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CAMBYSES

CAMBYSES (OPers. Ka^{m}būǰiya-, Elamite Kanbuziya, Akkadian Kambuziya, Aram. Knbwzy), the name of two kings of the Achaemenid dynasty. According to some scholars (e.g., Hüsing, pp. 320-22; cf. Frye, p. 87), the name was originally Elamite. Others connect it with Kamboja-, the name of an Iranian people who lived in northwest India (Charpentier; cf. *AirWb.*, col. 437). The latter etymology has been substantiated in detail by V. I. Abaev (pp. 266-68; cf. Eilers, p. 210; Herzfeld, pp. 344-46; Harmatta, pp. 6-7; *Iranisches Personennamenbuch* I/2, p. 23).

Cambyses I.

Cambyses II.

Cambyses I was king of Persia from about 600 to 559 B.C.; he was a younger son of Cyrus I, brother of Arukku, and father of Cyrus the Great. No reference to him is preserved from his lifetime. The main sources of information are several inscriptions of Cyrus the Great: In the list of his royal ancestors on his cylinder, Cyrus called himself “son of Cambyses, great king, king of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, great king, king of Anshan” (Oppenheim, p. 316); in an inscription found at Ur “son of Cambyses, king of the land of Anshan” (Gadd et al., no. 194); on building bricks from Uruk “son of Cambyses, mighty king” (Weissbach, p. 8; Schott, p. 63, no. 31); and in an inscription from Pasargadae “son of Cambyses the king, an Achaemenian” (Kent, *Old Persian*, p. 116, CMb; on the date of this inscription, which was probably engraved under Darius, see cyrus ii).

According to Herodotus (1.107-08), Cambyses was not a king but a Persian of good family, who married Mandane, a daughter of the Median king Astyages; from this union Cyrus the Great was born. Xenophon, on the other hand, though also reporting that Cambyses married Astyages' daughter Mandane, called him "king of the Persians" (*Cyropaedia* 1.2.1). Xenophon also stated (1.5.4-5, etc.) that Cambyses' authority as "king of Persia" was limited by a council of elders. There is no contradiction between Cyrus the Great's claim that his father was king of Anshan and Xenophon's statement that he was king of Persia, for Anshan and Pārsa were alternative names for the same country.

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Cambyses II.

Cambyses II ruled the Achaemenid empire between 530 and 522 B.C. He was the elder son of Cyrus the Great and Cassandane (Herodotus, 2.1, 3.2); Ctesias’ assertion that Cambyses’ mother was Amytis, daughter of the Median king Astyages (König, p. 2, par. 2), is not reliable. In the Bīsotūn inscription Cambyses is said to have had a brother Bardiya “of the same mother and the same father” (DB 1.30; Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 117-20). He married his own full sisters Atossa and Roxane, as well as Phaidyme, daughter of the noble Persian Otanes (Herodotus, 3.31, 32, 68; König, p. 7, par. 12).

On his cylinder Cyrus the Great stated that the supreme Babylonian god Marduk had blessed not only him but also his “own son” Cambyses. Soon after the conquest of Mesopotamia in 539 B.C. Cyrus made Cambyses king of Babylon. A badly damaged passage in the chronicle of Nabonidus contains a report that, in order to legitimize his appointment, Cambyses participated in the ritual prescribed for the king at the traditional New Year festival on 27 March 538 B.C., accepting the royal scepter from the hands of Marduk in Esagila, the god’s temple in Babylon (III. 24-28; Grayson, p. 111). A. L. Oppenheim attempted a reconstruction of the damaged text (*Survey of Persian Art* XV, p. 3501); according to his version, Cambyses entered the temple in ordinary Elamite attire, fully armed. The priests persuaded him to lay down his arms, but he refused to change his clothes for those prescribed in the ritual. He then received the royal scepter. In Oppenheim’s view Cambyses thus deliberately demonstrated “a deep-seated religious conviction” hostile to this alien religion (*Camb. Hist. Iran* II, p. 557). His restoration of the damaged passage is not reliable, however, and its interpretation is not convincing

(Boyce, p. 73 n. 15a).

Only in documents dated between the second and eleventh months of Cyrus's first regnal year, that is, between April and December, 538 B.C., is Cambyses called "king of Babylon"; his father bears the title "king of the lands," that is, of the Persian empire. Cambyses was thus king of Babylon for only about nine months before Cyrus removed him from office, for reasons unknown. Furthermore, he was king only of the city of Babylon and the northern part of the country while central and southern Babylonia remained under the direct control of Cyrus and his officials (San Nicolò, pp. 51-54; Frame, pp. 747-48; Oppenheim, *Camb. Hist. Iran* II, pp. 554-58). Some scholars have suggested that Cambyses was appointed king of Babylon not in 538 but in 530 b.c., before Cyrus's campaign against the Massagetai in Central Asia (Dubberstein, pp. 417-19; Shea, pp. 103-04), but this opinion is not consonant with the date formula "the first year of Cyrus, king of the lands, [and] Cambyses, king of Babylon" on a text (Strassmaier, 1890b, no. 16) that belongs without any doubt to 538 B.C.

It seems that after the Persian conquest of Mesopotamia and his short term as king of Babylon, Cambyses continued to spend much of his time in the cities of Babylon and Sippar. Legal documents drafted in Sippar in 536 and 534 B.C. refer to a steward and a scribe-interpreter "of the crown prince" Cambyses (Ungnad, no. 129; Strassmaier, 1990b, no. 199). In 535 B.C. one of Cambyses' agents lent 1 mina and 20 shekels of silver belonging to "the crown prince" Cambyses to a man who gave as security a house in Babylon (Strassmaier, 1890b, no. 177). One document, drafted in Babylon in 531 B.C, mentions a seal cutter, a slave of Cambyses (Strassmaier, 1890b, no. 325; see also nos. 270, 335, referring to managers of the prince Cambyses in Babylon in 532 and 530 B.C.).

Until recently two documents have been considered to be the latest Babylonian texts dated from Cyrus's reign. The first was drafted in Nippur on the thirteenth day of the month Abu in Cyrus's ninth regnal year (2 August 530 B.C.; Clay, no. 74). The second was drafted in Borsippa in the same year on the twenty-third day of an indeterminate month, for which the sign is indistinct. This sign has been read Ulūlu (Ungnad, no. 42); if the reading is correct, the corresponding date would be 12 September 530 B.C. R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein have rejected the reading, however, because of a text preserved from Babylon that is dated to the twelfth day of Ulūlu in the year of Cambyses' accession as king of Babylon, king of the lands (31 August 530 b.c.; see Strassmaier, 1890a, no. 1). They have read the disputed sign in the Borsippa

text as Abu, which would date it to 12 August 530 B.C. (p. 14). This opinion must now be reconsidered in the light of another document (McEwan, no. 123), which is dated to the nineteenth day of Araḫsamna in the ninth year of Cyrus, king of Babylon, king of the lands (4 December 530 B.C.). This text, which was discovered at Kish, thus provides a later date for the end of Cyrus's sole reign. From the end of 530 B.C. Cyrus and Cambyses both simultaneously bore the title "king of Babylon, king of the lands" for at least three months. It seems that Cyrus appointed Cambyses as joint ruler before his expedition against the Massagetai, for, according to Herodotus (1.208), Cambyses joined the campaign against the Massagetai but, as successor to the throne, was sent back to Persia before the decisive battle in which Cyrus perished (cf. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.7,11; König, p. 5, par. 8).

In 525 B.C. Cambyses marched against Egypt. In the spring of that year his army was victorious in a major battle at the city of Pelusium, in the eastern Delta (Herodotus, 3.10). The Egyptians retreated to Memphis as the Persians advanced deeper into the country. By summer all of Egypt was in their hands. The Libyans and the Greek cities of Cyrene and Barca voluntarily submitted to Cambyses. At the end of August he was officially installed as king of Egypt. Following traditional Egyptian royal protocol, he assumed the pharaonic titles "king of Upper and Lower Egypt" and "descendant of (the gods) Ra, Horus, Osiris." In Cambyses' propaganda the conquest was presented as a legitimate union with the local population, and the claim that he was the son of Cyrus by Princess Nitetis, daughter of the pharaoh Apries, was circulated. Several versions of this story have been transmitted (Herodotus, 3.1-3; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 13.10; cf. Atkinson, pp. 167-77; Hoffmann and Vorbichler, pp. 87-88).

Cambyses went to the city of Sais to participate in religious ceremonies in the temple of the goddess Neith, prostrated himself before her during the formal coronation ceremony, and offered sacrifices to Egyptian gods (Posener, pp. 170-71). Nevertheless, he dated his rule over Egypt not from the year of his conquest but from 530 b.c., when he had become king of the Persians (Parker, pp. 209-12; Atkinson, pp. 167-70).

Classical authors unanimously describe Cambyses' reign in Egypt as a period of violence, of pillaging temples, mockery of the gods, and desecration of royal tombs (Herodotus, 3.27-29; Strabo, 17.1, 27, etc.). In particular, they claim that Cambyses stabbed Apis, the Egyptian sacred bull. Yet no desecration of temples by Cambyses is recorded in the contemporary Egyptian sources.

Furthermore, according to the official epitaph, one Apis died in August, 525 b.c., and was buried in a granite sarcophagus made at Cambyses' order. Its successor died only four years after Cambyses' own death (Posener, p. 171). Egyptian legal and administrative texts from the first years of Cambyses' rule confirm that the Persian conquest did no significant damage to the economic life of the country (Posener, p. 169; Gyles, p. 69). In the so-called Demotic chronicle, Cambyses is said to have reduced the enormous revenues in silver and in kind that had been paid to the Egyptian temples by the Saitic pharaohs. Only three leading temples were allowed to retain all their privileges (Bresciani, 1965, pp. 312-13).

Once established in Egypt, Cambyses decided to conquer the rest of Africa. He sent an expedition against the oasis of Ammon, west of the Thebaid, but his army perished in a sandstorm (Herodotus, 3.26). He also undertook a campaign against Nubia. According to Herodotus (3.17, 25), he marched there with insufficient provisions and was eventually forced to withdraw, losing a large part of his army. He did, however, conquer the northern part of Nubia, beyond the First Cataract (cf. Herodotus, 3.97; Burn, p. 87). Supposedly there was still a place called "Cambyses' Depot" near the Third Cataract in Roman times, but it is probable that the classical authors mistook a similar toponym for the name Cambyses (see Burn, p. 87, with references to the sources). While the king was in Nubia, the Egyptians rose up in revolt against Persian rule, and at the end of 524 b.c. he returned to Memphis, where he quelled the rebellion with great severity (Herodotus, 3.27).

It is clear from the Bīsotūn inscription and Babylonian legal documents that Cambyses died after 1 July 522 B.C. He was still in Egypt when Gaumāta staged his palace revolution in Persia on 11 March 522 B.C. According to Herodotus (3.62), he was actually in Syria en route to Persia by the time a royal herald arrived with news of the revolt. He died there in mysterious circumstances: According to the Bīsotūn inscription he "was dead by his own death." Scholars interpret this phrase as indicating either a natural death or a suicide or accidental death (for literature, see Walser, pp. 8-18; Balcer, pp. 52, 99). In the Egyptian Demotic chronicle he is said only to have died on the journey (Cook, p. 50). Herodotus (3.62, 66) reported that Cambyses accidentally stabbed himself in the thigh as he was mounting his horse to march against Smerdis (i.e., Gaumāta) and called the wound divine retribution. Three weeks later Cambyses died at a place called Agbatana in Syria (probably modern Ḥamāg south of Aleppo), leaving no children. Ctesias, on the other hand, reported that

Cambyses died from an accident at home in Babylon (König, p. 7, par. 12).

Herodotus (3.89) claimed that the Persians called Cambyses “despot” because he was half-mad, cruel, and insolent, but this assessment reflects Persian and Egyptian propaganda against Cambyses. He was indeed disliked by the Persian tribal aristocracy because of his tendency to centralize power in his own hands (Dandamaev, 1976, pp. 155-57). The Egyptian priests spread false stories about him because he reduced the revenues of their temples.

No known Old Persian inscriptions survive from the time of Cambyses (for Egyptian texts in which he is mentioned, see Bresciani, 1958, p. 177; for Babylonian documents, see Dandamaev, 1984, pp. 13-14). Herzfeld was of the opinion that the so-called Taḵt-e Rostam in the neighborhood of Naqš-e Rostam was intended for Cambyses and remained unfinished after his death (p. 36; see also Boyce, p. 112).

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