

Paper #1 – Historical Perspective I

One of the crucial skills of an historian is the ability to examine two different sources on the same event and come to some conclusions about the ways in which each source contributes to our knowledge and understanding. You have already read Herodotus 3.61-79, 118-119 about how Darius eventually rose to power. The following pages are the translation of an inscription put up by Darius himself about his rule. Paragraphs 10-14 tell his version of the story we read in Herodotus. Read over both texts closely and answer the following question for paper #1:

Evaluate the relative value and danger of these 2 sources and discuss how they contribute to our understanding of Darius' rise to power?

In order to answer this question there are a number of things you may want to do first.

1. Read through each source closely and make a list of the similarities and differences.
 - a. What are the similarities and can we rely on these as the “true facts” of Darius' to power? Why or why not?
 - b. What are the key differences? For each difference are there reasons for understanding why Herodotus and Darius have chosen to tell this history in the way that they did? Think about the purposes and view point of each author, as well as any evidence from the earlier part of Herodotus that you read and in the rest of Darius' inscription that would help you to evaluate their potential value and danger as historical sources.

Note that Ahuramazda, so often mentioned in Darius' inscription, was the chief god of the Persians.

The Behistun Inscription



Behistun Rock is found in the Zagros mountains, in northwestern Iran, on an old caravan road that runs from Babylon to Ecbatana, the ancient capitol of Media. The mountain is 1700 feet high and on the sheer face, 300 feet above the base is a huge sculpted relief with inscriptions, commissioned by Darius the Great in 515 BCE.

Introduction: Darius' titles and the extent of his empire

1. I am [Darius](#), the great king, king of kings, the king of Persia, the king of countries, the son of [Hystaspes](#), the grandson of [Arsames](#), the [Achaemenid](#).

2. King Darius says: My father is [Hystaspes](#); the father of Hystaspes was [Arsames](#); the father of Arsames was [Ariaramnes](#); the father of Ariaramnes was Teispes; the father of Teispes was Achaemenes.
3. King Darius says: That is why we are called [Achaemenids](#); from antiquity we have been noble; from antiquity has our dynasty been royal.
4. King Darius says: Eight of my dynasty were kings before me; I am the ninth. Nine in succession we have been kings.
5. King Darius says: By the grace of [Ahuramazda](#) am I king; Ahuramazda has granted me the kingdom.
6. King Darius says: These are the countries which are subject unto me, and by the grace of Ahuramazda I became king of them: Persia, Elam, [Babylonia](#), [Assyria](#), [Arabia](#), Egypt, the countries by the Sea, [Lydia](#), the [Greeks](#), [Media](#), [Armenia](#), Cappadocia, [Parthia](#), [Drangiana](#), [Aria](#), [Chorasmia](#), Bactria, Sogdia, [Gandara](#), [Scythia](#), [Sattagydia](#), [Arachosia](#) and [Maka](#); twenty-three lands in all.
7. King Darius says: These are the countries which are subject to me; by the grace of Ahuramazda they became subject to me; they brought tribute unto me. Whatsoever commands have been laid on them by me, by night or by day, have been performed by them.
8. King Darius says: Within these lands, whosoever was a friend, him have I surely protected; whosoever was hostile, him have I utterly destroyed. By the grace of Ahuramazda these lands have conformed to my decrees; as it was commanded unto them by me, so was it done.
9. King Darius says: Ahuramazda has granted unto me this empire. Ahuramazda brought me help, until I gained this empire; by the grace of Ahuramazda do I hold this empire.

Murder of Smerdis and coup of Gaumâta the Magian

10. King Darius says: The following is what was done by me after I became king. A son of [Cyrus](#), named [Cambyses](#), one of our dynasty, was king here before me. That Cambyses had a brother, [Smerdis](#) by name, of the same mother and the same father as Cambyses. Afterwards, Cambyses slew this Smerdis. When Cambyses slew Smerdis, it was not known unto the people that Smerdis was slain. Thereupon Cambyses went to Egypt. When Cambyses had departed into Egypt, the people became hostile, and the lie multiplied in the land, even in Persia and Media, and in the other provinces.
11. King Darius says: Afterwards, there was a certain man, a [Magian](#), Gaumâta by name, who raised a rebellion in [Paishiyâuvâdâ](#), in a mountain called Arakadriš. On the fourteenth day of the month [Viyaxana](#) [11 March 522] did he rebel. He lied to the people, saying: 'I am Smerdis, the son of Cyrus, the brother of [Cambyses](#).' Then were all the people in revolt, and from Cambyses they went over unto him, both Persia and Media, and the other provinces. He seized the kingdom; on the ninth day of the month [Garmapada](#) [1 July 522] he seized the kingdom. Afterwards, Cambyses died of natural causes.
12. King Darius says: The kingdom of which Gaumâta, the Magian, dispossessed Cambyses, had always belonged to our dynasty. After that Gaumâta, the Magian, had dispossessed Cambyses of Persia and Media, and of the other provinces, he did according to his will. He became king.

13. King Darius says: There was no man, either Persian or Mede or of our own dynasty, who took the kingdom from Gaumâta, the Magian. The people feared him exceedingly, for he slew many who had known the real Smerdis. For this reason did he slay them, 'that they may not know that I am not Smerdis, the son of Cyrus.' There was none who dared to act against Gaumâta, the Magian, until I came. Then I prayed to Ahuramazda; Ahuramazda brought me help. On the tenth day of the month [Bâgayâdiš](#) [29 September 522] I, with a few men, slew that Gaumâta, the Magian, and the chief men who were his followers. At the stronghold called Sikayauvatiš, in the district called [Nisaia](#) in Media, I slew him; I dispossessed him of the kingdom. By the grace of Ahuramazda I became king; Ahuramazda granted me the kingdom.

14. King Darius says: The kingdom that had been wrested from our line I brought back and I reestablished it on its foundation. The temples which Gaumâta, the Magian, had destroyed, I restored to the people, and the pasture lands, and the herds and the dwelling places, and the houses which Gaumâta, the Magian, had taken away. I settled the people in their place, the people of Persia, and Media, and the other provinces. I restored that which had been taken away, as it was in the days of old. This did I by the grace of Ahuramazda, I labored until I had established our dynasty in its place, as in the days of old; I labored, by the grace of Ahuramazda, so that Gaumâta, the Magian, did not dispossess our house.

THE DEEDS OF DARIUS AFTER BECOMING KING HAVE BEEN EDITED OUT –
THEY TOOK PLACE IN CHAPTERS 15-55.

Affirmation of the truth of the record

56. King Darius says: This is what I have done, by the grace of Ahuramazda have I always acted. Whosoever shall read this inscription hereafter, let that which I have done be believed. You must not hold it to be lies.

57. King Darius says: I call Ahuramazda to witness that is true and not lies; all of it have I done in a single year.

58. King Darius says: By the grace of Ahuramazda I did much more, which is not graven in this inscription. On this account it has not been inscribed lest he who shall read this inscription hereafter should then hold that which has been done by me to be excessive and not believe it and takes it to be lies.

Affirmation that it is pious to make known the record

59. King Darius says: Those who were the former kings, as long as they lived, by them was not done thus as by the favor of Ahuramazda was done by me in one and the same year.

60. King Darius says: Now let what has been done by me convince you. For the sake of the people, do not conceal it. If you do not conceal this edict but if you publish it to the world, then may Ahuramazda be your friend, may your family be numerous, and may you live long.

61. King Darius says: If you conceal this edict and do not publish it to the world, may Ahuramazda slay you and may your house cease.

62. King Darius says: This is what I have done in one single year; by the grace of Ahuramazda have I always acted. Ahuramazda brought me help, and the other gods, all that there are.

The importance of righteousness

63. King Darius says: On this account Ahuramazda brought me help, and all the other gods, all that there are, because I was not wicked, nor was I a liar, nor was I a despot, neither I nor any of my family. I have ruled according to righteousness. Neither to the weak nor to the powerful did I do wrong. Whosoever helped my house, him I favored; he who was hostile, him I destroyed.

64. King Darius says: You who may be king hereafter, whosoever shall be a liar or a rebel, or shall not be friendly, punish him!

Blessings and curses

65. King Darius says: You who shall hereafter see this tablet, which I have written, or these sculptures, do not destroy them, but preserve them so long as you live!

66. King Darius says: If you shall behold this inscription or these sculptures, and shall not destroy them, but shall preserve them as long as your line endures, then may Ahuramazda be your friend, and may your family be numerous. Live long, and may Ahuramazda make fortunate whatsoever you do.

67. King Darius says: If you shall behold this inscription or these sculptures, and shall destroy them and shall not preserve them so long as your line endures, may Ahuramazda slay you, may your family come to nought, and may Ahuramazda destroy whatever you do!

Names of Darius' supporters

68. King Darius says: These are the men who were with me when I slew Gaumâta the Magian, who was called Smerdis; then these men helped me as my followers:

[Intaphrenes](#), son of Vayâspâra, a Persian;

[Otanes](#), son of Thukhra, a Persian;

[Gobryas](#), son of Mardonius, a Persian;

[Hydarnes](#), son of Bagâbigna, a Persian;

[Megabyzus](#), son of Dâtuvahya, a Persian;

[Ardumaniš](#), son of Vakauka, a Persian.

69. King Darius says: You who may be king hereafter, protect the family of these men.

70. King Darius says: By the grace of Ahuramazda this is the inscription which I have made. Besides, it was in [Aryan script](#), and it was composed on clay tablets and on parchment. Besides, a sculptured figure of myself I made. Besides, I made my lineage. And it was inscribed and was read off before me. Afterwards this inscription I sent off everywhere among the provinces. The people unitedly worked upon it.