



DEMOTIC CHRONICLE

DEMOTIC CHRONICLE, Egyptian papyrus document of the early 2nd century B.C.E. (Biblio-thèque Nationale, Paris, Pap. dem. no. 215 v), in which anti-Persian themes, especially focused on Cambyses (q.v.), Xerxes, and Artaxerxes III (q.v.), were elaborated in Ptolemaic Egyptian sacerdotal and intellectual surroundings (Bresciani, 1985, pp. 506, 525-26). The Persian conquerors of Egypt are called “Medes” (hieroglyphic *Mdj*, Demotic *Mtj* probably < Aram. *mdy*).

The document consists of a series of oracular sayings divided into “tablets,” followed by exegetical and prophetic paraphrases that are political in tone. The beginning, including the first columns of the text and the pseudepigraphic narrative foreword, is lost but, on the basis of comparable documents, may be reconstructed as follows: A court prophet interprets for the king, probably Nectanebus I (r. 378-60 B.C.E.), founder of the Thirtieth Dynasty, the sayings of obscure oracles written on “tablets.” In these sayings there are allusions to historical and dynastic events before the reign of Nectanebus I, to those of his own reign (see Bresciani, 1986, pp. 44-45), and to the future destiny of Egypt, including the disastrous arrival of the “Medes” (second Persian domination, 343-32 B.C.E.), then that of the Greeks, and finally the advent of an indigenous ruler who would revolt against the Greeks (almost surely Horunnofri-Harmachi, king of Upper Egypt from 205-04 to 186 B.C.E.).

In the surviving portion of the text the “Medes” are first mentioned (col. 3.18-20) as a point “post quem” for the indigenous dynasties (XXVIII-XXX) that ruled after the first Persian domination in Egypt (524-404 B.C.E.), which began



with the conquest by Cambyses. It is therefore probable (Bresciani, 1981, pp. 219-20) that in the lost beginning of the papyrus there were sayings and exegetical comments on the history of Egypt preceding the Twenty-Eighth Dynasty; in particular such tragedies as the Assyrian and Persian invasions may have been described, as well as the Achaemenid kings of the Twenty-Seventh Dynasty, judged in terms of punishment and rewards, just as the rulers from the Twenty-Eighth Dynasty to the Ptolemaic period are judged. A comparable passage in the “Law of the Temples” (Bibliothèque Nationale, Pap. dem. no. 215 r, col. c ll. 7-8; Bresciani 1981, pp. 217-18), in which the reigns of Cambyses and Darius I (q.v.) are judged in a similar way, suggests the nature of the text: “. . . Cambyses conquered Egypt. He was the cause of his own death, for punishment, and he was not able to return to his country. Darius succeeded him in the entire world, thanks to his charity (=goodness).”

Another series of sayings in the Demotic Chronicle (cols. 4.18-23, 5.1-4, 14-16) is connected with the second Persian domination, which followed the defeat of Nectanebus II by Artaxerxes III; the “Medes” are said to have thrown Egypt and its inhabitants into misfortune, but God liberated the country and forced the “Medes” to return to their own. This description recalls that of the conquest by the “Medes” and the subsequent liberation given in the “Prophecy of the Lamb,” a political text similar to the Chronicle (Staatsbibliothek, Vienna, Pap. Vindob. D.10.000): “I will rule Egypt after the Persian (Darius III, q.v.) who had turned his face to Egypt will be gone (from Egypt), returning to the foreign lands and to his places. Iniquity will have an end, and right and order will exist again in Egypt” (Bresciani, 1990, pp. 815, 818).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(For abbreviations found in this bibliography, see “Short References.”) E. Bresciani, “La morte di Cambise ovvero dell’ empietà punita,” *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 4, 1981, pp. 217-22.

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