

# 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

Cambyes 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.





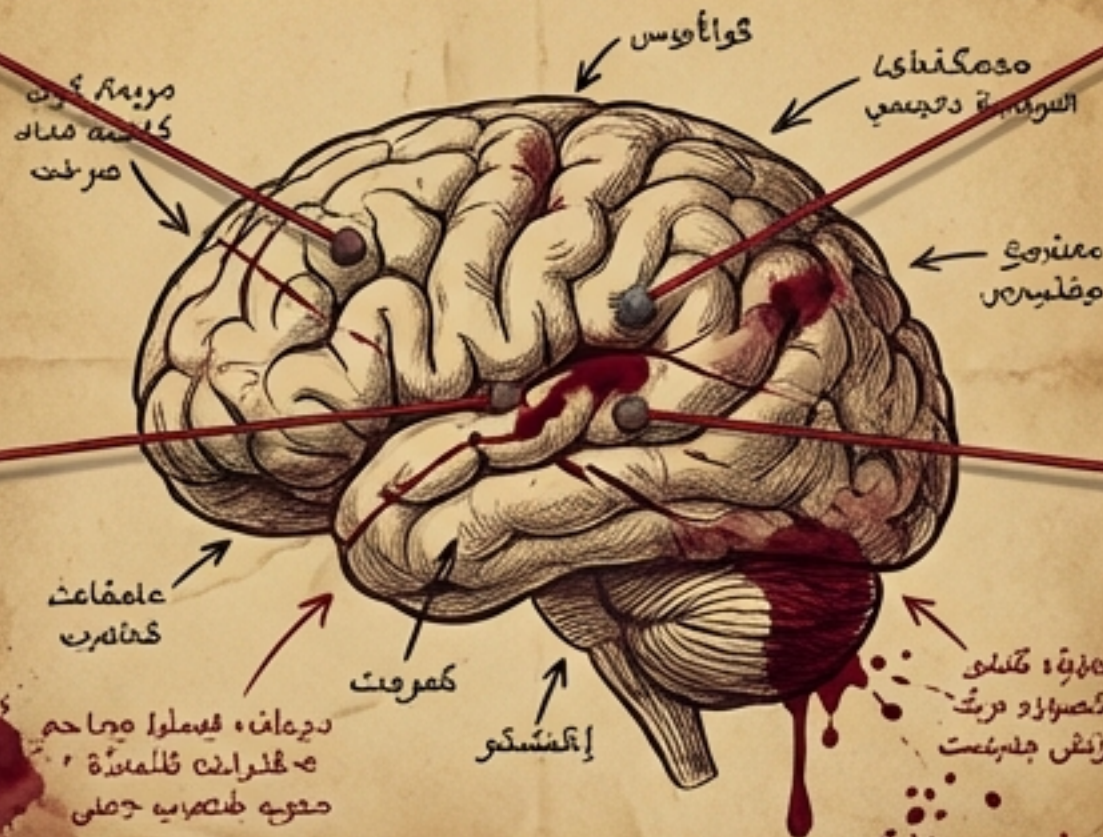
# Anatomy of Madness



## Sacrilege

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

## DOSSIER: CAMBYSES



## Fratricide

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



## Incest & Uxoricide

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



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



# 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**