

The Shadow of the Father

Book III: The Descent from Cyrus to Cambyses



The Legacy

Cyrus the Great.
The "Father."
Builder of Empire.



The Heir

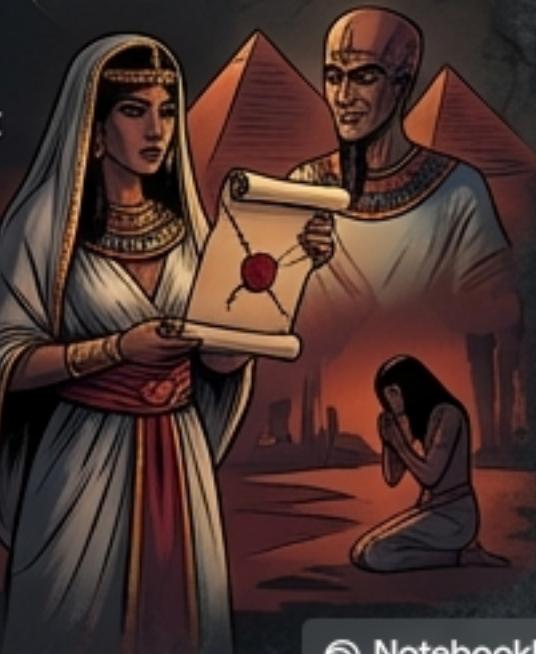
Cambyses II.
The "Master."
Unstable. Harsh. Reckless.



**"I see, O king, thou knowest not how
thou has been cheated by Amasis... I
am in truth the child of Apries."
— Nitetis to Cambyses**

The Catalyst

525 BC. A diplomatic insult triggers the invasion of Egypt. Amasis sends Nitetis, daughter of the deposed king Apries, disguised as his own daughter. Her revelation of the fraud provides the *casus belli*.



The Breaking of Egypt



The Crossing

Access to Egypt is impossible without water. Cambyses secures a treaty with the Arabian King to line the desert route with water-filled camel skins.



Pelusium

The Egyptian forces are routed and flee to Memphis.

The Forensic Evidence: Herodotus observes the battlefield years later. Persian skulls are brittle (due to wearing turbans/shade). Egyptian skulls are thick and hard (due to shaving heads/sun exposure).

The Psychological Toll

The Test of Psammenitus



Cambyses forces the defeated King Psammenitus to watch his daughter enslaved and his son executed.

Psammenitus remains silent until he sees a beggar friend, for whom he weeps. Cambyses spares him, but Psammenitus later plots revolt and is forced to drink bull's blood.



Anatomy of Madness



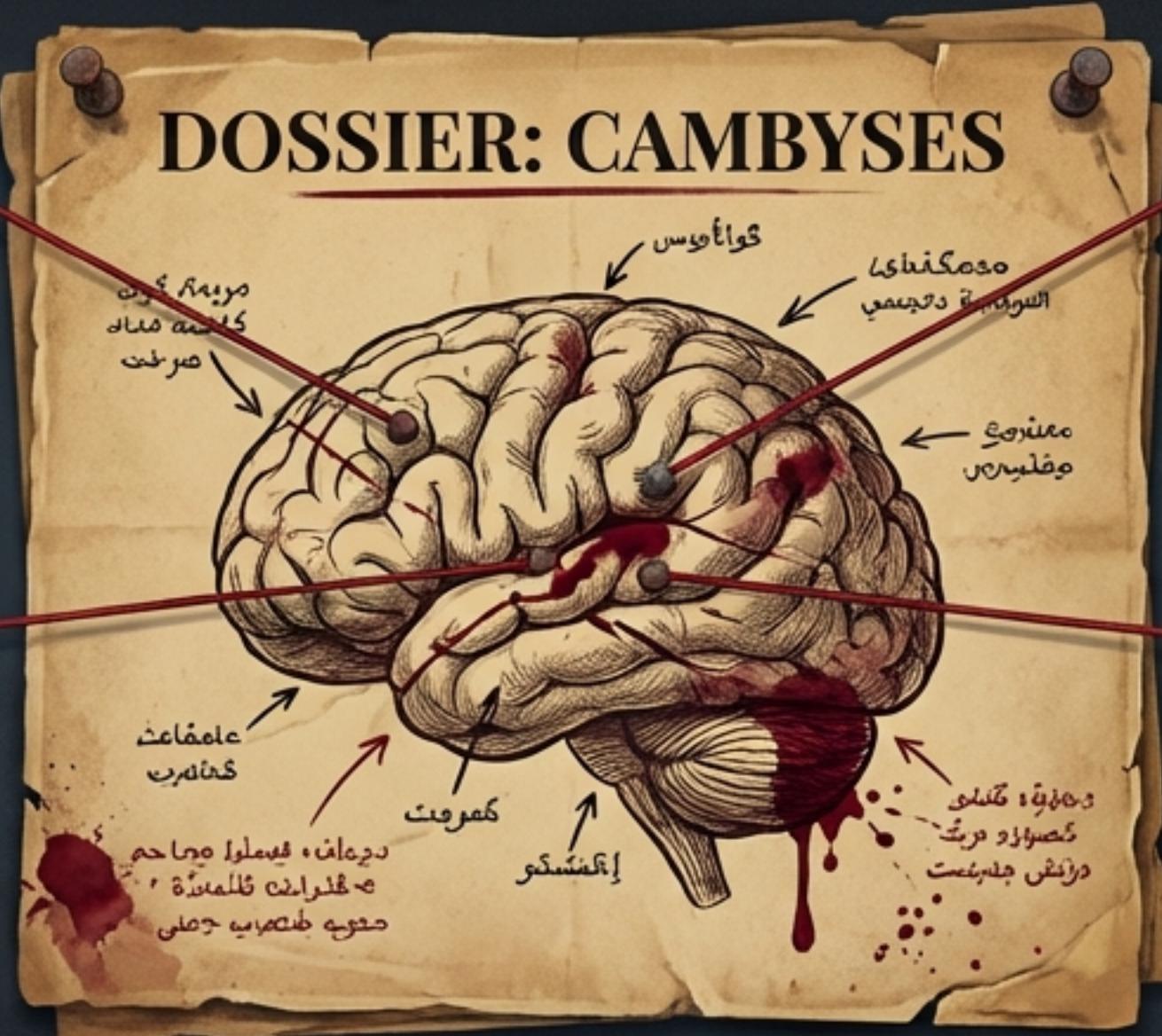
Sacrilege

Stabbing the Apis Bull in the thigh. Mocking the Egyptians for worshipping "flesh and blood."

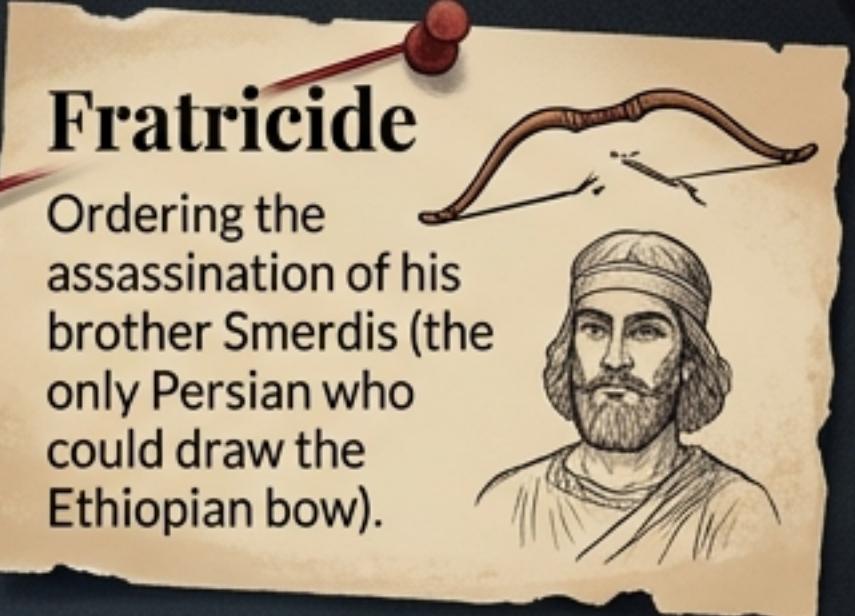


Incest & Uxoricide

Marrying two sisters against Persian law. Murdering the younger sister after she compared a stripped lettuce to the House of Cyrus.

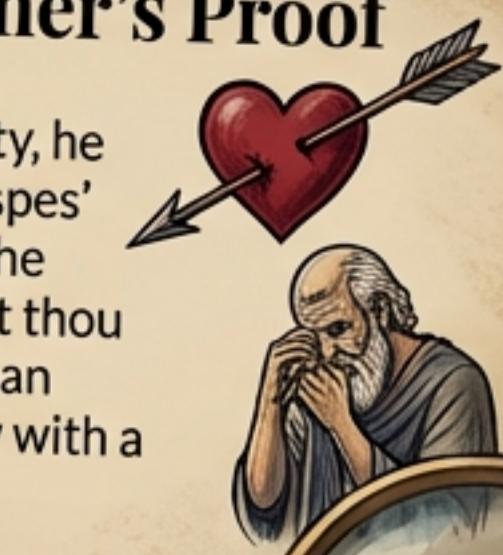


The Egyptians attribute this madness to the sacrifice against Apis. The Persians attribute it to "The Sacred Sickness" (Epilepsy).



Fraticide

Ordering the assassination of his brother Smerdis (the only Persian who could draw the Ethiopian bow).



The Archer's Proof

To prove sanity, he shoots Prexaspes' son through the heart. "Sawest thou ever mortal man send an arrow with a better aim?"

The Curse of Good Fortune: Polycrates of Samos



The Parallel Narrative

The Pirate King: Polycrates seizes Samos and plunders indiscriminately. "A friend is better pleased if you give him back what you took."

The Warning: Amasis of Egypt warns that the gods are envious of unbroken success. He advises Polycrates to discard his most clear treasure.

The Omen: Polycrates casts his emerald ring into the sea. Days later, a fisherman presents a prize fish to the king. The ring is found in its belly.

The Fall: The alliance with Egypt is broken. Polycrates is lured to the mainland by the Persian governor Oroetes and crucified. His daughter's dream is fulfilled: "Washed by rain (Zeus), anointed by the sun."

THE MAGIAN USURPATION



- **The Death of the King:** Cambyses dies of a gangrenous wound in the thigh (the same spot he stabbed the Apis Bull).
- **The Imposter:** The Magus Patizeithes places his brother on the throne. The brother's name is also Smerdis, and he resembles the true son of Cyrus.
- **The Flaw:** The Magian Smerdis has no ears (cut off by Cyrus for a past crime).
- **The Spy:** Otanes, a noble, suspects the fraud. He instructs his daughter Phaedima (a royal wife) to feel the King's head while he sleeps.
- **The Signal:** She finds no ears. The coup is exposed.

“THE SEVEN AGAINST THE MAGUS”



THE CONSPIRATORS

Otanes, Darius, Gobryas, Intaphernes, Megabyzus, Aspathines, Hydarnes.

THE DEBATE

- Otanes: Advocates caution and more numbers.
- Darius: Advocates immediate action. “If a single day be suffered to pass... I will denounce you all.”



THE CLIMAX: Darius and Gobryas corner the Magus in a dark chamber. Gobryas grapples the imposter. Darius hesitates to strike in the dark. Gobryas screams: “Strike, though it be through both!” Darius strikes. The Magus dies.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL DEBATE: 522 BC



DEMOCRACY (OTANES)

Concept: Isonomy (Equality before law).

Argument: “Monarchy allows unchecked hubris. A king subverts the laws and rapes women.”

Proposal: Magistrates answerable to the public. Rule by the many.



OLIGARCHY (MEGABYZUS)

Concept: Rule by the Best.

Argument: “The mob is a swollen river, void of understanding. We should choose the worthiest men, for the best counsels come from the best men.”



MONARCHY (DARIUS) [WINNER]

Concept: Rule by One.

Argument: “Nothing is better than the one best man. Oligarchy leads to feuds; Democracy leads to cliques. Both inevitably revert to Monarchy.”

Closer: “One man gave us our freedom (Cyrus). We should preserve that form.”



THE CONFIRMATION

Simultaneously, lightning flashes from a clear sky. The conspirators dismount and bow.

THE ACCESSION OF DARIUS

THE AGREEMENT

The Seven agree to ride out at sunrise. He whose horse neighs first shall be King.

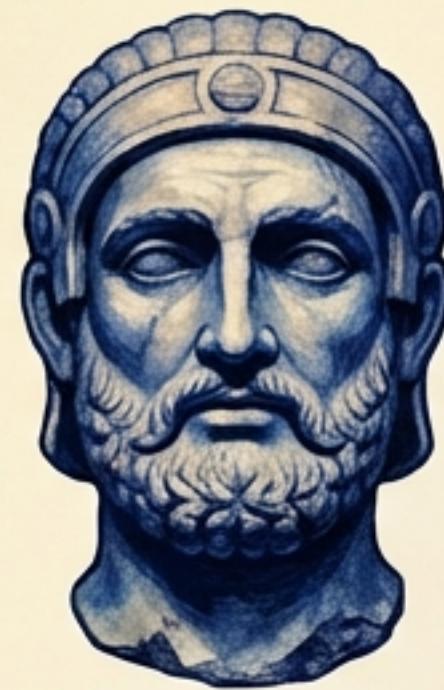
THE TRICK

Darius's groom, Oebares, rubs his hand on a mare's genitals, hides it in his tunic, and places it near the horse's nostrils at the critical mom. The horse snorts and neighs.

THE INSCRIPTION

Darius erects a statue: "Darius, son of Hystaspes, by aid of his good horse and of good horse and his good groom Oebares, got himself the kingdom."

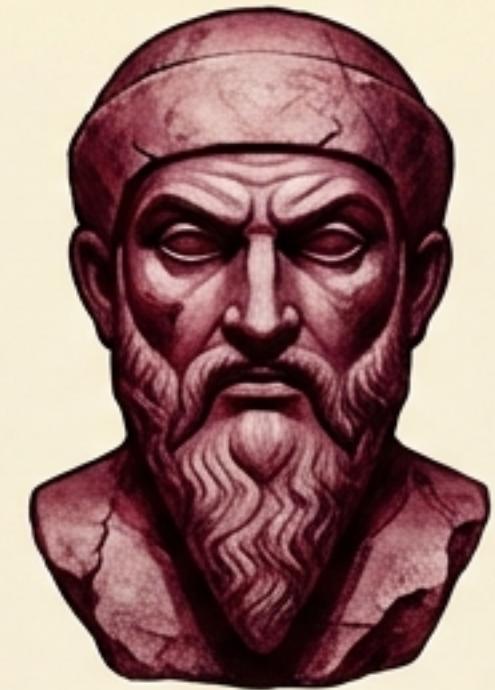
THE EVOLUTION OF AUTHORITY



CYRUS

The Father

Gentle. Procured goods for his people. Built the foundation.



CAMBYSES

The Master

Harsh. Reckless. Treated subjects as slaves.



DARIUS

The Huckster

Looked to make a gain in everything. Established the Satrapies. Fixed tributes.

Reform: Darius divides the empire into 20 Satrapies, joining neighbors into single fiscal units.

THE LEDGER OF THE WORLD

Total Annual Revenue: 14,560 Euboic Talents



Satrapy I (Ionia/Caria):
400 Talents Silver



Satrapy IX (Babylon):
1,000 Talents Silver
+ 500 Boy-Eunuchs



Satrapy IV (Cilicia):
360 White Horses
(one for each day)
+ 500 Talents Silver



Satrapy XX (India):
360 Talents of
GOLD DUST

(Value: 4,680 Silver Talents)



Arabia: 1,000
Talents of Frankincense
(Gift, not tribute)

INVENTORY OF THE EAST: INDIA



The Resource: 360 Talents of Gold Dust. The richest tribute in the empire.

The Source: The sandy deserts of the east.

The Method: Great ants, "size somewhat less than dogs but bigger than foxes," burrow underground and throw up gold-sand.

The Harvest: Indians ride camels (females are fastest, remembering their young) to snatch the gold at noon when the ants hide from the sun.

Flora: Wool growing on wild trees (Cotton).

INVENTORY OF THE SOUTH: ARABIA



Frankincense

Guarded by small winged serpents of varied colors. Harvesters burn styrax to drive them away.

Cassia

Collected by men covered in ox-hides to protect eyes from screeching bat-like creatures.

Cinnamon

Sticks brought by great birds to nests on sheer cliffs. Arabs use heavy meat chunks to break the nests down.

Divine Balance

Timid edible animals (hares) breed constantly; noxious predators (lions, vipers) breed slowly or die at birth.

THE PHYSICIAN AND THE SPY



- ***The Incident:*** Darius sprains his ankle. Egyptian doctors fail. Democedes of Crotona (a Greek slave) cures him.
- ***The Influence:*** Atossa (cured of a boil by Democedes) urges Darius to look West: “I long to be served by Lacedaemonian, Argive, and Athenian women.”
- ***The Mission:*** 15 Persian nobles guide Democedes to spy on Greece—the prelude to invasion.
- ***The Escape:*** Democedes escapes at Tarentum. The Persians are shipwrecked, enslaved, and ransomed. The first reconnaissance of Greece fails.

THE COST OF DOMINION: BABYLON



- ***The Revolt:*** Babylon rebels. “Till mules foal ye will not take our city.”
- ***The Sacrifice:*** Zopyrus, a high noble, cuts off his own nose and ears, and scorges himself. He defects to Babylon, claiming Darius inflicted the wounds.
- ***The Betrayal:*** Winning Babylonian trust, Zopyrus is given command of the gates. He opens them to the Persian army.
- ***The Verdict:*** Darius: “I had rather Zopyrus were unmaimed, than be master of twenty more Babylons.”

From Chaos to Order



- **Transition:** The Empire survives the madness of Cambyses and the Magian fraud to find stability under Darius.
- **Structure:** The 'Huckster King' transforms conquest into administration (Satrapies).
- **Legacy:** The borders are secure, the gold is counted, but the eyes of the Empire have turned West toward Greece.

“Law is the king o'er all.”
— Pindar