"King of Kings": Cultural Autonomy and Provincial Rebellion in the Achaemenid Empire

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Senior Honors Thesis

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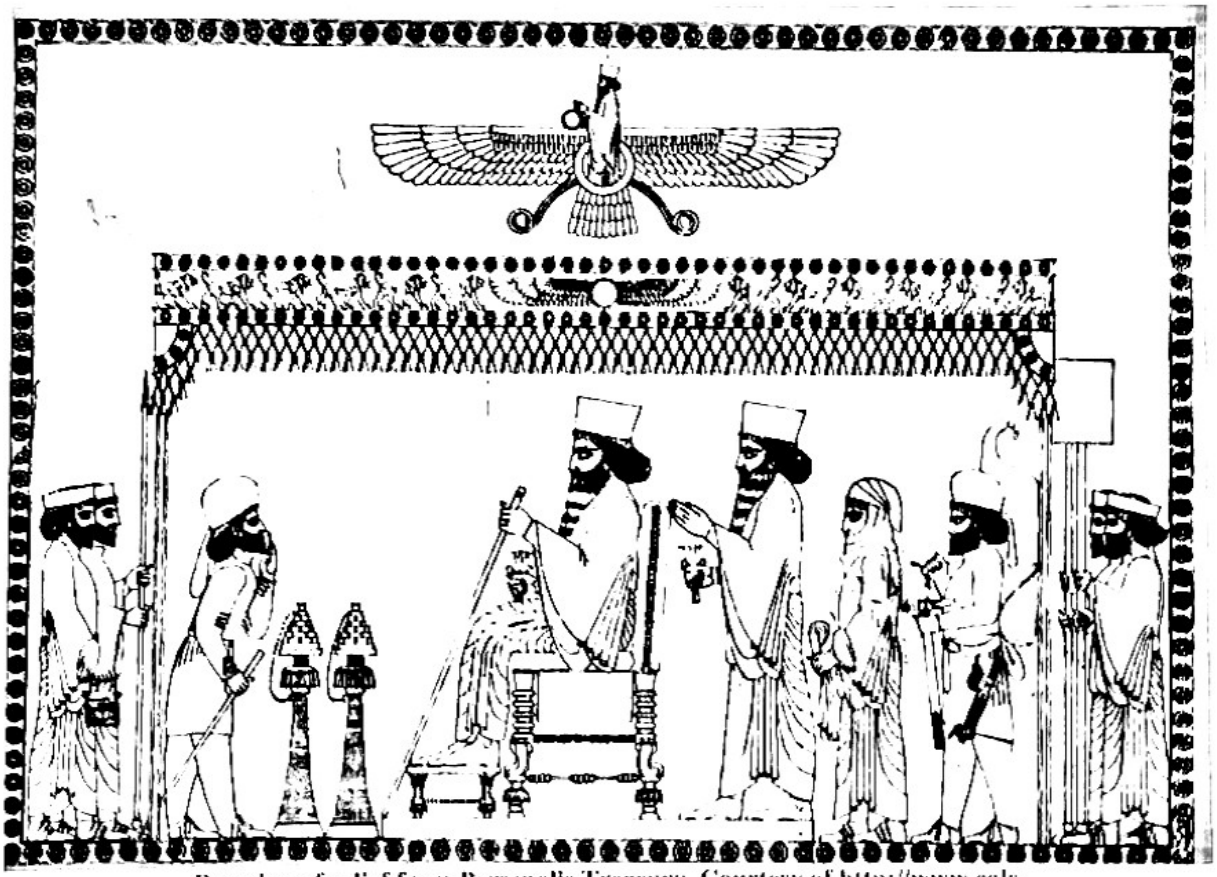

Drawing of relief from Persepolis Treasury, Courtesy of http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Archaeology/Hakhamaneshian/persepolis.htm

Table of Contents

1

The Changing Politics of Achaemenid Studies

The year 1919 witnessed the opening of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago. The Institute became active in Iranian archaeology in 1932 and has performed some of the most extensive excavations of any American organization. Archaeologists transported thousands of artifacts back to the United States for analysis before leaving the country in 1979 and despite the US archaeological departure from Iran, these artifacts have allowed for the continued study of the nation's history. Access to this wealth of historical objects limited the impact of strained relations between the United States and the government that came to power in Iran following the 1979 revolution.[1] Whatever barriers this political development created, the Oriental Institute's initial and prolific activity in the region prompted my desire to visit its museum at the University of Chicago. I traveled to Chicago to study the Institute's presentation of Persian history, as well as the influence that international politics have exerted over the university's own scholarship.

My experience in the Oriental Institute's museum contrasted with the archival investigations of my fellow researchers. As the other members of the Senior Honors Thesis program have chosen to research topics that fall within the past five centuries, they have had the advantage of textual primary sources, conveniently assembled in single archives. The nature of their topics required little physical analysis, whereas my research entailed a much more visual and spatially interactive experience. As I passed through the exhibit, guided through the various regions of the Near East by the different rooms' geographic and chronological organization, I

[1] "A Brief History," "Highlights from the Collection: Iran."

was left with several impressions. Principal among these observations was the seeming hierarchy of exhibits, represented by the size and order of the different regions' designated spaces.

Unsurprisingly, Mesopotamia constituted the first and largest spatial experience within the broader Near Eastern exhibit. The three segments of the Mesopotamian room culminated in an enormous lamassu relief (composite deity with bull's body, eagle's wings, and human head) on the far wall, which faced the main entrance (Figure 1). The presentation of thousands of years of history demanded the region's prominent placement as it covered a range of civilizations, beginning with the birth of the city-state in Sumer (c. 5500 BCE) and ending with the fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (539 BCE). The lack of any geographic, temporal, or cultural pattern of the exhibits led me to believe that their order must reflect their perceived importance. The Anatolian section followed the Mesopotamian and almost equaled it in size, though it featured noticeably fewer artifacts. The Hittite kingdom figured most prominently in the Anatolia area, but Lydian and Luwian artifacts appeared amidst the Hittite displays as well.

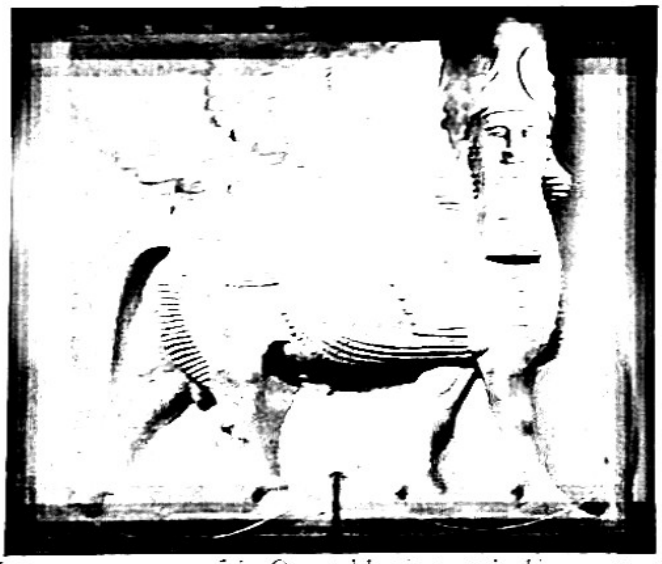

Figure 1: Lamassu courtesy of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.

I proceeded to a smaller Levantine space, which presented the development of Judaism in the region, before reaching an extensive Egyptian collection of artifacts. The scope of this exhibit met my expectations squarely because the extent of documentation and artifacts from the region merit such a high level of attention. However, the size of the display made the Persian space appear minuscule in comparison. Their juxtaposition highlighted differences in attention and extensiveness between the two exhibits. Removed to a corner of the building with only one entrance—the other sections all flowed from one to the other with the visitor entering and exiting through different openings—the Persian room lied outside this flow of exhibits. Whereas I had to pass through each other region to reach the next, I could have easily passed Persia by, had it not been the focus of my visit.

I was particularly sensitive to what I understood as a failure to direct visitor attention towards ancient Persia. The focus of my studies and the emphasis I had placed on the Oriental Institute's excavations in Iran led me to look for the museum's treatment of Persian history more than any other region. Independent of my personal bias, however, I believe this diminished focus resulted from either the Institute's restricted access to Iranian sites or else to the neglect Persian history has suffered in an era of political tension. Regardless of the cause, the display created an impression of inconsequence and impermanence.

Ironically, these two words could also describe one of the traditional theories regarding the Achaemenid Empire in ancient Persia. Each of the regions featured in the Oriental Institute museum once fell under the rule of the Achaemenid Empire.[2] Despite its reach, the Persian Empire has often been characterized as weak and having had little effect upon the territories it occupied. Outdated by modern standards, this view reflects the influence of a Western-centric approach throughout Persian historiography.

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[2] Nubia, the final and sparsest exhibit, presents the only exception to this claim.

Modern scholars initially developed their understanding of Persian history through an orientalist lens, exoticizing Persian customs and recollecting the decadence found in *Arabian Nights* and other medieval literature.[3] They imposed this interpretation upon Middle Eastern cultures in general, portraying them as lavish, but weak. The heavy reliance of historians upon classical Greek texts reinforced a Eurocentric approach—an approach that has been difficult to overcome. After the Persian defeat at Plataea in 479 BCE and the conclusion of the Greco-Persian Wars, Greek literature increasingly represented Persian kings as ineffective. The literary celebration of Greek victories over their imperial neighbors to the east invaded historical and cultural accounts and lasted throughout the classical period, which began with this military conflict.[4]

This cultural bias has, until recently, defined our understanding of the Achaemenid Empire. Seeking to lessen this prejudicial influence, I have carefully selected a collection of sources that return the Persian voice to Persian history. It is impossible to avoid the Greek sources as they often provide the only historical narrative of the Achaemenid Empire. Nevertheless, I have directed my focus toward primary sources that come directly from the Persians and the people they ruled. This decision created certain challenges throughout the research process unique to the study of ancient history. Particularly, the progression of the imperial chronology renders textual sources increasingly rare, except for those that refer to royal inscriptions. From Artaxerxes I (464-424 BCE) onward, Persian administrative texts become scarce and modern arguments struggle to maintain a Persian orientation of history. Historians have consequently continued to rely upon the classical sources, even with their biases and discrepancies. Thus, Xenophon and others will appear in this thesis, albeit with a much heavier

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[3] For more information on Orientalism, see Said 1979.
[4] Kuhrt 2007: 238.

emphasis on the Persian sources than the Greek. Part of what this thesis seeks to accomplish is the reconciliation of elements of the many schools of thought regarding the Achaemenid Empire, all of which bear the mark of this Eurocentric attitude.

Traditionally popular interpretations of Achaemenid administration portray it as politically weak and dependent upon a strong military. Historian Willem Vogelsang has cited P.R.S. Moorey as equating the apparent cultural autonomy of Achaemenid provinces with their political independence.[5] Moorey describes Achaemenid rulers as distant from their subjects with rule supported only by military garrisons. Any infrastructure established throughout the empire, such as its extensive road system, arose to facilitate the channels of communication between these military outposts. Vogelsang points out, however, "political developments do not necessarily correlate directly to changes in material culture." Furthermore, this thesis will establish the active role Persian kings played in presenting themselves to their subjects and the immediacy they attempted to create.[6] Historian Pierre Briant contradicts this autonomist view as well, asserting the presence of a Persian "*ethno-classe dominante*" in the territories, which strove to remain culturally separate from local elites while ruling over the region.[7] We see in this theory the birth of the notion that cultural autonomy in Achaemenid territories resulted from deliberate decision making on the part of the administration. This thesis furthers this understanding and argues that the Persian elites who relocated to conquered lands did not isolate themselves, but rather sought to incorporate themselves within the local ruling class. Through a combination of measured local autonomy and status-creating practices, the Achaemenid nobility won the loyalty of local elites and used local political systems to their advantage. As each territory reflected a

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[5] Moorey in Vogelsang 1992: 4-5.
[6] Vogelsang 1992: 4-5.
[7] For more on Briant's interpretation of elite culture and imperial administration in the Achaemenid Empire, see Briant 2002.

vastly different culture from the next, the Persian approach also had to be flexible. The Achaemenids still maintained a sense of superiority, however, and the strength of Persian identity remained important in the heart of the empire. My claim allows for this flexible identity and merely asserts that the Persians learned to use the empire's diversity to their benefit.

Throughout Persian historiography—and Middle Eastern in general—Western interpretations of historical events have carried the influence of cultural and political interactions between the two regions.[8] Orientalism and its prominence in traditional Western scholarship have distorted our understanding of the region and as early as the fifteenth century, proto-capitalist developments allowed for intercultural exchange and the subsequent Western exoticizing of Middle Eastern culture and history. The study of this region, labeled Orientalism, became a legitimate field of study for European scholars by the late eighteenth century. This "scholarship" found its base in pseudo-science and medieval literature like *Arabian Nights*, popularizing a confused understanding of Islamic culture.[9]

The condescension found in Orientalism survived into the twentieth century and influenced the mandate system that followed World War One. In this system, Western victors redrew the boundaries of Middle Eastern communities and established the modern nation-states that make up this region today. The underlying sentiment of this Western intervention implied that the new countries had not "modernized" sufficiently to handle the difficulties of self-governing, so the same foreign governments who created the new international borders also assumed political control. While these nations have since achieved political autonomy, their former colonial powers have indeed continued to exercise political and cultural influence in the region.

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[8] Any discussion about the "Middle East" as a region typically refers to the modern nations of Turkey, Syria, Palestine-Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran.
[9] Said 1979: 5.

The legacy of colonialism has inspired in many Middle Easterners a feeling of resentment towards Western condescension. Noteworthy for the focus of this thesis, Iran has experienced particularly strained relations with the United States and other Western powers. The overthrow of an American-installed government, headed by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, in 1979 led to the establishment of Islamist Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as head of state. Political relations between the US and Iran cooled after the revolution and a 444 daylong hostage crisis that took place at the American embassy in Iran in the same year. Excavations by American institutions in Iran ceased and each country became a symbol for cultural backwardness to the other. In this way, the study of Iranian history is inherently affected by political situations. Interpretations of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, a prominent feature in Iran's history, have oscillated between nineteenth century Orientalism and modern apologies for past misrepresentations of Persian culture.

The benevolent Achaemenid image has proliferated with international circulation of the Cyrus Cylinder.[10] Much of the basis for this portrayal comes from the claim that the Cylinder represents one of the earliest examples of a human rights declaration. However, as this thesis will establish, such an interpretation reflects neither Cyrus' intentions nor the historical context of his actions in Babylon. Rather, the popularization of this Achaemenid portrayal does suggest how extensively political agendas can influence historical analysis. Historians, Western or otherwise, must then analyze historical characters within their own contexts as much as possible. In the case of the Achaemenids, this entails a comparison with contemporary empires and the analysis of Achaemenid provinces against their own unique histories.

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[10] The Cyrus Cylinder is a Babylonian artifact that dates to the reign of Cyrus the Great. After conquering the city, Cyrus commissioned this cylinder in the Assyrian fashion and in the cuneiform text, he addresses his conquest and his treatment of his subjects. The Cylinder is currently on traveling exhibit in museums around the world. For more information on the Cyrus Cylinder and its modern connotations, see Curtis 2013.

The Achaemenid Empire appears particularly diverse when compared to other ancient empires. Their actions regarding provincial elites and administration distinguish Achaemenid practices from previous Mesopotamian empires, as well as the later Roman Empire. Persian tactics both influenced, and were influenced by, the historical context in which the Achaemenids rose to power and a brief history of the Achaemenid Empire is necessary to set the context for this understanding.

In many ways, the small kingdom of Media established the Persians' imperial heritage. Later Greek sources used "Mede" and "Persian" interchangeably and even though the Median Empire did precede the Achaemenid, the two seemed to flow from one to the next. In this initial phase of Median imperial development, the Medes and Babylonians united to defeat the Neo-Assyrian Empire, which ceased to rule independently after the Battle of Harran in 609 BCE. The division of spoils between the allies is not entirely clear, so it is difficult to determine who controlled which territories when the Persians began their conquest. Nevertheless, Cyrus II (r. 559-530 BCE), also called Cyrus the Great, had led the Persians to victory over the Median and Neo-Babylonian Empires, as well as the Lydian in Anatolia, by 538 BCE.[11] After his death, Cyrus' son Cambyses II (r. 530-522 BCE) consolidated control over these territories and added Egypt to the empire in 525 BCE. A succession crisis followed Cambyses' death, foreshadowing a pattern of problematic successions throughout the Achaemenid Empire's history. In the struggle for the throne, a distant relative of Cyrus' line seized power under the name Darius I (r. 522-486 BCE).[12]

After his accession, Darius faced the challenge of connecting his ancestry to Cyrus' and creating a sense of continuity between reigns. He littered his royal inscriptions with references

[11] The use of Roman numerals to denote lineage came as a much later invention. Thus their use in this thesis only serves to clarify descent for the reader.
[12] Kuhrt 2007: 30-135.

to Achaemenes, a vaguely recognizable dynastic patriarch.[13] Darius claimed Achaemenes as a common ancestor with Cyrus II and then married the deceased king's daughter to solidify his claim. Despite numerous rebellions, Darius' reign saw the development of a coherent imperial ideology and the consolidation of power over an empire that spanned from Egypt and Anatolia in the West to the edges of India in the East. Xerxes I (r. 486-465 BCE), Darius' son and heir, ruled during the height of Greco-Persian friction and also suppressed several revolts throughout the empire. Despite the heavy emphasis on the Greco-Persian Wars in classical literature, however, this conflict likely constituted only a minor affair in the Achaemenid perspective. Kingship passed to Xerxes' son Artaxerxes I (r. 464-424 BCE) with little intrigue, but failure plagued his reign. He barely retained possession of Egypt and upon his death, three of his sons struggled to seize the throne. A son named Ochus eventually prevailed and then ruled as Darius II (r. 423-405 BCE). The struggle that loomed over his early reign alluded to the violence that would haunt the empire until its eventual fall.[14]

Numerous revolts, both within and outside the core provinces, tested Darius' ability to coordinate the administration of the empire. Anatolian governors rebelled and fought amongst themselves, reflecting a lack of loyalty and unity within the Persian nobility. Darius' son, Artaxerxes II (r. 405/4-359/8 BCE), overcame similar obstacles in the rebellion of his own brother, Cyrus the Younger. Despite Artaxerxes' victory, his loss of Egypt around 405 BCE marred his reign. His son, Artaxerxes III (r. 358-338 BCE), recovered the lost province and the throne transferred to his son, Artaxerxes IV (r. 338-336 BCE) without incident. Darius III (r. 336-330 BCE) came to power after the assassination of the two previous rulers and concluded

[13] Despite the ambiguity of Achaemenes' relationship with Cyrus' line, this Achaemenes has given his name to the Achaemenid Empire.
[14] Kuhrt 2007: 135-312.

the Achaemenid line with his military defeat by Alexander the Great. The empire splintered upon his death and the vast territorial gains made under Achaemenid rule fell into disunity.[15]

With this acknowledgment of Persian history's complexity, this thesis will argue against a simplification of Persian culture and politics. Representations of the Empire as politically ineffective or benign fail to consider the various levels of interaction in the Persian-subject relationship. Therefore, this thesis will move past these two extreme stances—namely, orientalist and the modern overcorrection—in the analysis of Achaemenid culture and governing techniques, as well as their impact on the peoples they conquered. The extent to which provinces accepted or resisted Persian rule depended heavily upon the unity of local social classes in the receptivity they demonstrated toward Persian culture. Through the examination of Persian ideologies of empire, this thesis will demonstrate the centrality of cultural autonomy to Achaemenid imperial management and how this liberty allowed subject peoples to selectively engage in Persian culture. Finally, the close study of the Western regions Anatolia, Judea, and Egypt will prove that a province's submission ultimately rested on the cultural cohesion of its indigenous population more than the incorporation or rejection of elements of Persian society.

[15] Kuhrt 2007: 135-422.

2

Cultural Appropriation in Persian Ideologies of Empire

The Achaemenid Empire proved exceptional, not only with the scale of its conquests, but also in the development of its imperial ideologies. Studying the Persian worldview is essential to understanding why certain populations accepted or rejected Persian elite culture and consequently, why they accepted or rejected Persian rule. This chapter will investigate the Achaemenid view of the Persian-subject relationship, laying the foundation for the following section, which will analyze the balance between cultural autonomy and political submission that existed throughout the provinces. Through the study of imperial inscriptions and other primary sources, this thesis will refute the claim that cultural autonomy was symptomatic of either Persian weakness or an inherent veneration of social diversity. Rather, Achaemenid kings exploited their empire's cultural variance to demonstrate imperial strength. They permitted cultural autonomy, while suppressing political and military freedoms, in a calculated administrative maneuver. Imperial leaders claimed to restore indigenous religious and political traditions, employing local iconography and languages to do so. The participation of Persian rulers in provincial cultures, however, represents the appropriation of tradition more than its restoration.

The Median hostility toward Mesopotamian hegemony inspired the Achaemenids to institute a distinctly different political philosophy. They hoped to avoid the "retaliation" of discontented subjects, like the Median destruction of Neo-Assyrian temples during a successful Median rebellion.[16] Persians would have been familiar with these events and the Assyrian reputation because of the societies' close proximity. The vast territory encompassed by the Neo-

[16] Kuhrt 2007: 33.

Assyrian Empire included the fringes of Elam and what later became the Median Empire (Figure 2). When these two regions then fell under Achaemenid control, the Persians incorporated the lessons of their subjugation into their own imperial approach. Though they did uphold some Mesopotamian practices, like forced relocation, the Persians also oversaw the return of various populations to the ancestral lands from which the Assyrians, and later Babylonians, had removed them. In this way, they appealed to previously displaced populations while still removing newly conquered groups from potential power bases.

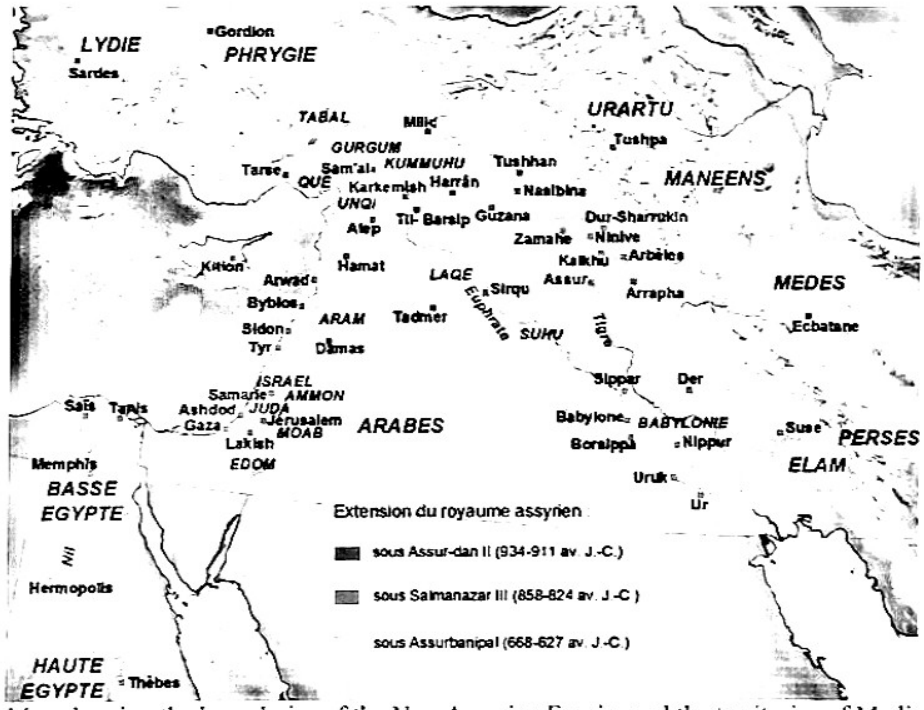

Figure 2: Map showing the boundaries of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and the territories of Media and Elam, courtesy of Sémhur, Wikimedia Commons, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Middle_East_topographic_map-blank.svg.

The Mesopotamian tendency to supersede indigenous identity can be seen in Assyrian actions in Anatolia. The Luwians formed a small kingdom in Southern Anatolia, conquered first by the Neo-Assyrian Empire and later by the Persians. The Luwians established a linguistic presence as far away as modern day Syria, but whether their political influence enjoyed the same reach remains unclear. Regardless of the extent of Luwian political control before the Assyrian

conquest, a large basalt statue found in the Amuq Valley at Tell Tayinat bears the mark of Assyrian mechanisms of control (Figure 3). The statue base relates a royal first person narrative, communicated through the Luwian hieroglyphic script. It references both Luwian and Mesopotamian gods in a demonstration of Anatolian openness to external customs and recounts the subject's "great and pious deeds." However, the Assyrians destroyed the statue sometime between 900 and 750 BCE, "most likely to destroy this symbol of independent local rule."[17]

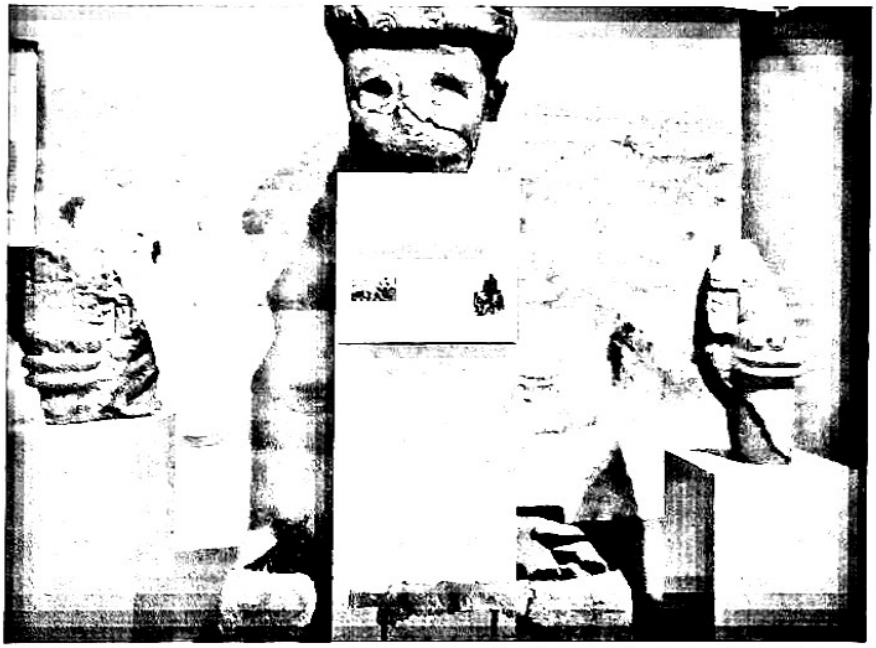

Figure 3: Inscribed base of monument with statue, the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL. Author's own image.

The Achaemenids later demonstrated their break with Mesopotamian tactics by permitting local self-expression and allowing for the return of populations displaced by their imperial predecessors. The case of the Judeans provides the most prominent example of the Achaemenids overseeing this journey back to ancestral lands. Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605-561 BCE) transported a portion of the Judean population to the center of the empire in 587/6 BCE after bringing the territory under Babylonian control. The Persian conquest of Babylon resulted

[17] Inscribed Base of a Monument.

in the Judean return to the Levant, where Achaemenid custom also allowed them to practice their religion freely.

The failure of these Mesopotamian empires to maintain their positions of power indefinitely indicated to Achaemenid kings that a lasting empire would require a shift in tactics. They elected not to impose upon or stifle local cultures and subjects paying tribute rose to replace their imitation of imperial cultural as the primary manner of demonstrating allegiance. Certain imperial inscriptions distinguish between "tribute" and "taxes;" for example, Darius I's inscription omits Parsa from the list of tax-paying regions, even though it did present the capital with its own form of payment.[18] Despite this discrepancy between which regions paid taxes and which offered tribute, it is clear that each satrapy did fulfill a financial obligation to the capital.[19]

Taxes and tribute alike arrived in the capital in various forms, reflecting the Achaemenid emphasis on representing imperial diversity. Even after the proliferation of coinage throughout the empire, each satrapy offered payment in the form of whatever goods it produced best. The delivery of material goods, such as furniture or textiles, human labor, precious metals, and even coins, ensured that all imperial needs were met. This range of subjects and goods played a central role in the artistic development of the Persepolis apadana, a columned hall built by Darius I and Xerxes I (Figure 4). The relief image on the apadana depicts the subjects of the empire bringing gifts to the king. Individuals are distinguishable by region based on their clothing and the objects they bring—incense, pottery, animals, and others—reflect the variety of resources available across the empire.

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[18] The ancient Persians referred to both the capital city of the Achaemenid Empire and the province where it was located as Parsa. The Greek name for the city is Persepolis. To distinguish between the city and the province, this thesis will refer to the city by the Greek name (Persepolis) and to the province by the Persian name (Parsa).

[19] Province governed by a satrap, an office similar to that of governor, Encyc. Britan. S.V. Satrap, Dusinberre 2013: 39-41.

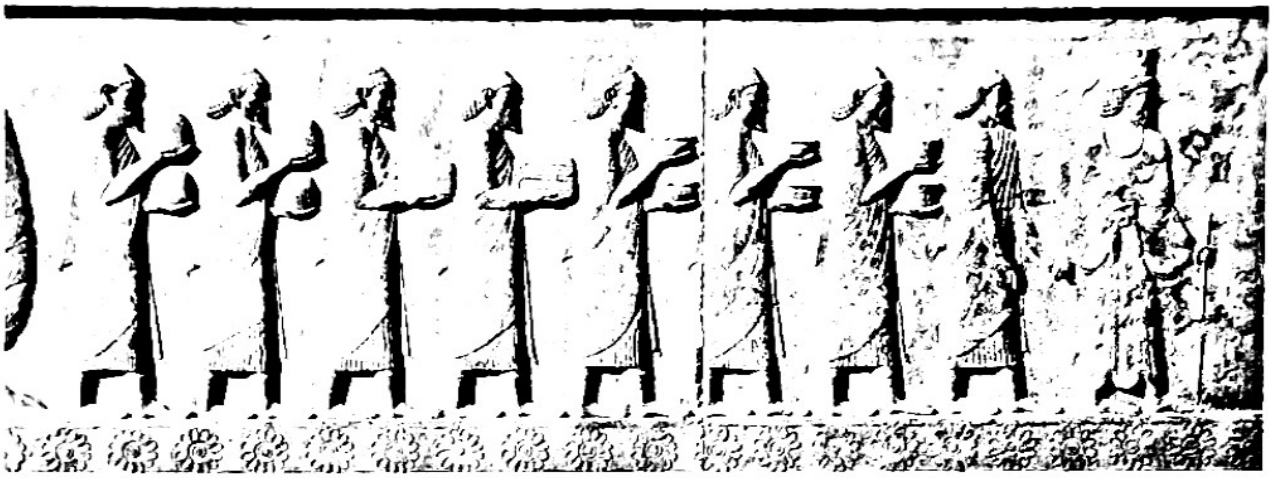

Figure 4: Relief of subjects bearing gifts to the Achaemenid king on the apadana at Persepolis, courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

The image on the apadana suggests that paying taxes had several functions. Not only did it enrich the empire, but it also unified the provinces in their simultaneous political submission and cultural independence. All subjects participated in the same experience of taxation, regardless of background. This formed a connection between the different parts of the imperial hierarchy, linking provincial subjects to the Persian rulers who received their payment. The diversity of tribute also supported a rhetoric of Persian strength. To rule over such a vast and varied empire required a powerful king and Achaemenid rulers saw themselves as fulfilling this role. In this way, cultural individualism did not subvert the image of a unified empire, but rather upheld the concept.[20]

Representations showing different conquered peoples that resemble the apadana relief appear throughout the empire, further strengthening the argument that tribute weighed more heavily than assimilation as an expression of loyalty. Systems for ensuring consistent payment became more regimented under Darius I, but no organizational development could overcome the role that imperial diversity played in exacting tribute. This income continued to reflect the many

[20] Dusinberre 2013: 39-41.

regions from which it came and the unique identity that each satrapy possessed. The Achaemenids saw their empire as a collection of peoples more than one of lands and each grouping constituted a cultural unit, which was responsible for the production of distinctive tribute goods.[21]

Even amidst the prominent displays of diversity, however, Achaemenid artists remained careful not to represent provincial subjects as equal in status to their Persian rulers. The two groups were distinguished from one another artistically in a show of Persian cultural primacy. In addition to the gift-bearers, the Persepolis apadana displays soldiers separating foreign ambassadors from the Persian courtiers and king. Their physical and artistic separation indicates the stress on depicting imperial diversity only to improve the image of Persian kings and not to reflect a perceived inherent right to cultural autonomy. That concept did not exist in the Achaemenid Empire.

The origins of the concept of an empire of cultural groupings can, however, be seen in the imperial language of Cyrus the Great. His Cylinder—the same that is currently the focus of a traveling exhibit—includes references to both territories and peoples as components of the empire. The Cylinder first lists his title as king of Anshan, Sumer, and Akkad. While these names denote geographic spaces, the text proceeds to list "those who live in (faraway lands)" and "the kings of the lands of Amurru, who live in tents" as subjects. These descriptions reveal the attitude that kings ruled over populations and not the physical terrain beneath their feet.[22] The allusion to these subjects' customs—living in tents—also foreshadows a later emphasis on local custom as a further identifier in imperial listings such as this.

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[21] Brosius 2006: 10-11.
[22] Brosius 2006: 10-11.

Inscribed tablets found at Persepolis indicate that this imperial ideology had solidified by the rule of Xerxes I. Similar to Cyrus' cylindrical inscription, Xerxes' mixed references to geographical regions, like Media and Elam, with cultural signifiers. His account included "Ionians who dwell by the Sea and (those) who dwell beyond the Sea, the Maka people…Scythians (Saca) who drink *haoma*, Scythians (Saca) who wear pointed hats, Thrace, the Akaufaka people, Libyans, Carians, Nubians." The increased presence of cultural identity in this text when compared to Cyrus' reflects the concept's centrality to the imperial ideology. Cultural behaviors continued to serve as the defining qualities of an Achaemenid grouping, as seen in the distinction between different groups of Scythians. Drinking *haoma*, a mind-altering substance, and wearing pointed hats offered easily identifiable characteristics that divided a vaguely defined nomadic people into smaller, more accessible units.[23]

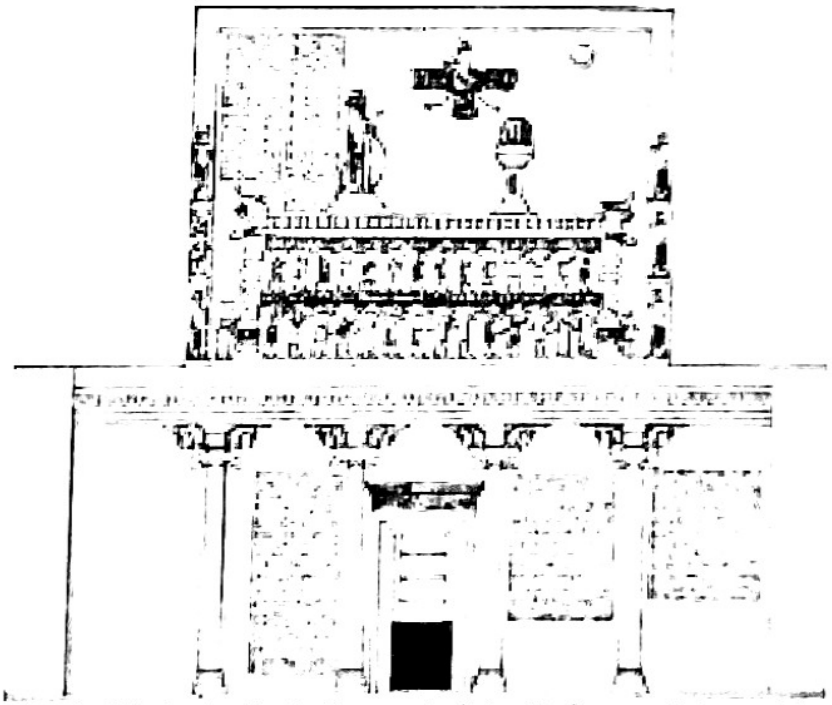

Figure 5: Tomb of Darius I at Naqš-e Rustam depicting Darius seated above subjects of the empire, Kuhrt 2007: 500.

[23] Kuhrt 2007: 304-305.

Darius I's tomb at Naqš-e Rustam establishes continuity between Cyrus' implicitly cultural imperial organization and Xerxes' explicit description through its representations of cultural diversity (Figure 5). The tomb affirms the presence of a steady trend that began with Cyrus rather than an innovative concept implemented by Xerxes. The burial site contains the graves of three other Achaemenid kings, all of which feature relief images of the king and his subjects. The subjects in the Darius relief resemble those in the apadana at Persepolis with regard to their careful depiction of cultural identity. They carry the king on a throne or platform in what is quite possibly the most literal visual representation of the Achaemenid emphasis on imperial diversity. The king's power and status are communicated through his elevated position as he depends literally upon the broadness of his base of subjects. The more populations he incorporated into the empire, the more powerful he appeared by ruling over them. The only tomb at this site to have its own inscription, Darius' text communicates the importance of ruling over a variety of subjects. In Elamite, Babylonian, and Old Persian, the inscription reads:

> If now, you should think "How many are the countries which Darius the king held?", look at the sculptures (of those) who bear the throne, then you shall know, then shall it become known to you: the spear of the Persian man has gone forth far; then shall it become known to you: the Persian man has delivered battle far indeed from Persia.[24]

Darius's pride in the territorial expanse of his empire paralleled, and resulted from, his pride in its social variance. In response to the question of subject countries, the text directs the reader to the accompanying reliefs that represent the many cultural backgrounds of Achaemenid subjects. People, not land, constituted an empire. In his assertion that Persian men had battled far from home, the notion of contact with new and foreign cultures remained implicit.

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[24] It was common for Achaemenid kings to create trilingual inscriptions, both to reach a larger audience and as a demonstration of power (Kuhrt 2007: 502-503).

Achaemenid ideology expanded upon the portrayal of kings as upholding indigenous traditions implicit in the political exploitation of imperial diversity. Persian kings also presented themselves as restoring traditions that had been lost or destroyed even before their arrival. This necessitated that the Achaemenid conquerors portray their local predecessors as usurpers and destroyers of native institutions.

This practice is seen in texts from the birth of the empire and one example comes from the Cyrus Cylinder and the king's conquest of Babylon (Figure 6). Though Persians worshipped different gods from the Babylonians, Cyrus attacked his then vanquished rival, saying "He (*Nabonidus*) made an imitation of Esagila [...] to Ur and the other cult centres. He introduced a cult order for them which was unsuitable [...], and in malice stopped regular sacrifice. The worship of Marduk, king of the gods, he removed from his heart."[25] In addressing Marduk, as "king of the gods," Cyrus appropriated Mesopotamian religion. He certainly did not adopt the worship of Marduk because he made similar statements regarding other deities upon subjugating neighboring cities. Therefore, this reverent speech constituted an appeal for local support more than an assumption of local custom. His appeal further demanded that he portray the previous king as opposing the values he had come to "restore."

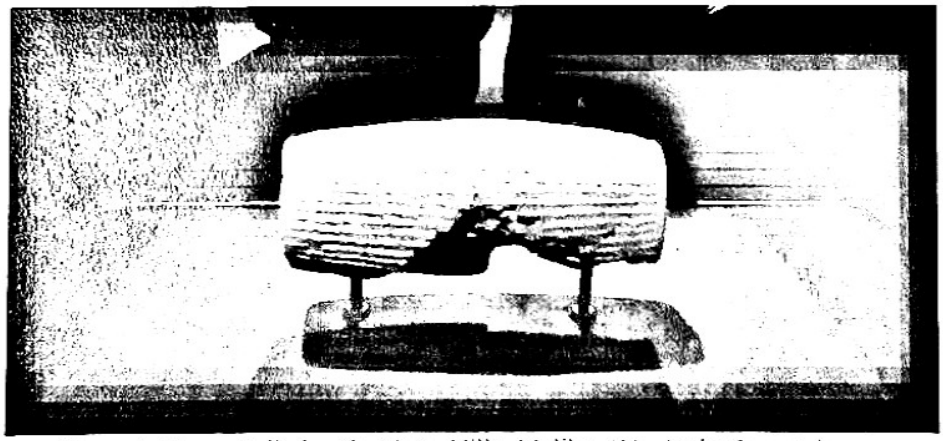

Figure 6: Cyrus Cylinder, the Getty Villa, Malibu, CA. Author's own image.

[25] Kuhrt 2007: 70-72.

Cyrus understood that a pragmatic approach to empire allowed for the conservation of resources. Pacifying a city through diplomatic means and cultural flattery used far fewer soldiers than continuing to battle to impose the conquering culture. He appealed to Babylonian piety, claiming corrupt kings had robbed their subjects of the true gods, whom they offended with their own religious ignorance. In returning to the Babylonians what he convinced them they had lost, (their gods) Cyrus created a space within the imperial framework for the city to see its traditions honored. The Cylinder text reflects neither a religious conversion nor an esteem for foreign cultures, but merely the arrogation of religion for political gain.

Cyrus' characterization of Nabonidus as a usurper also supported the legitimacy of his status as king. Cyrus' army and foreign blood gave him a no more valid claim to the Babylonian throne than the ethnically Assyrian Nabonidus. Yet Cyrus was able to paint himself as a liberator, rather than conqueror, by claiming the support of Marduk and blemishing the image of his primary opponent.[26] Such identification with local cultural institutions proved key to Achaemenid ideology. Cyrus couched himself as "king of Babylon, king of lands" to the Babylonians and created a sense of royal continuity, predating the Neo-Babylonian Empire itself by referring to an earlier Neo-Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal. This action allowed Cyrus to insist "that the ancient line of monarchs remained unbroken" and mask Babylonian servitude with the returning of "captive gods."[27]

The success Cyrus found in associating himself with the local political and cultural heritage inspired later Achaemenid kings to follow his example. They utilized indigenous customs and institutions to win support for their own political regimes, allowing local

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[26] Kuhrt 2007: 70-72.
[27] Olmstead 1948: 71.

populations to feel as though they had retained, or even acquired, some level of independence during the process of imperial incorporation. Directing local attention toward the development of ethnic and communal identities allowed the Achaemenids to distract their subjects from the reality of political subjugation. The stronger the Persians found these local cultural associations to be, the more they appropriated local traditions to appeal to local sentiments.[28]

This process of arrogation appears most clearly in the study of Persian-Egyptian interactions, in part due to the strength of the Egyptian cultural tradition. Instances of Achaemenid kings assuming Egyptian customs are more readily visible to the modern scholar because the two societies had historically employed distinctive titles and designations. Cambyses II imitated his father's behavior in Babylon after conquering Egypt in 525 BCE. He declined to present himself in either Persian or Babylonian terms, such as king of Anshan or king of lands, and instead referred to himself as "Pharaoh," "King of Upper and Lower Egypt," and as the son of Re in several official documents. This shift in royal language made Cambyses appear more familiar to his new subjects.

Evidence of Cambyses' use of Egyptian titles comes from an inscription on the sarcophagus of the Apis Bull.[29] Despite Greek claims of sacrilege that accuse the king of killing the bull and denying it a proper burial, the epitaph offers proof that Cambyses upheld Egyptian custom. The epitaph inscribed on the sarcophagus reads:

> The Horus Smatowy, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Mesutire, son of Re, Cambyses—may he live forever! He has made a fine monument for his father Apis-Osiris with a granite sarcophagus, dedicated by the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Mesutire, son of Re, Cambyses—may he live forever, in perpetuity

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[28] Brosius 2006: 11.

[29] Regarded as a manifestation of the Egyptian god Ptah. The Apis Bull was closely connected to the role of the king because of its association with the creator deity. Egyptian rulers played prominent roles in selecting bulls to become the Apis Bull, as well its ceremonious burial upon death (Kuhrt 2007: 122).

> and prosperity, full of health and joy, appearing as King of Upper and Lower Egypt eternally![30]

Overseeing the proper burial of this bull comprised only one in a series of Egyptian royalty's religious duties. Cambyses fulfilled these traditional roles to establish his legitimacy as ruler.[31] Satisfying the obligations that Egyptians used to define kingship accomplished this aim and created a sense of continuity between regimes, just as Cyrus had done in Babylon. In recreating in Egypt the effects Cyrus had on Babylon, Cambyses demonstrated the flexibility of this political ideology and ensured its adherence by later Achaemenid kings. The epitaph further associated this Persian king with the Egyptian conception of the pharaoh and Cambyses' understanding of the bond between Egyptian religion and Egyptian political office led him to support other religious traditions as well. The king supported local cults by repairing and revitalizing Egyptian temples, which he did for the temple of the goddess Neith at Saïs.[32] He also employed local devotion to Re and Osiris, chief Egyptian gods, to his advantage by claiming his descent from the Re-Osiris lineage. Egyptian kings had made this claim to assert their semi-divine status and Cambyses saw the political advantage of adhering to this religious tradition.[33]

The Achaemenid rulers who succeeded Cambyses followed the trend that he and his father had established in assuming native religious titles. The evidence is again particularly apparent in Egypt and a statue of Darius I highlights the flexibility of Achaemenid kings in addressing different cultural audiences. Excavators found the statue at Susa, an Elamite city near Persepolis, but it likely originated in the Egyptian city Heliopolis. There, it was inscribed with an Elamite script as well as Egyptian hieroglyphs (Figure 7). The Elamite text refers to Darius as the "Great King, king of kings, king of countries," claiming the blessing of the Persian god

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[30] Kuhrt 2007:124.
[31] Dusinberre 2013: 9
[32] Kuhrt 2007: 117-122.
[33] Brosius 2006: 15-17.

Ahuramazda.[34] The hieroglyphs, conversely, present the same Darius as the "King of Upper and Lower Egypt, lord of the two lands…remembered with his father Atum, the Heliopolitan father of the two lands, Re-Harakhte, for the length of eternity."[35]

Figure 7: Statue of Darius with Elamite and Egyptian inscriptions, Susa, Elam, courtesy of Koorosh Nozad, http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/History/hakhamaneshian/darius_great.htm.

The juxtaposition of these two inscriptions illustrates Darius' ability to modify his presentation, depending on the audience. To the Elamite observer, Darius was the "Great king…king of lands," but an Egyptian saw him as the semi-divine pharaoh familiar to Egyptian

[34] Ahuramazda (*Ahura Mazda* in several translations) was the Persian god of light and truth. He is associated with the rise of Zorastrianism and monotheism in Iranian lands, although it is not clear at what point the teachings of Zoroaster became widely accepted by the Persian nobility, as they did not impose or possess a coherent state religion (Miller 2011: 319).

[35] Kuhrt 2007: 477-480.

tradition.[36] In addition to the different language of the textual evidence, the artistic style of the statue also reflects the plasticity of Achaemenid imperial philosophy. Darius appears clothed in traditional Persian dress, but in the style of Egyptian sculpture. His rigid stance would have linked him visually to a myriad of Egyptian pharaoh sculptures, allowing him to transcend and merge the artistic traditions of either culture. The incorporation of local imagery into Achaemenid imperial representations reduced the distance between Darius and his subjects. The decision to use local artistic motifs within the "imperial framework" reinforced the role of Egyptian tradition in Darius' legitimacy as pharaoh, thus resulting in a high level of cultural autonomy.[37] We can see that Achaemenid kings upheld the trend of addressing themselves according to local convention with artifacts such as Egyptian vases, one of which bears the inscription "Artaxerxes, the Great Pharaoh" in hieroglyphs.[38]

If the Achaemenid approach to kingship involved appeals to local tradition and the appearance of legitimate succession, it also entailed the exploitation of these local cultures to enrich the Persian capital. This thesis has already discussed the way Achaemenids used diversity amongst the provinces as propaganda. A further study of archaeological evidence can then illuminate the delicate nature of maintaining a distinctly Persian identity, while allowing for the introduction of provincial cultures to the core provinces. The key to this balance lay in cultural appropriation rather than social integration. This allowed the Persians to sustain the powerful image conveyed at the Persepolis apadana and Naqš-e Rustam.

The assertion of Persian dominance also suggests that cultural autonomy did not arise out of grand ideas regarding social equality, but rather to achieve imperial harmony and uphold Persian authority. Along with cultural diversity, the concepts of balance and order rested at the

[36] Kuhrt 2007: 477-480.
[37] Dusinberre 2013: 49-50.
[38] Brosius 2006: 55.

core of Achaemenid rulership. Achaemenid kings subsequently tended to associate their functions as restorers of local custom and conduits of order in their royal inscriptions. Darius I successfully linked these two ideas in his Bisitun inscription, which featured this text alongside a relief of rebel kings brought before the king:

> For this reason Ahuramazda helped me, and the other gods who are: because I was not disloyal, I was not a follower of the Lie, I was not an evildoer – neither I nor my family. I acted according to righteousness. Neither to the powerless nor to the powerful did I do wrong. Him who strove for my house, him I treated well; him who did harm, I punished well.[39]

The text—which also affirms Darius' uprightness and Ahuramazda's royal blessing—appears in Column IV of the lengthy inscription, following an account of Darius' victory over numerous usurpers and rebellions. The king associated the image of a peaceful realm with the morality of its leader, meaning any who opposed his rule exhibited their own immoral nature. For the Achaemenid king, maintaining order throughout the empire was essential to his legitimacy as ruler.[40]

The blending of diverse artistic and political representations over a distinctly Persian foundation sought to achieve imperial political harmony. Averting rebellion, more than cultural freedom, motivated the Achaemenid protection of local identities and customs. Despite the liberty Achaemenid subjects typically enjoyed—especially in comparison with previous and succeeding empires—the Persians did consider themselves culturally superior. This social preeminence led the Achaemenids to establish themselves at the top of the ruling class and control the administration of their ruling ideology. This perceived superiority is presented by Xerxes I's inscription at Lake Van. While rulers did typically present royal inscriptions in local languages alongside Old Persian or other Iranian languages, this dedication diverged from that

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[39] Kuhrt 2007: 149.
[40] Kuhrt 2001: 107.

tradition. Lake Van lies on the border between Iranian and Anatolian territories, but firmly outside the central region from Parsa to Media. Interestingly, the inscription, carved into a rectangular cutout in the rocky wall of a historic castle, appears only in Persian and Mesopotamian scripts. The use of nonnative texts either aimed to assert the indigenous inferiority to Old Persian, or else to demonstrate that no written form of expression existed in the region.

Even the visual representation of Old Persian alongside the other translations denotes its primacy over other texts. This uniquely Persian script and language, most likely developed by Darius I to reflect the king's authority, appears larger and more generously spaced. It reflects the order of the Achaemenid worldview and thus, its royal status. Even though many local languages did thrive under Achaemenid authority, the Lake Van inscription suggests that their encouragement resulted more from political self-interest than a desire to spread the practice of foreign customs. The support of local populations' use of their own written scripts allowed Achaemenid rulers to realize the role of liberators or restore the "old ways," which in turn won them the loyalty of their diverse subjects.

However, the Achaemenid motivation should not suggest that they isolated themselves from their subjects either. While they did not seek assimilation with their subjects, Persians did participate in cultural borrowing as well. This occurred primarily between elite classes, whose cohesion across ethnic and territorial boundaries also contributed to the empire's strength. Nevertheless, the Achaemenids did emphasize their own primacy over neighboring cultures and presented this Iranian superiority and provincial harmony in the order in which they listed the provinces of the empire.

Physical closeness as a communicator of status figured prominently in these inscriptions as well. Just as positions that required close proximity with the king increased the individual's status, the provinces closest to Parsa enjoyed greater prestige. A Persepolis text indicates Parsa's prominence by emphasizing all other provinces' submission to the Persian people. He claims "these (are) the countries of which I took possession with these Persian people: these feared me (and) brought me tribute" before proceeding to list the many provinces.[41] In this way, he made the political submission of all Achaemenid lands to Persia clear in his assertion that he had taken "possession" and that they all pay tribute, the Achaemenid signifier of obedience.

In another expression of Parsa's dominance, Herodotus' account includes the Persian emphasis on closeness, as well as the importance of cultural units as the imperial foundation. He begins with the populations of the central regions—the Persians, the Medes, and the Elamites—and then lists the Hyrcanians, the Assyrians, and the Chaldeans (Figure 8).[42] These provinces begin with the center of the empire and then radiate outward, placing geographic location above any other qualification. This ordering served the concurrent functions of avoiding political favoritism and communicating the cultural importance of being physically near the source of imperial power.[43]

[41] Kuhrt 2007: 486.
[42] Kuhrt 2001: 113.
[43] Vogelsang 1992: 103-107.

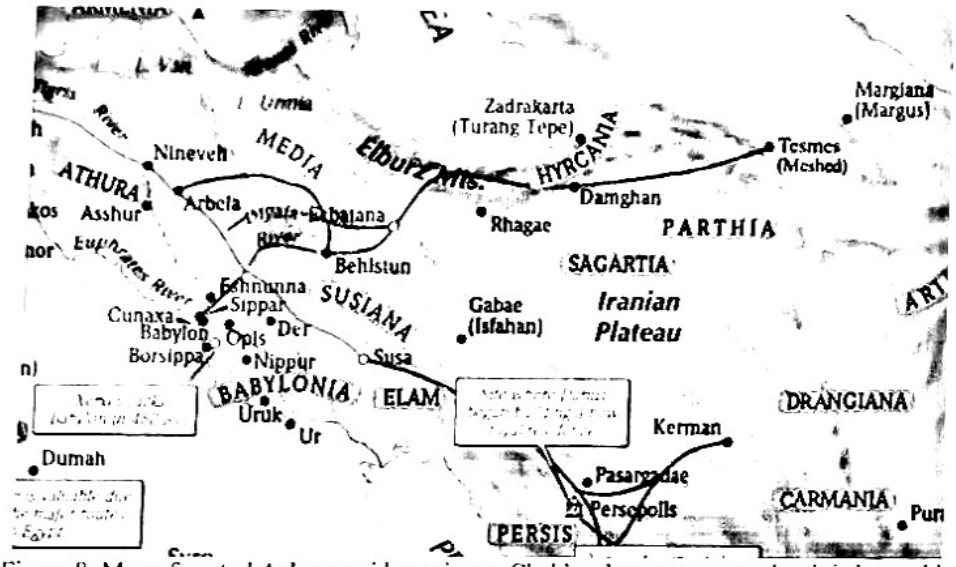

Figure 8: Map of central Achaemenid provinces, Chaldea does not appear, but it is located in southeast Mesopotamia, near the Red Sea, courtesy of John Lee

Achaemenid artifacts and inscriptions have created for modern scholars the image of an exceptionally tolerant empire. Whereas this legacy, along with Greek accounts of effeminacy and decadence, initially led historians to imagine Achaemenid rule as weak or ineffective, this interpretation has evolved. Today, the Achaemenid Empire is popularly characterized as ahead of its time in the support of human rights, despite the fact that the concept of one's humanity entitling an individual to universal rights did not develop for another two millennia. While neither view—one describing the Achaemenids as ineffective, the other as protective of inviolable universal rights—offers a complete understanding of the Persian Empire, an accurate portrayal does demand the mention of the remarkable tolerance exhibited by Achaemenid kings. Thus, the relationship between the Persian ruling elite and their subjects requires a fluid understanding of the balance between political submission and cultural liberty.

The claim that Achaemenid kings failed to exert any influence over their subjects, however, must be refuted. Granting provincial autonomy and the resulting receptivity of Persian rule reflects deliberation and intention of action. In establishing relationships with subject

populations, the Achaemenids demonstrated a keen understanding the cultures that surrounded them, manipulating these differences to their advantage. The Achaemenid approach to imperial administration allowed the Persians to maintain control over a territory geographically vaster than even the Roman Empire for three centuries. Persian political acumen allowed for the development of an ideology of kingship that rested upon order, uprightness, and diversity as the keys to imperial strength. Achaemenid rulers maintained the primacy of their homeland in relation to conquered territories, but strove not to show favoritism to any one province. They exploited the different customs they purported to protect in order to make themselves appear strong and to pacify their subjects. All these factors contributed to a high degree of cultural autonomy and a richly diverse Persian elite culture. While not all of their provinces demonstrated such allegiance to the empire, this disloyalty did not occur as a result of the same tactics the Persians had witnessed in the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Rather, the disconnect between mass and elite culture within a given province provoked hostility toward the conquering Persians.

3

Cultural Autonomy in the Provinces: Anatolia, Judea, and Egypt

As we have seen, the Achaemenid ideology of empire afforded a great deal of local autonomy. However, a further investigation into the nature of this liberty is necessary to the understanding of how subjugated peoples reacted to their Persian conquerors. The Persians established early on that the consistent flow of tribute signaled to them the satisfactory pacification of a province. This expression of loyalty sufficed and, except in the case of open rebellion, they saw no need to impose an excessively oppressive or despotic form of rule upon their subjects.

This vision of empire allowed for the establishment of individualized political and diplomatic approaches based on a region's existing relationship with the empire. The example of Egypt illustrates how Achaemenid kings reacted to individual provinces that resisted the presence of empire with military force. Minor revolts began in Egypt almost immediately following the kingdom's conquest and in order to pacify this growing dissent, the Persians established garrisons in the region. Evidence of this military presence can be seen in textual artifacts found in Elephantine. The primarily Judean garrison in the south of Egypt was most active during the fifth century BCE, a period of rising anti-Achaemenid sentiment. Letters from family members and records of repairs made to resources indicated the high level of activity during this period of growing rebellion. In their description of resentments between the local Egyptians and Judean garrison community, Aramaic papyri also found in Elephantine revealed the mounting tensions, which resulted in the Achaemenid loss of Egypt in 402 BCE.[44]

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[44] Kuhrt 2007: 706, 720-721, 727-729, 758-759, 816-817, 852-859.

Despite their diversity of administration, the Persian provincial authorities did exhibit certain consistencies. This section will illustrate these regional similarities through the generic political structure of the province, which limited local political freedom, but diverted attention from this loss of power with the granting of cultural autonomy. The regions of Anatolia, Judea, and Egypt will serve as case studies for this structure with its simultaneous cultural freedom and political submission, all under the appearance of total regional autonomy. The examination of these three geographic areas will also show that cultural receptivity largely followed class lines. Elites tended towards cultural integration, while the lower classes appear to have held onto previously formed notions of ethnic and cultural identity much more consistently. Finally, this chapter will establish that the cultural cohesion or disunity between the elites and the masses of a given region predicted the frequency of revolt more clearly than did incorporation or rejection of Achaemenid customs.

In demonstrating the high levels of liberty afforded to Achaemenid provinces, this chapter elaborates upon the previously popular autonomist theory. However, this thesis narrows the scope of the autonomist theory by asserting that subjects' freedom limited itself to the cultural realm, rather than encompassing the political arena as well. This stricter interpretation arises from the close examination of archaeological and architectural remains. The autonomist theory found its base in the Greek sources—which portrayed the Persian rulers as weak, and therefore incapable of closely managing their territories—and in the seeming lack of a Persian "footprint" in the provinces. This approach neglects to address the active, albeit invisible, policies Achaemenid rulers did implement, as well as the way in which they defined imperial rule. Achaemenid kingship did not require the submission of subjects in every aspect of daily life. Rulers instead typically assumed the political rituals of the territories they conquered and

then "coopted members of the defeated elites" to aid in the incorporation of Persian nobles into local society.[45] This cooperation, maintained through a variety of practices, constituted imperial authority for the Persians.

The Achaemenids did not utilize local political structures and noble classes because they lacked the population to support colonization projects.[46] Rather, the flexibility of Persian ideology in the empire-province relationship did not require a high degree of hands on administration. Persians often left power in the hands of local elites—sometimes even the king—as long as they swore loyalty to the Achaemenid ruler and provided for the consistent payment of taxes. This appropriation of local political structures presented the smart use of essential, limited resources, like manpower, in imperial management. The Achaemenids allowed local rulers to work for them instead of wholly reorganizing the preexisting, or nonexistent, bureaucracy. They achieved this objective through the granting of local social autonomy, paired with unifying practices like gift giving, intermarriage, and the spread of Aramaic as an official language.

While this "Persianization" of local elite classes may seem to contradict the notion of cultural autonomy, their use of non-coercive methods ensured the preservation of subjects' liberties. Furthermore, the effectiveness of this strategy lay in allowing local elites to choose their own level of participation in Persian culture. In essence, the freedom to choose made Persian culture more appealing. Assuming Persian qualities—particularly status-creating behaviors like fashion, feasting, and palace-building—created more political opportunities for non-Persian elites within local and Achaemenid governmental structures. As a result,

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[45] Kuhrt 2001: 103.

[46] Nevertheless, estimates do place the Persian population around 1 million in comparison to an empire of 25 million (Lee 2012).

practicality generally demanded that the provincial ruling class adopt certain customs, despite the illusion of choice.

Persians intermarried with local elites who, along with their offspring, generally encountered social acceptance amongst Persian elites due to the cultural, rather than ethnic, nature of Persian identity. This sort of cultural flexibility marked the empire as unique. Other contemporary societies exhibited far more rigidness in their definitions of citizenship. The Greek city-state of Athens, for example, required that both parents be Athenian for the offspring to enjoy Athenian citizenship with all its rights and protections.[47] No amount of integration within Athenian culture could negate an individual's lineage. This sort of society would offer little incentive to assimilate if citizenship remained essentially unattainable. The Achaemenids achieved a balance between this approach and the other extreme—the imposition of a conquering culture—with varying degrees of success, depending upon the region. However, placing the choice of cultural engagement in the hands of the conquered typically increased their receptivity.[48]

Over time, these factors facilitated the cohesion of elite culture across and the creation of certain common elements across territorial and ethnic divisions.[49] The primary impact Persians had upon the regions and elite groups they conquered appeared in the form of dining and feasting practices. Such a behavioral shift is not always readily visible in the archaeological record, which explains why autonomist theorists have depicted the Achaemenid impact as minimal. However, the presence of Persian-style utensils as far away as Siberia suggests the diffusion of elite Persian practices to surrounding cultures (Figure 9). Within the empire, provincial upper classes would have come into closer contact with the Persians, explaining arrival of these dishes

[47] Aristotle Ath. Pol. 42.1.
[48] Lee 2012.
[49] Dusinberre 2013: 268.

and behaviors among the elites before disseminating to the masses. The strength of this cultural interaction between elites appears in the persistence of the highly distinctive Achaemenid style of bowl, and the unique manner in which the diner held this object, in regions like Anatolia even centuries after the fall of the empire. The use of these bowls likely became popular because Anatolian subjects sought to imitate the elitism of their conquerors, rather than the imposition by Achaemenids of a certain style of dining. However, the proliferation of these bowls did not reflect the adoption by locals of all Persian customs, dining or otherwise. Cultural exchange is not "wholesale borrowing" and Persian practices, like the tendency to drink wine and beer, certainly did not translate completely into regional habits.[50]

Figure 9: Drawing of gilt silver ram-headed drinking vessel, Siberia, courtesy of Kuhrt 2007: 613.

The use of languages presented itself as a much more complex topic in comparison with the seemingly widespread popularity of Achaemenid dining habits. Local languages continued to thrive under Persian rule—a manifestation of the liberty afforded to local markers of identity.

[50] Lee 2012.

In spite of this strength of local expression, Aramaic appeared more frequently in the Achaemenid written record. The Neo-Assyrians and Neo-Babylonians used Aramaic as a *lingua franca* and its use proliferated with the territorial expansion of the Achaemenid Empire. Aramaic documents have appeared across the empire from Persepolis to Pakistan, to Egypt.[51] The language's accessibility prompted it to become the language of commerce, bureaucracy, and even religion in certain areas and its official status in Achaemenid administration made it a "powerfact" language. It linked the inscriber to Achaemenid authority, regardless of ethnicity, and its availability to all ethnicities and subject populations affirmed the fluid nature of Persian identity.[52]

One of the non-coercive practices that helped to spread the use of this language, simultaneously bringing Persians into contact with local elites, was gift giving. Though the Achaemenids did not constitute the only group to engage in this custom, it provided them with an effective means for affirming their authority. Giving gifts and the reciprocity implied increased the status of the giver while also increasing his connection to the receiver. This connection generally ensured the receiver's loyalty toward the giver as well. Xenophon described how Cyrus used this practice to reward loyal servants and ensure their continued service. His *Cyropaedia* related that "by acting very generously towards those who reported matters of interest to him, he persuaded many men to listen and look carefully so that they might report whatever would benefit the king."[53] Nevertheless, this practice only occurred between members of the upper classes. The exclusion of the lower classes from the exchange of gifts made the adoption of Persian customs less attractive, as it would open no political opportunities for them. The incorporation of Achaemenid cultural elements into provincial culture represented

[51] Rosenthal Ency. Iran. S.V. Aramaic.
[52] Dusinberre 2013: 64.
[53] Xen. Cyr. 8.2.10.12

more of a disintegration of culture rather than a fusion. This does not mean that they had no cultural contact with their rulers; rather, any changes amongst the masses came much more gradually and with less immediate of an impact.

While the following case studies will examine the cultural autonomy—and cultural borrowing—that existed in each region, such freedom often led elites to selectively engage in Achaemenid practices. Even with this general independence, however, Persians did assume some direct political control through the illusion of freedom. Initially, Persians often left local leaders in power and used gift giving and intermarriage to slowly bring these regions under their control. Using reciprocity in such a way allowed the Achaemenids to reap the financial benefits of empire without having to organize widespread colonization efforts. As a result, the first provincial governors typically came from the local elites. Later, the position of satrap replaced these governors and Persians almost exclusively made up this ruling class. Despite the inaccessibility of the position to local elites, they still found a place within the provincial political structure and in the bureaucracy. Nevertheless, satraps typically came from the king's own family in order to maintain closeness and loyalty throughout the empire. If a satrapy exhibited disloyalty in the form of rebellion, however, the king replaced the individual with someone even closer to himself. In this way, the cultural autonomy that existed in the provinces did not reflect a lack of control by Achaemenid kings and, along with this direct political rule, it often facilitated the development of imperial loyalty.[54]

[54] Cancik and Schneider, Brill's New Pauly S.V. Provincial Administration, Dusinberre 2013: 43-46.

4

Anatolia

A discussion of Anatolian cultural autonomy requires the explanation of its historical and cultural background. To provide some geographic context, "Anatolia" refers to the peninsula of Asia Minor, rather than a single satrapy. This region had witnessed the rise and fall of several kingdoms, but had never experienced widespread imperial unity until the Achaemenid conquest. These smaller territories—Armenia, Cappadocia, Hellespontine, Phrygia, Greater Phrygia, Caria, Lydia, Lycia, and Cilicia—possessed their own unique cultural practices and became satrapies under Achaemenid rule, despite their historically impermanent borders.[55] In this chapter, I provide examples of Anatolians selectively engaging with Persian culture to illuminate the nature of their relationship with the empire. The consistency of Anatolian openness to foreign culture also allows for the interpretation of these examples as reflecting the Anatolian experience in general, regardless of minor cultural differences.

Before discussing these examples, one problem worth addressing comes from the types of evidence available in the study of Achaemenid Anatolia. The range of sources differs greatly based on location within the peninsula, with primarily Greek textual evidence in the west and archaeological remains in the east. Such a distribution of sources means that neither region presents a complete historical image as relying on one form of evidence limits our scope of understanding. While the Greek texts offer a clearer historical narrative, they also contain a frequently anti-Persian bias. Though unsurprising when one considers the regularity with which Persians and Greeks clashed, this bias does require historians to look past Greek prejudice to the

[55] Dusinberre 2013: 33.

reality of these historic events and relationships.[56] In contrast, the eastern sources might lack the coherence of the Greek narrative, but they tell their own story—one of cultural trends and daily life.

With regard to Greek bias, the Hellenistic characterization of the Achaemenid Empire has led many scholars to view Achaemenid Anatolia through a militarist lens. Though evidence does suggest a heightened military presence, the application of this theory neglects the circumstances that led to this development.[57] Establishing military garrisons was less a default method of control and more a reflection of special circumstances. For example, the Achaemenid province of Cilicia warranted additional military supervision. Like many other satrapies, the native ruling family had retained its position of leadership even after the Achaemenid conquest. The Cilician royal family continued to govern until 400 BCE, but with considerably less direct authority. The Cilician king served as a tax-paying figurehead more than an actual ruler before losing any semblance of political authority in Artaxerxes II's consolidation of political control. A response to the rebellion of Cyrus the Younger, the king's brother, this consolidation and Cilicia's incredible wealth prompted the increased military presence. Since the motives for stationing soldiers in Cilicia rested on characteristics that distinguished it from other satrapies—its economic significance and the satrapal rebellion—Artaxerxes' actions do not necessarily support a militarist theory. The political role of the satrap and the incorporation of Persians within local elite society indicate that military strength comprised only one aspect of Persian administration.[58]

The political situation in Anatolia did not interfere with the region's realization of cultural autonomy. One manifestation of this cultural independence came in the form of local

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[56] Dusinberre 2013: 35.
[57] The militarist approach to understanding Achaemenid administration holds that Achaemenid authority rested primarily on the distribution of military garrisons along important channels of communication with little interaction between subjects and rulers (Moorey 1980: 128).
[58] Dusinberre 2013: 46-47.

languages. Lydian and Lycian especially flourished as written scripts, despite the simultaneous rise of Aramaic. The Semitic language's widespread use granted subjects across the empire access to political offices and facilitated commercial transactions between populations. The concurrent use of Aramaic and various local languages shows us how Achaemenid subjects balanced participation in the imperial process with the preservation of their native cultural identities. Lydian and Lycian illustrate perfectly this balance as well as the striving to further develop an independent identity in an imperial setting. The use of both languages reflected primarily lay activities before the Achaemenid conquest, but began to appear in mortuary texts after Anatolia's incorporation into the empire.[59] Imperial encouragement of autonomous cultural expression offers one possible cause for the timing of this linguistic proliferation, coinciding with the Achaemenid arrival.

Though it may seem counterintuitive to encourage cultural heterogeneity, the permission of autonomy within the imperial political structure may have contributed to the strength of the empire. In adhering to a Lydian or Lycian identity, these Anatolians contributed to the empire's diversity and therefore, to the Persian rhetoric of kingly power. Achaemenid support or acknowledgment of these local identities also instilled a feeling of social and political legitimacy. Each ethnic group occupied its own space within the imperial framework and enjoyed the freedom to develop its own cultural traditions. In the case of Lydian and Lycian, binding language to religious practice facilitated cultural expression well after the adoption of Achaemenid customs.

The consistency of "physical manifestation[s] of elite status and behavior" across Anatolian burial sites reveals the extent to which local elites incorporated Achaemenid

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[59] Dusinberre 2013: 261.

practices.[60] While Anatolians continued to assert local identities through the mortuary practices themselves, artistic representations and grave goods inside the tombs suggest the adoption of Persian indicators of status.

A Phrygian tomb at Tatarlī illustrates the Anatolian identification with Achaemenid representations of social standing. The tomb's log construction reflects Phrygian mortuary practices and it was certainly intended to hold a Phrygian elite. Inside, a painted scene blends Phrygian and Achaemenid iconography through the appearance of Persian figures within an Anatolian funerary procession. According to local artistic convention, the deceased appears seated in a chariot alongside figures that recall human depictions on seal impressions from Daskyleion and Persepolis.[61] The accompanying battle scene also presents the familiar "combatant Persian" motif in which a Persian leader fights a warrior opponent in a pointed cap. The absence of a "winged sun" is also noteworthy, considering the religious symbol's typical inclusion in this sort of scene.[62] The artist probably did not understand the motif's religious significance, which further suggests an adoption of foreign custom, rather than the presence of an actual Persian elite.

The clothing of the figures in the Tatarlī tomb indicates most clearly their Persian and Persianized identities. Even the deceased Phrygian elite has adopted a Persian-style dress and the Karaburun tomb in Lycia shows a similar combination of local burial practice and Achaemenid expressions of status. The deceased has opted for the local "deposition on a stone kline in a stone chamber," but appears in Persian clothing. He wears "a tended beard, a seal stone suspended on a cord around his neck, and a garment with a rosette border," all Persian

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[60] Dusinberre 2013: 268.
[61] Miller 2013: 23.
[62] Summerer 2007: 6-11.

practices.[63] In the realization of indigenous religious customs, such as burial techniques, Anatolians opened themselves up to more political interactions with Achaemenid culture. By not imposing a foreign religious or cultural identity upon the Anatolian population, Achaemenid kings increased local receptivity to political forms of expression. Clothing provided subjects with merely one manner of indicating their political allegiance and participating in Persian elite status culture, thereby incurring the social standing normally communicated by this dress.

The mechanisms used to disseminate Achaemenid elite culture among Anatolian elites also facilitated the spread of Persian culture to the Anatolian masses. Gift-giving introduced Anatolian populations to Achaemenid status symbols, while increasing the receiver's loyalty to the Persian benefactor. Grave goods in Anatolian style tombs suggest the widespread distribution of Achaemenid status gifts. A tomb at İkiztepe in modern Turkey contains such objects as Persian-style silver bowls and incense burners, very similar to those seen in the apadana reliefs at Persepolis. While these items, along with silver ladles and wine pitchers that reflect Achaemenid stylistic trends, most likely reflect gifts from Achaemenid elites to Anatolian elites, some objects may be of Anatolian origin.[64] A growing taste for Persian styles would have led local elites to elicit imitations from local artisans. The charge of local workers would have resulted in inconsistencies with Persian techniques and iconography, which Miller demonstrates did occur in the example of these grave goods. The juxtaposition of incongruent religious symbols on one of the bowls means that a Persian could not have created the bowl.[65]

The "social devolution of status goods" is further explained by the work of historian Elspeth Dusinberre. Her analysis of Achaemenid-style ceramic bowls found at Sardis correlates

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[63] Miller 2013: 23-24.
[64] Miller 2010: 857-858.
[65] Miller 2010: 859. For more on Miller's study of three İkiztepe bowls with "syntactical irregularities," see Miller 2007: 43-72.

their prevalence in the area and their imitation of Persian form with the bowls' "supplanting" of local molds and patterns within the first 50 years of conquest. Miller, however, argues that Dusinberre is overzealous in her claim because the Achaemenid bowl and its everted rim did not become the dominant style until much later.[66] Regardless of whether the Persian fashion rendered local styles obsolete, the ceramic imitations do suggest the diffusion of elite styles down the social hierarchy. This makes Anatolia a unique case in the adoption of Persian culture, at least when compared to the other case studies I present, because the ruling class and the lower class alike experienced exposure to Persian culture.

Other behaviors intended to create cohesion among elite cultures, such as feasting, also helped to expose the Anatolian lower classes to Achaemenid elite culture. Wealthy individuals put on large, communal feasts with the expectation that their generosity would lead to a direct increase in status. Feasts brought together a wide range of individuals who "share[d] various cultural assumptions and ideologies, yet who [were] otherwise divided by status or wealth, by obligation, or by other connections."[67] This practice fulfilled the king's demand that satrapal courts reflect the behavior of the court in Persepolis.[68] The lower status Anatolians who attended the feasts benefitted by receiving food, while also increasing their bond with the Persianized benefactor.

While the practice of feasting could have alienated a Persianized elite class from the lower class Anatolians, it actually strengthened their bond amidst cultural exposure to Achaemenid practices. When the Anatolian ruling class then engaged in other distinctly Persian actions, like the building of paradeisoi (elaborately organized gardens) and Achaemenid-style

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[66] Miller 2010: 865. For more on Dusinberre's study of the Sardis bowls, see Dusinberre 1999, Dusinberre 2003: 172-195.
[67] Dusinberre 2013: 123.
[68] Xen. Cyr. 8.6.10.

palaces, non-elites did not view the cultural transition as a loss of identity because they too had adopted and benefitted from elements of Persian culture. The establishment of paradeisoi across the empire epitomized the cohesion of elite culture and these gardens became as central to Anatolian elitism as they were to Persian. The establishment of order that they represented signaled that the Achaemenids had pacified Anatolia and bonded with the local socio-political structure.[69]

In a reflection of the high degree of cultural cohesion between elite groups, seal stones from Dascylium present the fluidity between different ethnic styles. Anatolians began incorporating seal stones into their dress as necklaces, brooches, rings, and other adornments, imitating the Persian trend.[70] Yet the seals reveal much more than just the local adoption of Achaemenid fashion. They provide a wealth of information regarding the adaptability of Anatolian culture across traditional ethnic boundaries. Archaeologists discovered seals featuring languages, imagery, and names belonging to different regional ethnic groups.[71] The mixing of characteristics between groups, particularly within a single seal stone, validates the claim of Anatolian cultural receptivity. It is nearly impossible to determine the ethnic origin of a seal's owner as a result of the artistic and cultural variance in seal content.[72] Interestingly though, the mixture of different iconographies and languages reveals more about the nature of Anatolian culture than the ethnic identification of a single seal could.

The Achaemenid definition of identity as cultural, rather than ethnic, allowed for the Anatolian adoption of Persian naming patterns. These seals, while still ethnically ambiguous, do suggest the availability of Persian names to local groups. Lydians and other Anatolians gave

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[69] Dusinberre 2013: 55-123.
[70] Dusinberre 2013: 66-69.
[71] Dusinberre 2013: 260.
[72] Miller 2011: 320.

their children Persian names because doing so opened opportunities in the Achaemenid bureaucracy. Due to the nature of the benefits that came from using Persian names—namely, political this practice tended to occur only among the elite class. However, neither Persian names nor those of any other ethnic group succeeded in becoming the dominant trend. As a result, different aspects of identity based on location, ethnicity, and religion, thrived within the dominating theme of the "elite." Anatolian ruling classes exercised flexibility in their solidarity with the lower classes through language and burial methods, while still associating themselves with the dominant Persians through seal iconography and naming patterns.[73]

A final example of the cultural unity across ethnic and class divisions comes from the introduction of statues as objects for worship in the cult of Anahita.[74] While religion did provide a way for Anatolians to express their unique, indigenous identity in the form of burial rites, it also acted as a unifying force. For those Anatolians and Persians who adhered to the cult, the introduction of statues made the religious practice uniform across the various satrapal capitals (Figure 10).[75] Not only did ethnic Persians in the cities of Susa, Ecbatana, Sardis, and others worship similarly, but local ethnic groups found the opportunity to worship publicly in the Persian manner.[76] Achaemenid rulers did not require the worship of this cult, but in making it voluntary they increased local religious interest. Whether they intended to increase membership in the cult or this resulted indirectly, the establishment of cultural freedom did arise as a deliberate administrative decision.

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[73] Dusinberre 2013: 261-269.
[74] Iranian deity sometimes identified with Artemis, Athena, or Aphrodite by classical writers. She also integrated aspects of **Mesopotamian** goddesses Nanaya and Ishtar, the goddess of erotic love and battle (Kuhrt 2007: 566).
[75] Kuhrt 2007: 566-567.
[76] Dusinberre 2013: 252-253.

Figure 10: Seal depicting female deity, believed to be Anahita, given her absorption of features of the Mesopotamian Ishtar, in front of Achaemenid king (Kuhrt 567).

If we move away from merely observing the relationship between Anatolian society and Achaemenid culture and examine the effect this interaction had on levels of rebellion, we see that receptivity or resistance toward foreign practices did not, in itself, predict regional loyalty. The cohesion of the local social hierarchy in either accepting or rejecting the Achaemenid cultural presence determined the frequency of revolt far more accurately. Areas where elites and the masses both adopted or both remained unaffected by Persian customs—as in Anatolia and Judea, respectively—tended to rebel less frequently. Conversely, provinces like Egypt, in which elites became Persianized but the lower classes remained culturally unaffected, experienced almost constant rebellion.

Anatolian acceptance of foreign cultural practices amongst the upper and lower classes led them to a more or less peaceful state in the Achaemenid Empire. When violence did break out against Achaemenid rulers, it tended to originate not with the Anatolian people, but with the other residents of Asia Minor. Unruly Ionians—Greeks who lived along the peninsula's western

coast—and satraps fought against Achaemenid rule more openly than did their Anatolian neighbors and subjects.

One of these rebellions took place in 401 BCE when Cyrus the Younger, a satrap at Sardis, rose up against his brother, the reigning king Artaxerxes II. Their father, Darius I, had hoped to resolve the issue of succession after his own convoluted ascension to the throne. The difficult of the matter was that, according to Achaemenid tradition, the oldest son did not necessarily inherit the throne from his father, so the transition after Darius became especially controversial. Though Darius seems to have chosen Artaxerxes as his successor, Cyrus began maneuvering early on to develop a base of power to challenge his brother's position as king.[77]

Adding to the strain of the situation, Darius had also established Tissaphernes as a satrap in Anatolia in order to pacify the western cities that periodically revolted. Satraps like Tissaphernes had begun establishing large mercenary forces in order to combat these rebellious, primarily Ionian, cities. One of the reasons these armies were so successful in subduing the rebels was that they remained loyal to the satrap alone and no other Persian official, which allowed for a quick response to any perceived threat.[78]

The prospect of inheriting authority over the whole of the Persian Empire made familial relations tense. The brothers began to fear attacks from one another and when Artaxerxes called his younger brother to his court, Cyrus refused. This disobedience fractured the relationship even further. While Artaxerxes had actually misunderstood his brother's actions as a political threat, his misperception of Cyrus' behavior as a show of disloyalty ultimately resulted in Cyrus' decision to rebel. Cyrus did not want to allow his brother the opportunity to eliminate him as a competitor in the line of succession. He used his satrapy at Sardis, with its large mercenary

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[77] Kuhrt 2007: 348.
[78] Dusinberre 2013: 43, Kuhrt 2007: 328-349.

force, to make war on Artaxerxes. Thus this "Anatolian" rebellion did not constitute disloyalty on the part of Anatolians themselves. The Persian prince and satrap had sparked the conflict and his heavy reliance on mercenaries, whom he actually deceived in order to win their loyalty, reflects the reluctance of the Achaemenid Anatolians to oppose the Persian king's rule. Even when presented with the opportunity to fight against the Achaemenid ruler, Anatolians elected not to engage in rebellion because they had no cause for disloyalty.[79] The fact that this great satrap rebellion enjoyed so little support from either the subjects of the empire or neighboring satraps, like Tissphernes, shows how little discontent there was in Anatolia. Given the opportunity, the Anatolians declined to join Cyrus the Younger and instead continued to follow the rule of his brother, Artaxerxes II.

The various forms of cultural autonomy that existed throughout the Anatolian peninsula ultimately resulted in their adoption of Persian culture and the subsequent peacefulness of the region, relatively speaking. The freedom to express concepts essential to their Anatolian identity—be it Cilician, Lydian, or any of the other regions that made up the larger territory of Anatolia—made Persian customs appear less invasive. Local languages continued to thrive and certain religious practices, particularly burial rites, maintained sovereignty over foreign practices and preserved the existence of a distinctly Anatolian identity, even with the integration of Achaemenid customs. The possibility of identifying with the Persians on a cultural level, despite ethnic distinctions, made measured assimilation attractive. In adopting the Aramaic language for official uses, giving Persian names to offspring, and using Achaemenid habits to demonstrate status provided Anatolians with a way in which to succeed in the Achaemenid bureaucracy. Anatolian elites spread the Persian culture to the masses through communal activities like feasting and requiring artisans to imitate Persian architecture and accessories. The fluidity of

[79] Lee 2012.

identity that resulted from the maintenance of Anatolian custom amidst the incorporation of Achaemenid cultural elements limited feelings of aggression or discontent toward the foreign rulers and, as a result, Anatolians tended not to incite rebellions against their conquerors. The most widespread rebellions all found support from sources outside the native Anatolian population—principally from satraps and neighboring Greeks—thus supporting the claim that the Anatolians accepted Achaemenid rule with a typically peaceful attitude.

5

Egypt

Egyptian society offers perhaps the starkest contrast between the way in which elites and lower classes received Persian culture. Just as they had in neighboring territories, the Achaemenids did not impose social assimilation, but instead allowed the coexistence of cultural autonomy and political incentive to integrate elite classes. The result in Egypt, however, differed significantly from Anatolia and Judea. Egyptian elites behaved in a similar manner to the Anatolian elites: they adopted Persian status symbols and intermarried in order to advance socially and politically within the Persian context. However, the strength of the Egyptian cultural tradition limited the reach of Persian society from infiltrating the lower classes, much the same way Judean identity repelled the Achaemenid influence.

The Egyptian ruling class did not share the benefits of incorporating aspects of Persian identity with their subjects, as the Anatolians did through feasting and the use of artisans to recreate Persian artistic styles. Their strong artistic tradition rejected foreign influence, so while the upper classes became Persianized through the adoption of status-creating behaviors—like intermarriage and artistic influences—their disinclination to imitate Achaemenid art and architecture restricted this Persianizing effect to the elites. The lower classes sought to preserve their strong Egyptian identity, but found it difficult to do so under the leadership of an increasingly distant ruling class. The disconnect between social classes created discontent in Egypt and contributed to the near-constant state of rebellion in which the province found itself.

Egypt had existed as an independent kingdom for roughly 2600 years before the Persian conquest in 525 BCE. With the brief exception of the Amarna Period, which began around 1350 BCE and lasted less than twenty years, Egyptian religion and artistic tradition remained fairly

constant, especially when compared with surrounding civilizations. Even the Amarna style, which featured much curvier and more fluid artistry, as opposed to typically rigid Egyptian art, failed to achieve any lasting effect on Egyptian culture.[80] This artistic style came along with a new religion, based on the cult of the sun god Aton. However, Egyptian subjects abandoned the cult upon the death of its inventor, the pharaoh Amenhotep.[81]

It comes as no surprise then that once the Persians arrived in Egypt, the local population continued to worship the same gods they had followed for millennia. However, this should not contradict the claim that Egyptian elites assumed aspects of Persian culture. Private sculptures found in Egyptian homes presented local officials in standard Egyptian pose, but wearing Persian court styles and jewelry, very similar to the statue of Darius found at Susa. These sculptures uphold the interpretation of Egyptian elite culture as open to Achaemenid styles regarding status. By adopting the fashion of their conquerors' court, Egyptian elites associated themselves with the governing political structure. They asserted their position in the hybridized socio-political hierarchy without abandoning any essential elements of the Egyptian identity—religion or language, for example. The example of the sculptures also suggests that Egyptian elites combined local and Achaemenid styles rather than fully adopting Persian customs. Thus the reach of Persian culture remained limited in this province.[82]

A hieroglyphic inscription made by the Egyptian Udjahorresnet highlights this tendency to represent traditional ancient Egyptian religious characteristics in a politically Achaemenid context.[83] He describes the decision of Darius I to support and restore temples that provided for the worship of cults that appeared in Egypt before the Persian conquest. In addition to this

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[80] Encyc. Britan. S.V. Amarna Style.
[81] Also known as Akhenaton. He changed his name to honor the god to which he devoted his cult.
[82] Kuhrt 2001:121.
[83] Courtier, naval commander, scholar, and priest who served under to Egyptian kings and the Achaemenids Cambyses and Darius I (Kuhrt, 2007: 120).

religious reference, Udjahorresnet also alludes to the clear distinction between social classes and their interactions with one another:

> (…) The Majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Darius, may he live forever, commanded me to return to Egypt…in order to restore the establishment of the House of Life […], after it had decayed…
>
> I did as His Majesty had commanded me. I furnished them (*the people referred to in the lacuna above*) with all their staff, consisting of the wellborn, no lowborn among them. I placed them in the charge of every learned man [in order to teach them] all their work. His Majesty had commanded to give them every good thing, in order that they might carry out all their work. I supplied them with everything that was useful for them, and all their requirements that were in writing, as they had been before.
>
> His Majesty did this because he knew the worth of this craft, in making all that are sick live, in making the names of all the gods, their temples, their offerings, and the conduct of their festivals endure forever.[84]

This text reaffirms the cultural independence of the Egyptians even amidst the merging of elite classes. Its use of hieroglyphics attests to the survival of local linguistic customs, while the reference to the House of Life at Saïs and Darius' order that it be restored reveals Achaemenid support of local religious tradition. Furthermore, naming Darius as King of Upper and Lower Egypt reflects the Persian use of conventional Egyptian expressions of kingship, which this thesis has already established as an appropriation, rather than an adoption, of local culture. This writing also reveals the close association between Egyptian and Persian elites. The Egyptian official Udjahorresnet labored under the authority of Darius, a Persian. He demonstrated the strength of his allegiance to Persian elites over the lower classes of Egypt itself in his statement that the project included only the "wellborn, no lowborn among them."

A second example of Egyptian interest in Persian elitism comes from the marriages that occurred between the two elite classes. The inscription on a stele from Saqqara relates a funerary spell for "the *ka* of Djerbherbes, son of Artam, born of the lady Tanofrether." The names Artam and Tanofrether are Persian and Egyptian, respectively, which indicates the

[84] Brosius 2006: 47-48.

marriage of a noble Persian, who had relocated to Egypt, to an elite Egyptian woman. The use of "lady" as a title for the woman reflects her membership to the Egyptian elite class. Egyptians rarely took Persian names, so the assigning of an Egyptian name to this multiethnic child signifies an important disparity in the Anatolian and Egyptian naming patterns. The creation of this stele reflects the Egyptian tendency to mingle Persian practices with their own customs, creating a completely new elite culture rather than wholly adopting or rejecting a custom in its entirety. This integration remained restricted to the upper classes, however, and lower classes tended to continue in their opposition to cultural fusion. The image found on the Saqqara stele conveys clearly the mixing of Egyptian and Persian artistic and cultural traditions (Figure 11).

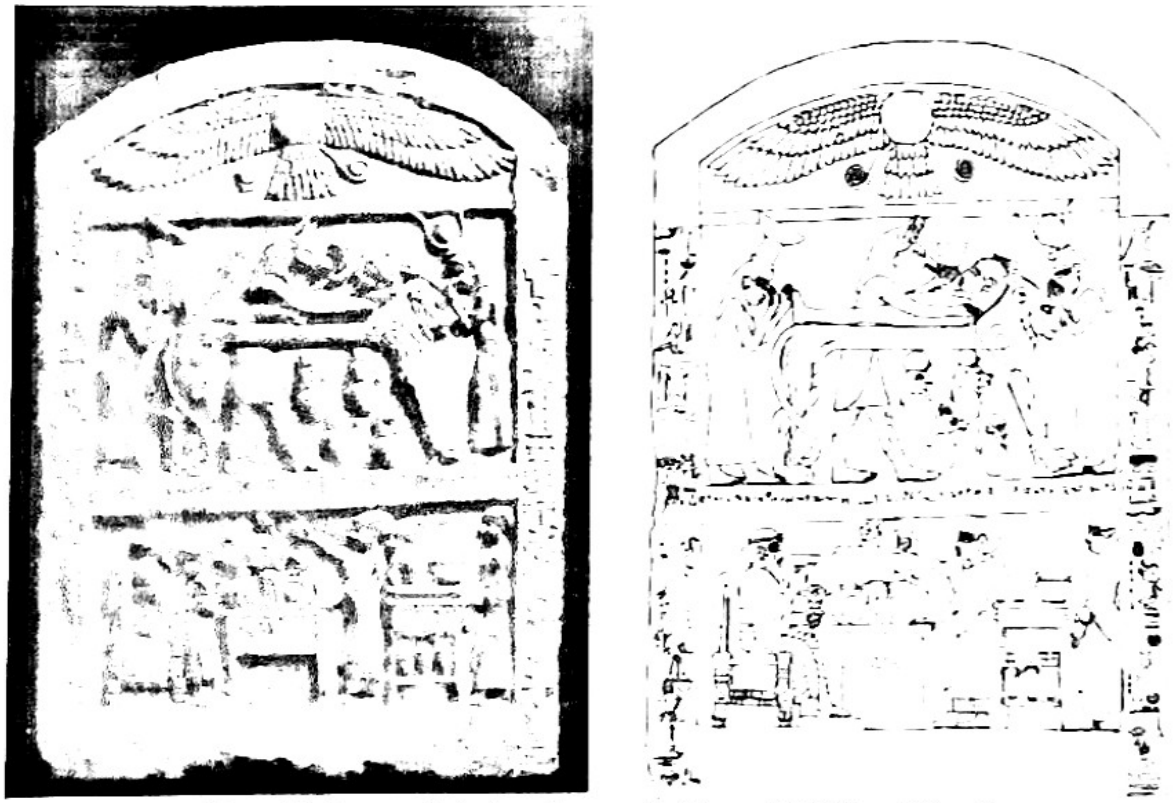

Figure 11: Funerary Stele from Saqqara, Mathieson: 1995, 27 and Plate V.

The top register communicates a distinctly Egyptian style, showing the mummification process and the god Anubis[85] preparing the deceased Djehherbes. The bottom register, however, reflects a more Persian attitude. An enthroned man in Persian dress holds a Persian-style bowl in typical elite fashion (balanced upon the finger tips) as two figures in Egyptian dress approach him with preparations for a feast.[86] Though Djehherbes may have identified more closely with his Egyptian heritage, demonstrated by his apparent preference for Egyptian funerary rites, he still indicates the presence of both elite cultures in his life. This combination of cultures on a personal level was only possible for Djehherbes because both his Persian father and his Egyptian mother came from the ruling class. The restriction of intermarriage to elite classes and the absence of such cross-class activities as feasting meant that exposure of the Egyptian masses to Persian culture remained limited.[87] The inconsistency of exposure created a cultural inconsistency within Egyptian society, which inevitably led to interclass and interethnic political strife.

The Egyptian political experience differed greatly from either the Anatolian or the Judean. While the Anatolians had experienced a few notable rebellions—Cyrus the Younger's satrap revolt and the Second Ionian Rebellion—and the Judeans generally viewed their Persian rulers in a favorable light, Egypt endured nearly constant rebellion and even pushed the Persians out of the province from 402-343 BCE.[88] In fact, while the general understanding of Persian rule in Egypt dates the Achaemenid era from 525 to 332 BCE, the Egyptian exhibit at the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago tells a different story. Several of the displays in the Ancient Egypt room completely omit the Achaemenid Era from their timelines. They typically

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[85] Egyptian god of the Underworld.
[86] Miller 2011: 329.
[87] Brosius 2006: 91-92.
[88] Kuhrt 2001: 95.

include the conquests of Alexander the Great and the dynasties of subsequent foreign invasions, but the Achaemenids encountered so much resistance and struggled so continuously to maintain control over the region that the Institute must have deemed Persian rule too incomplete to include in the historical timeline. The museum placards for many of the individual artifacts, however, do refer to the Persians if the artifact dated to Achaemenid Egypt. Nevertheless, the brevity of the Persian presence in Egypt is continuously brought the visitor's attention.

While minor revolts probably began in Egypt as early as 523/4 BCE, a Libyan prince named Inaros led the Egyptians in rebellion in 460 BCE and began one of the many periods of continued Egyptian resistance to Persian rule. After the assassination of Xerxes I, Inaros rose up against Artaxerxes I and enlisted Athenian aid to drive the Persians out. The Achaemenids attempted to bring the Spartans into the conflict in order to balance the presence of the Athenians, but they refused and for three more years, the Persians battled Inaros' forces. Though the rebellion ultimately failed and the province of Egypt returned to Persian control by 457 BCE, the next 40 years witnessed nearly constant insurgent activity in the delta in the launching of attacks on Persian forces.[89] The period of rebellion launched by the uprising of Inaros is indicative of the political strife that existed throughout Egypt while it fell under Achaemenid rule.

[89] Brosius 2006: 20.

6

Judea

The Persians made a less immediately visible impact upon Judea than either Anatolia or Egypt. The strength of Jewish identity as a cultural and religious association, even in its developing stages, and the nature of Persian-Judean interactions both contributed to the difficulty of understanding the Persian legacy in this region. This section will focus on Judean ideology, present in the Hebrew Scriptures that developed under Achaemenid rule as evidence of the separation between Persian and Judean cultures. This separation, however, does not reflect the absence of any cultural contact between the two societies, nor does it indicate that Judea survived wholly unaffected by Persian rule. The Achaemenids made a significant contribution to the development of Judean and Jewish identity by supporting cultural autonomy. This protection then allowed the Judeans to reevaluate their own ideologies in response to external forces, rather than fall victim to the trend of homogenization.

The Hebrew Bible did not characterize the Persians as entering "the world stage with a military bang" as many of the Greek sources did. The popular image of the Achaemenid Empire involved despotic and expansionist Achaemenid kings, who relied heavily upon their armies. Yet while these rulers depended upon conscription for the suppression of rebellions and the acquisition of lands, the experience of the Judeans did not include such frequent military contact, at least not immediately.[90] In contrast with this typical imperialist impression, the Persians created an environment in which the Jewish people could reshape existing ideologies in literary form and respond to changing cultural and political situations by allowing them to return to their

[90] Albertz 2001: 488.

home in the Levant.[91] The cooperation between Persia and Judea in such cultural matters, however, complicates the question of how to interpret intercultural interactions on a personal level. One of the clearest indicators of cultural receptivity amongst Anatolian and Egyptian elites appeared in their openness to interethnic marriages. Persians used this technique to incorporate themselves within local power structures, but in a society only just returning from exile and with a demonstrated tendency toward endogamy, intermarriage occurred less frequently. Passages from Ezra reveal a Judean distrust of outsiders and rejection of cross-cultural unions.

> We have trespassed against our God by bringing into our homes foreign women form the peoples of the land; but there is still hope for Israel despite this. Now then, let us make a covenant with our God to expel all these women and those who have been born to them, in accordance with the bidding of the LORD and of all who are concerned over the commandment of our God, and let the Teaching (*torá*) be obeyed. (Translations taken from the NJPSV)[92]

In this excerpt from Ezra, not only did Jewish society reject these foreign wives, but also the children of interethnic unions. This stood in stark contrast with Anatolian and Egyptian practices, which tended toward inclusiveness rather than ethnic purity. Anatolians fused cultural identities and adopted Persian naming practices to demonstrate their acceptance of the Achaemenid presence and their inclusion of the children of such unions in their society. This parallels the Egyptian recognition of Persian-Egyptian marriages, which the funerary inscription of Djedhorbes demonstrated. Judean ideology, however, clearly possessed elements of intentional cultural isolation. There also existed a conflict within the community regarding the acceptance of individuals from outside the community. Isaiah 56:6-7 vowed:

> As for the foreigners
> Who attach themselves to the LORD
> (...)

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[91] Hagedorn 2001: 42-43.
[92] Ezra 10:2-3

I will bring them to My sacred mount
And let them rejoice in My house of prayer.

These two interpretations reveal the tension between different factions within the Jewish community.[95] There clearly existed some measure of openness to the arrival of outsiders who inevitably must have brought their cultures of origin into contact with the Judeans. However, the surviving resistance to foreign influence seen in Isaiah suggests that, despite this simultaneous inclusion of converts in at least some instances, an adoption of foreign customs probably occurred less frequently, particularly when it entailed the inclusion of foreign women within the community. Isaiah clearly established an aversion to non-Jewish elements within the Judean community. This inspired the rejection of the foreign wives, since the responsibility for transmitting culture has historically fallen to the mother. It also allowed for the conversion of certain foreigners, as the passage above describes, so long as this conversion included the adoption Jewish culture completely. Scripture repeatedly refers to the presence of foreigners in the Jewish community, albeit with seemingly conflicting stances, but references to the abandoning of the community in favor of a neighbor culture appear far less often. This contrast reflects the Judean emphasis on maintaining its own identity within the context of a multicultural empire, rather than on merely remaining separate from surrounding communities.

The Judeans clearly did interact with Persian culture and even conveyed an appreciation of the Persian role in Jewish history and community. Instead of reimagining themselves in a Persian image, the Jewish texts modified during the Achaemenid era possess traces of this cooperation with the Persians even today, all in the context of cultural autonomy. Genesis 20 especially transformed under the influence of Achaemenid Judea. It depicted a king named Abimelech, who bore remarkable similarities to the characterization of the Persian king

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[95] Schaper 2011: 27-30.

Artaxerxes in Ezra 7-8. The Achaemenid Genesis praises Abimelech extensively, reflecting a positive view of Achaemenid kings in general and perhaps Artaxerxes in particular. This positive reception of Persian rule resulted in great part from the Jewish return from exile in Babylon. The autonomy Judeans enjoyed under Persian rule contrasted sharply with the experience and subsequent Biblical narrative of exile and provided an environment essential for the free reevaluation of ancient texts. The Genesis chapter also criticizes having a negative attitude toward the customs of a foreign society in which one dwelt. This underscores the relationship between the Judeans and the Persians. Furthermore, the changes made to Genesis would not have been possible without the influence of Persian rule. So while cultural independence did remain important to the Judean community, it was Achaemenid kingship that allowed for this autonomy.[94]

The clearest example of maintaining a Judean identity in a Persian context, however, comes from the story of Esther. Esther, a Jewish woman, hides her identity and marries the Persian king (most likely a Persian satrap at Susa). When he learns her true origin, her Jewishness does not present a problem and when the king's advisor Haman attempts to institutionalize Jewish persecution—ultimately a failed endeavor—he does so only by convincing the king that Esther's relative Mordecai and their people have risen in revolt. The cultural tolerance of the Achaemenid institution is inherent in this account. Furthermore, Esther's ability to save her people from genocide—made possible by her influence over her husband, the king—puts the Judeans in a position of power.[95] This story's importance lies in the establishment of a theological basis for modern Judaism's Purim festival. Purim serves as proof that Jewish people not only maintained the strength of their identity in the face of the cultural

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[94] Hagedorn 2011: 48-49.
[95] Hagedorn 2011: 50-53.

threat of intermarriage (represented by Esther's marriage to the king), but they moved further and developed new, distinctly Jewish traditions like this festival.

The cohesion of Judean identity could have inspired disloyalty toward an externally based king, but it did not. Despite the vocal rejection of foreign influences, certain aspects of Judean political and social structure actually facilitated a peaceful obedience of Achaemenid rule. Intermediaries between the Judean people and the Persian ruling class strengthened imperial allegiance by instilling in the Judean subjects an understanding that the emperor bore an interest in the welfare of the people. The position of the "go-between" became a set feature in Jewish history and allowed a distant ruler, like the Achaemenid king, to enjoy Judean loyalty. The Book of Nehemiah describes letters that traveled from the people, to the go-between, and then on to the Persian rulers[96]. While this account may not be fully historically accurate, it brings to life the system that developed into a central aspect of the Judean subject-ruler relationship. These letters contain positive references to the Persian king and suggest the Achaemenid presence as a "divinely ordained successor to the Davidic king."[97]

This amicable relationship progressed as Persian rule over Judea continued. Through these intermediaries, Judeans saw the actions of their king in a favorable light and as military service increased in importance, Judean loyalty to the Achaemenid crown amplified correspondingly. Persian kings used the hatru system to draft their subjects into an imperial army. These hatrus consisted of land grants in exchange for military service, but they also required individuals to relocate in order to accept their grants. This explains the presence of so many Jewish people in Egypt, and also resulted in the severing of the connection between Jewish

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[96] Book in the Hebrew Bible, generally appearing alongside Ezra. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are treated as a single book by Jewish and Catholic cannon, but Protestant and later Jewish editions (the Jerusalem Bible) treat the two as separate books, Ency. Britan. S.V. Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.
[97] Wright 2011: 514-517.

identity and a geographic location. Judeans became less associated with Judea itself and more with their unique cultural identity, which in turn allowed them to pledge loyalty to the Persian king over any local ruler of the same ethnicity. Before the Achaemenids gained control of this part of the world, the Assyrians had followed the same model of conscription with the aim of imperial expansion and pacification of the territories. When paired with the role of the go-between, however, the Persian policy of drafting and relocating subjects—specifically Judeans—heightened their loyalty to the empire. Although this policy removed these soldiers from their geographic home, which could have incited them to rebellion, it benefitted the empire by removing them from the troubles associated with their homelands as well. The intermediary, their immediate link to the status of these issues, then ensured a favorable image of the king. Garrisons like Elephantine in Egypt, which consisted primarily of Jewish soldiers from the Levant, relied on military leaders to connect them to their homes and to the political hierarchy. These intermediaries ensured that Judean needs were met, including the restoration of a Jewish temple at Elephantine, and allowed the coexistence of cultural autonomy and military and political loyalty.[98]

Despite the distance from their homeland, the Judeans at Elephantine maintained their cultural identity, partly through the help of these intermediaries. They demonstrated their loyalty to the king through military service and continued to uphold Achaemenid rule as a result of the cultural independence ensured by Persian kings. Judean identity became stronger during the Achaemenid era and the adherence of all social classes to this religiously infused cultural identity ensured the absence of interclass conflict. The occurrence of open rebellion was infrequent and Judeans all across the Persian Empire defended Achaemenid interests through their participation in the hatru system. Judeans also continued to practice cultural isolationism in foreign provinces

[98] Wright 2011: 507-510.

of the empire and their reluctance to integrate into host societies like Egyptian society for the soldiers at Elephantine ensured their continued loyalty, even when immersed in an openly rebellious environment.

7

Conclusion: A Comparison of the Achaemenid and Roman Models of Empire

Understanding the Achaemenid Empire within its own historical context has run into difficulty as a consequence of Iran-US hostility and the resulting lack of attention paid to Persian history. The relegation of Persian history to a lower shelf of historical study has manifested in a variety of ways, from the continued support of Orientalist theories to the lesser status assigned to Persian displays in exhibits like the Oriental Institute's. However, through the synthesis of various theories regarding the structure of the Achaemenid Empire, this thesis has attempted to shed light on the cultural and political realities of this historic episode. Indeed, Achaemenid kings did not fail to exert authority over their various territories. Instead, they sought to establish peace in the realm by affording their subjects a degree of independence. Learning from the struggles of the Mesopotamian empires, which faced resentment for imposing a harsh style of rule, the Achaemenids enticed local elites to engage with the imperial culture rather than enforcing its adherence.

Persian rulers balanced cultural autonomy with direct political control to manage their provinces. Yet this should not suggest that they wholly ignored the issue of foreign cultures. The Achaemenids adopted elements of local cultures in a superficial sense, only so far as indigenous titles and religious practices furthered the objectives of the conquering Persians. Achaemenid kings became "King of lands" and "Pharaoh," praising the gods of the populations whose royal titles they had assumed. Furthermore, Achaemenid kings were not the only individuals in the ruler-subject relationship to incorporate aspects of the opposing culture within their own. Cultural autonomy only meant that local elites had the freedom to choose the level of their association with Persian practices. Nothing was enforced, but Persian culture became

attractive as a way to gain status within the new social and governmental hierarchy. The elite classes tended to "Persianize" more frequently than did their subjects, but this cultural exchange occasionally extended to the masses. Anatolian elites adopted Persian names and modes of dress, while Egyptian elites intermarried and reflected this mixing of cultures through artistic means. Judean elites typically refrained from mixing with the Achaemenid rulers, but that does not mean they did not interact in a harmonious way.

Rather than depend upon the level to which subjects assumed Persian customs, the inclination toward rebellion rested much more heavily upon the relationship between indigenous ruling and lower classes. In Anatolia, where Persian culture disseminated down the social ladder, Anatolians themselves did not tend towards rebellion. In fact, the majority of military conflicts in this region originated amongst the satrapal class itself in a bid for political power. In Judea, too, where elites and the masses remained uncontaminated by Achaemenid culture to a large degree, open revolt was rare. Egypt, however, provides a stark contrast to these other two models. The former ruling classes admitted new Persian members with little reservation while the lower classes rejected the Achaemenid presence to a much larger degree. The growing disconnect between elite and popular culture translated into political discord and the province proved especially problematic for the Achaemenids. Egypt remained in a nearly constant state of rebellion, even temporarily freeing itself of the Achaemenid grip, only to fall to the Persian army and then remain under its tightened control until the fall of the empire.

Though the Achaemenid Empire did eventually meet its end, as all empires do, it offers a unique example of imperial administration. While perhaps not as revolutionary as modern observers would like to claim—particularly those who see the Achaemenids as the defenders of universal human rights—this Persian Empire was quite distinct from its contemporaries. One of

the best-known empires of the ancient world, the Roman Empire, took a markedly different approach. The two methods had their own unique advantages and difficulties, but it is interesting to note that under the shadow of Roman domination and impressiveness, the Achaemenid tactic often receives little attention (which has allowed it to be misrepresented as adhering to modern concepts, like the right to self-determination or personal liberties).

The uniqueness of their approach to imperial administration sets them apart from both preceding and subsequent empires. This singularity is particularly evident in comparison with the Roman Empire, which held a less flexible attitude toward the development of local culture than did the Achaemenid. While each empire may have reaped the benefits of elite incorporation into the local power structure, the social autonomy enjoyed by subjects of the Achaemenid Empire certainly ended under Roman rule, if not earlier under the various Hellenistic kingdoms that succeeded the Achaemenids.

While both empires in question certainly existed as the result of coordinated military campaigns aimed at conquest, the Roman Empire, as an "empire of conquest," incorporated an expansionist attitude in its treatment of defeated subjects. Whereas populations conquered by the Achaemenids typically lived as they had before with little change to the socio-political structure itself, Roman rule entailed the supply not merely of tribute, but of soldiers to replenish its depleted armies. This created a cycle of conquest and with it, a demand for soldiers from subjugated lands in order to fulfill a preconceived notion of what constituted imperial authority.[99] The Persian conception of tribute, conversely, consisted primarily of material goods like furniture or textiles.[100]

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[99] Hopkins 2009: 178-182.
[100] Dusinberre 2013: 39.

The Achaemenids did support their armies with soldiers from the provinces, but they did so in a different manner. The *hatru*, which appears prominently in the Murašu Archives (a Babylonian archive of tablets documenting financial transactions), consisted of a land grant and the requirement that the recipient—or his descendent, depending on when the need arose—repay the empire through military service. This system facilitated the cultivation and colonization of land around the empire and brought Persian culture into contact with provincial societies in a non-coercive manner. Both armies relied on conscription as well, but this fundamental difference in military ideologies—in which the Romans equated military subjugation with imperial strength and the Achaemenids placed cultural diversity and the flow of tribute goods at the heart of imperial ideology—distinguished the two empires.

The notion of diversity and its relationship with empire also featured prominently in the Achaemenid and Roman models of governance. This thesis has argued that the Achaemenid ideology of empire interpreted its strength through the extension of Persian authority over a vast and diverse realm. Artistic representations of culturally varied subjects literally and figuratively supporting the empire reflected the importance of heterogeneity to the Persians. Governing a single tribe was easy, but coordinating the administration of distinct and separate kingdoms required strength. As a result, the Persians allowed for local cultural autonomy and only required a highly populated army during times of conquest or rebellion. The Roman standing army, by comparison, was massive at around 300,000 individuals. Rome distributed its forces throughout the empire to ensure compliance with its cultural norms. The Persians had not established garrisons in regions that initially appeared peaceful and instead allowed satraps to arrange for the region's own defenses and often left local political structures and leaders in power. Rome, in a complete break with such provincial liberty, reorganized its territories upon

conquest. While some towns, in isolation from neighboring populations, were permitted to self-govern under the illusion of autonomy, the Romans typically "destroyed previous political systems and overrode the separate cultural identities of the kingdoms and tribes which they had conquered."[101] Such destruction of local traditions required the presence of a sizable standing army.

An analysis of the differences between the Roman and Achaemenid models of empire could fill the pages of countless books, so this thesis will not attempt to explore the nuances of their different cultural and political relationships with their provinces. However, it is important to understand that the Achaemenid Empire presented in this thesis represents merely one of a myriad of imperial approaches taken throughout history. Though the Achaemenids have often been neglected by popular investigation, their legacy endured throughout the empires that succeeded, which count the Roman Empire among their ranks. The Romans may have taken a more direct approach in the cultural conversion of subjects, but this incorporation was certainly eased by the proliferation of Aramaic, which occurred under the Achaemenids. By the time of Roman conquest, many areas of the eastern Mediterranean already spoke the same language, thus making cultural homogenization more feasible. The interconnectedness of the world's great empires cannot be denied as each has inherited from the civilization that preceded it. The Romans learned from Alexander and the Achaemenids just as the Achaemenids had learned from the actions of the Mesopotamians. So, while each imperial strategy met with varying degrees of success in throughout the regions of its territory, we should avoid arbitrary judgments regarding the success of these different situations. The Achaemenid Empire responded uniquely and thoughtfully to the historical situations in which it existed and undoubtedly deserves a prominent place in the historical record of great empires.

[101] Hopkins 2011: 185-192.

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