

the Persians the privilege of choosing whomever they please, or by some other method. For my own part, I abdicate from this contest with you; I will not rule or be ruled. But I withdraw from any chance of rule on one condition: that I shall not be ruled by any one of you, neither myself nor my descendants." That is what he said, and the six others accepted his proposition on these conditions. He, then, would not join the contest but withdrew, and till this day his house continues as the only free one in Persia and is under the rule of another only insofar as it itself chooses, providing it does not overstep the laws of Persia.

84. The remainder of the Seven debated as to how they might most justly choose a king. They resolved that if the kingship should devolve upon someone else among the Seven, other than Otanes, there should be given to him and all his descendants, every year, special privileges: a gift of Median dress and all the awards that are most honorable among the Persians. They resolved to give him these things because he had been the first to plan the conspiracy and had brought them all together. These, then, were to be Otanes' special privileges. But in regard to all the other conspirators, they made the following decisions: any one of the Seven that pleased might come into the palace without formal announcement unless the king was sleeping with a woman; the king should not be allowed to marry of any other stock than that of the Seven. As for the selection of a king, they resolved this: that all of them should mount their horses in the outskirts of the city and, as the sun rose, whichever horse neighed first, his rider should possess the throne.

85. Now, Darius had a groom whose name was Oebares, and he was a clever fellow. When the meeting broke up, Darius spoke to this man: "Oebares, we have resolved to deal with the kingship this way: when we are all on horseback, whichever of our horses neighs first, as the sun rises, makes his rider king. Now if you have any trick to deal with this, contrive that we win the prize and not someone else." Oebares answered him: "Master, if being king or not being king lies in this only, be confident and of good cheer as far as this goes, for no one will become king other than yourself; I have potent medicines for that." Darius said: "If you have any such contrivance, you had better put it into practice without delay, for our game is on for tomorrow." When Oebares heard this, he did the following: at

nightfall he led out that one of the mares that Darius' stallion loved most and tied her in the outskirts of the city. He then led out Darius' stallion and led him around a great while in the neighborhood of the mare, at times just suffering him to touch her; finally he let him go, to mount and breed her.

86. At the day's dawning, the Six, as they had agreed, came mounted; they rode through the city's outskirts, and when they came to the place where the mare had been tied up the night before, Darius' horse plunged forward and neighed. At the very moment this happened, there was a flash of lightning (though the sky was cloudless) and a rattle of thunder. These additional signs clinched the selection of Darius; they were additional to the trick, and what happened was, as it were, a collusion between it and something else. The other riders jumped down from their horses and did obeisance to Darius.

87. That is one story of how Oebares contrived the outcome. There is another—for the Persians tell the story both ways—that Oebares had rubbed his hand against the mare's loins and then hidden his hand in his breeches. As the sun rose and the Six were letting their horses go, Oebares, stretching out his hand, brought it close to the nostrils of the stallion, who, immediately he smelled it, neighed and whinnied.

88. So Darius, son of Hystaspes, became king,¹¹ and all the peoples in Asia became his subjects, having been conquered by Cyrus and, after him, by Cambyses. All, that is, but the Arabians. These were never reduced to slavish subjection to the Persians but were guest-friends, because they had let Cambyses through into Egypt. Without the good will of the Arabians, the Persians could not have invaded Egypt. The first two marriages Darius made were among the Persians. He married the two daughters of Cyrus, Atossa and Artystone. Atossa had previously been married to her brother Cambyses and also to the Magian; Artystone was still a maid. He also married the daughter of Smerdis, son of Cyrus, whose name was Parmys; also Otanes' daughter, who had discovered the Magian to the conspirators. Everything was full of the power of Darius. First of all he made and set up a monument of stone. On it was an engraving

11. In 521 B.C.

of a man on horseback, with an inscription: "Darius, son of Hystaspes, with the help of his horse's excellence" (he there mentioned the stallion's name) "and that of Oebares the groom, won the kingship of Persia."

89. Having done these things in Persia, he set up twenty provinces, which the Persians themselves call satrapies. He set up the satrapies and appointed governors to them and appointed the tribute they should pay, nation by nation. He assigned to each nation those that were nearest to it, but the farther peoples he assigned to one nation or another. The governments and the yearly taxation were as follows. Those who were paying in silver must use the Babylonian talent, those in gold the Euboic. The Babylonian is worth one and one-sixth of the Euboic. In the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses there had been no regular fixed tax, only collection of gifts. Because of his tax assessment, and other things of the same kind, the Persians have a saying that Darius was a shopkeeper, Cambyses a master of slaves, and Cyrus a father. What they mean is that Darius kept petty accounts for everything, that Cambyses was hard and contemptuous, and that Cyrus was gentle and contrived everything for their good.

90.¹² From the Ionians, the Magnesians in Asia, and the Aeolians, Carians, Lycians, Milyans, and Pamphylians there came an aggregate of 400 talents of silver; this was the total tax assessed. This was the first tax province. From the Mysians, Lydians, Lasionians, Cabalians, and Hytennians came 500 talents; this was the second province. From the Hellespontines (as you go in on the right-hand side), Phrygians, Asiatic Thracians, Paphlagonians, Mariandynians, and Syrians there was a tribute of 360 talents; this was the third province. From the Cilicians came 360 horses, all white, one for each day of the year, and 500 talents of silver. Of these silver talents,

12. What follows is a systematic account of the provinces (satrapies) of the Persian empire under Darius. The information involved roughly coincides with what we know from the inscriptions of Darius that we possess. Herodotus is looking at the geographical organization of the territory as well as its assessment for tax purposes. We do not know where Herodotus got this document—or, rather, the information it contains—but the comparison with Darius' inscriptions seems to warrant us in rating highly Herodotus' accuracy, in the simplest sense of historical accuracy. After chapter 97 he is dealing with the far eastern boundary of the empire, and here he does not have the quality of information that marks the earlier part.

140 were spent on the cavalry that guarded Cilicia; the remaining 360 went to Darius. This was the fourth province.

91. From the city of Posideium—established by Amphilochus, the son of Amphiarus, on the border between the Cilicians and Syrians—as far as Egypt (and always omitting the Arabians, who were not subject to tax), there was a tax assessment of 350 talents. In this province was all of Phoenicia, Palestinian Syria, and Cyprus. This was the fifth province. From Egypt and those parts of Libya that neighbor Egypt, and Cyrene and Barca (for these areas were all reckoned into this province of Egypt), there came a tribute of 700 talents, apart from the silver from Lake Moeris, which was from the fisheries. Apart from this silver and the grain that was measured out, there came, I say, 700 talents. As concerns the grain, this was 120,000 bushels, measured out to the Persians and their allies who were guarding the White Fort in Memphis. This was the sixth province. The Sattagydae, Gandarii, Dadicae, and Aparytae paid, all together, 170 talents. This was the seventh province. From Susa and the rest of the Cissian country came 300. This was the eighth province.

92. From Babylon and the rest of Assyria came 1,000 talents of silver and 500 boys, to be eunuchs. This was the ninth province. From Ecbatana and the rest of Media and from the Paricanians and the Orthocorybantians, 450 talents. This was the tenth province. The Caspii, Pausicae, Pantimathi, and Daritae paid jointly 200 talents. This was the eleventh province.

93. From the Bactrians, as far as the Aegli, came a tribute of 360 talents. This was the twelfth province. From the Pactyc country and Armenia and the neighboring parts, as far as the Euxine Sea, there came 400 talents. This was the thirteenth province. From the Sagartii, Sarangeis, Thamanaei, Utii, Myci, and those who live on the islands in the Red Sea, where the King establishes the men who are called "The Transplanted"—from all these came a tribute of 600 talents. This was the fourteenth province. The Sacae and the Caspii contributed 250 talents. This was the fifteenth province. The Parthians, Chorasmians, Sogdians, and Arians paid 300. This was the sixteenth province.

94. The Paricanii and Ethiopians in Asia contributed 400 talents. This was the seventeenth province. To the Matieni and Saspiri

and Alarodii was assigned a tax of 200 talents. This was the eighteenth province. To the Moschi, Tibareni, Macrones, Mossynoeci, and Mares was assigned a tax of 300 talents. This was the nineteenth province. The number of Indians is far greater than any other people I know of, and they contributed more also than any others. Theirs was a tax of 360 talents of gold dust. This was the twentieth province.

95. The Babylonian silver, reckoned in terms of the Euboic currency, comes to 9,880 Euboic talents. If one then counts the gold as worth thirteen times the silver, the gold dust is worth 4,680 Euboic talents. Putting all together, the yearly tribute to Darius amounts to 14,560 talents. In this total I disregard units of less than ten talents.

96. This tribute came to Darius from Asia and some few parts of Libya. But as time went on, there was another field of taxation in the islands¹³ and again in Europe, as far as Thessaly. His tribute the King stores as follows: he melts it down and pours it into earthen vessels, and when he has filled the vessel, he breaks off the outer layer of baked earth. When he needs money, he cuts off from the ingot as much as he wants for the coinage.

97. These were the governments and the settings of the taxation. I have not recorded any taxation of Persia, which is the only country not subject to tax. The Persians hold their land free of tax. The following peoples are not ordered to pay any taxes, but they contribute gifts. The Ethiopians who are neighbors to Egypt—that is, those Ethiopians whom Cambyses subdued on his way to the long-lived Ethiopians—and those who are settled about holy Nysa and celebrate festivals to Dionysus—these two peoples together bring their gifts every other year. (These Ethiopians and their neighbors are like the Callantian Indians in that they have black semen instead of white; they live in underground dwellings.)¹⁴ The gifts of these peoples, which were still being given in my time, were two choenixes of unrefined gold and two hundred ebony logs, five Ethiopian boys, and twenty great elephant tusks. The Colchians also contributed gifts, and so did their neighbors as far as the Caucasus Mountains (for as far as these mountains the government is Persian, but north of there no one regards the Persians); these people still

13. The Greek islands in the Aegean Sea.

14. See, for the same observation, chapter 101 of this book. Some editors think that the passage was mistakenly transferred from there to here. The Callantians are also referred to in 3.38, where they are called Callatians.

contributed gifts in my time and made the collection every four years. Their gifts were a hundred boys and a hundred girls. The Arabians contributed a thousand talents of frankincense every year. These, then, were the gifts that these peoples brought to the King, apart from the taxes.

98. The great abundance of gold, from which they bring to the King their gold dust, is won by the Indians as I shall show. All the eastern portion of India is sand. Indeed, of all the people whom we know and about whom there can be said anything with exactness, the Indians, of all the nations in Asia, live furthest to the east and the rising sun; and all the country of the Indians to the east is desert because of the sand. There are many peoples among the Indians, all speaking different languages, and some of them are nomads and some are not, and some of them live in swamps round rivers and eat raw fish, which they catch out of the reed boats from which they fish. Each boat is made of a single section of a great reed. These Indians also wear garments made of reeds. They mow and cut the reeds from the river and then weave them together, in the fashion of a mat, and put it on like a breastplate.

99. Others of the Indians, living to the east of these, are nomads and eaters of raw meat. They are called Padaei, and these are their customs: when one of their citizens falls sick, be it man or woman, those of closest association with him—men if he be a man—kill him, saying that, as he wastes away with disease, his flesh is being lost to them. If he denies that he is sick, they will still not grant him that but will kill and eat him anyhow. If it be a woman that is sick, it is again those that have had most to do with her that treat her just as the men treated the man. When a man comes to old age, they kill him and make a banquet of him; but not many of the people come to be of this kind because, before that, they fall sick and are, every one, killed.

100. There are other Indians, again, and another style of life. These will not kill any living thing, nor do they sow or possess houses; and what they eat is herbs. There is among them a grain about the size of millet within a husk, and this grain grows unsown out of the earth. The people collect it and boil and eat it, husk and all. When one of these falls sick, he wanders into the desert and lies down, and no one troubles about him, whether he is sick or dead.

101. Among the Indians I have spoken of, sexual intercourse is

quite public, as it is among the animals; their skin is as black as that of the Ethiopians. The seed that they ejaculate into their women is not, like the rest of mankind, white but black, as their skin is. The seed of the Ethiopians is likewise black. These Indians live furthest from the Persians, toward the south, and they were not subjects of King Darius.

102. There are others of the Indians who are neighbors of the city of Caspatyrus and the Pactyic country, north of the rest of India, and these live much like the Bactrians. They are the most warlike of the Indians, and it is they who go in quest of the gold; for in these parts all is desert because of the sand. In this desert, and sand, there are ants that are in bigness lesser than dogs but larger than foxes. Some of them have been hunted and captured and kept at the palace of the Persian king. These ants make their dwelling underground, digging out the sand in much the same fashion as ants do in Greece, and they are also very like them in form. The sand that they dig out has gold in it. The Indians start off into the desert to get at this sand. Each of these hunters harnesses together three camels, a male on either side, on a trace, and the female in the middle, on which the rider is mounted. He takes care that this mare camel should have offspring as young as possible, from which she has been taken away for the ride. Among these people, camels are every bit as quick as horses, apart from being far more capable of carrying burdens.

103. The Greeks know camels, so I will not write to describe their shape; but I will tell something that is not known. The camel in the hind legs has four thighs and four knees, and its genitals are turned toward the tail, between its hind legs.

104. Such is the gear of the Indians and such their method of harnessing when they go after the gold. They go expressly at that hour of day that will allow them to be in their hunt for gold when the heat is greatest; for by reason of the heat the ants will have vanished underground. In India the sun is hottest early in the morning—not, as among other people, at midday; in India it is hottest from sunrise till the breaking-up of the market. During this period it is far hotter than at midday in Greece, so that it is said the inhabitants at this time wet themselves over with water. The midday heat is in India about the same as it is among other men. But, as the afternoon comes on, the Indian sun becomes much as it is elsewhere in

the early morning, and from then it grows cooler and cooler, till at sunset it is indeed exceedingly cold.

105. The Indians then come to the place with bags, and after they have filled their bags with sand, they make off for home as fast as they can. For, as the Persians say, the ants become aware of them by smell and pursue them. There is nothing quicker than these ants, and so, if the Indians did not get well ahead of them while the ants were collecting, not one of the men would escape alive. The male camels, which are inferior to the females in quickness, begin to lag behind and are cut loose by the riders, one at a time. But the mare camels, as they think of their young, do not slack off at all. This is how, say the Persians, the most of the gold is won by the Indians. The rest of it, a smaller amount, is mined in their country.

106. Somehow the furthest parts of the world have the finest things in them; but, in the same way, Greece has much the best blend of seasons. So, as I have just said, there is India, furthest to the east. In it all living things, four-footed and winged, are far bigger than elsewhere, except for the horses. Indian horses are inferior to the Median horses that are called Nesaeian. And there is this tremendous store of gold, some of it mined, some of it carried down by rivers, and some plundered from the ants, as I have shown. They have wild trees there that bear a fruit that is in beauty like wool and in excellence as good as that which comes from sheep. The Indians wear clothes made from these plants.¹⁵

107. Furthest to the south of all the world is Arabia, and this is the one country on earth for growing myrrh and cassia and cinnamon and gum-labdanum. All of these are won by the Arabians, but with difficulty, except for the myrrh. They collect frankincense by burning storax, which the Phoenicians export to Greece. This burning is a part of the harvesting of the frankincense. For the bushes that grow frankincense are guarded by tiny winged snakes, of dappled color, and there are great numbers of them around each bush; these are the snakes that attack Egypt.¹⁶ There is nothing that can drive them from the bushes except the smoke of the storax.

108. The Arabians say that the whole land would be filled with

15. Cotton.

16. Cf. 2.75.

these snakes if something did not happen to them which I have known to happen to vipers. There is a divine providence, with a kind of wisdom to it, as one might guess, according to which whatever is cowardly of spirit and edible should be prolific in progeny, so that, with all the eating of them, they should not fail to exist; while things that are savage and inflict pain are infertile. For instance, the hare is hunted by every wild beast, bird, and man; but it is very prolific. It is the only one of all creatures that conceives on top of an existing pregnancy. Some of its children in the womb have fur already, while others are still bare; some are being shaped in the womb while others are being conceived. That is how the hare is. But the lioness, which is the strongest and most daring of animals, gives birth only once in her life and to but one cub. When she gives birth, she expels the womb with the cub. The reason is that, when the cub in the womb begins to stir, it has the sharpest nails of any creature and tears at the womb; as it grows bigger, the scratching grows worse, and, when the birth is near, there is hardly any of the womb left whole.

109. So it is also with the vipers and the winged snakes in Arabia: if these were to be born as nature is in them to do, there would be no living for man. But, as it is, when they are mating in couples and the male is in the very act of emitting his seed, the female, as he does so, seizes him by the neck and, hanging on, never lets him go till she has bitten the neck through. This is how the male dies; but the female pays a kind of recompense, too, to the male. For the children, while still in the womb, take vengeance for their male parent by eating through their mother's insides and so make their entry into the world after eating up her womb. Other snakes, which are not destructive of man, lay eggs and hatch out an infinity of children. Vipers are all over the earth; but these winged snakes are all concentrated in Arabia and nowhere else. That is why they seem so numerous, because they are all in this place only.

110. That is how the Arabians get their frankincense; and this is how they get the cassia: they bind ox-hides and other kinds of leather over all their body and their faces, except their eyes, when they go out to get cassia. This grows in shallow ponds, and round the pond and in it there live winged creatures, very like bats, with a dreadful squeak and very ready to fight. You must ward these off your eyes if you are to harvest the cassia.

111. Their method of collecting cinnamon is even more remarkable. Where it grows and what sort of land produces it they cannot say, except that they declare, with a show of reason, that it grows in the places where Dionysus was reared. They say that great birds carry these dry sticks, which we have learned from the Phoenicians to call cinnamon, and that the birds carry the sticks to their nests, which are plastered with mud and are placed on sheer crags where no man can climb up. The Arabians have found the following trick to deal with this. They cut out the limbs of dead oxen and asses, taking as much of the limbs as possible, and carry them to the part of the country where the nests are, and there they put them near the nests and themselves withdraw to a distance. The birds swoop down and carry off the limbs of the beasts to their nests, and the nests, being unable to bear the weight, break and fall down, and the Arabians approach and collect what they want. Thus is cinnamon gathered in these parts, and so from there it comes to other countries.

112. Gum-labdanum, which the Greeks call ledanum and the Arabians ladanum, is even more strangely produced. It is the most sweet-smelling of all things, and yet its birth is in the worst of stinks. For it is found growing in the beards of he-goats; it forms in them like tree gum. This is a substance useful for many perfumes, and the Arabians burn it chiefly as incense.

113. That, then, is enough about spices and perfumes. There is a most marvelous sweet smell from all this land of Arabia. There are there also two varieties of sheep that are worthy of wonder and occur nowhere else. The one of these has a long tail, not less than four and one-half feet. If this were suffered to trail after the sheep, it would be injured because of the rubbing of the tail on the ground. As it is, every shepherd knows enough of carpentry to make a small cart on which to fasten the tail, one for each sheep. The other variety of sheep has a thick tail that is one and one-half feet broad.

114. To the southwest of the world, Ethiopia is the furthest of all inhabited lands. It has much gold and abundant elephants, and all manner of wild trees and ebony, and the tallest, handsomest, and longest-lived men.

115. These, then, are the countries that are at the uttermost ends of the earth in Asia and Libya. But about the limits of the world toward the west, in Europe, I cannot speak with certainty. For my own part, I do not accept that there is a river, called Eridanus by

the barbarians, that issues into a sea toward the north, from which it is that amber comes; nor do I know of the actual existence of the Tin Islands, from which our tin comes. The very name Eridanus speaks against their story, for it is a Greek, not a barbarian, word, made up by some poet or other. Nor have I been able, for all my efforts that way, to hear from anyone who was an eyewitness that there is a sea beyond Europe. But certainly our tin and our amber come from the edges of the world.

116. It is clear that there is far the greatest supply of gold to the north of Europe, but how it is got is again something I cannot tell exactly; it is said that the Arimaspi—men with one eye—steal the gold from the griffins. I cannot be persuaded about this either—that there exist in nature men who are just like everyone else except that they have only one eye. Certainly, however, it seems likely that the ends of the earth, which enclose and entirely shut in all the rest, should have in themselves what we think most beautiful and rarest.

117. There is a plain in Asia shut in on every side by mountains, and there are five ravines that break through the mountains. This plain was once owned by the Chorasmians; it lies on the borders of the Chorasmians themselves and the territory of the Hyrcanians, Parthians, Sarangians, and Thamanæans; afterwards, when the Persians conquered, the land became the property of the Great King. From the mountains that surround the plain flows a mighty river, the name of which is the Aces. Now this river in the old days divided into five and watered the territories of the five nations just mentioned, each one through its ravine; but when the Persians took over, this is what was done with the river and its openings: the King built and set up a gate at each ravine. As the water was cut off from getting out, the plain within the mountains became a huge lake; for the river flowed in but had nowhere egress. So those who were wont to use the water and now have none are greatly at a loss. For in winter there is rain there, as in all other countries, but in summer the inhabitants have constant need of water for the millet and sesame seed that they sow. So when no water is given them, they and their womenfolk come to the Persians and, standing at the gates of the royal palace, raise a great to-do, and the King gives orders to open the gates that lead to these people's country, for those who need it worst. When their land is satiated with drinking up the

water, these gates are closed off again and the King orders the other gates opened to the other peoples who are in need. From what I hear, the King levies great sums for the opening of the gates, apart from the other tribute he exacts.

118. So much for that. Of the Seven who had formed the conspiracy against the Magian, one—Intaphrenes—had already been overtaken by death; he had done a deed of violence and insolence shortly after the uprising, and he died. This is how it was. He wanted to enter the palace on some business with the King, and the law stood, as I have related, that the Seven had free entry to the palace without announcing themselves, except at such times as the King was in bed with a woman. Therefore, Intaphrenes thought fit that no one should announce him, but that, since he was one of the Seven, he might enter. Now, the gatekeeper and the messenger-bearer would not suffer it; for, they said, the King *was* in bed with a woman. Intaphrenes thought that the men lied; he drew his scimitar and cut off their ears and their noses, threaded them on his horse's bridle and tied this round the men's necks, and so let them go.

119. They showed themselves to the King and told him why they had so suffered. Darius was terrified that the Six might have done this by common agreement, and so he sent for them, one by one, and made test of their mind toward himself—as to whether what had been done was done to their common liking. When he found out that Intaphrenes had not acted with the consent of the rest of them, he had him arrested, together with his sons and all his household. For he had strong thoughts that the man was plotting a rising against him, together with his kinsfolk. So he arrested them and put them in prison, to await their death. The wife of Intaphrenes came constantly to the King's door and wailed and lamented. And this she did again and again—so much so that Darius was moved to pity her. So he sent his messenger to her and said, "Woman, King Darius grants you the release of whichever of your imprisoned household you will choose." She took thought and then said, "If the King gives me the life of one of them, I will, of all of them, choose that of my brother." Darius heard this and was astonished at what she said, and so he sent again: "The King asks you on what grounds you would abandon your husband and sons and choose your brother to survive. Surely he is more distant from you than your children and less dear