The Four-Winged Guardian Figure

From a lonely pillar at Pasargadae the phantom of Cyrus the Great flits across the ruins of the long deserted city and beckons us to consider the remains of one of the world's greatest imperial dynasties: by a strange freak of archaeology we have a fleeting glimpse of a royal image arrested for eternity in stone. Many will be familiar with this great winged figure (P1. II) naming the king, the sole survivor of four which once stood on opposite sides of two doorways in the hypostyle building known as Portal R at Pasargadae.¹ The top of this monument, now vanished, was once inscribed in three languages, Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian, and posterity must be grateful to Ker Porter² who, just before 1820, copied the inscription, and likewise to Flandin and Coste who left another record of its unique size and shape.

The inscription itself makes a simple statement: "I (am) Cyrus the king an Achaemenian," an authentic and contemporaneous record of the style used by the early forerunners of the dynasty, before the reign of Darius, when titles became pompous and elaborate.

The chosen site for the king is a remarkable contrast to the simplicity of the inscription, and was perhaps intended to signify imperial magnificence: a strange Persian version of a concept of the divine Pharaoh. The winged sphinx borne on the wings of the free-flying sphinxes, a variety of design already familiar in Egypt, but unique in the Near East as applied to a Persian king. The monument which must have stood in Pasargadae from some unknown sources on the coast of Phoenicia, and that cannot mean it is the same and exactly of the same spatio-temporal grid which has been rehearsed for the Nile, to a form appropriate to the idea. A recurring explanation of the strange transformations has recently been made by Dr. R. B. Parkinson: he sees it as an expression of the cosmological metaphor which in variant form was employed by the Greeks. It is a metaphor which an inscription of the same period referred to a metaphorical interpretation of the seasonality and climatic relations towards the various religious methods within that empire.³ I find this interpretation of the original Persian form more persuasive because in the native "Punere de Ahuriman," in which Portal R gave access to the remains of later occupations, including a grid of stone blocks and the site, the mention of the god and the divinity in origin, and destination of the picturesque figural group which has been identified from the names of Narshar and Harvat, (P1. IV). On another period of the same period tradition was set up after the king of a distant province, it is a territory of the country of the Achaemenian (P1. IV).

¹I owe this information to David Stronach whose forthcoming book on the excavations which he directed on behalf of the British Institute of Persian Studies at Pasargadae will demonstrate the probability that four such figures, not more, existed and were in the symmetrical fashion of Achaemenian art placed in pairs.

²Ker Porter, Travels in Georgia, Persia etc. (London 1822) II, pl. 13; C. Texier, Description de L’Arménie, la Perse et La Mésopotomie II, (Paris, 1852), pl. 84. For an illustration of Ker Porter’s original water-colour sketch, now in the British Museum, see R. D. Barnett, “Sir Robert Ker Porter, Regency Artist and Traveller,” p. 22 and P1. IV, below.

Pl. III. Winged genius from the Palace of Sargon II of Assyria, Khorsabad.
(By kind permission of Messrs. Thames & Hudson from *The Art of Mesopotamia*, by E. Strommenger and Max Hirmer.)
the reign of Darius, when titles became pompous and elaborate.

The crown worn by the king is a remarkable contrast to the simplicity of the inscription and was perhaps intended to signify imperial majesty: a strange Persian version of a concept of the divine Pharaoh. The splendid splayed horns are those of the *Ovis Longipes Palaeaeptiaca*, a variety of ram apparently common during the Middle Kingdom in Egypt, but rare thereafter. It is clear that this unique crown must have come to Pasargadae from some unknown source on the coast of Phoenicia, and that it carried with it the prestige and authority of some quasi-Egyptian god which had thus travelled far beyond the Nile, in a form appropriate to Ba’al. A convincing explanation of this strange transference has recently been made by Dr. R. D. Barnett: he sees in it an expression of the oecumenical attitude of the Achaemenian kings who, from the time of Cyrus onwards, adopted a liberal policy of tolerance and conciliation towards the various religions embraced within their empire. I find this interpretation of the winged Cyrus the more attractive because in the nearby “Palace of Audience” to which Portal R gave access there were the remains of other carvings, including a god or priest clad with a fish cloak, clearly Assyrian in origin, and derived from the protective magical figures which had once adorned the portals of Nimrud and Nineveh, (Pl. III). On another portal the foot of a raptorial bird reminds us not only of the legs of a divine guardian on a doorway of Sennacherib’s Palace at Nineveh, but also of the claws of the dragons on the Ishtar Gate at Babylon.

Here indeed at Pasargadae, in these quasi Phoenician, Assyrian and Babylonian images, we have a forerunner of the Gate of All Nations which later on Darius was to erect at Persepolis.

Let us return to our rather sinister winged figure (Pl. II) which may have been remembered by Herodotus who tells us that Cyrus saw in his sleep the eldest of the sons of Hystaspes (Darius) with wings upon his shoulders, shadowing with the one wing Asia, and Europe with the other. Herodotus therefore, as I surmise, may have known of the close connection between this type of winged figure and the image of Iranian majesty, which he associated with a dream prognosticating the king’s death before his last, fatal campaign across the Oxus.

3 See F. L. Griffiths, *Beni Hassan* II, 15 and pl. 3.35 and A.A.A. IX (1922), pl. XXXII; F. E. Zeuner, *A History of Domesticated Animals*, pp. 154, 178. This type of sheep, long extinct in Egypt, is said to be represented by the modern Abyssinian, maned sheep.


5 The Pasargadae reliefs depicting a pair of human feet followed by the clawed feet of a mythical beast are illustrated in E. Herzfeld and F. Sarre, *Iranische Felsreliefs* (Berlin, 1910), fig. 84. Brick reliefs on the Processional Street at Babylon in E. Koldewey, *The Excavations at Babylon*, translated by A. S. Johns (London, 1914), figs. 32, 33—leg of a širrush and raptorial bird on p.48. C. J. Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria*, pl 17, divine guardians of Sennacherib at Nineveh. See also E. Strommenger, *The Art of Mesopotamia* (1962), pl. 226, which illustrates a four winged Assyrian figure facing right, carrying bucket and cone, and wearing a royal helmet with divine horns. This protective genius set up in the Palace of Sargon at Khorsabad, probably in 706 B.C. is in many respects iconographically in line with that of Cyrus and separated from it by not more than one hundred and sixty years. See also note 8, and below, T. Kawami, “A possible source for the sculpture of the Audience Hall, Pasargadae,” *Carl Nylander, Ionians in Pasargadae* (Uppsala, 1970), figs, 42a–b, p.123.

6 Hdt. I, 209.

7 Hdt. I, 210: “Thus Cyrus spoke in the belief that he was plotted against by Darius; but he missed the true meaning of the dream, which was sent by the deity to forewarn him, that he was due to die then and there, and that his kingdom was to fall at last to Darius.”
The building in which originally four of these magnificent figures stood must have served as a processional way and portal of access to the larger hypostyle palaces, P and S, which were in the vicinity, and we can imagine the intention, namely that the king should pass on his way to the state apartments and ceremonial halls under the cover of his guardian angel. This image at Pasargadae reminds me of a magical winged guardian which at Nimrud (Calah), the ancient military capital of Assyria, three centuries earlier had been set in the N.W. of Ashurnasirpal and watched over the king as he passed along the corridors from his private apartments to the throne-room and of another, about one hundred and fifty years older, erected by Sargon II in his Palace at Khorsabad.8

Authorities concerned with the history of Assyrian and Iranian art have been careful to point out that these winged prophylactic genii are not portraits of the king himself, even though the Pasargadae image has a superscription identifying the figure with Cyrus. But it is worth remembering that the corresponding Assyrian winged genii often carry inscriptions naming the king, and recounting his prowess and military exploits. It is clear to me, and perhaps I am heretical in expressing this opinion, that such figures were directly associated with the magical and charismatic powers ordinarily attributed to a king in the Orient, and that these winged phantoms corresponded with a concept, as so often best expressed by Shakespeare, “There’s such divinity doth hedge a king.”9

Much has been written about the simple formula of the trilingual inscription which once ran across the top of the image of Cyrus at Pasargadae, and it has been well demonstrated by R. Ghirshman that this is an authentic and contemporary record of the style used the early forerunners of the Achaemenids; it was from the reign of Darius onwards that titles became pompous and elaborate.10 The simple style of Cyrus was undoubtedly a reflection of Elamite royal custom and recalls the curt inscription at Choga Zanbil, 13th century B.C., which names the founder as “I Untash-Gal.” None of the inscriptions at Pasargadae describe the monarch as “King of Kings” Nor do they refer to his paternity, only to the name of the clan, Achaemeniam, as with Zoroaster who was never known by the name of his father, but as “the Spitamid.” In this way these Pasargadae legends of which there were probably not less than twenty-four,11 on the Palace portals, probably in three languages, are a remarkable contrast to the one hundred and ten or more royal12 inscriptions of the later members of the dynasty, scattered throughout Persepolis and elsewhere. Inconsistencies in the style of these titles which simply mention the king, sometimes the great king, and variations in orthography belong to a time when the royal house was groping to establish itself with the aid of formulae that later would become set.

8Mallowan, *Nimrud and its Remains*, I, 103, for the reference to the winged figures along the passage ways. Op. cit. 120 and Folding Map III for position and description of passage P. The Assyrian relief was on the wall of the corridor between P and N. See also note 5. The later figure in Sargon’s palace at Khorsabad is even more closely related to the winged one at Pasargadae, Pl. III.

9The quotation is taken from the mouth of Claudius in *Hamlet* and in full runs, “There’s such divinity doth hedge a king, that treason can but peep to what it would”: singularly apposite to the dream of Cyrus which foretold the transference of his dynasty to a collateral branch of the family, an event which occurred after the death of his son Cambyses.

10R. H. Ghirshman *J.N.E.S.* XXIV (1965), 246.


12Nylander, op. cit., p. 158.
Many and elaborate dissertations have been written about whether or not the Old Persian writing on these monuments was actually inscribed during the lifetime of Cyrus or after his death. The reason for this apparently strange hesitation is a passage written by his second successor, Darius, in paragraph 70 on the great rock of Bisutun which has generally been taken to mean that Darius himself claimed to have been the first to write in the Old Persian language, that is, that he had invented the alphabetic cuneiform used to express his native language. Hitherto court writing had perforce used Elamite, Babylonian, or Aramaic. Not all scholars accept this interpretation of the Bisutun inscription and many think, and probably rightly, that Darius was not denying the existence of prior inscriptions by Cyrus in Old Persian; on the contrary he was merely claiming that he was the first to make his proclamations through the medium of Aramaic as well as other languages.

Nylander, after some hesitation, favoured the thesis that the Old Persian legends were added later, over the Elamite and Babylonian. But more recently Hallock applying methods appropriate to a computer has brilliantly and briefly demonstrated the probability—it cannot amount to certainty—that the simplicity of the signs and their restricted number are to be ascribed to Cyrus himself, whose scribe was in an experimental stage of writing, and that Darius added to and elaborated the system.

Archaeology comes to the support of epigraphy in elucidating the problem, for as a result of the excavations conducted by David Stronach on behalf of the British Institute of Persian Studies it has now been possible to establish the fact that while Pasargadæ ceased to be the main imperial capital after the death of Cyrus, it was continuously inhabited down to Seleucid times, and moreover, from the use of the claw chisel, an instrument unknown to Cyrus’ masons, it may be deduced that work was continued and completed in some of the palaces and other buildings during the reign of Darius, who added more inscriptions naming Cyrus after that monarch had died.

We know from Bisutun that Darius did nothing to recall the past achievements of Cyrus, neither did he name him among the eight rulers of his family whom he claimed as predecessors. Indeed the name of Cyrus is only mentioned inevitably, in a single context which tells us that the usurper Smerdis claimed to have been his son. No doubt Darius was jealous of the achievements of a major branch of the clan to which he was alien. It is interesting that this bitterness between the two separate branches of the royal house persisted over the centuries, for Ctesias the Greek physician who served for many years at the court of Artaxerxes II, 405–359 B.C., claimed that Cyrus the Great was not an Achaemenian by birth but a commoner who had ingratiated himself with Cambyses and rebelled against him. The apparent early occurrence of the low-frequency values ku (attached to the two wedge sign) and ru (attached to a 3 wedge sign) both employed in the writing of the name (Kuruš) strongly suggests that CMa or some lost Cyrus inscription served as basic text. This is not incontrovertible evidence, nor does any such evidence exist.

We may however safely discount this statement for we know that Ctesias was an unreliable historian fed on tittle-tattle and harem gossip, and his story was merely aimed at discrediting the line of Cyrus and justifying the seizure of the throne by Darius. It seems likely that the occasion for this falsification of history would have been the recording of the unsuccessful revolt of Cyrus the Younger, killed at the battle of Cunaxa, whereupon Ctesias entered the service of Artaxerxes II who may well have been gratified at being exhibited as a true scion of a branch of the Achaemenian line, which needed support for its legitimacy. The tendentious pseudo-history of Ctesias as reported by Nikolaos of Damascus thus strengthens the general credibility of Herodotus, and of Xenophon, who record the legitimate claim to the throne of Cyrus the Great as the son of Cambyses I, and therefore grandson of Cyrus I.18

We have seen that on the great trilingual inscription carved to the order of Darius in 520 B.C. on the precipitous rock at Bisutun there is but a bare mention of the name of Cyrus. But paradoxically there is in that same inscription a wonderful testimony to the extent of Cyrus’ power, for in the sixth paragraph we have a record of the twenty three provinces which Darius the king proclaimed as having come to him by the favour of Ahuramazda—and he might well have added by the legacy of Cyrus. This we must deduce, for the inscription was completed in the third year of Darius’ reign, and the first two years were wholly occupied in repressing rebellions by pretenders to the throne—the false Smerdis among others who tried to establish that he was the son of Cyrus and brother to Cambyses II. Now we know that Cambyses’ reign must have been largely occupied with his conquest of Egypt, that he was troubled by internal rebellions—an unbalanced, perhaps insane monarch19 who in his comparatively short reign of seven or eight years could not have acquired the vast empire bequeathed to Darius. We may therefore have every confidence in the later Greek and Roman historians who have left us a record of Cyrus’ domains.

Thus we may accept the list of Darius’ provinces on Bisutun as a more or less accurate presentation of what Cyrus had first achieved for the Achaemenian empire. The Old Persian version records these countries as follows: Persia, Elam, Babylonia, Arabia, Egypt, those who are beside the sea, Sardis, Ionia, Media, Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactria, Sogdiana, Gandhara, Scythia, Sattagydia, Arachosia, Maka: in all XXIII provinces. We may therefore deduce that territorially Cyrus had first acquired for a united Iran tracts of land which extended from the Greek cities on the western seaboard of Asia Minor, Palestine, Syria and Babylonia into the Caucasus and Transcaspian provinces, through what is now Afghanistan into the distant territory of Bactria and the vast tract of land between the Oxus and the Jaxartes rivers. There is little doubt that he had set himself the task of conquering Egypt, but death intervened and this target was left to his son Cambyses who fulfilled the grand design.

It is instructive to compare the list on the rock at Bisutun with the more detailed list

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18 Whose reign first appeared in history through the discovery at Nineveh by R. Campbell Thompson of this earlier Cyrus in the annals of Ashur-bani-pal who exacted tribute from him, see A.A.A. XX(1931–2), 95. Parentage in Hdt. I, 46, Xenophon, Cyrop I, II, 1.
19 Hdt. III, 30. He was an overbearing monarch; killed the Apis Bull and committed suicide when his throne was in danger.
in Herodotus\textsuperscript{20} which applies to the state of the empire controlled by Darius at the end of his thirty-six year reign when he had substantially added to the legacy at his disposal at the beginning of it. Here we have the empire for administrative purposes divided into twenty provinces, each a separate satrapy paying a specified tribute: the notable and distinctive additions were of course Egypt and India or rather the Indians who paid “a tribute exceeding that of every other people, to wit, three hundred and sixty talents of gold dust” which was reckoned at thirteen times the worth of silver or 4680 talents. This would have been the most precious jewel of all for Cyrus’ crown but although in encompassing Bactria, Sogdiana, and Gandhara he may well have gazed at the Pamirs and the Hindu Kush, he could not quite achieve that more distant goal.\textsuperscript{21} But it is known from historical and topographical evidence that he established a powerful frontier fortress named Cyropolis (Kurkath)\textsuperscript{22} which was identified as his foundation Alexander the Great, and later by the Arabs, on the river Jaxartes. In this city he established for the first time an Achaemenian frontier post on the very boundaries of Central Asia—a bulwark against the hordes of migrant tribes who were perpetually threatening Iran from as far afield as Outer Mongolia.

We may however safely accept the testimony of Alexander’s historian Arrian who says “but no one else ever invaded India, not even Cyrus, son of Cambyses, though he made an expedition against the Scythians and in all other ways was the most energetic of the kings of Asia.” But he had the thrill of discovering new and unknown peoples, of incorporating them in the comity of Iranian nations, of exacting gifts in his honour and doubtless of laying down and initiating the lines on which his enormously stretched civil service was to operate under the Persian system of satrapies. Herodotus tells us:\textsuperscript{23} “During all the reign of Cyrus, there were no fixed tributes, but the nations severally brought gifts to the king. On account of this and other such like doings, the Persians say that Darius was a huckster, Cambyses a master, and Cyrus a father; for Darius looked to making a gain in everything; Cambyses was harsh and reckless; while Cyrus was gentle and provided them with all manner of goods.”

From Darius’ tribute list we are able to compare the amounts paid in silver talents by each province and we may note that the ninth province of Darius, Babylonia and Assyria, which contributed a thousand talents was by far the richest prize: the acquisition of these Mesopotamian territories occurred in the last decade of Cyrus’ regain, 539 B.C. It is also noticeable that as soon as Sardis and Lydia fell into his lap, probably about 545 B.C., or possibly a year or two later,\textsuperscript{24} together with the wealthy Greek cities of Ionia, he must have been enriched by a great accretion.

\textsuperscript{20} Hdt. III, 90–94.
\textsuperscript{21} Arrian, Indica 9, 10.
\textsuperscript{22} E. Benveniste, “La Ville de Cyreschata,” Journal Asiatique CCXXXIV Années 1943–5 (1947), for a summary of the evidence and references to the classical authorities. Alexander, according to Strabo XI, 4, and Quintus Curtius VII, 6, 20, had desired to spare the city out of respect for the memory of its founder, Cyrus. The position of this site has been marked on the map taken from the Nonesuch Herodotus, but there omitted, see p. 5.
\textsuperscript{23} Hdt. III, 89.
\textsuperscript{24} H. T. Wade-Gery in J.H.S. LXXI (1951), p.219, note 38, deduces from Herodotus that Sardis did not fall before 544 B.C.—battle of Pallene 546, fall of Sardis perceptibly later; he therefore prefers Herodotus’ evidence to the conjecture based on the Nabonidus Chronicle that Cyrus defeated Croesus in 547 B.C. See also note 34.
of gold and silver indispensable to the financing of his campaigns.

Much money must also have been added to the Persian treasury through Cyrus’ incorporation of the provinces that stretched along and behind the southern Iranian seaboard, particularly the hinterland which contained the lines of caravan routes to India—Parsa, Drangiana, Arachosia and the territory called Maka, probably the ancient Makkān which at this period presumably referred to territory on either side of the Persian Gulf and may have included Oman. We have only to turn to Darius’ tribute lists to appreciate the outstanding value of these satrapies. And here archaeology comes to the aid of history, for Strabo25 tells us that there were other palaces besides Persepolis and Pasargadæ and he mentions one “on the coast near Taokē as it is called.” We may ask if this is not to be identified with a remarkable discovery appropriately made in Cyrus’ twenty fifth centennial year by an archaeological expedition under the direction of Ali Akbar Safaraz: two lines of beautifully and simply carved column bases found in the course of excavating a palace of Cyrus the Great, some 30 kilometers from the Persian Gulf off the highway connecting Bushire and Borazjan, in an area which had previously turned up Achaemenian artefacts.26 This, we may be certain, is a herald of other discoveries to come, and in the course of time, remains attributable to Cyrus himself will surely be found in more than one outpost of his empire.

In assessing the accretion of wealth that came to Iran from the time of Cyrus onwards we should not forget the great influx of men, animals as well as timber and other commodities—gold from Sardis and Bactria, which together with Sogdiana supplied lapis lazuli and carnelian: in the time of Darius, Cilicia, according to Herodotus, contributed 360 white horses and Babylonia 400 boy eunuchs.

Ancient Travel
These considerations lead us to broach another topic, namely ancient travel. How long did it take for the armies, embassies, officials, and traders to cross from one end of the empire to another? We know that relays of post horses supplied at regular stations spread out at a day’s interval over the royal roads and the Royal Mail were elaborately organized, as indeed they had to be if so vast an empire was not to fall apart.27 How long did it take Cyrus to march across to Sardis in the campaign which resulted in the capture of that city? According to Herodotus28 the distance from Susa to Sardis over the approved route worked out at about 1700 miles and was accomplished in 90 days—at the rate of about 19 miles a day—an exhausting rate of travel—it is likely that the preliminary subjugation of Western Asia Minor and the intervening territory must have taken Cyrus at least a year. In the opposite direction we have remarkable evidence of envoys travelling from Iran to Afghanistan, a distance which I would reckon at approximately 1200 miles over one of three possible routes. On one of the Persepolis Fortress tablets published by R. T. Hallock29 we have a record of a guide named Zišanduš and his five boys

25Strabo XV, 3.
26“Palace of Cyrus Unearthed” A. T. Zand in Tehran Journal, June 1, 1971, with illustration of three column bases.
27Hdt. VIII 98 and note in the Nonesuch Herodotus on the Persian posts. See also Esther VIII, 10, Ahasuerus (Xerxes) 485–464 B.C. sent letters all over the empire by means of swift horses that were bred from the royal stud.
28Hdt. V, 53 and note in the Nonesuch Herodotus.
who escort a lone woman, perhaps a princess all the way from Susa to Kandahar (Kandaraš). This is one of the set of texts of the fifth century B.C. which give evidence of distinguished couriers who escorted Indians, Cappadocians, Egyptians, men of Sardis and others. “Nothing mortal travels so fast as these messengers” says Herodotus in another context—speaking about the Royal Mail—“and these men will not be hindered from accomplishing at their best speed the distance which they have to go, either by snow, or rain, or heat, or by the darkness of night.” These distinguished couriers who escorted special parties where the ancestors of those who conduct Swan’s Tours and the like—they had to know every inch of the road and to be persona grata in the potentially hostile or friendly territories through which they passed. Perhaps the most distinguished of all these messengers was the angel Raphael who in disguise and for wages offered Tobit to escort his son all the way from Nineveh through Ecbatana (Hamadan) to Rhages (near Tehran). “Do you know the way to Media?” Tobias asked. “Yes” he said “I have often been there. I am familiar with all the routes and know them well.” Journeys of this kind had of course to be provided for by the house of Tobit, Jewish bankers, who during the late Assyrian empire under Sennacherib and Ezarhaddon had wisely dispersed their interests both in Assyria and in Media, in anticipation of a clash between the two.

Curriculum Vitae
A consideration of the vast distances that had to be covered by the armies of Cyrus for the acquisition of the empire must lead us to reflect, if only briefly, on the order and sequence of his campaigns. We know that he was about 40 years old when he came to the throne and about 70 when he died on campaign in Transoxiana. He must have been a very tough old man: so far as we know, his curriculum vitae runs approximately as follows: born 598 B.C., son of Cambyses I and of Mundane daughter of Astyages king of the Medes; married, probably not later than 578 B.C. to Cassandane 32 his best loved wife who bore him a son and heir, Cambyses II; when she died he ordered all his subjects to go into mourning; married secondly to Amytis; ascended to the throne 558 B.C.; conquest of modes, capture of their king Astyages, and of the Median capital Ecbatana (Hamadan) 550 B.C.; submission of Hyrcania and Parthia33 549 B.C.; submission of Lydia, capture of Sardis and of Croesus about 545 B.C.; capture of Babylon and king Nabonidus 539 B.C.; death beyond the Oxus fighting the Massagetae 529 B.C. 34

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30Hdt. VIII, 98. The mounted couriers of the express service to whom Herodotus refers are named as pirradaziš in the Elamite texts.
31Tobit V, 6–8. Long distance couriers in the reign of Artaxerxes, see Esther VIII, 9–12.
32Hdt. II, 1 for Cassandane wife of Cyrus. See also Hdt. I, 107, 108 for Mandane mother of Cyrus who was married by Astyages to a Persian of good family “but much inferior to a Mede of even middle condition;” but his father was none the less king of Anshan, at that time no doubt a petty vassal state of Media. Ctesias apud Photium ed. R. Henry, Persica, Chapters I, 2 pp.10–13, Collection Lebègue, (1947) differs from Herodotus but is unreliable.
33Hdt. I, 130, 153, 177, and notes in Nonesuch Herodotus on the sequence of these campaigns.
34I accept the general chronology proposed by Sidney Smith, Schweich Lectures, op. cit, p. 29. “According to Dinon, Cyrus the Great was 40 years old when he came to the throne, and reigned 30 years. Dinon is not reliable, and the figures are suspicious, but the fit the probabilities. Cyrus died in 529; his reign may well have begun in 558, and he may have been born in 598 for his grandfather was already king of Parsumash in 640.” Smith also recalls, op. cit. 123 note 35, that Herodotus gives 29 years for the length of Cyrus’ reign against Ctesias and Justin 30 and that the difference may be due to the months of the Babylonian year, “beginning of Kingship.” The date of the fall of Sardis however is still uncertain.
Chronology of Conquests
The situation which confronted Cyrus at the beginning of his reign has been admirably and succinctly expounded by Sidney Smith in his Schweich Lectures of 1940 as follows: “The Assyrians by hard fighting had kept open the passes into Armenia and Cappadocia for three centuries. After the fall of Nineveh (in 612 B.C.) the eastern and northern passes were held by the Medes, the northwestern were only open by favour of the Cilicians and Lydians, and subject to a treaty. The traffic from the Phoenician ports was interfered with by pirates from the Lydian coast, and by Greeks, the allies of the Egyptians.” Further, Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, “had attempted to secure that trade from the Persian Gulf was not diverted westwards; it was desirable to control the increasingly prosperous trade of Southern Arabia and the Red Sea.”35 Cyrus, in his ambitious attempt to assume empire in western Asia was governed by such consideration. The cycle of trade had to penetrate these political and geographical barriers, and we may watch him in pursuit of these objectives during the thirty years of his reign. The first decade, or most of it, was occupied in consolidating his position under the king of the Medes, whose daughter, Mandane, was his mother, that is to say, Astyages was his grandfather on the maternal side. These years must have been devoted by Cyrus to increasing his authority over the confederation of Persian tribes and to the intrigues which led to the capture of Ecbatana. Thereafter he inherited a not inconsiderable Median empire about which we know little except in so far as scattered references in the later Greek histories36 bear witness to its extensive ramifications in the east. The year after the defeat of Astyages, Hyrcania, and Parthia in Transcaspia acknowledged a new master, readily enough perhaps, and this allegiance secured Cyrus’ eastern flanks and enabled him to conduct the first of his great imperial campaigns—against Sardis; but probably that had entailed a distant march to the Caspian in order to establish his authority there.

It seems unlikely that he would have attempted the campaigns further east against Bactria and the Saceae or Sogdiana...
Map, showing the extent of the Achaemenian empire under Cyrus the Great and Darius, after the Nonesuch Herodotus, with the addition of Cyropolis. (By courtesy of The Nonesuch Press and T. L. Poulton.)
at so early a stage in his career. The take-over of Parthia and Hyrcania, formerly Median dependencies, provided him with a bulwark of security before embarking on his distant marches into Asia Minor where, according to Herodotus, “Cyrus in person subjected the upper regions, conquering every nation, and not suffering one to escape.” He also adds: “of these conquests I shall pass by the greater portion, and give an account of those only which gave him most trouble, and are the worthiest of mention”—proof that much information was available for which he could not find room in his histories—an assurance that we need not wholly discard the amplified accounts in the later Greek histories of Cyrus’ activities here and elsewhere.

The second decade must have been largely spent in the conquest and consolidation not only of the whole of Iran, but also of those distant flanks which were to put him in touch with the countries controlled by the great cities now named Merv and Samarcand. How many campaigns were involved we do not know, though as more excavations are to be conducted on these eastern confines, I do not doubt that we shall gradually come into possession of many wonderful clues.

We must however accept the fact previously mentioned that Cyrus never reached India, a design no doubt frustrated by his death in the field some hundreds of miles distant from its frontier. Arrian’s testimony in this respect is certainly sound.

How many campaigns in the field did Cyrus conduct in the course of this second decade 545–539 B.C. that is between the capture of Sardis and of Babylon? It is difficult to believe that he would have been away from home during all that time, for continued absence from the seat of government for so long would have constituted a danger to his dynasty. We know that his great imperial predecessors the Assyrians had conducted annual campaigns, but such marches to and fro rarely exceeded some five or six hundred miles, whereas Cyrus had to undertake the moving of armies up to five times that distance. It is reasonable to think that in the course of this second decade, approximately, he must have returned to his bases in Elam and Media at least three times, however confident he may have been in his satraps and allowing for the fact that his kingdom was sustained by the continuous acquisition of wealth that surged to the homeland on the tides of victory.

We have unfortunately no knowledge of the order in which he conducted his campaigns during this period, but perhaps we may be justified in postulating that Alexander, whose historians must have had intelligence about Cyrus’ military logistics, trod on much the same tracks, and for this reason I would suggest that although at the outset he must have marched due eastwards below the Caspian, at least one march was conducted by him down from

37 Hdt. I, 177.
38 Hdt. I, 96. “I know besides three ways in which the story of Cyrus is told, all differing from my own narrative.”
39 Indica 9, 10. Pliny, N.H. VI, 92 recorded that Kapisa (modern Kafshan) perhaps not much more than 250 miles from the upper Indus river was destroyed by Cyrus. The place is thought by A. D. H. Bivar to have been north of Kabul. See his in chapter in Central Asia, ed. Gavin Hambly (1969), p.20.
40 Xenophon, Gyrop. VII, 1–3 states that before his death, Cyrus now a very old man, returned for the seventh time in his reign to Persia. This statement may well be a true record of the facts—long absences punctuated by visits to the seat of government at home, about three times during each of the last two decades when he was his acquiring his empire.
the direction of Bactria (Afghanistan) through the Helmand basin, Arachosia, Gedrosia, Kerman, and Markan. Again we may consult Arrian, as I think, with some confidence; Nearchos reported that an attempt to reach India through South Baluchistan resulted in the loss of the greater part of Cyrus’ army.  

However that may be, Berosus follows Herodotus in asserting that Cyrus possessed all the rest of Asia at the time when he first attacked Babylon in 540 B.C.; as is confirmed by the famous inscribed cylinder in which Cyrus says “The kings of the Westland dwelling in tents, all those brought heavy tribute to me in Babylon and kissed my feet.” This climax of his military career was, according to Xenophon, immediately preceded by the reduction of Arabia where Nabonidus for ten years exiled to the oasis of Tema had perhaps been attempting to establish control over the caravan routes and trade on the Persian Gulf. At all events the year 539 B.C. marks the triumphant beginning of Cyrus’ third and last decade. Whatever he may have achieved militarily between 539 and 529 B.C. it is clear that the moment of his greatest triumph was in 539 B.C. when according to the Nabonidus Chronicle “In the month of Arahsamna, the third day, Cyrus entered Babylon. Green twigs, doubtless reeds or rushes to smooth the path of his chariot, were spread in front of him. The state of ‘peace’ was imposed on all the city. Cyrus sent greetings to all Babylon.”

The event marked a critical shift in the balance of power held by the contending forces of Western Asia. The peoples of Iran had for three quarters of a century been allied to Babylon, ever since the Medes made a combined attack on Nineveh in 612 and overthrew the empire of Assyria. Even as late as about 550 B.C. Cyrus had an understanding with Nabonidus that enabled this Babylonian monarch to invest Harran

41 Anabasis VI. 24. Indica 9. “Cyrus son of Cambyses had got through with only seven survivors, for Cyrus did come into these parts intending to invade the country of India; but before he could do so he lost the greater part of his army by the barrenness and difficulty of the route.”
42 He entered the city on 3rd Marcheswan, 539 B.C. (corrected date). Sidney Smith, “A Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus,” Babylonian Historical Texts (1924), p. 28. It should be noted that Sidney Smith, Schweich Lectures, op. cit. p. 119 note 18, drew attention to the fact that all the years given in his Babylonian Historical Texts are one too late—an error in the use of the Canon of Ptolemy. Corrected dating has been used here.
44 Cyropaedia VII, 4.
which had suffered Median occupation, and rebuild the temple of the Moon God. But once Lydia had been overthrown the balance of power was upset and the interests of Babylonia and Iran were in conflict.

The capture of Babylon, richest of all the Persian satrapies, inevitably brought in its train hegemony over the rich cities of Syria and Palestine, as well as the Phoenician coast which had formerly fallen within the Babylonian orbit, if not entirely under its control. There followed the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon, and the charter granted by Cyrus which we shall consider briefly later. Maurice Dunand has recently well demonstrated that the tolerance and liberal help granted on this occasion for the return of the Jews to Zion was the corner stone of s policy which was designed to take over the remnants of the old Babylonian empire in Phoenicia and Palestine. There is much archaeological evidence that the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem was followed by the repair and foundation of a chain of fortified sites which ran down from the Gulf of Issus at about the latitude of modern Alexandretta to the marches of Palestine where the Jews were doubtless expected to co-operate in sustaining a defensive bulwark against Egypt. The prophet who is usually referred to as Deutero-Isaiah leaves us in no doubt about his loyalty.” Thus says the Lord to his anointed Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and ungird the loins of kings . . . .” (Isaiah 45.1) The interests of Jewry and Iran thus went hand in hand and although we do not yet know to what extent Cyrus himself took a hand in engineering these defences, his impetus must be discerned behind the great quadrangular blocks of dressed masonry which the Achaemenians encouraged on the margins of river beds and rocky hill sides, as well as in the temples and fortresses at Sidon, Byblos, Banyas, Amrith-Marathus, Jerusalem, Lachish, and other sites on the way to Egypt.47

Cuneiform Records: The Cyrus Cylinder

Nothing could be more interesting historically than the examination of Cyrus’ campaigns in Babylonia and of his final peaceful entry into the capital. For our reconstruction of these events we depend not only on Greek sources, principally Herodotus, who wrote less than a century later, and Xenophon, but on the contemporary cuneiform records themselves—both the laconic and incisive Nabonidus Chronicle relating to these last days and the vivid records of Cyrus himself, first the famous Cyrus cylinder which he must have deposited in Babylon and then a highly coloured and prejudiced verse account. These two latter documents are masterpieces of political propaganda and although not the first of their kind in the ancient world are skilled instruments of tendentious history: and in addition there are the official proclamations, inscriptions on bricks, and the ordinary day to day business records from which we may strike a balance and arrive at a proper appreciation of the situation.

It is significant that in many of the documents which relate to Cyrus’ activities in Babylonia the titular describes him as king of Anshan which, at this period and in this context, may well have denoted the extensive tract of territory south east

47Maurice Dunand, “La Défense du Front Méditérranean de l’empire Achéménide” in The Role the Phoenicians in the Interactions of Mediterranean Civilizations, ed. by William Ward, Beirut American University Centennial Publication (1968). The full list of sites is therein mentioned: doubtless Phoenician masons were often used in their construction, but and siting have in many cases an Achaemenian impress.
of Elam where Pasargadae and later, Persepolis, were situated.\textsuperscript{48}

The Cyrus cylinder in an appropriate Babylonian from, and in contrast to the simple titular of the Pasargadae inscription says: “I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, legitimate king, king of Sumer and Akbar, king of the four quarters (of the world), son of Cambyses, great king, king of Anshan, descendant of Teispes, great king, king of Anshan, of a family (which) always (exercised) kingship; whose rule Bel and Nabu love, whom they want as king to please their hearts.”\textsuperscript{49}

In this way Cyrus characteristically and with diplomatic astuteness assimilated the acceptable style of titular to which Babylonia, heir of Sumerian kingship, had by long tradition been accustomed.

We cannot doubt that as with all great conquerors the elements of luck and good timing enabled Cyrus to triumph over Babylonia, which proved to be the richest of all his satrapies. Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, who ascended the throne in 556 B.C., was tainted by his northern ancestry; he was the son of the great high priestess of the temple of the moon god Sin, named E-Hul-Hul in Harran and reigned for seventeen troubled years. He soon fell foul of the priesthood by introducing an alien theology and an unacceptable image of the moon in eclipse that amounted to heretical practice. So uneasy did relations with the priests become that he went into self-imposed exile in the oasis of ‘Tema’ in N.W. Arabia, a ten year Odyssey, leaving behind him as regent his son Belshazzar who, according to the Old Testament,\textsuperscript{50} witnessed the final writing on the wall of the palace at Babylon, on the eve of its downfall.

During the many years of his exile the New Year festival at Babylon which required the personal presence of the king could not be celebrated, and the people of that city and of the surrounding country did not forgive him for this disgrace.

Thus when Cyrus began to undertake his campaign in 540 B.C. Babylonian affairs were at a low ebb and there was little loyalty to the ruler of the country. Gobryas (Gubaru), governor of Gutium,\textsuperscript{51} who had been the principal general of

\textsuperscript{48}Sidney Smith, \textit{Schweich Lectures}, op. cit, p.28 and map No. I opposite “both Parsumash and Anzan designate the province round Pasargadae” 120–23. In \textit{Proc. Soc. British Academy LV} (1970), “Elamite Problems,” p.256, I took the view that Anshan was “approximately coterminous with the present day territory of the Bakhtiarri,” a theory which perhaps finds support in the Sumerian Epic entitled Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta, translation by S. N. Kramer (U. of Pa. 1952) introduction page 1 and lines 70–82, 106–10, 165–67, where Anshan appears clearly to have been associated with mountainous territory in the reign of Enmerkar, third millennium B.C., E.D.II period. Dr. Georgina Herrmann has also kindly recalled for me a passage translated by S. N. Kramer in \textit{The Sumerians} (1963) p. 273 with reference to the Epic entitled Lugalbanda and Enmerkar. Lugalbanda a henchman of the latter volunteered to seek help for his master by making a dangerous journey to the city of Aratta. “He takes up his weapons, crosses the seven mountains that reach from one end of Anshan to the other”—or, as the poet puts it, from the “shoulder” of Anshan to the “head” of Anshan—and finally arrives with joyful step at his destination. The identification of frontiers, never firmly fixed in antiquity is however always difficult and boundaries frequently changed in the course of time, so that we need not accept evidence which holds good for the third millennium as applicable to later periods. I understand that John Hansman’s view coincides more nearly with that quoted from Sidney Smith qv. \textit{supra}, see “Elamites, Achaemenians and Anshan,” pp. 101–25 below.


\textsuperscript{50}\textit{Daniel} 5, 5; wrongly therein described as the king.

\textsuperscript{51}Sidney Smith, \textit{Schweich Lectures}, op. cit., 47 considers that Gubaru is to be identified with the Gobryas in Xenophon’s account and is not to be confused with the Persian Gubaru who was appointed by Cyrus satrap of Babylon immediately after his own entry. The latter was probably the Gobryas mentioned by Herodotus, one of Darius’ trusty officers.
Nebuchadrezzar, defected to the side of Cyrus, who within a year was able to make a peaceful entry into Babylon having first, according to Herodotus, used a cunning stratagem, namely the diversion of a main canal in order to overcome a formidable obstruction to entry.

The Cyrus cylinder tells us of the restoration of the derelict city and of its sanctuaries of a return of the gods to their ancient enclosures both in Babylon and elsewhere\(^\text{52}\) and of the re-institution of the New Year festival, for Marduk in his mercy had granted forgiveness on account of the probity and right conduct of the new prince, Cyrus, who respected the ways of the gods of the country. Not only did Cyrus burn the false images of his predecessor, but he instituted within the city a new slum clearance scheme and: “brought relief to their dilapidated housing (thus) putting an end to their (main) complaints.”

It seems most probable that Cyrus’ entry had been assisted by the large community of Jews which had been deported by Nebuchadrezzar II from Judah under Jehoiakin\(^\text{53}\) sixty years before; these exiles believed that in spite of their captive prosperity they would receive more liberal treatment at Persian hands. In this they were right and, as we learn from the book of Ezra, Cyrus gave a charter to the Jews for the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem and the return of the utensils sequestered by Nebuchadrezzar.\(^\text{54}\) It is interesting that no images or statuary came into question for these would have been anathema in the Jewish Temple. However that may be, part of the community under Sheshbazzar (probably a Jew) and Zerubbabel returned to Zion and joined the small remnant that still held Israel together.\(^\text{55}\) The remainder were loath to leave the commercial prosperity which they must obviously have acquired under Babylonian rule, however intolerant in religious matters their Babylonian masters may have been.

**Cyrus’ Toleration: Foreign Policy**

Religious toleration was a remarkable feature of Persian rule and there is no question that Cyrus himself was a liberal-minded promoter of this humane and intelligent policy. Many other examples of Cyrus’ help in restoring and alien shrines could be quoted, for this was part of a well thought-out policy. At Ur of the Chaldees, for example, a great centre for the worship of the Moon god Nanna, Cyrus installed a new gate in the great Temenos wall which had first been built by Nebuchadrezzar as a sacred enclosure for the principal temples in that city. Within the lining of the gatebox socket, Cyrus’ bricks proclaimed his might and liberality and he himself restored one of the temples.\(^\text{56}\)

\(^{52}\) U.V.B. I, 48. He is known to have contributed to the restoration of E-anna in Uruk (Erech).

\(^{53}\) II Kings 24, 10.

\(^{54}\) Ezra 6, 1–5.

\(^{55}\) Ezra 2 gives a register of those who returned but there is a discrepancy between the figures given there and those recorded in Nehemiaih and Esdras. None the less, between 30,000 and 40,000 Jews took advantage of the offer. A much smaller contingent of 1,500 persons returned later from Babylonia under Ezra in the seventh years of Artaxerxes (458 B.C.).

\(^{56}\) Cyrus adopted the pompous style of titulary used by royalty in Babylon. Burnt bricks of Erech (Uruk) are inscribed “Cyrus builder of Esagila and Ezida, son of Cambyses, Great King am I.” In this manner he honoured Marduk and Nabu under a titulary used previously by Nebuchadrezzar. See George Smith T.S.B.A. (1873), opp.p 146, Weissbach, Die Keilinschriften der Achämeniden (1911) pp. 8–9. In the same city, Uruk, he also contributed to the upkeep of E-anna. Similarly at Ur bricks were inscribed “Cyrus King of all, King of Anshan, son of Cambyses, King of Anshan. The great gods have delivered all the lands into my hand; the land I have made to swell in a peaceful habitation.” UET (1928), No. 194.; U.E. IX (1962), 7–8; Antiqs. Journal III, No. 4 (Oct. 1923) p. 315, pl. XXV.
Pl. II. The Winged Figure, once inscribed with the name of Cyrus. (Photo: Olive Kitson, Pasargadae expedition)
At the neighbouring city of Uruk, one of the principal urban centres of S. Babylonia, a command was given to four of the king’s officers for the provision of bowmen to guard the shepherds: “in accordance with the yearly arrangement in the barracks which are upon great river,” that is on the Euphrates. This edict delivered in the very first year of his occupation, shows that Cyrus was determined to keep order in the administration of Babylonia immediately after occupation, and that his Civil Affairs Officers had in readiness a properly prepared and well thought out plan for taking over the administration of a newly conquered country.57 From these official proclamations, as well as from many other documents, we know that business went on as usual, for the selling of date groves, the acquisition of land, the renting of ships, the transactions of goldsmiths and the like. Eight out of the twelve Achaemenian business documents found at Ur were written in his reign.58

One remarkable characteristic which many historians have attributed to Cyrus is his clemency to fallen rulers, in the true fashion of mediaeval chivalry. We may consider the treatment of three of his chief opponents: Croesus, Astyages, and Nabonidus. It is Herodotus’ story that Cyrus condemned Croesus to be burnt on a pyre and there follows the legend of the miraculous intervention of Apollo to save him, when the flames could not have been extinguished by human hands. But historians have rightly objected that the pollution of fire by human sacrifice would have been anathema and contrary to Persian religious practice. Bacchylides59 who lived nearer to the time of Croesus—he was born about forty years after the fall of Sardis—preserved the truth: that Croesus attempted suicide. We may infer that Cyrus saved him from the flames—a more probable story, and one that accords with Greek tradition, namely that Cyrus used conquered princes to advise him in the administration of their former domains. There is no need to invoke a mutilated passage in the Nabonidus Chronicle which some scholars have interpreted as meaning that Cyrus marched against the country Ly . . . possibly Lydia60 and killed its king, for it is recognized that the Akkadian word iduk can mean fought, not necessarily killed.61 Moreover the sign read as Ly is almost illegible. Even if the sign may be read Ly . . . another interpretation is possible: that the country was Ly(cia) conquered by Cyrus before its neighbour Caria which capitulated without striking a blow because the Carians had seen the fearful fate that had befallen its neighbours. Incidentally Lycia is mentioned in Hittite records and once in an Akkadian text from the ancient Syrian city of Ugarit.62 It may be however that the Nabonidus Chronicle in this passage refers to some

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57R. P. Dougherty Archives from Erech, Neo-Babylonian to Persian Periods (1933), p. 34, No. 102. The document was dated “1st year of Cyrus, king of countries.”
59Bacchylides, ed. by R. C. Jebb, Epinikion III, lines 28 f., dated 468 B.C. Commentary on this episode, see A. R. Burn, Persia and the Greeks, p. 42 and note 9. There was oriental precedent for the burning of a defeated prince: best known is the case of the Assyrian Shamash-shum-ukin, in Greek legend known as Sardanapalus who, when defeated by his brother Ashur-bani-pal, perished in the flames of his own palace: see Mallowan Nimrud and its Remains I, 246; the record of that event was preserved on a fragment of a prism found in “the library,” room N.T. 12 of the building known as Ezida, in Calah. Other examples of self-immolation on a funeral pyre are: Boges, Hdt. VII, 107; Hamilcar, Hdt. VII, 167; Zimri, I Kings 16, 18.
62J. Garstang and O. R. Gurney, The Geography of the
other country, neither Lydia nor Lycia, and in any case this text as it stands cannot be taken as evidence that Cyrus killed Croesus: we may still accept the testimony of the Greek historians who reckoned that his life was saved.

As regards Astyages there is no question that Cyrus treated him honourably after the fall of the Median Empire and the investment of Ecbatana. Indeed Cyrus was his grandson, and grandsons do not kill their own grandfathers. The case of Nabonidus the last king of Babylon was different, even though Abydenus according to Eusebius and Josephus alleged that the captive king was honourably exiled to Carmania. The virulence of Cyrus’ propaganda against Nabonidus however and the deadly hostility of the Babylonian priesthood allowed of no generous solution: Cyrus was nothing if not a diplomatist and knew that here mercy would have been dangerous. Xenophon knew better and has left us a dramatic picture of the king dagger in hand awaiting death at the hands of two of Cyrus’ nobles Gadatas and Gobryas, probably in the great Throne-Room of his palace at Babylon.63 Sidney Smith has commented aptly: “The stories of the invariably merciful treatment of conquered kings by Cyrus are propaganda material in the legends, and also testimony to a new conscience

Late Hittite Empire, see index under Lycia and Lukka Lands, particularly p.82 for various references and discussion of topographical problems in the Hittite records. See also Ugaritica V, 87, letter from the king of Ugarit to the king of Alashia mentioning mât lukkaa, line 23, and note5 on pp.88–9 on geographical identifications at this period.

63Xenophon, Cyropaedia VII, v. 29, 30.
in international affairs, for no conqueror would previously have desired such a reputation.  

The Gadatas who is mentioned as one of the assassins of Nabonidus may possibly have been the officer who was satrap in Ionia under Darius, who gave him a sharp remand for not having respected the privileges accorded to the priests of Apollo in a sanctuary near Magnesia. The only predecessor who can have rewarded the priests of Apollo in this district was Cyrus for whom “a favourable oracle was worth more than a battle.” This instance of intelligent diplomacy towards foreign priesthoods is one that is wholly in accord with what we know of Cyrus’ policy when laying down the foundations of the Achaemenian empire.

Religion

In Babylonia as in Judah and elsewhere we have seen ample evidence of Cyrus’ toleration in religious matters and there is no trace of national fanaticism. What then were the beliefs of Cyrus himself and of the Iranian State? It is clear from many sources that polytheism was practised in Iran, and no doubt the fire cult played a prominent part in religious ceremonial. At Nush-i Jan, an ancient Median site of the eighth century B.C. not far from Hamadan, David Stronach has recently unearthed a fire tower in which the sacred fire was

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64Sidney Smith, Schweich Lectures, op. cit, 36.
65The objection to this assumption is that if the Gadatas of Darius is to be identified with the satrap of Cyrus he would have been a young man for office under the latter and an old man under the former. The identification is possible but not probable.
66Sidney Smith, op. cit., 41.
extinguished, most probably if we are to follow the later testimony of Diodorus on the death of the king, and in Achaemenian times there are many representations as well as actual monuments of fire altars. It may also be recalled that about one generation before Cyrus, north eastern Iran had come under the influence of the great religious teacher and prophet, Zoroaster, whose main scene of activity and preaching was Khwarezm (Chorasmia) in territory which today includes Merv and Herat. It was perhaps in or about 586 B.C. that Zoroaster at the age of 42 made a notable convert in king Vištāspa, apparently the last of his royal line. Perhaps Cyrus who about fifty years later incorporated that king’s territory within his empire may have come under the influence of Zoroaster’s teaching—he may even have been a Zoroastrian himself, although there is no evidence yet for saying that Zoroastrianism became a state religion before the time of Darius and his successors. But it seems probable that the noble teachings of this prophet who, for the first time in history, preached the doctrine of free will, would have found a kindred spirit in the liberal minded Cyrus. In this powerful new religion it was man who held the balance between good and evil; the eternal combat between good and evil, strikingly represented in Iranian religion through the contrast between the powers of light and darkness. The doctrine harmonizes well with the part played by fire in the older polytheism of Iran. One may sense that Cyrus’ new concept of mercy and justice may have emanated from such beliefs.

*Portray of Cyrus*

Great military achievements speak for themselves, but when we seek to receive a glimpse of his character and qualities we inevitably turn to Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, which is an artist’s portrait of the Ideal Ruler and the best form of Government. This is a picture of Cyrus the Great seen through the form of the Cyrus the Younger, the hero slain on the field of battle—so greatly admired by the mercenary Greek who served him. In this work, as Gilbert Murray has aptly said “Truth is subordinate to edification.” Let us recognize immediately that Xenophon does violence to the historical facts. “Media was subdued by force and treachery in the lifetime of Astyages, not voluntarily ceded to Cyrus by Cyaxares as the dowry of his daughter”—”the beautiful account of the peaceful passing of Cyrus is wholly out of accord with the well-established record of his violent death in the battle against the Massagetae (529 B.C.).” It was his son Cambyses, and not Cyrus who conquered Egypt. But this picture of a great hero could not have been painted had there not been a credible memory of such a Cyrus—Cyrus the Great, addressed in the Old Testament as the “Lord’s anointed.”

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67 Diodorus Siculus XVII, 114, 4.
68 W. B. Henning, *Zoroaster*, Ratanbai Katrak Lectures 1949, (1951) makes a good case for three possible dates of Zoroaster 630–553, 628–551, 618–541, remarkably supported by Syrian writer, Theodore bar Qōnti, 628 years and seven months before Christ: the latter probably arrived at this date by using the book which Theodore of Mopsuestia had written against the Magian religion. More recently in *B.S.O.A.S. XXXIII* (1970), Mary Boyce, “On the calendar of Zoroastrian Feasts,” has argued for a date of 665–588 B.C. on the assumption that it was his death that was thus calculated in the Sasanian calendar—to which must be added 77 years for the known length of his life. Cogent arguments are used in accordance with more recent Zoroastrian practice which involves a religious duty to keep the days of remembrances for the dead of his own family, hence to record the years from the death of an ancestor. But in my opinion, Henning’s lower dates are more appropriate to the historical setting, which seems to require a date for Zoroaster not more than a generation before Cyrus—perhaps less. The debate is likely to continue.
“The Lord, the God of heaven” has given
him “all the Kingdoms of the earth”—
equally lauded by Ezra, and by Isaiah, 70
who says of Cyrus, “He is my shepherd,
and he shall fulfill all my purpose.”

We should therefore recognize that
although the account which Xenophon
has left us of Cyrus’ campaign in Asia
Minor is not strictly historical, it gives us
an insight both into the Achaemenians’
military mind and diplomatic practices:
Cyrus II, the Great, the model prince,
may have initiated many of these. Thus
we read of his extraordinary generalship,
his lightning Napoleonic thrusts and
the way in which after a preliminary
skirmish at Pteria in Cappadocia he
made an immediate unexpected attack on
Croesus and thereby worsted him. 71 Most
interesting, in addition to the accounts
of ruses and stratagems for capturing
fortresses, are his exceptionally intelligent
handling of his soldiers, his understanding
of their psychology and his ability to
make them fear, respect and love him:
the mark of a true general. We also have
a remarkable account of the training of
Persian soldiers through lion hunting, a
picture which corresponds very well with
what we see on the Assyrian reliefs, and
there can be no doubt that this formed part
of the specific military training for young
officers in the Persian army: a practice
which no doubt they had received from
their imperial Assyrian predecessors.

Xenophon is singularly ignorant about
the northern peoples concerned, confuses
Syrians, Cappadocians, and Arabs and
seems to be unaware of the role played
by Babylonia and Assyria. But he has
one extraordinarily interesting passage
concerning the north Syrian frontier which,
if properly followed, would help solve
one of the intractable Palestinian problems
today. Cyrus realized that some of the
northern frontier forts were an insoluble
bone of contention between the frontiers
of Asia Minor and Syria. He persuaded the
warring parties concerned to disarm and
to let him hold the key forts in his supra-
national hands, while flocks on both side
could cross the frontier unmolested and
likewise farmers could have freedom of
movement. This today would be the answer
to the Golan Heights and many other
similar problems. 72a

It was entirely owing to the imaginative
insight of Cyrus that through his military
and administrative skill Iran was for the
first time brought into a close political
relationship with the rich trading cities of
the East Greek world and in touch with her
merchants and bankers, many of whom
were ready to accept Persian suzerainty
rather than the cut-throat and spiteful
competition of rival Greek cities, and for
that reason Miletus, with its powerful fleet,
a rival to Sardis and Ephesus, welcomed
Persian intervention and did nothing to
support Greek resistance.

Choice of Pasargadae as Capital
We conclude, as we began, with a brief
reference to the site of Pasargadae itself.
Why did Cyrus choose the place for the
building of his new capital city? How
much of the architecture and sculpture
bears the authentic impress of his work?
The answer to the first question must in
my opinion rest on a clue provided by
Herodotus, 73 the relevant passage runs as
follows: “Now the Persian nation is made
up of many tribes. Those which Cyrus
assembled and persuaded to revolt from the

70II Chronicles 36, Ezra 1:1–2; Isaiah 44, 28; 45, 1.
71Hdt. I, 76, 77.
72 Xenophon, op. cit. I ii, 9–11; VIII i, 38; I iv, 16–24.
72a Xenophon, Cyropaedia III, 21.
73 Hdt. I, 125.
Medes were the principal ones on which all the others are dependent. These are the Pasargadae, the Maraphians, and the Maspian, of which the Pasargadae are the noblest. The Achaemenidae, from whom spring all the Perseid kings, form one of their clans.” It seems a legitimate inference that Cyrus was a member of the “noblest tribe” which frequented this district and, like Sargon II of Assyria when he came to the throne, built his capital in the heart of his true homeland. Moreover, the omens for that foundation were no doubt deemed to be good, for later Greek historians certify that it was here that Cyrus won the decisive victory over Astyages the Mede that resulted in the submission of the Median peoples and the transfer of power and the seat of authority to the Persians. Some scholars, but not all, would derive his name from the river Kur, the principal waterway of this district.

Finally, in answer to the second question which seeks to know what at Pasargadae are the authentic marks of Cyrus, we are indebted to David Stronach who, aided by Carl Nylander, has rendered a notable archaeological service in demonstrating the technological differences between the art and architecture of Cyrus and that of his successors. This evidence may be examined in detail in various journals as well as in the large and final volume on the excavations at Pasargadae now in the press.

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**The Citadel**

First of all we may notice the splendid Takht or citadel (P.I. IV) with its massive fortifications of rusticated ashlar masonry containing masons’ marks which are Lydian in character, as well as Lydian-style lead and iron butterfly clamps which are markedly different from those used in the time of Darius. Under Cyrus the wide dove-tail type was the only form used, but this shrunk under Darius and had become more or less straight-sided by 450 B.C. The employment of Lydian masons in Iran no doubt followed the capture of Sardis after 545 B.C. and must have been increasingly encouraged by the use of silver coinage under Darius. We may however note that Lydian craftsmen had long been in demand, for Lydian names figure in the issues of rations at Babylon shortly after B.C.

**Introduction of Coinage**

Cyrus’ conquest of Lydia resulted in yet another important innovation in so far as Persia was concerned, namely the introduction of coinage into his realm—an innovation usually attributed to Darius. Herodotus recorded that it was Croesus who introduced the first coinage of gold and silver side by side, and the very scarce heavy lion and bull coinage is attributable to him. But there are, as Sir Edward Robinson has informed me, two known Croesid “lion and bull” issues however, is in the shape of a double dove-tail; this was filled with molten lead to both the iron and the stone from corrosion. There are direct parallels at Sardis. Information kindly supplied by David Stronach.
the second of which has been discovered in various hoards, all later than Croesus, and lighter than the old standard—conforming more closely in weight with the first darics and silver sigloi. It is therefore tempting to infer that it was Cyrus, not Darius, who first introduced current coins into his empire, a medium of payment which became indispensable as skilled foreign labour was increasingly attracted to employment in the capital cities of Iran. Perhaps therefore we may be justified in crediting Cyrus with the far-seeing ability to adopt a monetary innovation which was destined to revolutionize the older methods of fiscal procedure, as well as commerce in Western Asia.

The Zendan and the Ka’bah

It was Cyrus too who built the great tower named the Zendan \(^{82}\) whereon there are no traces of the claw chisel frequently, but not invariably, used by Darius’ masons. The purpose and function of this tower and its replica the Ka’bah Naqsh-i-Rustam remains a problem. It has often been suggested that both buildings were fire temples related to the coins which depict models of fire altars, and Ker Porter was convinced from the many traces of smoke in the tower of Naqsh-i-Rustam that this was its purpose. But nothing of the kind has been observed in the tower at Pasargadae and David Stronach has informed me that in his opinion the gently sloping pyramidal roof there makes it unlikely that anything can have been placed on its summit, nor is it likely that any fire burnt therein, for there is no trace of any ventilation whereas all modern Zoroastrian fire temples are ventilated. In seeking an interpretation for their use we should perhaps be guided by the long Sasanian inscription at Naqsh-i-Rustam.

The writing on the outside wall of that tower\(^{83}\) names Kartir, the celebrated High Priest and developer of Sasanian Zoroastrianism, the Magian chief, and refers to the sacred imperial fires which were kept alight (not necessarily within the building) in memory of the members of the royal family—as well as for the living. Here, it seems, memorial services were held and masses said for the souls of the blessed departed. There were also endowments for the foundation of a fire-temple for the sacred fires in various parts of the realm. Daily offerings of lambs and kids, bread and wine were also instituted. In this connection it is tempting to suggest that a great rectangular enclosure “The Sacred Precinct”\(^{84}\) not far from the Takht at Pasargadae and its associated fire-altars may have been a reserve dedicated to fire-rituals and fire-worship, but we must await Stronach’s verdict on the subject: the association of Precinct and altars with Cyrus cannot be excluded.

It is moreover interesting that the style of tower in the Zendan,\(^{85}\) with its dentil cornices and blind windows, finds parallels in the architecture of Urartu (later Armenia) may perhaps be traced at Altin Tepe in Cappadocia—again a fruit of Cyrus’ conquest. Common sense tells us also that so powerful a building, once endowed with massive doors must have been a repository for guarding the sacred paraphernalia and royal relics associated with the throne—no more practical building could have been devised for that purpose—in close touch with the royal

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\(^{82}\)Iran III (1965), pl. I and fig. 2, 3, opp. p.13.
\(^{84}\)Iran III (1965), p.24 and for location on site plan fig. 1.
\(^{85}\)Op. cit., pl. 1 and fig. 3 opp. p. 13 for plan and elevation.
hypostyle halls, wherein the king held his imperial lévées.

**Character of Architecture and Sculpture**
We have clearly seen that in the hypostyle halls P and S, near the royal portal R, the architecture reveals both the old oriental style initiated by Cyrus as well as evidence that Darius inscribed his own name and was content to record that of the founder Cyrus, member of a collateral and alien branch of the royal line. In Palace P above the Portals of the Main Hall, above the sculpture, there appears to have been a trilingual inscription which began with the name of Darius who was possibly claiming the credit for finishing the Palace. In the same building, the sculpture on the robes bears the same simple Cyrus titles which we observed in the Great Winged figure, but the sculpture also betrays the influence of Greek artistry, an indication that here we see the hand of Darius superimposed on that of Cyrus. Stronach has informed me that Palace P has yielded traces of the original plan designed by Cyrus, a plan that was later modified, no doubt by Darius. It was Darius who was the first to introduce logograms in the inscriptions.

**Cyrus’ Tomb and Epitaph**
We come finally to the most memorable relic of all, the tomb of the Founder himself (P1. I). This wonderful memorial, built of a fine white limestone, in the shape of a gabled house standing on a six stepped podium needs no detailed description here. Together with the citadel it is the outstanding monument in the plain of Pasargadae and from the time of Alexander the Great, who ordered its repair and the restitution of Cyrus’ desecrated bones, no traveller could remain unmoved by the sight of it. Both Strabo and Arrian have recorded the inscription which, as they allege, was on the tomb, but no modern historian believes that the form of wording given by them is anything but Greek. “O man, I am Cyrus, who acquired the Empire for the Persians and was King of Asia; grudge me not thereafter this monument.” That was reported by Aristobulus, and Strabo adds another attributed to Onesicritus—one in Greek, carved in Persian letters—”Here I lie, Cyrus King of Kings.” It does not need much imagination to penetrate this travesty of the truth. Greek travellers to the site must have been shown the simple bilingual and trilingual inscriptions of Cyrus in cuneiform script to which they added their own comment, or the guide’s, that Cyrus had indeed acquired the Empire and that none should begrudge him this monument—the sort of banal remark that any tourist might utter. It may well be that originally there was an inscription within the park and copse which according to Strabo was the setting for the tomb. Alexander on his visit was reported to have seen a slightly different version of the inscription in Persian letters. Both Greek historians tell us of the elaborate and expensive golden furniture and other trappings with which the tomb had originally been endowed. There is no need to dilate on this subject; but one recent discovery, due to the new and detailed scrutiny made by David Stronach, deserves mention. On the gable over the top of the doors of the tomb, Stronach was the first archaeologist to observe an elaborate raised disc with twenty four outer rays surrounding a double concentric rosette. Perhaps, as Stronach has suggested to me, this ornament may have been regarded

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87 Iran II, figs. 1, 2, pls. I–III.
88 Arrian, Anabasis VI, 29, 8.
89 Strabo XV, 3, 7.
As the “sun-disc,” an early symbol of Ahuramazda the supreme god whom Cyrus may well have revered in this guise.

It remains only to consider the origins of the form of this most unusual tomb, venerated by the Greeks and classical in appearance. Stronach believes that the “essential character of the monument accords with an indigenous Achaemenian tradition in which a primitive type of gabled house served as a prototype for all major free-standing tombs.”90 This surmise may well be correct, but I am tempted to suggest an even closer and doubtless heretical opinion. I look on the tomb chamber as an expensive copy in stone of the original wooden coffin in which the body of Cyrus was carried over a thousand miles from the battle-field to be laid to rest in his own home. I find support for this conjecture in the rather more rudimentary and primitive tomb of the same type known as Gur-i-Dokhtar91 in the southern Zagros, south—west of Kazerun, which looks to me even more wooden in character: perhaps the steps beneath both tombs reproduce in more elaborate form the raised biers on which the coffins were carried.

90Iran II (1964), p. 27.
91Iran II (1964), pl. III and fig. 3; discussion on pp. 28–30. This tomb lies in a bleak valley of the southern Zagros mountains 100 km. south-west of Kazerun. David Stronach, op. cit., adduces reasons for assigning this tomb to the earlier portion of the sixth century B.C., but a more recent examination by him has detected the use of a late type of clamp not earlier than the fifth B.C. We may assume perhaps that this was a late, provincial version of an older type. Various opinions about the character and date of this monument have also been expressed by L. Vanden Berghe and C. Nylander; references and discussion in RLA, ed. E. Ebeling et al., Dritter Band, Achte Lieferung (Berlin, 1971), article entitled “Grab,” p. 589, by E. Strommenger. Nylander, Ionians in Pasargadae, p. 145, has however good reason for asserting that “the mouldings and the entablature of the Cyrus tomb are Ionic.”