

Smerdis (Herodotus III.30, 61–88)

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[30] Καμβύσης δέ, ὡς λέγουσι Αἰγύπτιοι, αὐτίκα διὰ τοῦτο τὸ ἀδίκημα ἐμάνη, ἐὼν οὐδὲ πρότερον φρενήρης. καὶ πρῶτα μὲν τῶν κακῶν ἐξεργάσατο τὸν ἀδελφεὸν Σμέρδιν ἐόντα πατρὸς καὶ μητρὸς τῆς αὐτῆς, τὸν ἀπέπεμψε ἐς Πέρσας φθόνῳ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου, ὅτι τὸ τόξον μοῦνος Περσέων ὅσον τε ἐπὶ δύο δακτύλους εἴρυσε, τὸ παρὰ τοῦ Αἰθίοπος ἦνεικαν οἱ Ἰχθυοφάγοι, τῶν δὲ ἄλλων Περσέων οὐδεὶς οἴος τε ἐγένετο. ἀποικομένου ὦν ἐς Πέρσας τοῦ Σμέρδιος ὄψιν εἶδε ὁ Καμβύσης ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ τοιήνδε· ἔδοξέ οἱ ἄγγελον ἐλθόντα ἐκ Περσέων ἀγγέλλειν ὡς ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ τῷ βασιλῆϊ ἰζόμενος Σμέρδης τῇ κεφαλῇ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ψαύσειε. πρὸς ὦν ταῦτα δεισας περὶ ἑαυτοῦ μή μιν ἀποκτείνας ὁ ἀδελφεὸς ἄρχη, πέμπει Πρηξάσπεα ἐς Πέρσας, ὃς ἦν οἱ ἀνὴρ Περσέων πιστότατος, ἀποκτενέοντά μιν. ὁ δὲ ἀναβάς ἐς Σοῦσα ἀπέκτεινε Σμέρδιν, οἱ μὲν λέγουσι ἐπ’ ἄγρην ἐξαγαγόντα, οἱ δὲ ἐς τὴν Ἐρυθρὴν θάλασσαν προαγαγόντα καταποντῶσαι.

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[61] Καμβύση δὲ τῷ Κύρου χρονίζοντι περὶ Αἴγυπτον καὶ παραφρονήσαντι ἐπανιστέαται ἄνδρες Μάγοι δύο ἀδελφοί, τῶν τὸν ἕτερον καταλελοίπεε τῶν οἰκίων μελεδωνὸν ὁ Καμβύσης. οὗτος δὴ ὦν οἱ ἐπανέστη μαθὼν τε τὸν Σμέρδιος θάνατον ὡς κρύπτοιο γενόμενος, καὶ ὡς ὀλίγοι εἶψαν οἱ ἐπιστάμενοι αὐτὸν Περσέων, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ περιεόντα μιν εἰδείψαν. πρὸς ταῦτα βουλευσας τάδε ἐπεχείρησε τοῖσι βασιλῆϊσι. ἦν οἱ ἀδελφεός, τὸν εἶπά οἱ συνεπαναστήναι, οἰκῶς μάλιστα τὸ εἶδος Σμέρδι τῷ Κύρου, τὸν ὁ Καμβύσης ἐόντα ἑαυτοῦ ἀδελφεὸν ἀπέκτεινε· ἦν τε δὴ ὁμοῖος εἶδος τῷ Σμέρδι καὶ δὴ καὶ οὐνομα τούτῳ εἶχε Σμέρδιν. τοῦτον τὸν ἄνδρα ἀναγνώσας ὁ Μάγος Πατιζειθῆς ὡς οἱ αὐτὸς πάντα διαπρήξει, εἶσε ἄγων ἐς τὸν βασιλῆιον θρόνον. ποιήσας δὲ τοῦτο κήρυκας τῇ τε ἄλλῃ διέπεμπε καὶ δὴ καὶ ἐς Αἴγυπτον προερέοντα τῷ στρατῷ ὡς Σμέρδιος τοῦ Κύρου ἀκουστέα εἶη τοῦ λοιποῦ ἄλλ’ οὐ Καμβύσεω.

[62] Οἱ τε δὴ ὦν ἄλλοι κήρυκες προηγόρευον ταῦτα καὶ δὴ καὶ ὁ ἐπ’ Αἴγυπτον ταχθεὶς, εὔρισκε γὰρ Καμβύσεα καὶ τὸν στρατὸν ἐόντα τῆς Συρίας ἐν Ἀγβατάνοισι, προηγόρευε στὰς ἐς μέσον τὰ ἐντεταλμένα ἐκ τοῦ Μάγου. Καμβύσης δὲ ἀκούσας ταῦτα ἐκ τοῦ κήρυκος καὶ ἐλπίσας μιν λέγειν ἀληθέα αὐτὸς τε προοδεῖσθαι ἐκ Πρηξάσπεος (πεμφθέντα γὰρ αὐτὸν ὡς ἀποκτενέοντα Σμέρδιν οὐ ποιῆσαι ταῦτα), βλέψας ἐς τὸν Πρηξάσπεα εἶπε “Πρηξάσπεες, οὕτω μοι διεπρήξαι τό τοι προσέθηκα πρῆγμα;” ὁ δὲ εἶπε “ὦ δέσποτα, οὐκ ἔστι ταῦτα ἀληθέα, ὅπως κοτὲ σοὶ Σμέρδης ἀδελφεὸς σὸς ἐπανέστηκε, οὐδὲ ὅπως τι ἐξ ἐκείνου τοῦ ἀνδρὸς νεῖκός τοι ἔσται ἢ μέγα ἢ μικρόν· ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτὸς, ποιήσας τὰ σύ με ἐκέλευες, ἔθαψά μιν χερσὶ τῆσι ἑμεωυτοῦ. εἰ μὲν νυν οἱ τεθνεῶτες ἀνεστῆσι, προσδέχεό τοι καὶ Ἀστυάγεα τὸν Μῆδον ἐπαναστήσεσθαι· εἰ δ’ ἔστι ὥσπερ πρὸ τοῦ, οὐ μὴ τί τοι ἐκ γέ ἐκείνου νεώτερον ἀναβλάσθη. νῦν ὦν μοι δοκέει μεταδιώξαντας τὸν κήρυκα ἐξετάζειν εἰρωτεύοντας παρ’ ὅτευ ἦγων προαγορεύει ἡμῖν Σμέρδιος βασιλέος ἀκούειν.”

[30] By reason of this wrongful deed, as the Egyptians say, Cambyses’ former want of sense turned straightway to madness. His first evil act was to make away with his full brother Smerdis, whom he had sent away from Egypt to Persia out of jealousy, because Smerdis alone could draw the bow brought from the Ethiopian by the Fish-eaters as far as two fingerbreadths; but no other Persian could draw it. Smerdis having gone to Persia, Cambyses saw in a dream a vision, whereby it seemed to him that a messenger came from Persia and told him that Smerdis had sat on the royal throne with his head reaching to heaven. Fearing therefore for himself, lest his brother might slay him and so be king, he sent to Persia Prexaspes, the trustiest of his Persians, to kill Smerdis. Prexaspes went up to Susa and so did; some say that he took Smerdis out a-hunting, others that he brought him to the Red Sea and there drowned him.

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[61] Now after Cambyses son of Cyrus had lost his wits, while he still lingered in Egypt, two Magians, who were brothers, rebelled against him. One of them had been left by Cambyses to be steward of his house; this man now revolted from him, perceiving that the death of Smerdis was kept secret, and that few persons knew of it, most of them believing him to be still alive. Therefore he thus plotted to gain the royal power: he had a brother, his partner, as I said, in rebellion; this brother was very like in appearance to Cyrus’ son, Smerdis, brother of Cambyses and by him put to death; nor was he like him in appearance only, but he bore the same name also, Smerdis. Patizeithes the Magian persuaded this man that he, Patizeithes, would manage the whole business for him; he brought his brother and set him on the royal throne; which done, he sent heralds to all parts, one of whom was to go to Egypt and proclaim to the army that henceforth they must obey not Cambyses but Smerdis the son of Cyrus.

[62] So this proclamation was everywhere made; the herald appointed to go to Egypt, finding Cambyses and his army at Agbatana in Syria, came out before them all and proclaimed the message given him by the Magian. When Cambyses heard what the herald said, he supposed that it was truth, and that Prexaspes, when sent to kill Smerdis, had not so done but played Cambyses false; and he said, fixing his eyes on Prexaspes, “Is it thus, Prexaspes, that you did my behest?” “Nay,” said Prexaspes, “this is no truth, sire, that your brother Smerdis has rebelled against you; nor can it be that he will have any quarrel with you, small or great; I myself did your bidding, and mine own hands buried him. If then the dead can rise, you may look to see Astyages the Mede rise up against you; but if nature’s order be not changed, assuredly no harm to you will arise from Smerdis. Now therefore this is my counsel, that we pursue after this herald and examine him, to know from whom he comes with his proclamation that we must obey Smerdis as our king.”

[63] Ταῦτα εἶπαντος Πρηξάσπεος, ἤρεσε γὰρ Καμβύση, αὐτίκα μεταδίωκτος γενόμενος ὁ κῆρυξ ἦκε· ἀπιγμένον δέ μιν εἶρετο ὁ Πρηξάσπης τάδε. “Ὁνθρωπε, φῆς γὰρ ἦκειν παρὰ Σμέρδιος τοῦ Κύρου ἄγγελος· νῦν ὦν εἶπας τὴν ἀληθείην ἄπιθι χαίρων, κότερα αὐτός τοι Σμέρδις φαινόμενος ἐς ὄψιν ἐνετέλλετο ταῦτα ἢ τῶν τις ἐκείνου ὑπηρετέων.” ὁ δὲ εἶπε “Ἐγὼ Σμέρδιν μὲν τὸν Κύρου, ἐξ ὅτευ βασιλεὺς Καμβύσης ἦλασε ἐς Αἴγυπτον, οὐκ ὄπωπα· ὁ δὲ μοι Μάγος τὸν Καμβύσης ἐπίτροπον τῶν οἰκίων ἀπέδεξε, οὗτος ταῦτα ἐνετείλατο, φὰς Σμέρδιν τὸν Κύρου εἶναι τὸν ταῦτα ἐπιθέμενον εἶπαι πρὸς ὑμέας.” ὁ μὲν δὴ σφι ἔλεγε οὐδὲν ἐπικατεφουσμένος, Καμβύσης δὲ εἶπε “Πρηξάσπεες, σὺ μὲν οἶα ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς ποιήσας τὸ κελευόμενον αἰτήν ἐκπέφυγας· ἐμοὶ δὲ τίς ἂν εἴη Περσέων ὁ ἐπανεστὼς ἐπιβατεύων τοῦ Σμέρδιος οὐνόματος;” ὁ δὲ εἶπε “Ἐγὼ μοι δοκέω συνιέναι τὸ γεγονός τοῦτο, ὦ βασιλεῦ· οἱ Μάγοι εἰσὶ τοι οἱ ἐπανεστῶτες, τὸν τε ἔλιπες μελεδῶν τῶν οἰκίων, Πατιζειθης, καὶ ὁ τούτου ἀδελφὸς Σμέρδις.”

[64] Ἐνθαῦτα ἀκούσαντα Καμβύσεια τὸ Σμέρδιος οὐνομα ἔτυψε ἢ ἀληθείᾳ τῶν τε λόγων καὶ τοῦ ἐνουπνίου· ὃς ἐδόκεε ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ ἀπαγγεῖλαι τινὰ οἷ ὡς Σμέρδις ἰζόμενος ἐς τὸν βασιλῆιον θρόνον ψαύσειε τῇ κεφαλῇ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. μαθὼν δὲ ὡς μάτην ἀπολωλεκὼς εἶη τὸν ἀδελφόν, ἀπέχλαιε Σμέρδιν· ἀποκλαύσας δὲ καὶ περιημεκτήσας τῇ ἀπάσῃ συμφορῇ ἀναθρόσκει ἐπὶ τὸν ἵππον, ἐν νόῳ ἔχων τὴν ταχίστην ἐς Σοῦσα στρατεύεσθαι ἐπὶ τὸν Μάγον. καὶ οἱ ἀναθρόσκοντι ἐπὶ τὸν ἵππον τοῦ κολοῦ τοῦ ζίφους ὁ μύκης ἀποπίπτει, γυμνωθὲν δὲ τὸ ζίφος παῖει τὸν μηρόν· τρωματισθεὶς δὲ κατὰ τοῦτο τῇ αὐτὸς πρότερον τὸν τῶν Αἴγυπτίων θεὸν Ἄπιν ἔπληξε, ὡς οἱ καιρὴν ἔδοξε τετύφθαι, εἶρετο ὁ Καμβύσης ὅ τι τῇ πόλι οὐνομα εἶη· οἱ δὲ εἶπαν ὅτι Ἀγβάτανα. τῷ δὲ ἔτι πρότερον ἐκέχρηστο ἐκ Βουτοῦς πόλιος ἐν Ἀγβατάνοισι τελευτήσειν τὸν βίον. ὁ μὲν δὴ ἐν τοῖσι Μηδικοῖσι Ἀγβατάνοισι ἐδόκεε τελευτήσειν γηραῖος, ἐν τοῖσι οἱ ἦν τὰ πάντα πρήγματα· τὸ δὲ χρηστήριον ἐν τοῖσι ἐν Συρίῃ Ἀγβατάνοισι ἔλεγε ἄρα. καὶ δὴ ὡς τότε ἐπειρόμενος ἐπύθετο τῆς πόλιος τὸ οὐνομα, ὑπὸ τῆς συμφορῆς τῆς τε ἐκ τοῦ Μάγου ἐκπεπληγμένος καὶ τοῦ τρώματος ἐσωφρόνησε, συλλαβῶν δὲ τὸ θεοπρόπιον εἶπε “Ἐνθαῦτα Καμβύσεια τὸν Κύρου ἐστὶ πεπρωμένον τελευτᾶν.”

[63] Cambyses thought well of Prexaspes' counsel; the herald was pursued and brought; and when he came, Prexaspes put this question to him: “Sirrah, you say that your message is from Cyrus' son Smerdis; tell me this now, and you may go hence unpunished: was it Smerdis who himself appeared to you and gave you this charge, or was it one of his servants?” “Since King Cambyses marched to Egypt,” answered the herald, “I have never myself seen Smerdis the son of Cyrus; the Magian whom Cambyses made overseer of his house gave me the charge, saying that it was the will of Smerdis, son of Cyrus, that I should make it known to you.” So spoke the herald, telling the whole truth; and Cambyses said, “Prexaspes, I hold you innocent; you have done my bidding right loyally; but who can this Persian be who rebels against me and usurps the name of Smerdis?” Prexaspes replied, “I think, sire, that I understand what has been done here; the rebels are the Magians, Patizeithes whom you left steward of your house, and his brother Smerdis.”

[64] At the name of Smerdis, Cambyses was smitten to the heart by the truth of the word and the fulfilment of his dream; for he had dreamt that a message had come to him that Smerdis had sat on the royal throne with his head reaching to heaven; and perceiving that he had killed his brother to no purpose, he wept bitterly for Smerdis. Having wept his fill, in great grief for all his mishap, he leapt upon his horse, with intent to march forthwith to Susa against the Magian. As he mounted, the cap slipped off the scabbard of his sword, and the naked blade struck his thigh, wounding him in the same part where he himself had once smitten the Egyptian god Apis; and believing the blow to be mortal, Cambyses asked what was the name of the town where he was. They told him it was Agbatana. Now a prophecy had ere this come to him from Buto, that he would end his life at Agbatana; Cambyses supposed this to signify that he would die in old age at the Median Agbatana, his capital city; but as the event proved, the oracle prophesied his death at Agbatana of Syria. So when he now enquired and learnt the name of the town, the shock of his wound, and of the misfortune that came to him from the Magian, brought him to his senses; he understood the prophecy and said: “Here Cambyses son of Cyrus is doomed to die.”

[65] Τότε μὲν τοσαῦτα. ἡμέρησι δὲ ὕστερον ὡς εἴκοσι μεταπεμφάμενος Περσέων τῶν παρεόντων τοὺς λογιμωτάτους ἔλεγέ σφι τάδε. “ὦ Πέρσαι, καταλελάβηκέ με, τὸ πάντων μάλιστα ἔκρυπτον πρηγμάτων, τοῦτο ἐς ὑμέας ἐκφῆναι. ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐὼν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ εἶδον ὄψιν ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ, τὴν μηδαμὰ ὄφελον ἰδεῖν· ἐδόχεον δέ μοι ἄγγελον ἐλθόντα ἐξ οἴκου ἀγγέλλειν ὡς Σμέρδις ἰζόμενος ἐς τὸν βασιλῆιον θρόνον ψάυσειε τῇ κεφαλῇ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. δεῖσας δὲ μὴ ἀπαιρηθῆω τὴν ἀρχὴν πρὸς τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ, ἐποίησα ταχύτερα ἢ σοφώτερα· ἐν τῇ γὰρ ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει οὐκ ἐνῆν ἄρα τὸ μέλλον γίνεσθαι ἀποτράπειν. ἐγὼ δὲ ὁ μάταιος Πρηξάσπεα ἀποπέμπω ἐς Σοῦσα ἀποκτενέοντα Σμέρδιν. ἐξεργασθέντος δὲ κακοῦ τοσοῦτου ἀδεῶς διαιτώμην, οὐδαμὰ ἐπιλεξάμενος μὴ κοτέ τις μοι Σμέρδις ὑπαραιρημένου ἄλλος ἐπανασταίη ἀνθρώπων. παντὸς δὲ τοῦ μέλλοντος ἔσσεσθαι ἀμαρτῶν ἀδελφειοκτόνος τε οὐδὲν δέον γέγονα καὶ τῆς βασιλείης οὐδὲν ἦσσον ἐστέρημα· Σμέρδις γὰρ δὴ ἦν ὁ Μάγος τὸν μοι ὁ δαίμων προσέφαινε ἐν τῇ ὄψι ἐπαναστήσεσθαι. τὸ μὲν δὴ ἔργον ἐξέργασταί μοι, καὶ Σμέρδιν τὸν Κύρου μηκέτι ὑμῖν ἐόντα λογίζεσθε· οἱ δὲ ὑμῖν Μάγοι κρατέουσι τῶν βασιλείων, τὸν τε ἔλιπον ἐπίτροπον τῶν οἰκίων καὶ ὁ ἐκείνου ἀδελφεὸς Σμέρδις. τὸν μὲν νυν μάλιστα χρῆν ἐμεῦ αἰσχροῦ πρὸς τῶν Μάγων πεπονθότος τιμωρέειν ἐμοί, οὗτος μὲν ἀνοσίῳ μόρῳ τετελεύτηχε ὑπὸ τῶν ἐωυτοῦ οἰκιοτάτων· τούτου δὲ μηκέτι ἐόντος, δεύτερα τῶν λοιπῶν ὑμῖν ὧ Πέρσαι γίνεταί μοι ἀναγκαιότατον ἐντέλλεσθαι τὰ θέλω μοι γενέσθαι τελευτῶν τὸν βίον· καὶ δὴ ὑμῖν τάδε ἐπισκήπτω θεοὺς τοὺς βασιλείους ἐπικαλέων καὶ πᾶσι ὑμῖν καὶ μάλιστα Ἀχαμενιδέων τοῖσι παρεούσι, μὴ περιιδεῖν τὴν ἡγεμονίην αὐτίς ἐς Μήδους περιελθοῦσαν, ἀλλ’ εἴτε δόλῳ ἔχουσι αὐτὴν κτησάμενοι, δόλῳ ἀπαιρηθῆναι ὑπὸ ὑμέων, εἴτε καὶ σθένει τεῶν κατεργασάμενοι, σθένει κατὰ τὸ καρτερόν ἀνασώσασθαι. καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ποιεῦσι ὑμῖν γῆ τε καρπὸν ἐκφέρου καὶ γυναῖκας τε καὶ ποῖμνα τίκτοιεν, ἐοῦσι ἐς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον ἐλευθέρουσι· μὴ δὲ ἀνασωσαμένοισι τὴν ἀρχὴν μηδ’ ἐπιχειρήσασιν ἀνασώζειν τὰ ἐναντία τούτοις ἀρῶμαι ὑμῖν γενέσθαι, καὶ πρὸς ἔτι τούτοις τὸ τέλος Περσέων ἐκάστω ἐπιγενέσθαι οἷον ἐμοί ἐπιγέγονε.” ἄμα τε εἶπας ταῦτα ὁ Καμβύσης ἀπέκλαιε πᾶσαν τὴν ἐωυτοῦ πρηξίν.

[66] Πέρσαι δὲ ὡς τὸν βασιλέα εἶδον ἀνακλαύσαντα πάντες τὰ τε ἐσθῆτος ἐχόμενα εἶχον, ταῦτα κατηρεῖκοντο καὶ οἰμωγῇ ἀφθόνῳ διεχρέωντο. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα ὡς ἐσφακέλισέ τε τὸ ὀστέον καὶ ὁ μηρὸς τάχιστα ἐσάπη, ἀπήνευκε Καμβύσεια τὸν Κύρου, βασιλεύσαντα μὲν τὰ πάντα ἑπτὰ ἔτεα καὶ πέντε μῆνας, ἄπαιδα δὲ τὸ παράπαν ἐόντα ἔρσηνος καὶ θήλεος γόνου. Περσέων δὲ τοῖσι παρεούσι ἀπιστίη πολλὴ ὑπεκέχυτο τοὺς Μάγους ἔχειν τὰ πρηγμάτα, ἀλλ’ ἠπιστέατο ἐπὶ διαβολῇ εἰπεῖν Καμβύσεια τὰ εἶπε περὶ τοῦ Σμέρδιος θανάτου, ἵνα οἱ ἐκπολεμωθῇ πᾶν τὸ Περσικόν. οὗτοι μὲν νυν ἠπιστέατο Σμέρδιν τὸν Κύρου βασιλέα ἐνεστεῶτα· δεινῶς γὰρ καὶ ὁ Πρηξάσπης ἕξαρνος ἦν μὲν ἀποκτεῖναι Σμέρδιν· οὐ γὰρ ἦν οἱ ἀσφαλὲς Καμβύσειω τετελευτηκότος φάναι τὸν Κύρου υἱὸν ἀπολωλέκεναι αὐτοχειρίῃ.

[65] At this time he said no more. But about twenty days after, he sent for the most honourable of the Persians that were about him, and thus addressed them: “Needs must, Persians! that I declare to you a matter which I kept most strictly concealed. When I was in Egypt, I saw in my sleep a vision that I would I had never seen; methought a messenger came from home to tell me that Smerdis had sat on the royal throne, his head reaching to heaven. Then I feared that my brother would take away from me my sovereignty, and I acted with more haste than wisdom; for (as I now see) no human power can turn fate aside; fool that I was! I sent Prexaspes to Susa to slay Smerdis. When that great wrong was done I lived without fear, for never did I think that when Smerdis was taken out of my way another man might rise against me. So did I wholly mistake what was to be; I have slain my brother when there was no need, and lost my kingship none the less; for the rebel foretold by heaven in the vision was Smerdis the Magian. Now I have done the deed, and I would have you believe that Smerdis Cyrus’ son no longer lives; you see the Magians masters of my royal estate, even him that I left steward of my house, and his brother Smerdis. So then, he that especially should have avenged the dishonour done me by the Magians lies foully slain by his nearest kinsman; and he being no longer in life, necessity constrains me, in his default, to charge you, men of Persia, with the last desire of my life. In the name of the gods of my royal house I charge all of you, but chiefly those Achaemenids that are here, not to suffer the sovereignty to fall again into Median hands; if they have won it by trickery, trick them of it again; if they have wrested it away by force, then do you by force and strength of hand recover it. And if you so do, may your land bring forth her fruits, and your women and your flocks and herds be blessed with offspring; but if you win not back the kingdom nor essay so to do, then I pray that all may go contrariwise for you, yea, that every Persian may meet an end such as mine.” With that Cambyses wept bitterly for all that had befallen him.

[66] When the Persians saw their king weep, they all rent the garments which they wore and lamented loud and long. But after this the bone became gangrened and mortification of the thigh set in rapidly; which took off Cambyses son of Cyrus, who had reigned in all seven years and five months, and left no issue at all, male or female. The Persians present fully disbelieved in their hearts that the Magians were masters of the kingdom; they supposed that Cambyses’ intent was to deceive them with his tale of Smerdis’ death, so that all Persia might be plunged into a war against him. So they believed that it was Cyrus’ son Smerdis who had been made king. For Prexaspes stoutly denied that he had killed Smerdis, since now that Cambyses was dead, it was not safe for him to say that he had slain the son of Cyrus with his own hands.

[67] Ὁ δὲ δὴ Μάγος τελευτήσαντος Καμβύσεω ἀδεῶς ἐβασίλευσε, ἐπιβατεύων τοῦ ὁμωνύμου Σμέρδιος τοῦ Κύρου, μῆνας ἑπτὰ τοὺς ἐπιλοίπους Καμβύση ἐς τὰ ὀκτῶ ἔτεα τῆς πληρώσιος· ἐν τοῖσι ἀπεδέξατο ἐς τοὺς ὑπηκόους πάντας εὐεργεσίας μεγάλας, ὥστε ἀποθανόντος αὐτοῦ πόθον ἔχειν πάντας τοὺς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίῃ πάρεξ αὐτῶν Περσέων. διαπέμψας γὰρ ὁ Μάγος ἐς πᾶν ἔθνος τῶν ἡρχε προεῖπε ἀτελείην εἶναι στρατηγίας καὶ φόρου ἐπ' ἔτεα τρία.

[68] Προεῖπε μὲν δὴ ταῦτα αὐτίκα ἐνιστάμενος ἐς τὴν ἀρχὴν, ὀγδόῳ δὲ μηνὶ ἐγένετο κατάδηλος τρόπῳ τοιῷδε. Ὀτάνης ἦν Φαρνάσπεω μὲν παῖς, γένει δὲ καὶ χρήμασι ὅμοιος τῷ πρώτῳ Περσέων. οὗτος ὁ Ὀτάνης πρώτος ὑπώπτευσεν τὸν Μάγον ὡς οὐκ εἶη ὁ Κύρου Σμέρδις ἀλλ' ὅς περ ἦν, τῆδε συμβαλλόμενος, ὅτι τε οὐκ ἐξεφοίτα ἐκ τῆς ἀκροπόλιος καὶ ὅτι οὐκ ἐκάλεε ἐς ὄψιν ἐωυτῶ οὐδένα τῶν λογίμων Περσέων· ὑποπτεύσας δὲ μιν ἐποίησε τάδε. ἔσχε αὐτοῦ Καμβύσης θυγατέρα, τῇ οὖνομα ἦν Φαιδύμη· τὴν αὐτὴν δὴ ταύτην εἶχε τότε ὁ Μάγος καὶ ταύτην τε συνοικεῖε καὶ τῆσι ἄλλῃσι πάσῃσι τῆσι τοῦ Καμβύσεω γυναῖξί. πέμπων δὴ ὢν ὁ Ὀτάνης παρὰ ταύτην τὴν θυγατέρα ἐπυνθάνετο παρ' ὅτεω ἀνθρώπων κοιμῶτο, εἴτε μετὰ Σμέρδιος τοῦ Κύρου εἴτε μετὰ ἄλλου τευ. ἡ δὲ οἱ ἀντέπεμπε φαμένη οὐ γινώσκειν· οὔτε γὰρ τὸν Κύρου Σμέρδιν ἰδέσθαι οὐδαμὰ οὔτε ὅστις εἶη ὁ συνοικεῖων αὐτῇ εἰδέναι. ἔπεμπε δεύτερα ὁ Ὀτάνης λέγων “Εἰ μὴ αὐτὴ Σμέρδιν τὸν Κύρου γινώσκεις, σὺ δὲ παρὰ Ἀτόσσης πύθου ὅτεω τούτῳ συνοικεῖ αὐτὴν τε ἐκεῖνη καὶ σύ· πάντως γὰρ δὴ κου τὸν γε ἐωυτῆς ἀδελφεὸν γινώσκει.”

[69] Ἀντιπέμπει πρὸς ταῦτα ἡ θυγάτηρ “Οὔτε Ἀτόσση δύναμαι ἐς λόγους ἐλθεῖν οὔτε ἄλλην οὐδεμίαν ἰδέσθαι τῶν συγκατημενέων γυναικῶν. ἐπεῖτε γὰρ τάχιστα οὗτος ὢνθρωπος, ὅστις κοτὲ ἐστί, παρέλαβε τὴν βασιλίην, διέσπειρε ἡμέας ἄλλην ἄλλη τάξας.” ἀκούοντι δὲ ταῦτα τῷ Ὀτάνῃ μᾶλλον κατεφάνετο τὸ πρῆγμα. τρίτην δὲ ἀγγελίην ἐσπέμπει παρ' αὐτὴν λέγουσαν ταῦτα. “ὦ θυγάτερ, δεῖ σε γεγυνοῦσαν εὖ κίνδυνον ἀναλαβέσθαι τὸν ἂν ὁ πατὴρ ὑποδύνειν κελεύῃ. εἰ γὰρ δὴ μὴ ἐστί ὁ Κύρου Σμέρδις ἀλλὰ τὸν καταδοκέω ἐγώ, οὔτοι μιν σοὶ τε συγκαοιμώμενον καὶ τὸ Περσέων κράτος ἔχοντα δεῖ χαίροντα ἀπαλλάσσειν, ἀλλὰ δοῦνα δίκην. νῦν ὢν ποιήσον τάδε· ἐπεὰν σοὶ συνεύδῃ καὶ μάθῃς αὐτὸν κατυπνωμένον, ἄφασσον αὐτοῦ τὰ ὦτα· καὶ ἦν μὲν φαίνεταί ἔχων ὦτα, νόμιζε σεωυτὴν Σμέρδι τῷ Κύρου συνοικεῖν, ἦν δὲ μὴ ἔχων, σὺ δὲ τῷ Μάγῳ Σμέρδι.” ἀντιπέμπει πρὸς ταῦτα ἡ Φαιδύμη φαμένη κινδυνεύειν μεγάλως, ἦν ποιῆ ταῦτα· εἰ γὰρ δὴ μὴ τυγχάνει τὰ ὦτα ἔχων, ἐπίλαμπτος δὲ ἀφάσσοισα ἔσται, εὖ εἰδέναι ὡς ἀιστώσει μιν· ὅμως μέντοι ποιήσειν ταῦτα. ἡ μὲν δὴ ὑπεδέξατο ταῦτα τῷ πατρὶ κατεργάσεσθαι. τοῦ δὲ Μάγου τούτου τοῦ Σμέρδιος Κύρος ὁ Καμβύσεω ἄρχων τὰ ὦτα ἀπέταμε ἐπ' αἰτίῃ δὴ τιμὴν οὐ σμικρῇ. ἡ ὢν δὴ Φαιδύμη αὐτῆ, ἡ τοῦ Ὀτάνεω θυγάτηρ, πάντα ἐπιτελέουσα τὰ ὑπεδέξατο τῷ πατρὶ, ἐπεῖτε αὐτῆς μέρος ἐγένετο τῆς ἀπίξιος παρὰ τὸν Μάγον (ἐν περιτροπῇ γὰρ δὴ αἱ γυναῖκες φοιτέουσι τοῖσι Πέρσῃσι), ἐλθοῦσα παρ' αὐτὸν ἠῦδε, ὑπνωμένου δὲ καρτερῶς τοῦ Μάγου ἤφασσε τὰ ὦτα. μαθοῦσα δὲ οὐ χαλεπῶς ἀλλ' εὐπετέως οὐκ ἔχοντα τὸν ἄνδρα ὦτα, ὡς ἡμέρη τάχιστα ἐγεγόνεε, πέμψασα ἐσήμηνε τῷ πατρὶ τὰ γενόμενα.

[67] Cambyses being dead, the Magian, pretending to be the Smerdis of like name, Cyrus' son, reigned without fear for the seven months lacking to Cambyses' full eight years of kingship. In this time he greatly benefited all his subjects, in so much that after his death all the Asiatics except the Persians wished him back; for he sent hither and thither to every nation of his dominions and proclaimed them for three years freed from service in arms and from tribute.

[68] Such was his proclamation at the beginning of his reign; but in the eighth month it was revealed who he was, and this is how it was done:—There was one Otanes, son of Pharnaspes, as well-born and rich a man as any Persian. This Otanes was the first to suspect that the Magian was not Cyrus' son Smerdis but his true self; the reason was, that he never left the citadel nor summoned any notable Persian into his presence; and in his suspicion—Cambyses having married Otanes' daughter Phaedyne, whom the Magian had now wedded, with all the rest of Cambyses' wives—Otanes sent to this daughter, asking with whom she lay, Smerdis, Cyrus' son, or another. She sent back a message that she did not know; for (said she) she had never seen Cyrus' son Smerdis, nor knew who was her bedfellow. Then Otanes sent a second message, to this effect: “If you do not yourself know Cyrus' son Smerdis, then ask Atossa who is this that is her lord and yours; for surely she knows her own brother.”

[69] To this his daughter replied: “I cannot get speech with Atossa, nor can I see any other of the women of the household; for no sooner had this man, whoever he is, made himself king, than he sent us to live apart, each in her appointed place.” When Otanes heard that, he saw more clearly how the matter stood; and he sent her this third message: “Daughter, it is due to your noble birth that you should run any risk that your father bids you face. If this man be not Smerdis son of Cyrus, but another whom I suspect him to be, then he must not go unscathed, but be punished for sharing your bed and sitting on the throne of Persia. Now, therefore, when he lies with you and you see that he is asleep, do as I bid you and feel for his ears; if you see that he has ears, then you may think that it is Smerdis son of Cyrus who is your lord; but if he has none, it is Smerdis the Magian.” Phaedyne answered by messenger that she would run very great risk by so doing; for if it should turn out that he had no ears, and she were caught feeling for them, he would surely make an end of her; nevertheless she would do it. So she promised to achieve her father's bidding. It is known that Cyrus son of Cambyses had in his reign cut off the ears of this Magian, Smerdis, for some grave reason—I know not what. So Phaedyne, daughter of Otanes, performed her promise to her father. When it was her turn to visit the Magian (as a Persian's wives come in regular order to their lord), she came to his bed and felt for the Magian's ears while he slumbered deeply; and having with no great difficulty assured herself that he had no ears, she sent and told this to her father as soon as it was morning.

[70] Ὁ δὲ Ὀτάνης παραλαβὼν Ἀσπαθίνην καὶ Γοβρύην, Περσέων τε πρῶτους ἐόντας καὶ ἐωυτῷ ἐπιτηδεοτάτους ἐς πίστιν, ἀπηγγήσατο πᾶν τὸ πρῆγμα· οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ ἄρα ὑπώπτευον οὕτω τοῦτο ἔχειν, ἀνευρίκνυον δὲ τοῦ Ὀτάνου τοὺς λόγους ἐδέξαντο, καὶ ἔδοξε σφι ἕκαστον ἄνδρα Περσέων προσεταιρίσασθαι τοῦτον ὅτεω πιστεύει μάλιστα. Ὀτάνης μὲν νῦν ἐσάγεται Ἰνταφρένεα, Γοβρύης δὲ Μεγάβυζον, Ἀσπαθίνης δὲ Ὑδάρνεα. γεγονόντων δὲ τούτων ἕξ παραγίνεται ἐς τὰ Σοῦσα Δαρεῖος ὁ Ὑστάσπεος ἐκ Περσέων ἦκων· τούτων γὰρ δὴ ἦν οἱ ὁ πατὴρ ὕπαρχος. ἐπεὶ ὦν οὕτως ἀπίκετο, τοῖσι ἕξ τῶν Περσέων ἔδοξε καὶ Δαρεῖον προσεταιρίσασθαι.

[71] Συνελθόντες δὲ οὗτοι ἐόντες ἑπτὰ ἐδίδοσαν σφίσι πίστις καὶ λόγους. ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐς Δαρεῖον ἀπίκετο γνώμην ἀποφαίνεσθαι, ἔλεγέ σφι τάδε. “Ἐγὼ ταῦτα ἔδοκον μὲν αὐτὸς μόνος ἐπίστασθαι, ὅτι τε ὁ Μάγος εἶη ὁ βασιλεύων καὶ Σμέρδης ὁ Κύρου τετελεύτηκε· καὶ αὐτοῦ τούτου εἶνεκεν ἦκω σπουδῆ ὡς συστήσω ἐπὶ τῷ Μάγῳ θάνατον. ἐπεὶ δὲ συνήνεικε ὥστε καὶ ὑμέας εἶδέναι καὶ μὴ μόνον ἐμέ, ποιεῖν αὐτίκα μοι δοκεῖ καὶ μὴ ὑπερβάλλεσθαι· οὐ γὰρ ἄμεινον.” εἶπε πρὸς ταῦτα ὁ Ὀτάνης “Ὡ καὶ Ὑστάσπεος, εἷς τε πατὴρ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ἐκφαίνειν ἔοικας σεωυτὸν ἐόντα τοῦ πατρὸς οὐδὲν ἥσσω· τὴν μὲντοι ἐπιχείρησιν ταύτην μὴ οὕτω συντάχυνε ἀβούλως, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τὸ σωφρονέστερον αὐτὴν λάμβανε· δεῖ γὰρ πλεῖνας γενομένους οὕτω ἐπιχειρεῖν.” λέγει πρὸς ταῦτα Δαρεῖος “Ἄνδρες οἱ παρόντες, τρόπῳ τῷ εἰρημένῳ ἕξ Ὀτάνου εἰ χρήσεσθε, ἐπίστασθε ὅτι ἀπολέεσθε χάκιστα· ἐξοίσει γὰρ τις πρὸς τὸν Μάγον, ἰδίῃ περιβαλλόμενος ἐωυτῷ κέρδεα. μάλιστα μὲν νῦν ὠφείλετε ἐπ’ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν βαλλόμενοι ποιεῖν ταῦτα· ἐπεὶ δὲ ὑμῖν ἀναφέρειν ἐς πλεῖνας ἔδοκεε καὶ ἐμοὶ ὑπερέθεσθε, ἢ ποιῶμεν σήμερον ἢ ἴστε ὑμῖν ὅτι ἦν ὑπερέσθη ἢ νῦν ἡμέρη, ὡς οὐκ ἄλλος φθὰς ἐμεῦ κατήγορος ἔσται, ἀλλὰ σφεα αὐτὸς ἐγὼ κατερέω πρὸς τὸν Μάγον.”

[72] Λέγει πρὸς ταῦτα Ὀτάνης, ἐπειδὴ ὦρα σπερχόμενον Δαρεῖον, “Ἐπεὶ ἡμέας συνταχύνειν ἀναγκάζεις καὶ ὑπερβάλλεσθαι οὐκ ἔξ, ἴθι ἐξηγέο αὐτὸς ὅτεω τρόπῳ πάριμεν ἐς τὰ βασιλῆα καὶ ἐπιχειρήσομεν αὐτοῖσι. φυλακὰς γὰρ δὴ διεστεώσας οἰδὰς κου καὶ αὐτὸς, εἰ μὴ ἰδὼν, ἀλλ’ ἀκούσας· τὰς τέφ τρόπῳ περήσομεν;” ἀμείβεται Δαρεῖος τοῖσιδε. “Ὀτάνη, ἢ πολλὰ ἐστὶ τὰ λόγῳ μὲν οὐκ οἶά τε δηλῶσαι, ἔργῳ δὲ ἄλλα δ’ ἐστὶ τὰ λόγῳ μὲν οἶά τε, ἔργον δὲ οὐδὲν ἀπ’ αὐτῶν λαμπρὸν γίνεται. ὑμεῖς δὲ ἴστε φυλακὰς τὰς κατεστεώσας ἐούσας οὐδὲν χαλεπὰς παρελθεῖν. τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐόντων τοιῶνδε οὐδεὶς ὅστις οὐ παρήσει, τὰ μὲν κου καταιδεόμενος ἡμέας, τὰ δὲ κου καὶ δευμαίνων· τοῦτο δὲ ἔχω αὐτὸς σκῆψιν εὐπρεπεστάτην τῇ πάριμεν, φὰς ἄρτι τε ἦκειν ἐκ Περσέων καὶ βούλεσθαι τι ἔπος παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς σημεῖναι τῷ βασιλεί. ἐνθα γὰρ τι δεῖ ψευδὸς λέγεσθαι, λεγέσθω. τοῦ γὰρ αὐτοῦ γλιχόμεθα οἱ τε ψευδόμενοι καὶ οἱ τῇ ἀληθείῃ διαχρεώμενοι. οἱ μὲν γε ψεύδονται τότε ἐπεὰν τι μέλλωσι τοῖσι ψεύδεσι πείσαντες κερδήσεσθαι, οἱ δ’ ἀληθίζονται ἵνα τῇ ἀληθείῃ ἐπισπάσωνται κέρδος καὶ τι μᾶλλον σφι ἐπιτρέπηται. οὕτω οὐ ταῦτα ἀσκέοντες τῷ τοῦ περιεχόμεθα. εἰ δὲ μηδὲν κερδήσεσθαι μέλλοιεν, ὁμοίως ἂν ὅ τε ἀληθίζόμενος ψευδῆς εἶη καὶ ὁ ψευδόμενος ἀληθής. ὅς ἂν μὲν νῦν τῶν πλουρῶν ἐκὼν παρῆ, αὐτῷ οἱ ἄμεινον ἐς χρόνον ἔσται· ὅς δ’ ἂν ἀντιβαίνειν πειράται, δευκνύσθω ἐνθαῦτα ἐὼν πολέμιος, καὶ ἔπειτα ὡσάμενοι ἔσω ἔργου ἐχώμεθα.”

[70] Otanes then took to himself two Persians of the highest rank whom he thought worthiest of trust, Aspathines and Gobryas, and told them the whole story. These, it would seem, had themselves suspected that it was so; and now they readily believed what Otanes revealed to them. They resolved that each should take into their fellowship that Persian whom he most trusted; Otanes brought in Intaphrenes, Gobryas brought Megabyzus and Aspathines Hydarnes; so they were six. Now came to Susa Darius son of Hystaspes, from Persia, of which his father was vice-gerent; and on his coming the six Persians resolved to make Darius too their comrade.

[71] The seven then met and gave each other pledges and spoke together; and when it was Darius’ turn to declare his mind, he spoke as follows: “I supposed that I alone knew that it was the Magian who is king and that Smerdis son of Cyrus is dead; and it is for this cause that I have made haste to come, that I might compass the Magian’s death; but since it has so fallen out that you too and not I alone know the truth, my counsel is for action forthwith, no delay; for evil will come of delay.” “Son of Hystaspes,” Otanes answered, “your father is a valiant man, and methinks you declare yourself as valiant as he; yet hasten not this enterprise thus inconsiderately; take the matter more prudently; we must wait to set about it till there are more of us.” To this Darius answered: “Sirs, if you do as Otanes counsels, you must all know that you will perish miserably; for someone will carry all to the Magian, desiring private reward for himself. Now, it had been best for you to achieve your end yourselves unaided; but seeing that it was your pleasure to impart your plot to others and that so you have trusted me with it, let us, I say, do the deed this day; if you let to-day pass, be assured that none will accuse you ere I do, for I will myself lay the whole matter before the Magian.”

[72] To this Otanes replied, seeing Darius’ vehemence, “Since you compel us to hasten and will brook no delay, tell us now yourself how we shall pass into the palace and assail the Magians. The place is beset all round by guards; this you know, for you have seen or heard of them; how shall we win past the guards?” “Otanes,” answered Darius, “very many things can be done whereof the doing cannot be described in words; and sometimes a plan easy to make clear is yet followed by no deed of note. Right well you know that the guards who are set are easy to pass. For we being such as we are, there is none who will not grant us admittance, partly from reverence and partly too from fear; and further, I have myself the fairest pretext for entering, for I will say that I am lately come from Persia and have a message for the king from my father. Let lies be told where they are needful. All of us aim at the like end, whether we lie or speak truth; he that lies does it to win credence and so advantage by his deceit, and he that speaks truth hopes that truth will get him profit and greater trust; so we do but take different ways to the same goal. Were the hope of advantage taken away, the truth-teller were as ready to lie as the liar to speak truth. Now if any warder of the gate willingly suffer us to pass, it will be the better for him thereafter. But if any strives to withstand us let us mark him for an enemy, and so thrust ourselves in and begin our work.”

[73] Λέγει Γοβρύης μετὰ ταῦτα “Ἄνδρες φίλοι, ἡμῖν κότε κάλλιον παρέξει ἀνασώσασθαι τὴν ἀρχήν, ἢ εἴ γε μὴ οἴοι τε ἐσόμεθα αὐτὴν ἀναλαβεῖν, ἀποθανεῖν; ὅτε γε ἀρχόμεθα μὲν ἐόντες Πέρσαι ὑπὸ Μήδου ἀνδρὸς Μάγου, καὶ τούτου ὧτα οὐκ ἔχοντος. ὅσοι τε ὑμῶν Καμβύση νοσέοντι παρεγένοντο, πάντως κου μέμνησθε τὰ ἐπέσκηψε Πέρσησι τελευτῶν τὸν βίον μὴ πειρωμένοισι ἀνακτᾶσθαι τὴν ἀρχήν· τὰ τότε οὐκ ἐνεδεχόμεθα, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ διαβολῇ ἐδοκέομεν εἰπεῖν Καμβύσεια. νῦν ὧν τίθεμαι ψῆφον πείθεσθαι Δαρεῖω καὶ μὴ διαλύεσθαι ἐκ τοῦ συλλόγου τοῦδε ἀλλ’ ἢ ἐπὶ τὸν Μάγον ἰθέως.” ταῦτα εἶπε Γοβρύης, καὶ πάντες αὐτῆ ἀνεον.

[74] Ἐν ᾧ δὲ οὗτοι ταῦτα ἐβουλεύοντο, ἐγένετο κατὰ συντυχήν τάδε. τοῖσι Μάγοισι ἔδοξε βουλευομένοισι Πρηξάσπεα φίλον προσθέσθαι, ὅτι τε ἐπεπόνθεε πρὸς Καμβύσειω ἀνάσεια, ὅς οἱ τὸν παῖδα τοξεύσας ἀπολωλέκεε, καὶ διότι μόνος ἠπίστατο τὸν Σμέρδιος τοῦ Κύρου θάνατον αὐτοχειρὴ μιν ἀπολέσας, πρὸς δ’ ἔτι ἐόντα ἐν αἴνῃ μεγίστη τὸν Πρηξάσπεα ἐν Πέρσησι. τούτων δὴ μιν εἵνεκεν καλέσαντες φίλον προσεκτῶντο πίστι τε λαβόντες καὶ ὀρκίοισι, ἢ μὲν ἔξεν παρ’ ἐωυτῶ μηδ’ ἐξοίσειν μηδὲν ἀνθρώπων τὴν ἀπὸ σφῶν ἀπάτην ἐς Πέρσας γεγонуῖαν, ὑπισχνούμενοι τὰ πάντα οἱ μυρία δώσειν. ὑποσχομένου δὲ τοῦ Πρηξάσπεος ποιήσεν ταῦτα, ὡς ἀνέπεισάν μιν οἱ Μάγοι, δεύτερα προσέφερον, αὐτοὶ μὲν φάμενοι Πέρσας πάντας συγκαλέειν ὑπὸ τὸ βασιλῆιον τεῖχος, κείνον δ’ ἐκέλευον ἀναβάντα ἐπὶ πύργον ἀγορεύσαι ὡς ὑπὸ τοῦ Κύρου Σμέρδιος ἄρχονται καὶ ὑπ’ οὐδενὸς ἄλλου. ταῦτα δὲ οὕτω ἐνετέλλοντο ὡς πιστοτάτου δῆθεν ἐόντος αὐτοῦ ἐν Πέρσησι, καὶ πολλάκις ἀποδεξαμένου γνώμην ὡς περιεῖη ὁ Κύρου Σμέρδιος, καὶ ἐξαρηνησαμένου τὸν φόνον αὐτοῦ.

[75] Φάμενοι δὲ καὶ ταῦτα ἐτοίμοι εἶναι ποιέειν τοῦ Πρηξάσπεος, συγκαλέσαντες Πέρσας οἱ Μάγοι ἀνεβίβασαν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ πύργον καὶ ἀγορεύειν ἐκέλευον. ὁ δὲ τῶν μὲν ἐκεῖνοι προσεδέοντο αὐτοῦ, τούτων μὲν ἐκῶν ἐπελήθετο, ἀρξάμενος δὲ ἀπ’ Ἀχαιμένεος ἐγενεηλόγησε τὴν πατριὴν τὴν Κύρου, μετὰ δὲ ὡς ἐς τοῦτον κατέβη τελευτῶν ἔλεγε ὅσα ἀγαθὰ Κύρος Πέρσας πεποιήκοι, διεξεθῶν δὲ ταῦτα ἐξέφαίνε τὴν ἀληθείην, φάμενος πρότερον μὲν κρύπτειν (οὐ γὰρ οἱ εἶναι ἀσφαλὲς λέγειν τὰ γενόμενα), ἐν δὲ τῷ παρεόντι ἀναγκαίην μιν καταλαμβάνειν φαίνειν. καὶ δὴ ἔλεγε τὸν μὲν Κύρου Σμέρδιον ὡς αὐτὸς ὑπὸ Καμβύσειω ἀναγκαζόμενος ἀποκτείνειε, τοὺς Μάγους δὲ βασιλεύειν. Πέρσησι δὲ πολλὰ ἐπαρησάμενος εἰ μὴ ἀνακτησαίατο ὀπίσω τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τοὺς Μάγους τισαίατο, ἀπῆκε ἐωυτὸν ἐπὶ κεφαλὴν φέρεσθαι ἀπὸ τοῦ πύργου κάτω. Πρηξάσπεος μὲν νῦν ἐὼν τὸν πάντα χρόνον ἀνὴρ δόκιμος οὕτω ἐτελεύτησε.

[73] Then said Gobryas, “Friends, when shall we have a better occasion to win back the kingship, or, if we cannot so do, to die? seeing that we who are Persians are ruled by a Mede, a Magian, and he a man that has no ears. Those of you that were with Cambyses in his sickness cannot but remember the curse which with his last breath he laid on the Persians if they should not essay to win back the kingship; albeit we did not then believe Cambyses, but thought that he spoke to deceive us. Now therefore my vote is that we follow Darius’ plan, and not quit this council to do aught else but attack the Magian forthwith.” So spoke Gobryas; and they all consented to what he said.

[74] While they were thus planning, matters befell as I will show. The Magians had taken counsel and resolved to make a friend of Prexaspes, because he had been wronged by Cambyses (who had shot his son with an arrow) and because he alone knew of the death of Cyrus’ son Smerdis, having himself been the slayer; and further, because Prexaspes was very greatly esteemed by the Persians. Therefore they summoned him and, to gain his friendship, made him to pledge himself and swear that he would never reveal to any man their treacherous dealing with the Persians, but keep it to himself; and they promised to give him all things in great abundance. Prexaspes was persuaded and promised to do their will. Then the Magians made this second proposal to him, that they should summon a meeting of all Persians before the palace wall, and he should go up on to a tower and declare that it was Smerdis son of Cyrus and no other who was king of Persia. They gave him this charge, because they thought him to be the man most trusted by the Persians, and because he had oftentimes asserted that Cyrus’ son Smerdis was alive, and had denied the murder.

[75] Prexaspes consented to do this also; the Magians summoned the Persians together, and brought him up on to a tower and bade him speak. Then, putting away from his mind all the Magians’ demands, he traced the lineage of Cyrus from Achaemenes downwards; when he came at last to the name of Cyrus, he recounted all the good which that king had done to Persia, after which recital he declared the truth; which, he said, he had till now concealed because he could not safely tell it, but was now constrained by necessity to reveal: “I,” said he, “was compelled by Cambyses to kill Smerdis son of Cyrus; it is the Magians who now rule you.” Then, invoking a terrible curse on the Persians if they failed to win back the throne and take vengeance on the Magians, he threw himself headlong down from the tower; thus honourably ended Prexaspes’ honourable life.

[76] Οἱ δὲ δὴ ἑπτὰ τῶν Περσέων ὡς ἐβουλευσάντο αὐτίκα ἐπιχειρεῖν τοῖσι Μάγοισι καὶ μὴ ὑπερβάλλεσθαι, ἦσαν εὐζάμενοι τοῖσι θεοῖσι, τῶν περὶ Πρηξάσπεα πρηθέντων εἰδότες οὐδέν. ἔν τε δὴ τῇ ὁδῷ μέσῃ στείχοντες ἐγίνοντο καὶ τὰ περὶ Πρηξάσπεα γεγονότα ἐπυνθάνοντο. ἐνθαῦτα ἐκστάντες τῆς ὁδοῦ ἐδίδοσαν αὐτῖσι σφίσι λόγους, οἳ μὲν ἀμφὶ τὸν Ὀτάνην πάγχυ κελεύοντες ὑπερβαλέσθαι μὴδὲ οἰδεόντων τῶν πρηγμαίων ἐπιτίθεσθαι, οἳ δὲ ἀμφὶ τὸν Δαρεῖον αὐτίκα τε ἰέναι καὶ τὰ δεδογμένα ποιεῖν μὴδὲ ὑπερβάλλεσθαι. ὠθιζομένων δ' αὐτῶν ἐφάνη ἰρήκων ἑπτὰ ζεύγεα δύο αἰγυπῶν ζεύγεα διώκοντα καὶ τίλλοντά τε καὶ ἀμύσσοντα. ἰδόντες δὲ ταῦτα οἱ ἑπτὰ τὴν τε Δαρείου πάντες αἶνεον γνώμην καὶ ἔπειτα ἦσαν ἐπὶ τὰ βασιλῆα θεταρηκότες τοῖσι ὄρνεσι.

[77] Ἐπιστάσι δὲ ἐπὶ τὰς πύλας ἐγένετο οἷόν τι Δαρεῖω ἢ γνώμη ἔφερε· καταιδόμενοι γὰρ οἱ φύλακοι ἄνδρας τοὺς Περσέων πρῶτους καὶ οὐδὲν τοιοῦτο ὑποπτεύοντες ἐξ αὐτῶν ἔσεσθαι, παρίεσαν θείῃ πομπῇ χρωμένους, οὐδ' ἐπειρώτα οὐδεὶς. ἐπεῖτε δὲ καὶ παρῆλθον ἐς τὴν αὐλήν, ἐνέκυρσαν τοῖσι τὰς ἀγγελίας ἐσφέρουσι εὐνούχοισι· οἳ σφεας ἰστόρεον ὅ τι θέλοντες ἦκοιεν, καὶ ἅμα ἰστορέοντες τούτους τοῖσι πυλουροῖσι ἀπειλεῖον ὅτι σφέας παρῆχαν, ἰσχόν τε βουλομένους τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἐς τὸ πρόσω παριέναι. οἳ δὲ διακελευσάμενοι καὶ σπασάμενοι τὰ ἐγχειρίδια τούτους μὲν τοὺς ἰσχόντας αὐτοῦ ταύτῃ συγκεντέουσι, αὐτοὶ δὲ ἦσαν δρόμῳ ἐς τὸν ἀνδρεῶνα.

[78] Οἱ δὲ Μάγοι ἔτυχον ἀμφοτέροι τῆνικαῦτα ἐόντες τε ἔσω καὶ τὰ ἀπὸ Πρηξάσπεος γενομένα ἐν βουλήν ἔχοντες. ἐπεὶ ὦν εἶδον τοὺς εὐνούχους τεθορυβημένους τε καὶ βωῶντας, ἀνά τε ἔδραμον πάλιν ἀμφοτέροι καὶ ὡς ἔμαθον τὸ ποιούμενον πρὸς ἀλλήν ἐτράποντο. ὁ μὲν δὴ αὐτῶν φθάνει τὰ τόξα κατελόμενος, ὁ δὲ πρὸς τὴν αἰχμὴν ἐτράπετο. ἐνθαῦτα δὴ συνέμισγον ἀλλήλοισι. τῷ μὲν δὴ τὰ τόξα ἀναλαβόντι αὐτῶν, ἐόντων τε ἀγχοῦ τῶν πολεμίων καὶ προσκειμένων, ἦν χρηστὰ οὐδέν· ὁ δ' ἕτερος τῇ αἰχμῇ ἤμυνετο καὶ τοῦτο μὲν Ἄσπαθίνην παίει ἐς τὸν μηρόν, τοῦτο δὲ Ἰνταφρένεα ἐς τὸν ὀφθαλμόν· καὶ ἐστερήθη μὲν τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ ἐκ τοῦ τρώματος ὁ Ἰνταφρένης, οὐ μέντοι ἀπέθανε γε. τῶν μὲν δὴ Μάγων οὐτερος τρωματίζει τούτους· ὁ δὲ ἕτερος, ἐπεῖτε οἱ τὰ τόξα οὐδὲν χρηστὰ ἐγένετο, ἦν γὰρ δὴ θάλαμος ἐσέχων ἐς τὸν ἀνδρεῶνα, ἐς τοῦτον καταφεύγει, θέλων αὐτοῦ προσθεῖναι τὰς θύρας, καὶ οἱ συνεσπίπτουσι τῶν ἑπτὰ δύο, Δαρεῖός τε καὶ Γοβρύης. συμπλακέντος δὲ Γοβρύεω τῷ Μάγῳ ὁ Δαρεῖος ἐπεστεῶς ἠπόρεε οἷα ἐν σκότει, προμηθεόμενος μὴ πλήξῃ τὸν Γοβρύην. ὁρῶν δὲ μιν ἀργὸν ἐπεστεῶτα ὁ Γοβρύης εἶρετο ὅ τι οὐ χράται τῇ χειρί· ὁ δὲ εἶπε “Προμηθεόμενος σέο, μὴ πλήξω.” Γοβρύης δὲ ἀμείβετο “Ὦθεε τὸ ξίφος καὶ δι' ἀμφοτέρων.” Δαρεῖος δὲ πειθόμενος ὥσέ τε τὸ ἐγχειρίδιον καὶ ἔτυχε κως τοῦ Μάγου.

[76] The seven Persians, after counsel purposing to attack the Magians forthwith and delay no longer, prayed to the gods and set forth, knowing nothing of Prexaspes' part in the business. But when they had gone half way they heard the story of him; whereat they went aside from the way and consulted together, Otanes' friends being wholly for waiting and not attacking in the present ferment, but Darius' party bidding to go forthwith and do their agreed purpose without delay. While they disputed, they saw seven pairs of hawks that chased and rent and tore two pairs of vultures; seeing which all the seven consented to Darius' opinion, and went on to the palace, heartened by the sight of the birds.

[77] When they came to the gate, that happened which Darius had expected; the guards, out of regard for the chief men in Persia, and because they never suspected their design, suffered them without question to pass in under heaven's guidance. Coming into the court, they met there the eunuchs who carry messages to the king; who asked the seven with what intent they had come, at the same time threatening the gate-wards for letting them pass, and barring the further passage of the seven. These gave each other the word, drew their daggers, and stabbing the eunuchs who barred their way, ran into the men's apartment.

[78] It chanced that both the Magians were within, consulting together on the outcome of Prexaspes' act. Seeing the eunuchs in confusion and hearing their cries they both sprang back: and when they saw what was afoot they set about defending themselves; one made haste to take down his bow, the other seized his spear; so the seven and the two met in fight. He that had caught up the bow found it availed him nothing, his enemies being so close and pressing him hard; but the other defended himself with his spear, smiting Aspathines in the thigh and Intaphrenes in the eye; Intaphrenes was not slain by the wound, but lost his eye. So these were wounded by one of the Magians; the other, his bow availing him nothing, fled into a chamber adjoining the men's apartment and would have shut its door. Two of the seven, Darius and Gobryas, hurled themselves into the chamber with him. Gobryas and the Magian grappling together, Darius stood perplexed by the darkness, fearing to strike Gobryas; whereat Gobryas, seeing Darius stand idle, cried to know why he did not strike; “For fear of stabbing you,” quoth Darius. “Nay,” said Gobryas, “thrust with your sword, though it be through both of us.” So Darius thrust with his dagger, and by good luck it was the Magian that he stabbed.

[79] Ἀποκτείναντες δὲ τοὺς Μάγους καὶ ἀποταμόντες αὐτῶν τὰς κεφαλὰς, τοὺς μὲν τραυματίας ἐωυτῶν αὐτοῦ λείπουν καὶ ἀδυνασίου εἵνεκεν καὶ φυλακῆς τῆς ἀκροπόλιος, οἱ δὲ πέντε αὐτῶν ἔχοντες τῶν Μάγων τὰς κεφαλὰς ἔθειον βοῆν τε καὶ πατάγων χρεώμενοι, καὶ Πέρσας τοὺς ἄλλους ἐπεκαλέοντο ἐξηγεομενοὶ τε τὸ πρῆγμα καὶ δεικνύοντες τὰς κεφαλὰς, καὶ ἅμα ἔκτεινον πάντα τινὰ τῶν Μάγων τὸν ἐν ποσὶ γινόμενον. οἱ δὲ Πέρσαι μαθόντες τὸ γεγονός ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ καὶ τῶν Μάγων τὴν ἀπάτην, ἐδικαίουν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἕτερα τοιαῦτα ποιῆσαι, σπασάμενοι δὲ τὰ ἐγχειρίδια ἔκτεινον ὅκου τινὰ Μάγων εὕρισκον· εἰ δὲ μὴ νύξ ἐπελθοῦσα ἔσχε, ἔλιπον ἂν οὐδένα Μάγον. ταύτην τὴν ἡμέρην θεραπεύουσι Πέρσαι κοινῇ μάλιστα τῶν ἡμερῶν, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ ὀρθὴν μεγάλην ἀνάγουσι, ἣ κέκληται ὑπὸ Περσέων μαγοφόνια· ἐν τῇ Μάγον οὐδένα ἔξεστι φανῆναι ἐς τὸ φῶς, ἀλλὰ κατ' οἴκους ἐωυτοὺς οἱ Μάγοι ἔχουσι τὴν ἡμέρην ταύτην.

[80] Ἐπεὶ δὲ κατέστη ὁ θόρυβος καὶ ἐκτὸς πέντε ἡμερῶν ἐγένετο, ἐβουλεύοντο οἱ ἐπαναστάντες τοῖσι Μάγοισι περὶ τῶν πάντων πρηγμαμάτων καὶ ἐλέχθησαν λόγοι ἄπιστοι μὲν ἐνόησι Ἑλλήνων, ἐλέχθησαν δ' ὦν. Ὁτάνης μὲν ἐκέλευε ἐς μέσον Πέρσης καταθεῖναι τὰ πρηγματα, λέγων τάδε. “Ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ ἓνα μὲν ἡμῶν μούναρχον μηκέτι γενέσθαι. οὔτε γὰρ ἡδὺ οὔτε ἀγαθόν. εἶδετε μὲν γὰρ τὴν Καμβύσεια ὕβριν ἐπ' ὅσον ἐπεξήλθε, μετεσχῆκατε δὲ καὶ τῆς τοῦ Μάγου ὕβριος. κῶς δ' ἂν εἴη χρῆμα κατηρητημένον μούναρχίῃ, τῇ ἔξεστι ἀνευθύνω ποιῆσαι τὰ βούλεται; καὶ γὰρ ἂν τὸν ἄριστον ἀνδρῶν πάντων στάντα ἐς ταύτην ἐκτὸς τῶν ἐωθότων νοημάτων στήσειε. ἐγγίνεται μὲν γὰρ οἱ ὕβρις ὑπὸ τῶν παρεόντων ἀγαθῶν, φθόνος δὲ ἀρχῆθεν ἐμφύεται ἀνθρώπῳ. δύο δ' ἔχων ταῦτα ἔχει πᾶσαν κακότητα· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὕβρις κεκορημένος ἔρδει πολλά καὶ ἀτάσθαλα, τὰ δὲ φθόνος. καίτοι ἄνδρα γε τύραννον ἀφθονον ἔδει εἶναι, ἔχοντά γε πάντα τὰ ἀγαθὰ. τὸ δὲ ὑπεναντίον τούτου ἐς τοὺς πολίτας πέφυκε· φθονεῖ γὰρ τοῖσι ἀρίστοισι περιεοῦσί τε καὶ ζώουσι, χαίρει δὲ τοῖσι κακίστοισι τῶν ἀστῶν, διαβολὰς δὲ ἄριστος ἐνδέκεσθαι. ἀναρμοστότατον δὲ πάντων ἦν τε γὰρ αὐτὸν μετρίως θωμάζης, ἄχθεται ὅτι οὐ κάρτα θεραπεύεται, ἦν τε θεραπεύῃ τις κάρτα, ἄχθεται ἅτε θωπί. τὰ δὲ δὴ μέγιστα ἔρχομαι ἐρέων· νόμοιά τε κινεῖ πάτρια καὶ βιάται γυναικας κτείνει τε ἀκρίτους. πλῆθος δὲ ἄρχον πρῶτα μὲν οὐνομα πάντων κάλλιστον ἔχει, ἰσονομίην, δεύτερα δὲ τούτων τῶν ὁ μούναρχος ποιεῖ οὐδέν· πάλω μὲν ἀρχὰς ἄρχει, ὑπεύθυνον δὲ ἀρχὴν ἔχει, βουλευματα δὲ πάντα ἐς τὸ κοινὸν ἀναφέρει. τίθεμαι ὦν γνώμην μετέντας ἡμέας μούναρχίην τὸ πλῆθος ἀέξειν· ἐν γὰρ τῷ πολλῷ ἐνὶ τὰ πάντα.”

[79] Having killed the Magians and cut off their heads, they left their wounded where they were, by reason of their infirmity and to guard the citadel; the other five took the Magians' heads and ran with much shouting and noise, calling all Persians to aid, telling what they had done and showing the heads; at the same time they killed every Magian that came in their way. The Persians, when they heard from the seven what had been done and how the Magians had tricked them, resolved to follow the example set, and drew their daggers and slew all the Magians they could find; and if nightfall had not stayed them they would not have left one Magian alive. This day is the greatest holy day that all Persians alike keep; they celebrate a great festival on it, which they call the Massacre of the Magians; while the festival lasts no Magian may come abroad, but during this day they remain in their houses.

[80] When the tumult was abated, and five days had passed, the rebels against the Magians held a council on the whole state of affairs, at which words were uttered which to some Greeks seem incredible; but there is no doubt that they were spoken. Otanes was for giving the government to the whole body of the Persian people. “I hold,” he said, “that we must make an end of monarchy; there is no pleasure or advantage in it. You have seen to what lengths went the insolence of Cambyses, and you have borne your share of the insolence of the Magian. What right order is there to be found in monarchy, when the ruler can do what he will, nor be held to account for it? Give this power to the best man on earth, and it would stir him to unwonted thoughts. The advantage which he holds breeds insolence, and nature makes all men jealous. This double cause is the root of all evil in him; sated with power he will do many reckless deeds, some from insolence, some from jealousy. For whereas an absolute ruler, as having all that heart can desire, should rightly be jealous of no man, yet it is contrariwise with him in his dealing with his countrymen; he is jealous of the safety of the good, and glad of the safety of the evil; and no man is so ready to believe calumny. Of all men he is the most inconsistent; accord him but just honour, and he is displeased that you make him not your first care; make him such, and he damns you for a flatterer. But I have yet worse to say of him than that; he turns the laws of the land upside down, he rapes women, he puts high and low to death. But the virtue of a multitude's rule lies first in its excellent name, which signifies equality before the law; and secondly, in that it does none of the things that a monarch does. All offices are assigned by lot, and the holders are accountable for what they do therein; and the general assembly arbitrates on all counsels. Therefore I declare my opinion, that we make an end of monarchy and increase the power of the multitude, seeing that all good lies in the many.”

[81] Ὅτανης μὲν δὴ ταύτην γνώμην ἐσέφερε· Μεγάβυζος δὲ ὀλιγαρχίῃ ἐκέλευε ἐπιτρέπειν, λέγων τάδε. “Τὰ μὲν Ὅτανης εἶπε τυραννίδα παύων, λελέχθω καί μοι ταῦτα, τὰ δ’ ἐς τὸ πλῆθος ἄνωγε φέρειν τὸ κράτος, γνώμης τῆς ἀρίστης ἡμάρτηκε· ὁμίλου γὰρ ἀχρηίου οὐδὲν ἔστι ἀξυνετώτερον οὐδὲ ὕβριστότερον. καί τοι τυράννου ὕβριν φεύγοντας ἄνδρας ἐς δῆμου ἀκολάστου ὕβριν πεσεῖν ἔστι οὐδαμῶς ἀνασχετόν. ὁ μὲν γὰρ εἴ τι ποιεῖ, γινώσκων ποιεῖ, τῷ δὲ οὐδὲ γινώσκειν ἔνι· κῶς γὰρ ἂν γινώσκοι ὅς οὐτ’ ἐδιδάχθη οὔτε εἶδε καλὸν οὐδὲν οἰκίηον, ὠθεῖ τε ἐμπεσῶν τὰ πρήγματα ἄνευ νόου, χειμάρρῳ ποταμῷ εἴκελος; δῆμῳ μὲν νυν, οἱ Πέρσησι κακὸν νοέουσι, οὔτοι χράσθων, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀνδρῶν τῶν ἀρίστων ἐπιλέξαντες ὁμιλίην τούτοις περιθέωμεν τὸ κράτος· ἐν γὰρ δὴ τούτοις καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐνεσόμεθα· ἀρίστων δὲ ἀνδρῶν οἶκος ἄριστα βουλευόμεθα γίνεσθαι.”

[82] Μεγάβυζος μὲν δὴ ταύτην γνώμην ἐσέφερε· τρίτος δὲ Δαρεῖος ἀπεδείκνυτο γνώμην, λέγων “Ἐμοὶ δὲ τὰ μὲν εἶπε Μεγάβυζος ἐς τὸ πλῆθος ἔχοντα δοκέει ὀρθῶς λέξαι, τὰ δὲ ἐς ὀλιγαρχίην οὐκ ὀρθῶς. τριῶν γὰρ προκειμένων καὶ πάντων τῷ λόγῳ ἀρίστων ἐόντων, δῆμου τε ἀρίστου καὶ ὀλιγαρχίης καὶ μοναρχου, πολλῷ τοῦτο προσέχειν λέγω. ἀνδρὸς γὰρ ἑνὸς τοῦ ἀρίστου οὐδὲν ἄμεινον ἂν φανείη· γνώμη γὰρ τοιαύτη χρεώμενος ἐπιτροπεύει ἂν ἀμωμήτως τοῦ πλήθους, σιγῶτό τε ἂν βουλευόμενα ἐπιδυσμενέας ἄνδρας οὕτω μάλιστα. ἐν δὲ ὀλιγαρχίῃ πολλοῖσι ἀρετὴν ἐπασκέουσι ἐς τὸ κοινὸν ἔχθρα ἴδια ἰσχυρὰ φιλεῖ ἐγγίνεσθαι· αὐτὸς γὰρ ἕκαστος βουλόμενος κορυφαῖος εἶναι γνώμησιν τε νικᾶν ἐς ἔχθρα μεγάλα ἀλλήλοισι ἀπικνέονται, ἐξ ὧν στάσεις ἐγγίνονται, ἐκ δὲ τῶν στασιῶν φόνος· ἐκ δὲ τοῦ φόνου ἀπέβη ἐς μοναρχίην, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ διέδεξε ὅσῳ ἔστι τοῦτο ἄριστον. δῆμου τε αὖ ἄρχοντος ἀδύνατα μὴ οὐ κακότητά ἐγγίνεσθαι· κακότητος τοίνυν ἐγγινομένης ἐς τὰ κοινὰ ἔχθρα μὲν οὐκ ἐγγίνεται τοῖσι κακοῖσι, φιλία δὲ ἰσχυραί· οἱ γὰρ κακοῦντες τὰ κοινὰ συγχύψαντες ποιεῦσι. τοῦτο δὲ τοιοῦτο γίνεται ἐς ὃ ἂν προστάς τις τοῦ δῆμου τοὺς τοιούτους παύσῃ. ἐκ δὲ αὐτῶν θαμάζεται οὗτος δὴ ὑπὸ τοῦ δῆμου, θαμαζόμενος δὲ ἂν ὧν ἐφάνη μοναρχος ἕων, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ δηλοῖ καὶ οὗτος ὡς ἡ μοναρχία κράτιστος. ἐνὶ δὲ ἑπεὶ πάντα συλλαβόντα εἰπεῖν, κότεν ἡμῖν ἡ ἐλευθερία ἐγένετο καὶ τεῦ δόντος; κότερα παρὰ τοῦ δῆμου ἢ ὀλιγαρχίης ἢ μοναρχου; ἔχω τοίνυν γνώμην ἡμέας ἐλευθερωθέντας διὰ ἓνα ἄνδρα τὸ τοιοῦτο περιστέλλειν, χωρὶς τε τούτου πατέριους νόμους μὴ λύειν ἔχοντας εὔ· οὐ γὰρ ἄμεινον.”

[81] Such was the judgment of Otanes: but Megabyzus’ counsel was to make a ruling oligarchy. “I agree,” said he, “to all that Otanes says against the rule of one; but when he bids you give the power to the multitude, his judgment falls short of the best. Nothing is more foolish and violent than a useless mob; to save ourselves from the insolence of a despot by changing it for the insolence of the unbridled commonalty—that were unbearable indeed. Whatever the despot does, he does with knowledge; but the people have not even that; how can they have knowledge, who have neither learnt nor for themselves seen what is best, but ever rush headlong and drive blindly onward, like a river in spate? Let those stand for democracy who wish ill to Persia; but let us choose a company of the best men and invest these with the power. For we ourselves shall be of that company; and where we have the best men, there ’tis like that we shall have the best counsels.”

[82] Such was the judgment of Megabyzus. Darius was the third to declare his opinion. “Methinks,” said he, “Megabyzus speaks rightly concerning democracy, but not so concerning oligarchy. For the choice lying between these three, and each of them, democracy, oligarchy and monarchy being supposed to be the best of its kind, I hold that monarchy is by far the most excellent. Nothing can be found better than the rule of the one best man; his judgment being like to himself, he will govern the multitude with perfect wisdom, and best conceal plans made for the defeat of enemies. But in an oligarchy, the desire of many to do the state good service oftentimes engenders bitter enmity among them; for each one wishing to be chief of all and to make his counsels prevail, violent enmity is the outcome, enmity brings faction and faction bloodshed; and the end of bloodshed is monarchy; whereby it is shown that this fashion of government is the best. Again, the rule of the commonalty must of necessity engender evil-mindedness; and when evil-mindedness in public matters is engendered, bad men are not divided by enmity but united by close friendship; for they that would do evil to the commonwealth conspire together to do it. This continues till someone rises to champion the people’s cause and makes an end of such evil-doing. He therefore becomes the people’s idol, and being their idol is made their monarch; so his case also proves that monarchy is the best government. But (to conclude the whole matter in one word) tell me, whence and by whose gift came our freedom—from the commonalty or an oligarchy or a single ruler? I hold therefore, that as the rule of one man gave us freedom, so that rule we should preserve; and, moreover, that we should not repeal the good laws of our fathers; that were ill done.”

[83] Γνώμαι μὲν δὴ τρεῖς αὐταὶ προεκέατο, οἱ δὲ τέσσερες τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀνδρῶν προσέθεντο ταύτη. ὡς δὲ ἐσώθη τῇ γνώμῃ ὁ Ὀτάνης Πέρσησι ἰσονομίην σπεύδων ποιῆσαι, ἔλεξε ἐς μέσον αὐτοῖσι τάδε. “Ἄνδρες στασιῶται, δῆλα γὰρ δὴ ὅτι δεῖ ἓνα γε τινὰ ἡμῶν βασιλέα γενέσθαι, ἦτοι κλήρω γε λαχόντα, ἢ ἐπιτρεψάντων τῷ Περσέων πλῆθει τὸν ἂν ἐκεῖνο ἔληται, ἢ ἄλλη τινὶ μηχανῇ. ἐγὼ μὲν νυν ὑμῖν οὐκ ἐναγωνιεῦμαι· οὔτε γὰρ ἄρχειν οὔτε ἄρχεσθαι ἐθέλω· ἐπὶ τούτῳ δὲ ὑπεξίσταμαι τῆς ἀρχῆς, ἐπ’ ὧς τε ὑπ’ οὐδενός ὑμέων ἄρξομαι, οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐγὼ οὔτε οἱ ἅπ’ ἐμεῦ αἰεὶ γινόμενοι.” τοῦτου εἰπαντος ταῦτα ὡς συνεχώρεον οἱ ἕξ ἐπὶ τούτοις, οὗτος μὲν δὴ σφι οὐκ ἐνηγωνίζετο ἀλλ’ ἐκ μέσου κατήστω, καὶ νῦν αὕτη ἡ οἰκίη διατελεῖ μόνῃ ἐλευθέρῃ ἐοῦσα Περσέων καὶ ἄρχεται τσαῦτα ὅσα αὐτὴ θέλει, νόμους οὐκ ὑπερβαίνουσα τοὺς Περσέων.

[84] Οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐβουλεύοντο ὡς βασιλέα δικαιοτάτα στήσονται· καὶ σφι ἔδοξε Ὀτάνῃ μὲν καὶ τοῖσι ἀπὸ Ὀτάνεω αἰεὶ γινομένοις, ἦν ἐς ἄλλον τινὰ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἔλλη ἢ βασιλῆν, ἐξαιρέτα δίδοσθαι ἐσθῆτά τε Μηδικὴν ἔτεος ἐκάστου καὶ τὴν πᾶσαν δωρεὴν ἣ γίνετα ἐν Πέρσησι τιμωτάτη. τοῦδε δὲ εἵνεκεν ἐβούλευσάν οἱ δίδοσθαι ταῦτα, ὅτι ἐβούλευσέ τε πρῶτος τὸ πρῆγμα καὶ συνέστησε αὐτούς. ταῦτα μὲν δὴ Ὀτάνῃ ἐξαιρέτα, τάδε δὲ ἐς τὸ κοινὸν ἐβούλευσαν, παριέναι ἐς τὰ βασιλῆα πάντα τὸν βουλούμενον τῶν ἑπτὰ ἄνευ ἐσαγγελέος, ἦν μὴ τυγχάνῃ εὐδῶν μετὰ γυναικὸς βασιλεύς, γαμέειν δὲ μὴ ἐξεῖναι ἄλλοθεν τῷ βασιλείῃ ἢ ἐκ τῶν συνεπαναστάντων. περὶ δὲ τῆς βασιλῆς ἐβούλευσαν τοιόνδε· ὅτε ἂν ὁ ἵππος ἡλίου ἐπανατέλλοντος πρῶτος φθέγγηται, ἐν τῷ προαστείῳ αὐτῶν ἐπιβεβηκότων, τοῦτον ἔχειν τὴν βασιλῆν.

[85] Δαρεῖω δὲ ἦν ἵπποκόμος ἀνὴρ σοφός, τῷ οὐνομα ἦν Οἰβάρης. πρὸς τοῦτον τὸν ἄνδρα, ἐπειτέ διελύθησαν, ἔλεξε Δαρεῖος τάδε. “Οἰβάρης, ἡμῖν δέδοκται περὶ τῆς βασιλῆς ποιέειν κατὰ τάδε· ὅτε ἂν ὁ ἵππος πρῶτος φθέγγηται ἅμα τῷ ἡλίῳ ἀνιόντι αὐτῶν ἐπαναβεβηκότων, τοῦτον ἔχειν τὴν βασιλῆν. νῦν ὧν εἴ τινα ἔχεις σοφίην, μηχανῶ ὡς ἂν ἡμεῖς σχῶμεν τοῦτο τὸ γέρας καὶ μὴ ἄλλος τις.” ἀμείβεται Οἰβάρης τοῖσιδε. “Εἰ μὲν δὴ ὧς δέσποτα ἐν τούτῳ τοι ἐστὶ ἢ βασιλέα εἶναι ἢ μὴ, θάρσσε τούτου εἵνεκεν καὶ θυμὸν ἔχε ἀγαθόν, ὡς βασιλεύς οὐδεὶς ἄλλος πρὸ σεῦ ἔσται· τοιαῦτα ἔχω φάρμακα.” λέγει Δαρεῖος “Εἰ τοίνυν τι τοιοῦτον ἔχεις σοφίση, ὦρη μηχανᾶσθαι καὶ μὴ ἀναβάλλεσθαι, ὡς τῆς ἐπιούσης ἡμέρης ὁ ἀγὼν ἡμῖν ἐστί.” ἀκούσας ταῦτα ὁ Οἰβάρης ποιέει τοιόνδε· ὡς ἐγένετο ἡ νύξ, τῶν θηλέων ἵππων μίαν, τὴν ὁ Δαρεῖος ἵππος ἔσπεργε μάλιστα, ταύτην ἀγαγὼν ἐς τὸ προάστειον κατέδησε καὶ ἐπήγαγε τὸν Δαρεῖος ἵππον, καὶ τὰ μὲν πολλὰ περιῆγε ἀγχοῦ τῇ ἵππῳ ἐγχρίμπτων τῇ θηλέῃ, τέλος δὲ ἐπῆκε ὀχεῦσαι τὸν ἵππον.

[83] Having to judge between these three opinions, four of the seven declared for the last. Then Otanes, his proposal to give the Persians equality being defeated, thus spoke among them all: “Friends and partisans! seeing that it is plain that one of us must be made king (whether by lot, or by our suffering the people of Persia to choose whom they will, or in some other way), know that I will not enter the lists with you; I desire neither to rule nor to be ruled; but if I waive my claim to be king, I make this condition, that neither I nor any of my posterity shall be subject to any one of you.” To these terms the six others agreed; Otanes took no part in the contest but stood aside; and to this day his house (and none other in Persia) remains free, nor is compelled to render any unwilling obedience, so long as it transgresses no Persian law.

[84] The rest of the seven then consulted what was the justest way of making a king; and they resolved, if another of the seven than Otanes should gain the royal power, that Otanes and his posterity should receive for themselves specially a yearly gift of Median raiment and all such presents as the Persians hold most precious. The reason of this resolve was that it was he who had first contrived the matter and assembled the conspirators. To Otanes, then, they gave this peculiar honour; but with regard to all of them alike they decreed that any one of the seven should, if he so wished, enter the king’s palace unannounced, save if the king were sleeping with a woman; and that it should be forbidden to the king to take a wife saving from the households of the conspirators. As concerning the making of a king, they resolved that he should be elected whose horse, when they were all mounted in the suburb of the city, should first be heard to neigh at sunrise.

[85] Now Darius had a clever groom, whose name was Oebares. When the council broke up, Darius said to him: “Oebares, in the matter of the kingship, we are resolved that he shall be king whose horse, when we are all mounted, shall first neigh at sunrise. Now do you devise by whatever cunning you can that we and none other may win this prize.” “Master,” Oebares answered, “if this is to determine whether you be king or not, you have no cause to fear; be of good courage; no man but you shall be king; trust my arts for that.” “Then,” said Darius, “if you have any trick such as you say, set about it without delay, for to-morrow is the day of decision.” When Oebares heard that he did as I will show. At nightfall he brought a mare that was especially favoured by Darius’ horse, and tethered her in the suburb of the city; then bringing in Darius’ horse, he led him round her near, so as ever and anon to touch her, and at last let the stallion have his way with the mare.

[86] Ἄμ' ἡμέρη δὲ διαφωσκούση οἱ ἕξ κατὰ συνθεήσαντο παρήσαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἵππων· διεξελαυνόντων δὲ κατὰ τὸ προάστειον, ὡς κατὰ τοῦτο τὸ χωρίον ἐγίνοντο ἵνα τῆς παροικομένης νυκτὸς κατεδέδετο ἡ θήλεα ἵππος, ἐνθαῦτα ὁ Δαρείου ἵππος προσδραμῶν ἐχρεμέτισε· ἅμα δὲ τῷ ἵπῳ τοῦτο ποιήσαντι ἀστραπή ἐξ αἰθρίας καὶ βροντὴ ἐγένετο. ἐπιγενόμενα δὲ ταῦτα τῷ Δαρείῳ ἐτελέωσέ μιν ὥσπερ ἐκ συνθέτου τευ γενόμενα· οἱ δὲ καταθορόντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἵππων προσεκύνεον τὸν Δαρεῖον.

[87] Οἱ μὲν δὴ φασὶ τὸν Οἰβάρεα ταῦτα μηχανήσασθαι, οἱ δὲ τοιάδε (καὶ γὰρ ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρα λέγεται ὑπὸ Περσέων), ὡς τῆς ἵππου ταύτης τῶν ἄρθρων ἐπιψύσας τῇ χειρὶ ἔχει αὐτὴν κρύψας ἐν τῆσι ἀναξυρίσι· ὡς δὲ ἅμα τῷ ἡλίῳ ἀνιόντι ἀπίεσθαι μέλλειν τοὺς ἵππους, τὸν Οἰβάρεα τοῦτον ἐξείραντα τὴν χεῖρα πρὸς τοῦ Δαρείου ἵππου τοὺς μυκτῆρας προσενεῖκαι, τὸν δὲ αἰσθόμενον φριμάξασθαί τε καὶ χρεμετίσαι.

[88] Δαρεῖός τε δὴ ὁ Ὑστάσπεος βασιλεὺς ἀπεδέδεκτο, καὶ οἱ ἦσαν ἐν τῇ Ἀσίῃ πάντες κατήκοοι πλην Ἀραβίων, Κύρου τε καταστρεψαμένου καὶ ὕστερον αὖτις Καμβύσεω. Ἀράβιοι δὲ οὐδαμὰ κατήκουσαν ἐπὶ δουλοσύνη Πέρσης, ἀλλὰ ξεῖνοι ἐγένοντο παρέντες Καμβύσεα ἐπ' Αἴγυπτον· ἀεχόντων γὰρ Ἀραβίων οὐκ ἂν ἐσβάλοιεν Πέρσαι ἐς Αἴγυπτον. γάμους τε τοὺς πρώτους ἐγάμει Πέρσησι ὁ Δαρεῖος, Κύρου μὲν δύο θυγατέρας Ἄτοσσαν τε καὶ Ἄρτυστώνην, τὴν μὲν Ἄτοσσαν προσυνοικήσασαν Καμβύση τε τῷ ἀδελφεῷ καὶ αὖτις τῷ Μάγῳ, τὴν δὲ Ἄρτυστώνην παρθένον· ἑτέραν δὲ Σμέρδιος τοῦ Κύρου θυγατέρα ἔγημε, τῇ οὖνομα ἦν Πάρμυς· ἔσχε δὲ καὶ τὴν τοῦ Ὀτάνεω θυγατέρα, ἣ τὸν Μάγον καταδήλον ἐποίησε· δυνάμιος τε πάντα οἱ ἐπιμπλέατο. πρῶτον μὲν νυν τύπον ποιησάμενος λίθινον ἔστησε· ζῶον δὲ οἱ ἐνήν ἄνθρωπος ἵππεύς, ἐπέγραψε δὲ γράμματα λέγοντα τάδε· “Δαρεῖος ὁ Ὑστάσπεος σὺν τε τοῦ ἵππου τῇ ἀρετῇ” τὸ οὖνομα λέγων “καὶ Οἰβάρεος τοῦ ἵπποκόμου ἐκτίσαστο τὴν Περσέων βασιληίην.”

[86] At dawn of day came the six on horseback as they had agreed. As they rode out through the suburb and came to the place where the mare had been picketed in the past night, Darius' horse trotted up to it and whinnied; and as he so did there came lightning and thunder out of a clear sky. These signs given to Darius were thought to be foreordained and made his election perfect; his companions leapt from their horses and did obeisance to him.

[87] Some say that this was Oebares' plan; but there is another story in Persia besides this: that he touched the mare with his hand, and then kept it hidden in his breeches till the six were about to let go their horses at sunrise; when he took his hand out and held it to the nostrils of Darius' horse, which forthwith snorted and whinnied.

[88] So Darius son of Hystaspes was made king, and the whole of Asia, which Cyrus first and Cambyses after him had subdued, was made subject to him, except the Arabians; these did not yield the obedience of slaves to the Persians, but were united to them by friendship, as having given Cambyses passage into Egypt, which the Persians could not enter without the consent of the Arabians. Darius took wives from the noblest houses of Persia, marrying Cyrus' daughters Atossa and Artystone; Atossa had been wife of her brother Cambyses and afterwards of the Magian, Artystone was a virgin. He married also Parmys, daughter of Cyrus' son Smerdis, and that daughter of Otanes who had discovered the truth about the Magian; and the whole land was full of his power. First he made and set up a carved stone, whereon was graven the figure of a horseman, with this inscription: “Darius son of Hystaspes, aided by the excellence of his horse” (here followed the horse's name) “and of Oebares his groom, won the kingdom of Persia.”