Ecbatana and displayed them all together.

DB AE §25 (trans. Bae 2001, 145)

mār-banêšu addūk napḫar 47 bīrit Agamatanu qaqqadātīšunu ālul ultu kilīli ša birtu

I executed his (Fravartiš's) nobles, a total of [47]. I hung their heads inside Ecbatana from the battlements of the fortress.

DB AA §25

The Old Persian reads:

And the men who were his (Fravartiš') foremost followers, those I hanged at Ecbatana in the fortress.

DB OP §32 (trans. Schmitt 1991, 61)

Gershevitch suggested that the decapitations were missed out of the Old Persian version because of scribal error caused by similarity between the words *hangmatānai* (Ecbatana) and *ha(n)gmatā* (all together). As he states: 'the eyes of the chalker skipped from the first to the second *hagmatā* and he, by flinging away the OP clay tablet, deprived us until

today of the rolling heads of those rebels.'[593] We cannot, in the present state of evidence, confirm Gershevitch's restoration, though the theory of scribal error is persuasive considering that the Old Persian and Elamite inscriptions agree on all other punishment details.

The references in the Akkadian and Elamite inscriptions offer the only extant Persian attestation of decapitation. Muller noted that in Greek sources, this is the 'most frequent type of mutilation associated with the Achaemenids'.[594] He states, on the other hand, that there are no mentions of decapitation in the Behistun inscriptions,[595] an error which results from his use of the translation of the Behistun inscription given in Kuhrt's *Persian Empire* sourcebook, which is based on the Old Persian version only, though she does note differences between the inscriptions sometimes.[596]

Muller attributes a potent religious significance to this type of punishment: the Achaemenids carried out post-mortem decapitation so that they could present the heads of their enemies to the goddess Anahita.[597] As I have stated already, though it may be impossible to disentangle religious from political motivations for punishment, wholly religious explanations which draw on much later Iranian cultural practice may not be the most reliable way of interpreting the Behistun punishments. Furthermore, there is no indication that the Behistun decapitations were carried out post-mortem, these were more likely used as a mode of execution than straightforward trophy collecting in the aftermath of battle.

In her study *Losing One's Head in the Ancient Near East* documenting the proliferation of decapitation between the third millennium BCE and the Neo-Assyrian period,[598] Dolce described decapitation as '*the* exemplary way of reducing the other to an inanimate object, lacking the breath of life' and distinguished between it and other forms of mutilation as it entailed the loss of life.[599] May stated that decapitation of images of rulers

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[593]   Gershevitch 1979, 125.
[594]   Muller 2016, 198.
[595]   *idem*, 216.
[596]   Kuhrt 2007, 140-158 in footnotes.
[597]   Muller 2016, 212.
[598]   Dolce 2018.
[599]   *idem*, 7.

was a similarly disempowering gesture.[600] In a study of the Achaemenid ruler's body, Llewellyn-Jones noted:

> The head held the highest place in the Near Eastern body's hierarchy and was the most honourable part of the body. Since the head represented the whole person, beheading the enemy gave a dramatic emphasis to the destruction of the opponent's whole being.

> Llewellyn-Jones 2015, 220

These observations are credible, though it is also worth noting the proliferation of decapitation as a punishment throughout history, in a variety of social and cultural contexts. The term in English 'capital punishment' even derives etymologically from the Latin term *caput* (head). In a chapter subtitled 'a head is always a sign of something', Janes states the decapitation is 'among the most ancient, widespread, and enduring of human cultural practices.'[601]

There are instances in Assyrian royal inscriptions where kings claim to have removed the heads of every enemy solider, and Dolce conjectured that the collection of heads in the aftermath of battle may have been a means of quantifying the number of enemy dead, though this cannot be proven. [602] Ashurbanipal's treatment of the Elamite Teumann's head after the battle of Til Tuba is an outstanding example of the use of an enemy's head as the king's victory trophy, which was paraded through the empire and eventually displayed at the king's capital and, indeed, in his private palace garden.[603] In Figure 26 below, Teumann's head is seen hanging from a tree while the king reclines feasting with his queen.

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[600] May 2010, 112.
[601] Janes 2005, 10.
[602] Dolce 2018, 8.
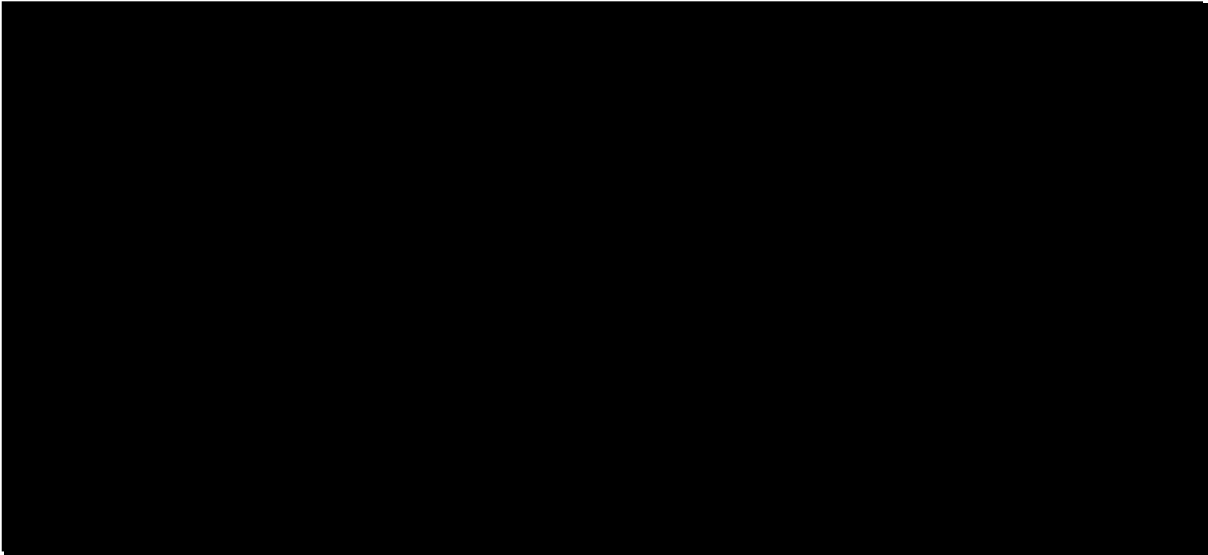[603] Bonatz 2004, 94. Bahrani 2008, 23-55.

Figure 26 The 'Garden Party' Relief from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal Nineveh, Iraq ca. 645 BCE (BM 124920)

Darius' use of corporal punishment transformed his enemies' bodies into emblems of his victory over the rebel forces. However, in the absence of further evidence offering a Persian perspective on decapitation, we should be cautious of extrapolating further from these circumstances; we cannot say that the Achaemenids used decapitation regularly. We can only interpret the Behistun punishment episodes as proof of the response to the severity of the crisis confronting Darius upon his accession, not as proof of general punishment practice throughout the empire's lifetime. As we already know, Fravartiš was subjected to the most severe punishment because he catalysed a rebellion which posed the greatest existential threat to Persian hegemony. In the spirit of this, we should not read too much into this singular instance of mass execution by decapitation. In the absence of further evidence, the Behistun decapitations can only be construed as a response suited to the extraordinary threat posed by the Median revolts between 522-521 BCE.

Conclusion

The analysis of this chapter has revealed that Darius favoured his role as executioner over that of battle commander. He allowed his subordinates to play a pre-eminent role in the battles fought between 522-520 BCE, which not only kept himself out of personal

danger but also aided in the construction of his network of violence and therefore ensured the empire's future stability. In several cases, Darius took over from his subordinate to execute a rebel leader, emphasising the importance of punishment in the reactivation of Persian power. Fewer executions are recorded in the Old Persian and Elamite versions of the inscription, but proportionately more are carried out by Darius himself. According to the distribution of punishment between the king and his subordinates, Darius appears as 'executioner in chief'. The punishment of enemies therefore appears as a royal prerogative.

The 'severity' of the punishments is defined as 'the amount of detail Darius gives about the punishment' – and each of the most 'severe' punishments are carried out by the king. These were inflicted on the Persian, Median and Babylonian rebels, whose rebellions posed the greatest existential threat to Darius' kingship and Achaemenid hegemony. Each of these rebels appealed to the former greatness of their region when making claims to the kingship, and the Median and Persian rebellions catalysed resistance in regions outside Media and Persia proper. Babylonian resistance was geographically circumscribed, though we know that the two Babylonian rebels were officially named king in the region in Darius' first regnal year. The descriptions of the Elamite revolts suggest that resistance in Elam was negligible, though the accounts may have been designed to obscure the level of resistance against Darius. Assertions that the Elamite people revolted against the pretenders may also serve to suggest that the king still had a loyal following in the region.

Information about execution locations is given only in cases where Darius executes a rebel leader, and exceptionally when Vindafarna executes Arakhu on the king's orders. Each of the impalements was carried out at a politically significant location; an important centre in the region of the revolt. This served to ensure the correct audience for the execution itself, and the report of this in the inscription served to figuratively reclaim the region for the Persian Empire.

Analysis of the various distributions of punishment in the first section showed that Darius manipulated his narrative of these events in line with his aims in the construction of elite and royal identity. The descriptions do not reflect historical realities during the period but

provide ideological information about appropriate forms of punishment in the Achaemenid Empire. Darius tells that three kinds of punishment were used against the rebels, in different combinations: impalement, facial mutilation, and decapitation. Each of these was well-established as a form of punishment especially proper for use against traitors within the cultural landscape of the empire.

In the second part of the chapter, I moved to considerations of the meaning of 'narrow' violence following the crisis in the rebels' punishments. Neo-Assyrian images and inscriptions offer the fullest evidence for the use of impalement in an imperial context. Evidence for the use of impalement in a pre-Achaemenid Iranian context is sparse, and Herodotus' and Ctesias' narratives on this subject are notably tendentious. According to the Behistun inscriptions, in an Achaemenid imperial context, impalement was preserved for use against the gravest enemies. However, in the aftermath of the crisis, Darius executed tens of rebels at a time by impalement – which means that the Behistun inscriptions constitute the earliest known attestation of the use of mass impalement. No further sources confirm that this was usual practice throughout the empire's lifetime, and this case must therefore be assumed to reflect the severity of the political crisis confronting Darius at this moment in time.

The Median facial mutilations have been interpreted as punishments which were especially chosen to suit the cultural sensibilities of a Median audience – as a warning against further rebellion. Darius' decision to mutilate his enemies' faces however is significant in an Achaemenid imperial context. Analyses of the proportional guidelines followed in the creation of Achaemenid representations of human figures suggest that the face was the primary site of social differentiation, and facial perfection was expected of those wishing to exercise the kingship. The total annihilation of his enemies' faces stood for Darius' total annihilation of the threat they posed to his kingship. The decision to mutilate each of his enemies' facial appendages may also have been motivated by the need to provide a demonstration of power which was legible in each part of the empire and did not rely on culturally determined preconceptions of the symbolism inherent in the removal of certain body parts. The preservation of one of each of the rebels' eyes may be interpreted as a means of ensuring that the rebels witnessed their own punishments, and those of their followers. Overall, the use of facial mutilation was especially suited to the Achaemenid imperial context. Again, Darius' use of the

punishment reflects the especially critical circumstances of his first regnal year, and the especial severity of the Median rebellions.

Finally, I considered the exceptional instance of decapitation which Darius claims was carried out to punish Fravartiš' followers. Decapitation is the most well-documented form of corporal punishment, across a range of historical, cultural, and social contexts. The symbolism of decapitation in an Achaemenid imperial milieu is difficult to parse, since this is the sole attestation of its use from a Persian perspective. Again, it appears that the use of this punishment in the context of the crisis was a response especially suited to refute the threat posed by the Median rebellions from 522-521 BCE.

To sum up, in this chapter, I have demonstrated that the punishment episodes, in distribution and detail, were composed to be especially relevant in an Achaemenid imperial milieu. The distribution of the punishments speak of an Achaemenid convention of royal prerogative in punishment. In determining what kinds of punishment should be used against his enemies, Darius drew on the cultural sensibilities of his subjects, though incorporating innovations in their use, by which he made them legible to the diversity of peoples living in the Achaemenid Empire – a strategy also followed in the creation of imperial representations throughout the empire's lifetime.[604] And since there are no further Achaemenid attestations that these modes of punishment, it may be said that they were selected for their severity, to suit the especial severity of the political crisis confronting Darius upon his accession.

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[604] See further Chapter Two especially Section 4.2, on the rest of the corpus of Achaemenid representation. However, I have not discussed the legibility of later Achaemenid representational practice in detail in this thesis. On this, Root 1979 remains a seminal text. In this Chapter,

Conclusion: Towards a Persian Perspective

In this thesis, I have examined the challenges of studying the history of violence, and the use of figurative violence in the creation and maintenance of the Achaemenid regime of power.

Violence presents critical challenges of interpretation, with the result that social scientific researchers have yet to agree on what violence *is*. Current discussions revolve around the relative validity of 'narrow' (physical) and 'wide' (non-physical) conceptions of violence. I began the thesis by examining the debate around these definitions in the context of ancient historical violence studies. According to some social scientists, even if a categorical definition of the term could be reached, such a shared definition of violence may not be applicable to each and every culture and time period we wish to examine. They propose instead that we adopt a non-unitary conception of violence, which can be adjusted to suit individual contexts. I have argued that a changing conception of violence may be especially suited to the study of ancient history, especially in allowing us to confront the typological variation displayed by our source material alongside the changing social and cultural contexts of the societies we research.

Ancient historians have rarely engaged explicitly with the social scientific debate in constructing their methodologies. Rare studies which have done so have asserted that the more traditional conception of violence as action threatening or achieving physical harm is most appropriate for the source material at hand. In studies which have not taken the social scientific debate into consideration, appraisal of physical violence has likewise dominated the field.

I have identified two central problems with the study of physical violence in the ancient world. The first relates to the lack of sources offering 'direct' evidence of physical violence, and the limitations of 'indirect' evidence. Direct evidence constitutes bioarchaeological data and archaeological assemblages, where these can be contextualised to demonstrate that violent action took place. Such material is notably rare, and it is not always possible to contextualise it and demonstrate incontrovertibly

that physical violence took place. For instance, signs of traumatic injury on skeletal remains are not in themselves evidence for the happenstance of physical violence in history as paleoforensic techniques cannot detect differences between accidental and deliberate injury, or the perpetrators of violence in every instance.

Documentary and literary sources provide 'indirect' evidence for the historical use of physical violence. These are problematic as such accounts are necessarily constructed along the lines of the author's own worldview. Literary sources prove especially difficult to interpret, as we are often inadequately equipped to understand the contemporary contexts, concerns and debates which informed their creation, let alone the acts of physical violence described in them. Modern interpretations of physical violence in the ancient world are also affected by contemporary attitudes regarding the legitimacy or otherwise of certain acts.

Besides these methodological issues in the study of ancient physical violence, I dispute the broader contribution of studies even of direct evidence for it. Questions about the impact of physical violence in society, for example as a feature of the daily lives of ancient peoples, often outweigh the scope of our sources. This is in line with the difficulties of taking a bottom up approach in ancient historical studies, which is obviated by a more general lack of sources which inform us about the lives of those occupying the lower echelons of society. Furthermore, studies of physical violence in the ancient world show a marked tendency to focus on extremely gruesome acts, whether or not the evidence suggests that these were used at all frequently. Thus, studies of ancient physical violence may not make a significant contribution to our understanding of society as a whole.

Considering the methodological challenges and limitations of studies of ancient physical violence, in this thesis, I have examined non-physical violence which is intrinsic in the construction of monuments to past violence, as well as representations of past violence and the possible symbolism of acts described – an analysis of the meaning of narrow violence in the context of the Achaemenid Empire in crisis. This approach is especially well-suited to tackle an evidentiary basis in which indirect sources for violence pre-dominate; we most commonly encounter semi-fictionalised accounts of violence. We

must ask questions about authorial motivations behind the narration of such events, before or instead of considering the incidents themselves. A wide conceptualisation of violence draws attention away from the practicalities of physical violence. Studies of physical violence often fail to illuminate societal and cultural concerns underpinning the use of certain forms of physical violence.

All studies of Achaemenid history have to confront the range of sources available. The empire's diversity and longevity places a vast corpus of sources at our disposal, and researchers may not necessarily be equipped to deal with each and every one of these, as they relate to different themes of study, in a holistic way. My decision to examine figurative violence in Achaemenid imperial governance was predicated on a wish to view violence from a Persian ruler's perspective. In line with this, it made the most sense to examine sources emanating from the Persians themselves and, considering the conspicuous eschewal of violent themes in Achaemenid representational sources, to position the Behistun Monument as *the* primary source which we can use to understand violence in the creation of empire and imperial governance.

Viewed through the lens of classical sources, Achaemenid violence is the result of arbitrary decision making and a predilection for cruelty. This interpretation is most striking in the violence inflicted on the king's allies. At several points throughout this thesis I have referred to Plutarch's account of the Ordeal of the Troughs, which he says Artaxerxes II used against the soldier Mithridates in the aftermath of the Battle of Cunaxa. This story is most disturbing not merely for the description of an especially horrifying act of violence, but because, the way Plutarch tells it, it was used against Mithridates despite, or even because of, his record of outstanding military service. Most classical narratives of Persian violence await corroboration from other sources. At other points throughout the thesis, I have examined Herodotus' accounts of Achaemenid violence, and in several cases have shown that these are most useful in reconstructing general principles of Achaemenid kingship, rather than confirming the incidence of physical violence. Above all, these micro-analyses have shown how much more is revealed when Greek sources are considered in light of Persian evidence, rather than the other way around.

By comparison with the classical image of Persian kings, Achaemenid representational choices do not highlight a propensity to violence. Because of this, they are often compared with the Neo-Assyrians, who at different times privileged depiction of violent acts in warfare and its aftermath. This was most pronounced during times of imperial growth (early 9th century BCE) and failure (mid-7th century BCE), under the rulers Ashurnasirpal II and Ashurbanipal. But the overall impression is of an imperial power whose dominance relied on the use of violence, though the large surviving epistolary corpus demonstrates that the kings and their subordinates more often made recourse to modes of reconciliation which did not involve physical violence.

Achaemenid eschewal of violent themes in representational practice, by contrast, is connected with an overall lack of narrative relief imagery. References to violence are therefore allusive; they are contained in indirect allusions to the geographical reach of Persian hegemony, and to military ability as a central characteristic of Achaemenid identity. These speak for the centrality of violence in royal and elite ideology throughout the empire's lifetime, but they cannot be used to create a complex picture of developments in the use of figurative violence – except to say that it was not used in an explicit way following the suppression of the crisis between 522-519 BCE.

The paucity of studies which have addressed Achaemenid violence reflects a lack of sources offering a Persian perspective. More than this, it reveals a general discomfort with suggestions that the Achaemenids employed questionable or sinister means to ensure their subjects' obedience. Studies of violent behaviour may be construed as privileging trivial acts of violence over broader structural aspects of Achaemenid imperialism, and even re-introducing orientalist stereotypes into the reconstruction of Achaemenid history. A lack of scholarship on Achaemenid violence is a result of historians being discouraged from using Greek and Roman sources because of difficulties of interpretation. On the other hand, studies which have considered Achaemenid violence are marked by a tendency not to interrogate Greek accounts closely enough.

The reluctance of modern scholars to address Achaemenid violence should also be considered in the light of Darius' *eagerness* to boast that violence was central to the

foundation of his regime of power. His violence was legitimate – at least, when used in response to a crisis which threatened to dismantle Persian hegemony. This violent message was suitable for circulation among all the peoples of the empire in different formats. The extraordinary appeal to past violence in the Behistun image and inscriptions, by contrast with other extant artefacts of Achaemenid representational practice, was predicated on the political circumstances attending the monument's creation.

The value of the Behistun Monument as a source for imperial ideology and the early history of the Achaemenid empire has long been recognised. General disregard for the monument as a source of information about Achaemenid violence is not easy to understand, though contributing factors can be identified. In the first place, violence in the monument's contents are an aberration in a representational scheme which does not otherwise celebrate the use of violence. The early date of the monument, preceding the construction of Susa and Persepolis, suggests that the it marks an experimental or immature stage in the construction of Achaemenid representational practice. Thus, it is easy to construe the absence of violence in later sources as a deliberate move away from violent subject matter, which did not conform with the message of imperial harmony and cooperation between rulers and subjects which informed later representational choices. However, it is not necessary to interpret the monument as an 'outlier' because of its subject matter, considering that it was created to counter the political crisis attending Darius' accession. This was a violent statement suited to these circumstances – which demanded an extraordinary display of imperial power.

The second factor is a lack of engagement with the inscriptions in their original languages, and a failure of scholars to conduct close readings of each text in translation. One of the central aims of those involved in the Bīsōtun Epigraphic Exploration, who are preparing a volume of new text editions from the monument and high quality photographs of these and the relief image, is to 'to allow scholars to appreciate the monument as a five voiced medium'.[605] It is hoped that the publication will lead to a renewed interest in the monument's multilingualism, and reposition it at the centre of Iranian studies.

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[605]   http://soudavar.org/bisotun-epigraphic-expedition/.

The texts on the monument are not monolithic, they are versions of one another, which display key differences. For my thesis, the most important difference is between the Akkadian version on one hand and the Old Persian and Elamite inscriptions on the other because the former contains extra violent details. These additions were made possible because Akkadian cuneiform takes up less space than the other two scripts. However, Darius' decision to fill this space with extra violent details – casualty figures and information about rebel deaths – evokes the centrality of violence in the construction of Achaemenid imperialism and identity.

The results of my own research would be less rich had I not spent time translating the Akkadian inscription. This brought to light aspects of the narratives surveyed in my case study and many of the patterns I discussed, which had escaped my notice during earlier readings of the texts in translation. The Behistun inscriptions are long, formulaic expositions which at first sight appear to offer merely an unimaginative straightforward account of events aiming to legitimise Darius' kingship. Closer examination reveals the centrality of figurative violence in the creation of a monument which Darius used to found the new regime of Achaemenid power and establish a model of behaviour for both foreign and Persian subjects.

I have argued that the construction of such a victory monument was an inherently violent act. Implicit violence aside, my case study focussed on evaluating the depictions and descriptions of violence on the monument. My analysis of violence in the image went beyond explicit allusions to the physical violence wrought against the rebel leaders, to the implications of insistent differentiation between non-royal and non-Persian individuals in Achaemenid artwork. Depiction of cultural diversity served as an expression of the inexorable reach of Persian power and a means of excluding individuals from positions of power within the new Achaemenid regime. At Behistun, characterisation of the rebel leaders as diverging in physical appearance from the Achaemenid ideal served to justify the king's use of violence against them. Since their precise contents were illegible, the inscriptions were also figurative expressions of Persian power. The co-option of subject languages for declarations of imperial power, in this case narratives of the violence wrought against Persian subjects, was a powerful demonstration of Persian dominance and a warning against future transgression.

Closer analysis of the violence rhetoric in the Behistun inscriptions has shown that they offer an unparalleled view of the intrinsic role of violence in Achaemenid imperial ideology and identity. The king used the battle narratives and punishment episodes to emphasise Persian military superiority as well as more importantly, his own personal military prowess. He allowed his subordinates to play a pre-eminent role in the crisis and in doing so created a network of violence, through which he could survey the whole empire, and respond to any acts of rebellion. The existence of this network furnished a warning to would-be rebels about the consequences of dissent and a model of behaviour for his subordinates to follow.

The king's admission that his subordinates were instrumental in reclaiming the empire did not detract from his personal military achievement, as commander in chief. As Young remarked, as recently as 2004, following military historical analysis of the Behistun inscriptions:

> Darius was a first class strategist and tactician, an outstanding and popular military commander, and probably well worth of the epithet 'Great'.
>
> Young 2004, 285

Besides emphasising his military prowess, Darius used the report to position the use of physical violence as a royal prerogative in the Achaemenid imperial milieu. This is especially clear in Darius' role as executioner in chief in the punishment episodes. The modes of punishment inflicted on the rebel leaders were predicated to speak to the cultural sensibilities of Darius' subjects, though they acquired new significance when they were used in an Achaemenid imperial context.

The case study presented here focussed primarily on violent rhetoric in the inscriptions. The relief image is full of latent violence – for example in the representation of the weapons, chains and grovelling. Besides this, my short analysis of the characterisation of the rebel leaders at Behistun and subject peoples elsewhere demonstrated that the

violence of these images is primarily implicit. This is against the overall 'peaceful' aspect of Achaemenid imagery. This deserves fuller consideration than space afforded here, paying especial attention to the use of representations of empire to draw subjects into an idealised imperial order, but also to *exclude* them from occupying certain positions of power and to justify the exploitation of their resources. Owing to the ideological importance of the royal body, which I began to explore here, such an analysis could focus on the semiotics of body parts seen through official Achaemenid representational practice.

More than offering a different view of the Behistun Monument and Achaemenid representational practice, the ideas and methodology presented in this thesis offer new directions in the study of ancient violence, especially in the examination of figurative accounts of violence. This could include for example a commentary on violent episodes in Herodotus, which took into account narrative aims, influences and contexts. The micro-analyses I have presented throughout the thesis may offer fertile ground to begin discussion about the meanings of violence in classical accounts, but the methodology will prove especially useful in the interpretation of figurative accounts of violence in other historical contexts and sources.

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