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**Milestones in the Development of Achaemenid Historiography  
in the Times of Ernst Herzfeld (1879-1948)**

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It is clear simply from consulting the bibliography of Ernst Herzfeld that even though he did not confine himself to this time and space of Achaemenid history and archaeology, he published many studies that concerned it. His investigations at Pasargadae, the opening of excavations at Persepolis, the founding of the *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* (the first volume of which was published in 1929-30), the many articles on Achaemenid inscriptions that he published there and elsewhere, and then his book of 1938 on the royal inscriptions--all these are eloquent testimony to his interest in the Iran of the Great Kings. This is surely the reason that the organizers initially asked me to give a presentation on the impact of Herzfeld's work on Achaemenid history. Nevertheless, after consulting with Ann Gunter and Stefan Hauser, I decided to modify my approach somewhat<sup>1</sup>.

In the first place, it is essential to recall that Herzfeld was at once a linguist, an epigraphist, an archaeologist, a historian of art, a geographer, and more, as is revealed particularly well by his work at Pasargadae, where he marshalled every kind of information that was available then (almost a century ago), and where he opened radically new perspectives. It was the same at Persepolis between 1931 and 1934, after the remarkable bilingual report published in 1929-30, in French and Persian (AMI 1: 17-40). In short, as C.R. Morey correctly emphasized in *Archeologia Orientalia* in 1952, "[Herzfeld was] a scholar whose like it would be difficult to find today and even more difficult to expect to find in the future, which seems to be trending more and more in the direction of specialized research" (p. 1). Although I have always argued for an approach that crosses the boundaries of disciplines, I consider myself to be without the competence required to evaluate the scientific results of his inquiries in each of his fields of knowledge, fifty years after his death.

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<sup>1</sup> I express my warmest thanks to Matthew Stolper (OI Chicago), who has translated my text into English. Apart from some minor corrections and updatings, the text here published is the same than the one that was delivered at the Washington-Conference.

At the same time, even though his efforts, along with the work of many others, indisputably played a role in the slow and contradictory movement that led to the birth and establishment of an Achaemenid history in the full sense of the term, I want to emphasize that, unless I am mistaken, the development of this history was never the prime concern nor the basic motivation of Ernst Herzfeld himself. To be sure, he published a voluminous study on the relationships between myth and history in ancient Iran.<sup>2</sup> There, he commented that neither a philological analysis nor a literary analysis could suffice. It was also necessary, he wrote, to carry out the investigation with the help of historical method. He was undoubtedly also one of the first to emphasize, in this same study, the need for an investigation of textual archaeology (p. 2). Nevertheless, in the absence of a closer analysis, it is my impression that the most vital parts of his work are concerned primarily with archaeology, philology and historical geography. It was around these focal interests that he constructed a book, the title of which was not settled when he died in 1948: *Studies in the History and Geography of the Ancient East*, or else *The Persian Empire*.<sup>3</sup>

To be meaningful, an analysis of Herzfeld's work would have to be carried out in an exhaustive manner, a task which was not possible for the reasons I have mentioned. I have therefore chosen instead to place Herzfeld in the context of Achaemenid historiography in the period that corresponds to his lifetime, between 1879 and 1948<sup>4</sup>. If we take stock of matters at Herzfeld's demise at the age of sixty-eight, Persian and Iranian historiography seem to be blossoming. Huart and Delaporte publish their book on *Iran antique* in 1943; Ghirshman prepares his *Iran des origines à l'Islam* between 1947 and 1949 (to be published in 1953); and it is also in 1947 that Herzfeld publishes his *Zoroaster and His World* (Princeton) and in 1947 that he makes the final addenda to the manuscript of the book that he had begun to prepare during the Thirties and Forties; and finally, in 1948, the year of Herzfeld's death, Olmstead's *Persian Empire* appears posthumously--the same year in which G. G. Cameron publishes the first collection of the Elamite tablets from Persepolis, announced by Herzfeld himself in *JRAS* 1933, then by Schmidt in 1939, and then by Cameron and Hallock in *JNES* 1942. Thus, the history of Iran appears to be entering a phase with a trend to greater generality, for the Forties of the twentieth century are an age of synthesis. To take only a few notable examples, in 1941 Rostovtzeff brings out his monumental *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*; in 1948 Tarn's *Alexander the Great* is published; in 1950 it is the turn of Magie's *Roman Rule in Asia*

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<sup>2</sup> « Mythos und Geschichte », *AMI* 1-2 (1933) : 1-100.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. C.R. Morey, *Archeologia Orientalia* (1952) : 280.

<sup>4</sup> On this topics, see also my *Leçon inaugurale* (Collège de France, Paris, 2000), and *Annuaire du Collège de France* 100 (1999-2000): 781sq.

*Minor*.<sup>5</sup> In an entirely different domain, one with which Iranology has no direct relationships, how could one fail to mention that in 1948 Fernand Braudel is elected the first president of the new Fourth section of the École Pratique des Hautes-Études (EPHE), and that, in 1949, he publishes his monumental and seminal *Mediterranean World in the Time of Philipp II?*

In the introduction to the dissertation on Pasargadae that he published in the journal *Klio* in 1908, Herzfeld cited without exception all the travelers who had described, even studied, the ruins of Fars, from the Venetian Giosafa Barbaro in the sixteenth century to the report of Easton published at Chicago in 1892. As a logical element of his plan as an architect and archaeologist, Herzfeld had prepared a list of his predecessors at the sites. But the progress of study is not reducible to this aspect of things. For his part, Olmstead, in the introduction to his book of 1948, was astonished that George Rawlinson's *Fifth Monarchy* (published in 1867), remained, even eighty years after its appearance, the only available synthesis of Achaemenid history, despite the fact that the history of the Near East had been profoundly modified in the meantime. He wrote likewise that Rawlinson had access to almost all the sources that he had himself used to write his *Persian Empire*. The assertion is (if I may say so) more generous than accurate in retrospect—Olmstead was actually able to use many sources that Rawlinson did not have. On the other hand, the assertion would be valid for someone like Herzfeld, who begins his career as a researcher toward the end of the nineteenth century. In fact, it is rather the Seventies and Eighties of the nineteenth century that saw the beginning of a first flourishing of the studies that preceded and prefigured the flourishing in the Forties of the twentieth century. I have tried to give an account of this first flourishing, imperfect as it may be, with the aid of two tables with (selected) lists of publications: on the one hand, publications of documents, and on the other, works of synthesis on ancient Persia.

**Table 1**

Dates	Documentary Publications (a selected list)
1838-1878	<b>French Translation of the <i>Shah-nameh</i> by Jules Mohl</b>
1843-1854	<b>Flandin et Coste, <i>Voyage en Perse</i> (1840-1841)</b>

<sup>5</sup> Cf. my (still unpublished) papers, “Rostovtzeff et le passage du monde achéménide au monde hellénistique” (*Colloque Mikhaïl Rostovtzeff*, Paris, May 17-19, 2000), and « “Fifty years of research on Achaemenid Asia Minor. The contribution of Greek and Epichoric Epigraphy” (*Revisiting Asia Minor. Fifty Years after David Magie’s Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, Princeton University, 9-10 December 2000).

1846	H.C. Rawlinson, <i>Persian Cuneiform Inscription at Behistoun</i> , London
1847	Letronne, <i>Mémoire de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i> 17/1, 1847 (Persian period in Egypt)
1857	Loftus, <i>Travels and Researches</i> De Luynes, <i>Mémoire sur le sarcophage d'Eshmunazar...</i> , Paris
1878-79	Ch.Clermont-Ganneau, « Origine perse des monuments araméens d'Égypte », <i>Rev. Archéol.</i> 36 : 93-107 ; 37 : 21-39.
1880	H.C. Rawlinson, <i>JRAS</i> 12 (Cyrus Cylinder)
1882	F. Stolze-Th.Nöldeke, <i>Persepolis...</i> , I-II, Berlin
1885	Discovering of the « lions and bowmen » at Susa (Dieulafoy's excavations)
1889	Cousin-Deschamps, <i>Bull.CH</i> 13, « Letter of Darius to Gadatas »
1890, 1897	J.N. Strassmaier, <i>Inscripfen von Kambyses,...Cyrus,..Darius</i> , Leipzig
1892	Hamdy Bey-Reinach, <i>Une nécropole royale à Sidon</i> , Paris
1892	J. Darmesteter, <i>Le Zend-Avesta</i> , I-III, Annales du Musée Guimet, Paris
1893	M. Dieulafoy, <i>L'acropole de Suse</i> , Paris
1893	E.Babelon, <i>Les Perses achéménides...</i> (Coin-Catalogue), Paris
1898	H. Brugsch, <i>Reise nach der grossen Oasen El Khargab</i> , Leipzig
1898	Hilprecht-Clay, <i>Business documents...</i> , BE IX, Philadelphia
1905	De Morgan, <i>MDP</i> VIII (tomb of a Persian 'princess' at Susa)
1906	Sayce-Cowley, <i>Aramaic papyri discovered at Assuan</i> , London
1905	Dalton, <i>Oxus Treasure</i>
1907	King-Thompson, <i>The Sculptures and Inscriptions of Darius the Great at Behistoun</i> , London
1908	E. Herzfeld, "Pasargadae. Untersuchungen zur persischen Archäologie", <i>Klio</i> 8/1 : 1-68
1911	F.H. Weissbach, <i>Die Keilsinschriften der Achämeniden</i> , Leipzig
1912	Clay, <i>Business documents of Murashû ...</i> , BE X, Philadelphia
1922	H.C. Butler, <i>Sardis I : The Excavations</i> , Leiden
1923	A.E. Cowley, <i>Aramaic papyri of the fifth Cent. B.C.</i> , Oxford
1925	L. Legrain, <i>The culture of the Babylonians from their seals...</i> , Philadelphia
1929-1930	E. Herzfeld, "Bericht über die Ausgrabungen von Pasargadae 1928", <i>AMI</i> 1 : 4-19
1929-1930	E. Herzfeld, "Rapport sur l'état actuel des ruines de Persépolis et propositions pour leur conservation", <i>AMI</i> 1 : 17-40 (+30 Plates, 1 map+ Persian text)
1938	E. Herzfeld, <i>Altpersische Inschriften</i> , Berlin
1939	E.F. Schmidt, <i>The Treasury of Persepolis and other discoveries in the Homeland of the Persians</i> , Chicago
1942	G.G. Cameron, "Darius' daughter and the Persepolis inscriptions", <i>JNES</i> 1 : 214-219
1948	G.G. Cameron, <i>Persepolis Treasury Texts</i> , Chicago

Table 2

Dates	Historical Synthesis (a selected list)
1681	Bossuet, <i>Discours sur l'histoire universelle</i> , Paris (Eng. Tr.. London 1730)
1730	H. Rollin, <i>Histoire ancienne</i> , I-XVI, Paris (Eng. Tr. London 1862-67)
1815	A.H. Malcolm, <i>The history of Persia</i> , I-II, London
1833	H.G. Droysen, <i>Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen</i> , Berlin
1837	F. Hegel, <i>Vorlesungen...</i> ( <i>Leçons sur la philosophie de l'histoire</i> , Paris, 1963. Première partie : <i>Le monde oriental</i> ; Troisième section : <i>La Perse</i> , pp.133-168)
1839	A.J.M. de Saint-Félix, <i>Précis de l'histoire des peuples anciens</i> . III : <i>Histoire des nations iramiques [sic]</i> , Paris : 275-448
1846	G. Grote, <i>History of Greece</i> , 12 vol., London
1850	W.S.A.Vaux, <i>Nineveh and Persepolis</i> , London
1867	G. Rawlinson, <i>The Fifth Oriental Monarchy</i> , London
1869	J.A. de Gobineau, <i>Histoire des Perses</i> , I-II, Paris
1875	G. Maspéro, <i>Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient</i> , Paris (1st ed.)
1871	Fr. Spiegel, <i>Erânische Althbertumskunde</i> , I-III, Leipzig
1879	F. Justi, <i>Geschichte des alten Persiens</i> , Berlin
1883	G. Weber, <i>Histoire universelle</i> . II : <i>Histoire grecque, les peuples orientaux</i> , Paris, French translation from the 9th German edition
1883	H.G. Droysen, <i>Histoire de l'hellénisme</i> , I, French tr., Paris
1884	F. Justi, <i>Geschichte der orientalischen Völker</i> , Berlin (Fünfter Abschnitt : <i>Die Herrschaft der Perser</i> ; pp.373-426 : <i>Die Achämeniden</i> )
1884-1885	M. Dieulafoy, <i>L'art antique de la Perse</i> , Paris
1885	J. Darmesteter, <i>Coup d'œil sur l'histoire de la Perse</i> (Leçon d'ouverture au Collège de France), Paris, E. Leroux
1886	Th. Nöldeke, "Persia", <i>Encyclopaedia Britannica</i>
1887	Th. Nöldeke, <i>Aufsätze zur persischen Geschichte</i> , Leipzig
1888	S.G.W. Benjamin, <i>Persia</i> , London-New York
1890	J.Perrot-Ch. Chipiez, <i>Histoire de l'art dans l'antiquité</i> , V, Paris (Book X : <i>La Perse</i> , pp. 403-897)
1894-1904	Th. Nöldeke, <i>Das iranische Nationalepos</i> , Strassburg (Eng. Transl. Bombay 1930)
1896	Ed. Meyer, <i>Die Entstehung des Judentums. Eine historische Untersuchung</i> , Leipzig
1899	G. Maspéro, <i>Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient Classique</i> , IV, Paris (VI : <i>La conquête iranienne</i> , pp. 569-695 ; VII : <i>La fin du vieux monde oriental</i> , pp.697-814)
1900	G. Rawlinson, <i>Ancient History</i> , New York, The Colonial Press, Revised edition (Book II, pp.77-94 : <i>History of Persia</i> , 558-330)
1906-1910	V. Prasek, <i>Geschichte der Meder und Perser bis zur makedonischen Eroberung</i> , I-II, Gotha
1925	Cl. Huart, <i>La civilisation iranienne</i> , Paris
1929-1930	E. Herzfeld (hrgg.), <i>AMI</i> , Bd. I (Herzfeld, p. 1-185)
1936	A. Christensen, <i>Les gestes des rois dans les traditions de l'Iran antique</i> , Paris
1938	E. Benveniste, <i>Les mages dans l'Iran ancien</i> , Paris

1940	<b>W. Eilers, <i>Iranische Beamtennamen...</i>, Leipzig</b>
1941	<b>E. Herzfeld, <i>Iran in the Ancient East</i>, Oxford</b>
1943	<b>Cl. Huart-L. Delaporte, <i>L'Iran antique. Élam et Perse et la civilisation iranienne</i>, Paris</b>
1946	<b>G. Cardascia submits his thesis, <i>Les archives des Murashû</i> (= Paris 1951)</b>
1947	<b>F. Herzfeld, <i>Zoroaster and his world</i>, I-II, Princeton</b>
[1947]	<b>E. Herzfeld, [<i>Studies in history and geography of the Ancient East</i>] = 1968</b>
1948	<b>Death of E. Herzfeld and posthumous publication of Olmstead's, <i>History of the Persian Empire</i>, Chicago</b>

Around 1900, the discoveries and documentary publications of the preceding decades had radically changed the situation: in the reading of the royal inscriptions (Rawlinson 1846; Loftus 1857), the exploration of Persepolis (Flandin and Coste 1843-54; Stolze and Nöldeke 1882), the excavation of Susa (Loftus 1857; Dieulafoy 1885, 1893), the publication of Babylonian tablets (Rawlinson 1880; Strassmaier 1890, 1897), of Aramaic documents from Egypt (Clermont-Ganneau 1878), of coins from the Persian period (Babelon 1898), or even the translation of the Avesta and commentary on it (Darmesteter 1892), and the discovery of Greek inscriptions of Asia Minor (Cousin-Deschamps 1888), not to mention excavations at provincial sites, such as Sardis and elsewhere (for example Xanthos in Lycia)<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, when Herzfeld undertook his own work between 1900 and 1948, the rhythm of publication did not abate: publications of the royal inscriptions (King and Thompson 1907; Weissbach 1911), of work at Susa (e.g., de Morgan 1905), of Aramaic documents from Egypt (Sayce and Cowley 1906; Cowley 1923), of Babylonian tablets (e.g., Clay 1912), of the Oxus treasure (Dalton 1905), and, of course, publication of the Persepolis tablets (to which I will return in my conclusion). This is the stream to which Herzfeld added with his own work during the forty years which passed between his thesis on Pasargadae in 1907 and *Zoroaster and His Time* in 1947, and the manuscript that he left behind in proofs in Cairo.

During the same period one can recognize a sustained rhythm of publication of works of historical synthesis on ancient Persia (table 2). On a purely scientific level, the multiplication and diversification of documentary resources was certainly the cause, but it can scarcely be doubted that greater contemporary European interest in the Near East also promoted this movement. The table i speaks for itself. I will give only the briefest commentary on it: (first,) because its obvious connections with the history of Greece, from Herodotus and Aeschylus on, the history of ancient Persia was included in universal histories and general histories, not to mention meditations on the philosophy of history, between Bossuet and Hegel; (second,) the

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<sup>6</sup> E. Slatter, *Xanthos. Travels of discovery in Turkey*. (Original illustrations by Charles Fellows and George Scharf junior), London, The Rubicon Press, 1994.

travels and the first excavations carried out in the Near East and in Persia stimulated an entire series of works on the history of Persia, especially in the Seventies and Eighties in Germany: without exception these works deal with the period of origins, the Achaemenids, the Parthians and the Sassanids (to whom the lion's share of attention is devoted); (third,) later on, the studies become more precise, more specialized along with documentary publications, incorporating more and more the results of excavations in Mesopotamia and Iran.

It is therefore clear that after Herzfeld had been initiated into archaeology under Delitzsch at Assur, between 1903 and 1906, when he turned to later periods, understanding of the history and civilization of the Achaemenid empire had made prodigious advances during the preceding decades: sound documentary and historiographic foundations already existed, which could easily be integrated into the development of knowledge and research. What I want to focus on now are two specific historiographic aspects: first, the discussions of the place of Achaemenid history in the general history of the ancient Near East, and second, the discussions of the sources for Persian and Achaemenid history. I will conclude with a brief return to the year 1948.

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The historical assessment of the Achaemenid phase of Near Eastern history was determined simultaneously by a judgment about the internal development of the empire and by its chronological position between the fall of the Assyro-Babylonian empire and the conquests of Alexander.

**2.1** The internal development of the Achaemenid empire was considered almost unanimously as a long decay after the defeats in the Persian Wars. That is the thesis hammered out relentlessly by George Rawlinson in his various works: for example, in his manual of ancient history in 1900, speaking of the defeat of Darius III by Alexander, Rawlinson wrote: "The result of the contest might have been predicted from the time of the battle of Marathon" (p. 94). An analogous judgment can be found in the work of Justi (1879: 123), who also relies on the famous story of Xerxes and his sister-in-law recounted by Herodotus, a story which he uses to denounce harem intrigues. He judges that in this respect the Persian empire shared the fate of all oriental empires, and with this end in view, he establishes a direct connection between the court of the Great Kings and the court of the Shah of Persia in modern times, and he gives this definitive formulation: "Women played a much greater role in world history than is usually supposed, and the women's quarters among the last of the Achaemenids [that is, after Xerxes] were not only the theater of personal intrigues and jealous quarrels, but they were also

the actual point of departure for political actions, as well as for many abominable crimes” (p. 126). Justi likewise dilates on moral and military enfeeblement and the incompetence of the kings, and he denounces Parysatis, whom he qualifies as a “true Fury” (p. 136). The same historiographic intrigue can be found in Nöldeke in 1886 (p. 42). He denounces Xerxes as “on a par with the absolute worst of oriental despots in time of war, as vainglorious as he was effeminate”; under these conditions, the defeats in Europe constitute the turning point of Persian history (p. 48), and the succession struggles are just one of very many examples of this genre “in oriental history” (p. 49). In his *Leçon Inaugurale* at the Collège de France in 1885, Darmesteter describes an erosion, both internal and external; the former is caused by the hegemony of the Median magi (sic), the second by the defeats at the hands of the Greeks, which would “result in the dissolution of the Iranian state” (p. 19). In Darmesteter’s eyes, the defeat is historically just: in fact, Achaemenid “despotism” is “a principle of death, for it degrades and annihilates the individual, and once it is shaken everything crumbles with it ... Marathon, Salamis and Plataea are victories, not for Greece, but for humanity ...” (p. 20). In the end, Sassanid Persia succumbed to the same evils, for “despotism is the tradition in Persia” (p. 32).

I do not think it would be useful to multiply citations that repeat one another. I will simply add two comments. The only differences among these authors have to do with the state of the empire at the arrival of Alexander and the personality of Darius III<sup>7</sup>. For some (the great majority), Darius III was a remarkable prince, but he ruled an empire that was severely weakened and he had to battle an enemy who was his superior. For the others (like Nöldeke), Darius III was an incompetent on the order of a Xerxes, but events proved what power of resistance remained in so immense an empire (p. 81). My second comment has to do with the extraordinary persistence of this historiography. All the elements of “Persian decadence” are already expounded in great detail by Rollin in 1730<sup>8</sup>. But in fact, Rollin himself borrowed this judgment from the *Discours sur l’histoire universelle* of Bossuet (1681). Both of them are still cited in the bibliography of influential Rawlinson’s manual in 1900 (p. 6-7).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See *Annuaire du Collège de France* 100 (1999-2000): 783-789, and my book *Darius dans l’ombre d’Alexandre*, chapter 1: “Darius d’hier et d’aujourd’hui” (Paris, Fayard)

<sup>8</sup> See *Annuaire du Collège de France* 101 (2000-2001) : 707-712, and my paper (in press), “La tradition gréco-romaine sur Alexandre le Grand dans la France moderne et contemporaine : quelques réflexions sur la permanence et l’adaptabilité des modèles interprétatifs”, in : *The Role of Greek Classics in the development of European and National Identities* (Dutch Institute at Athens, October 2-4, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> G. Rawlinson, *Ancient History from the Earliest Times to the Fall of the Western Empire*, New York, Colonial Press, revised edition, 1900. Nevertheless, Rawlinson did recognize that “the earlier portion of this work

Since exactly the same prejudices and exactly the same formulas can be found in recent books, —indeed, even in very recent ones<sup>10</sup>, —one is forced to admit that despite the progress accomplished in other areas, and despite some very early lucid openings<sup>11</sup>, in Achaemenid historiography “orientalism” has remained the keystone for more than three centuries! Is this not a disturbing observation?

**2.2** The other theme consists in an evaluation of the specific role played by the Achaemenid phase in the history of the oriental empires. I will take just two works, of Perrot and Chipiez<sup>12</sup>, and of Maspéro, the first appearing in 1890, the second in 1899, and both abundantly cited by later authors. In their Chapter XVIII, entitled “General Characteristics of Persian Art,” Perrot and Chipiez develop a thesis that is far from entirely original, but which they express in a form that appears new. For them, Persian art is born “from a determination to be imitative .... It is not, like the arts of Egypt and Chaldea, a spontaneous expression of ideas and beliefs of a great people” (p. 883). Nonetheless, Perrot and Chipiez remain restrained; they do not push their thesis as far as de Morgan does when he published the Achaemenid tomb at Susa in 1905<sup>13</sup>. I cite only a single passage from this truly remarkable work: “The various elements [copied by the Persians] were, most often, associated with utter bad taste; rarely are they grouped in an agreeable fashion ... The Persian aesthetic remains quite inferior to those of the peoples who were adopted as models” (pp. 56, 58). Perrot and Chipiez, for their part, recognized a certain “originality” in Persian art, but nonetheless a limited originality, for it was never accompanied by any fertility or any diversity: “Behind sometimes brilliant appearances,” (they wrote) “this immobility is nothing but decadence, more or less well concealed” (pp. 893-95). Furthermore, the authors reproduce for their own purpose the very cautious judgment of Darmesteter: “Persepolis is the caprice of an all-powerful dilettante who has a taste for the

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[Rollin] is now antiquated, and must be replaced by writers who have the advantage of recent discoveries” (p. 7).

<sup>10</sup> See particularly M. Dandamaev's *Political History of the Persian Empire* (English Translation, Brill, Leiden-New York-Kobenhavn-Köln, 1989), with my review-article, “L'histoire politique de l'empire achéménide: problèmes et méthodes. (À propos d'un ouvrage de M.A. Dandamaev)”, *Revue des Études Anciennes* 95/3-4 (1993): 399-423; see also my paper, “L'histoire achéménide : sources, méthodes, raisonnements et modèles », *Topoi* 4 (1994) : 109-130.

<sup>11</sup> See particularly the comments by Letronne (1847), then by Clermont-Ganneau (1878-79) about the specificity of the Persian period in Egypt, with my comments in *Leçon inaugurale* (2000): 10-12.

<sup>12</sup> G. Perrot – Ch. Chipiez, *Histoire de l'art dans l'Antiquité. V : Perse-Phrygie-Lydie et Carie-Lycie*, Paris, Librairie Hachette, 1890 (« Livre X : La Perse », p. 401-906).

<sup>13</sup> Jacques de Morgan, « Tombe achéménide », in : *Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse* VIII (1905) : 30-58.

grandiose”<sup>14</sup> (p. 18)—a formula which is in my opinion nothing but an adaptation of a judgment made by Cornelius de Pauw, who in 1772 saw in Persepolis a testimony to “the barbarian magnificence of Asiatic despots.”<sup>15</sup> In the view of Perrot and Chipiez, Persian art really had no autonomous position. It played, in essence, the role of a transmitter of the heritage of “the once-great peoples, now fallen,” that is, Egypt and Chaldea (p. 880). They conclude thus: “The interest of this art is that it resumes in its works all the efforts, all the plastic creations of the oldest civilized people, which Greece and Rome were bound to inherit; at the same time, it is the first art which ... underwent the influence of the Hellenic genius ... By this twofold title, this study devoted to Persian art formed the natural epilogue to the history of the arts of the Orient which we have undertaken” (p. 897).

I must repeat a point: this general interpretation goes back well before Perrot and Chipiez. To be convinced of this, it suffices to read the pages written in 1857 by Loftus about Achaemenid Susa, which he had unearthed himself some years earlier<sup>16</sup>: “The palaces of Susa and Persepolis are much inferior to those whose remains are still preserved for us [in Egypt and in Assyria], and, far from being (as M. Flandin remarks<sup>17</sup> ... ) ‘worthy to be classed with Greek art,’ they were rather the works of a powerful monarch, who wanted the skill and taste to direct the labour which his power commanded ... The purity and artistic feelings of the vanquished he could not transplant, nor even appreciate” (p. 377). From Loftus to Darmesteter and especially to de Morgan, the continuity is plain to see, and if Perrot and Chipiez added nuances that were not negligible, they did not bring into question the very bases of this assessment. Since then, despite the progress made at the time of Herzfeld, such prejudices continue to be transmitted. To return to the Forties of the twentieth century, one should recall that the two famous articles of Henri

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<sup>14</sup> James Darmesteter, *Coup d’œil sur l’histoire de la Perse (Leçon inaugurale au Collège de France)*, Paris, 1885.

<sup>15</sup> Cornelius de Pauw, *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains, ou Mémoires intéressants pour servir à l’Histoire de l’Espèce humaine*, I, Berlin (1772) : 383-384, —as quoted by D. Van der Cruysse, *Chardin le Persan*, Éd. Fayard, Paris (1998) : 211 and 486.

<sup>16</sup> William K. Loftus, *Travels and Researches in Chaldaea and Susiana, with an account of excavations at Warka, the “Erech” of Nimrod and Shûsh, “Shusan the Palace” of Esther*, J. Nisbet and Co, London, 1857.

<sup>17</sup> I suppose that here Loftus must implicitly refer to E. Flandin, *Voyage en Perse de MM. Eugène Flandin, peintre, et Pascal Coste, architecte. (Relation de voyage par M. Eugène Flandin)*, II, Paris, 1851, particularly the developments at p. 148 sq. ; cf. for example p. 211 : « ..Rien dans ces palais des princes achéménides, n’est sauvage ni barbare; tout, au contraire, y décèle une ère de civilisation où les arts avaient déjà fait un grand pas...Non! A Persépolis, tout est art, tout est élégance...Les compositions des artistes perses se distinguent toujours par le goût, l’originalité et la richesse ».

Frankfort (“Achaemenian Sculpture”) and of Gisella Richter (“Greeks in Persia”) both appeared in *AJA* in 1946. It would prove necessary to await the great work of Carl Nylander in 1970<sup>18</sup> for a radical critique to be made and an alternative interpretation to be proposed, then elaborated by Margaret Root in her book of 1979<sup>19</sup>.

Maspéro, for his part, expounded a thesis very close to that of Perrot and Chippiez, but he put his interpretation in the framework of political analysis<sup>20</sup>. He too adopts the thesis of “Achaemenid decadence” and places it in the Oriental *longue durée* in a section (VI) with the emblematic title “The End of the Old Oriental World.” He opines that the respite in the time of Artaxerxes III is only an illusion, for no renaissance was possible, because of the exhaustion of the Orient: “The peoples of the Old Oriental World, at least all those who had taken part in its history, were either no longer in existence or else drawing out a failing old age. They had been worn out, one by the other, during their centuries of virility.<sup>21</sup> ... Only the indestructible Egypt had escaped the wreckage and seemed destined to outlive its rivals by a long time.<sup>22</sup> ... [In reality,] it lived and progressed by virtue of its sheer energy.” And he reconstructed the unfortunate historical fate of the Persians in this way: “The Iranians, initiated into the oriental civilizations at the time when they were declining into senescence, frequently aged from contact with them. Taking on the age along with the patrimony of their conquests, they lost all the bloom of youth in a few years, and the energy that remained to them was at most enough to maintain as a whole the empire that they had founded.” I quote finally the last phrase of the chapter: “The Old Oriental World was dying with its forces spent: before it died of its own accord, the fortunate audacity of Alexander called Greece to take up the succession” (p. 814). One is reminded of the parallel final phrase of Chapter XVI of Perrot and Chipiez: “No longer does anything separate us from that Greece on which our eyes have been ever fixed, as if on the goal and the promised land ... “ (p. 897)!

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<sup>18</sup> Carl Nylander, *Ionians in Pasargadae. Studies in Old Persian Architecture* (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Boreas, Near Eastern Civilizations 2), Uppsala, 1970.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art. Essays on the creation of an Iconography of Empire* (Acta Iranica 19, Textes et Mémoires), Brill, Leiden, 1979.

<sup>20</sup> Gaston Maspéro, *Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient classique*, III : *Les Empires*, Paris, Hachette, 1899.

<sup>21</sup> (776-->788). [789]

<sup>22</sup> .... [789-804] ... [804]

**3.1** I come now to the second aspect that I mentioned, that is, discussions of the sources and of the priorities. I will touch briefly on three matters, without taking the time to analyze them in detail. First of all, in a general way, it is certain that the authors of this period deplored the lack of documentation; thus Darmesteter in 1885: “The civilization of [the Achaemenid] period is known to us only from foreign testimonies and from much too rare national remnants.” Eduard Meyer, though vastly better informed, begins his introductory exposition of the sources for Achaemenid history with this phrase: “In contrast with the older Oriental empires, the Persian empire left only very few monuments” (*GdA*, 3); the main part of his introduction was then devoted to the Greek and Judean sources. In 1846, Henry Creswicke Rawlinson had underscored the entirely new matter that the Behistun inscription introduced<sup>23</sup>: “The evidence of Herodotus, in regard to the early incidents of the reign of Darius, must be received with considerable caution” (pp. 188-89). Properly understood, all work from then on makes use of the contribution of Behistun, yet the cautious judgment of Rawlinson on Herodotus is neither repeated nor even considered. On the contrary, Darmesteter, for example, judges that “the narratives of the Greeks, historians and poets, [are] confirmed by the historical inscriptions carved on the rock by the Achaemenid kings” (pp. 17-18). This is a declaration that generations of historians have put in practice, systematically using Herodotus and Behistun on the assumption that the two narratives were complementary—a method which is extremely dubious all the same<sup>24</sup>. The title that Ahl gave to his book and the aim that he declared seem different: “To make some contribution to our acquaintance with the Ancient Persians from an examination of sources truly Persian”<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, the author carefully examines the Behistun inscription, but very quickly, with the reigns of Xerxes and then of Artaxerxes I, he returns to a canonical narrative founded on a relentless reading of the Classical sources and on a sure conviction of an irremediable decadence<sup>26</sup>. In a certain measure, the many works of Herzfeld on the Achaemenid inscriptions went in the right direction particularly because he also knew the Greek sources so well. But it would be necessary to await Olmstead for the balance

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<sup>23</sup> Major H.C. Rawlinson, *The Persian cuneiform Inscription at Behistun decyphered and translated*, Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1846.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. my remarks in *Histoire de l'empire perse. De Cyrus à Alexandre*, Paris, Fayard (1996): 119-127, and in *Annales HSS*, september-october 1999/5: 1134-1135.

<sup>25</sup> Augustus W. Ahl, *Outline of Persian History based on the cuneiform inscriptions* (Studies in Philology and History), New York-Leipzig, 1922. (The author was Professor of Greek Language and Literature, Thiel College, Oxford).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. p. 83: “Xerxes...soon became a tool in the hands of the two ever-scheming political parties at the court...”; speaking (very briefly) of Darius the Third, the author (p. 107, n.1) refers to G. Maspero, *Passing of the Empires, 850 B.C.-330 B.C.*

between Greek sources and properly Achaemenid sources to be redressed. And even so, the movement was only begun in 1948 and it is far from being complete even today, despite the large number of studies devoted to the theme “Greek Sources and Achaemenid History” in the Seventies, Eighties and Nineties<sup>27</sup>.

**3.2** In the second place, I want to recall a debate that is entirely forgotten today. A first offensive against the hegemony of the Greek sources had in fact already been carried out in the course of the nineteenth century, but on completely different bases: some researchers had tried to substitute for them “Oriental” sources, not the properly Achaemenid sources that were not yet known, but the medieval Persian and Arabo-Persian texts, especially the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi, of which Nöldeke had produced an analysis at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1850, Vaux systematically utilized sources of this type<sup>28</sup>, then Gobineau in 1869 (from a very different point of view)<sup>29</sup>. But one of the first to go in this direction was Malcolm, in 1818, who tried to construct a system of equivalence between the names of kings known from Classical sources and the names found in what Christensen in 1936 called the Iranian royal legend, more precisely, the list of the Kayanids, frequently identified with the Achaemenids. The work of Malcolm was discussed at length by Spiegel in 1871, in his *Erânische Alterthümer*. Not only converging criticisms, but also the publication of properly Achaemenid sources eliminated the medieval texts from discussions of the sources of Achaemenid history. I mention in passing that Herzfeld also participated in this discussion, in his fashion, in a large article on “Mythos und Geschichte” in 1933. His conclusion is still valid: “Für die Perser ist das Epos bis heute ihre Geschichte...Die Geburt der Geschichte ist der Tod des Mythos.”<sup>30</sup>

**3.3** I come to my third and final point. In a lecture that I delivered in March 2001 in Washington<sup>31</sup>, I posed a question that I qualified as obsessive, to wit: In the swelling flood of publications, how can one

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<sup>27</sup> See my cautious comments in *Bulletin d'Histoire Achéménide* II, Éditions Thotm, Paris (2001): 23-32.

<sup>28</sup> W.S.W. Vaux, *Nineveh and Persepolis. An Historical sketch of Ancient Assyria and Persia, with an account of recent Researches in those countries*, London (1850), part. p. 76sq.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph de Gobineau, *Histoire des Perses d'après les auteurs orientaux, grecs et latins*, I-II, Paris, 1869, part. I, p. 1-240 and his methodological declaration, p. 241-272 (“Façon de comprendre l'histoire iranienne et ses sources”). On Gobineau, see recently J. Calmard, *EncTr* X/1 (2001) : 20-24, and an interesting book by F. Assimacopoulos, *Gobineau et la Grèce* (Studien zur Geschichte Südosteuropas, 15), P. Lang, Frankfurt/a.M, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Wien, 1999.

<sup>30</sup> AMI VII (1933): 109.

<sup>31</sup> "The History of the Achaemenid empire to-day : new trends and new perspectives" (<http://www.fis-iran.org/achemenid.htm>); an updated version will be published in the *Ancient History Bulletin* (Calgary).

distinguish what is simply *recent* from what is really *new*? Analysis of the production of the first half of the twentieth century, even if incomplete, leads me to the same question. Let me recall briefly a tale that is now well-known. “Once upon a time”, —actually, in 1933 and in 1936 to 38, —archaeologists working on the terrace of Persepolis brought to light two groups of clay tablets inscribed in cuneiform. The first group was discovered in the northeastern corner of the fortification, when Ernst Herzfeld directed the work on the terrace. These Fortification tablets were carefully packed and then sent for study to the Oriental Institute at Chicago, where they are kept today on long-term loan.<sup>32</sup> The Treasury tablets, found later, were divided between the museums in Tehran and Chicago. The new texts were studied mainly by Arno Poebel, George Cameron and Richard Hallock. Cameron and Hallock each published a collection of texts, one in 1948, the other in 1969.

In a fundamental sense, it undoubtedly was,—and it still remains,—a discovery of documents that completely overturned the traditional view of the Persian monarchy: an assessment of the tablets would have dissuaded anyone from analyzing the Persian monarchy through the deforming lenses of feudal, nomadic or primitivist theses, since the tablets show that the administrative organization centered on Persepolis had genetic connections with the Syro-Mesopotamian kingdoms of earlier centuries. Now it is startling not only that, unless I am mistaken, Herzfeld never devoted a study specifically to the tablets<sup>33</sup>, but above all that despite the pioneering studies not only of the editors, but also of such great scholars as (for example) Emile Benveniste, Walther Hinz and Ilya Gershevitch, the importance of the discovery completely eluded historians who were trained primarily in the Classical texts<sup>34</sup>. And yet as early as 1942 Cameron had published

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<sup>32</sup> Except for about 150 tablets now in the Archeological Museum in Tehran; see G.G. Cameron, *JNES* 1964:167ff.

<sup>33</sup> The only one direct reference is to be found in the text of a lecture he delivered at the Royal Asiatic Society on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1933, and published as “Recent discoveries at Persepolis”, *JRAS* 1934: 226-232: “Among the small finds, not belonging to architecture and sculpture, is to be mentioned the discovery of two little archive chambers in the fortification wall: not apparently the archives of the State, but either military or judicial records. There are about 10,000 intact pieces, 10000 more or less complete ones, and probably more than 10000 fragments. The shapes vary greatly, from the largest ever known to the smallest. There are mostly in Elamite cuneiform, and will require years of labour and study to be deciphered. Among them are about 500 small pieces with Aramaic writing in ink. As an exception there was found one piece —perhaps there are more—in Phrygian letters and language” (p. 231-232).

<sup>34</sup> As I mentioned long ago (see *Rois, tributs et paysans*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris [1982] : 505, n.41), the great French historian Édouard Will « discovered » the existence of the Persepolis tablets only through David Lewis’ book, *Sparta and Persia*, published in 1977 (cf. his review in *Revue de Philologie* 1979/2: 315).

an article that established a connection between the “daughter” (actually, a princess) called Irtashduna in a Fortification tablet, and the wife of Darius known from Herodotus under the name Artystone (although Cameron’s interpretation was partly erroneous). On the other hand, in a lucid review of Cameron’s book published in 1951, F. Altheim showed the connections between the *Oeconomica* of Pseudo-Aristotle and the workings of the royal economy in the Persia of Darius and Xerxes<sup>35</sup>.

Apart from the editors of the tablets, only one solitary author had a very early recognition of the novelty introduced by this documentation—very early, that is, as of the Forties. This was Olmstead, whose *Persian Empire* was published posthumously in 1948, the same year in which Herzfeld died with his own manuscript in proofs. In the introduction to his book, Olmstead emphasizes with regret how Achaemenid history had remained neglected, and he explains the reasons for such cumulative delay. For this reason he hails the opening of the Oriental Institute excavations of Persepolis as “a new epoch in the recovery of the Ancient Near East” (p. x), or even as “the Renaissance of later Near Eastern history” (p. xii). He does not neglect to present the discovery of the tablets (p. xi), to which he returns at greater length in his Chapter XIII. To be sure, Olmstead himself worked at Chicago, and, as he himself said, he could benefit from his collaboration and his conversations with his colleagues,—and his own students, including Cameron, Hallock, and others, —who worked on “the card-catalogue dictionary of Old Persian” and the counterpart dictionaries of Aramaic and Elamite (p. xi), and who prepared the editions of the tablets. But this proximity, from which Herzfeld could have benefited still more, does not explain everything. If Olmstead immediately introduced discussions of these tablets, it is because he was a true historian, careful to examine all the documentary corpora, to determine their specificity but also to reveal the inter-documentary connections (cf. pp. xii-xiii).<sup>36</sup> He was equally concerned, as he insists so vigorously, not to reduce the work of the historian to a description of the palace and the life of the court. On the contrary, he finds in these new Persepolitan documents, as in the Babylonian and Aramaic documents, testimonies to the daily life of ordinary people (p. xiv).

The last sentence of his book makes the following declaration, full of legitimate pride in the work already accomplished by all the specialists, and especially full of optimism for the future that he did not have a chance to see but which he did much to prepare: “Now at last, through the united effort of archeologist, philologist, and historian, Achaemenid Persia has risen from the dead” (p. 524).

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Histoire de l’empire perse*, p. 466-471, 967-968, et *Bulletin d’Histoire achéménide*, Paris, Ed.Thotm (2001) : 134-136, n. 281.

<sup>36</sup> See the short but very informative notice by Matt Stolper in *American National Biography*, XVI (OUP, 1999): 695-96.

There is no doubt that at this time he had understood that the Persepolis tablets were going to play a decisive role in this renewal. Operating in a milieu where the information coming from Persepolis converged, Olmstead was able to detect immediately among the *recent* information that which was truly *new*. It is not the least of his titles to glory!