Resistance against the Achaemenid Empire: the Egyptian Rebellions of 521 and 487/86 BC

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introducing Achaemenid Egypt

In the sixth to fourth centuries BC, the Achaemenid Persian Empire (ca. 550 – 330 BC) was the dominant political power in the ancient Near East. The empire had been founded by Cyrus II, an initially obscure ruler from Persia (southwestern Iran). Though we know little about Cyrus' life, we know that he managed to defeat the Median Empire of Astyages, the Lydian Empire of Croesus, and the Neo-Babylonian Empire of Nabonidus in little over a decade.[1] According to a legend that developed after Cyrus' death, the imperial founder had died while fighting on the Eurasian steppe, attempting – though failing – to incorporate the nomadic tribe of the Massagetae into his fledgling state (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.201-14).[2] The empire's expansion continued after Cyrus' passing. Persian armies went on to campaign in e.g. Sudan, Libya, Greece, Macedonia, the Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The resulting state was the largest the world had ever seen. In the words of one scholar: at its height, the Persian Empire stretched "from the Aral Sea and the western edge of the Himalayas (Central Asia) to the Sahara (Africa), and from the Indus River Valley (Indian subcontinent) to the Danube (southeastern Europe) – the first world empire, indeed."[3] For ca. a century and a half, Egypt was one of its many provinces.

Before Egypt became a part of the Persian Empire in the late sixth century BC, the country had been ruled by a series of native kings. This period is known today as the Twenty-Sixth or Saite

[1] For introductions to the Persian or Achaemenid Empire – terms that will be used interchangeably in the present study – see e.g. Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*, Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, and Waters, *Ancient Persia*. In addition, Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, provides an introduction to the sources on which the study of the empire is based, and Jacobs and Rollinger, *Companion to the Achaemenid Persian Empire*, provide introductions to a large number of empire-related topics. For the difference between Persian, Achaemenid and Teispid, see e.g. Jacobs, "'Kyros, der große König,'" 635-63, and Henkelman, "Cyrus the Persian," 577-634.

[2] The story about the Massagetae was but one version of Cyrus' death. For the variety of the tradition, see e.g. Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 99-102 nos. 3.34-36, and Beckman, "Many Deaths of Cyrus," 1-21.

[3] Waters, *Ancient Persia*, 82.

Figure 1. Map of the world of the Persian Empire: at its height, the empire stretched from the Aral Sea to the Sahara, and from the Indus River Valley to the Danube. (Adapted by the author from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Achaemenid_Empire_500_BCE.jpg)

Dynasty (ca. 664 – 526 BC).[4] The Saite Dynasty is sometimes regarded as a "renaissance" of sorts: after several centuries in which Egypt had been politically divided and, at times, occupied by foreign powers, the kings of the Delta city of Sais had ushered in a period of unified rule. It was characterized by a resurgence of monumental building: construction works were carried out at temple sites throughout the country, and royal statues were erected the size of which rivaled those from the New Kingdom.[5] Outside of its borders, the Egyptian army competed with the Neo-Babylonian Empire for hegemony in the Levant, and with kings of Kush for control over Nubia.[6] Nevertheless, the last king of the Saite Dynasty – Psamtik III (527 – 526 BC) – was unable to keep the armies of Persia at bay. In the early months of 526 BC, Cambyses, Cyrus' son and successor, crossed the Sinai desert and arrived in Egypt.[7] He was met by the Egyptian army near Pelusium, a site at the eastern edge of the Delta. According to a late fifth century BC account, the battle that ensued was fierce; the bones of the fallen soldiers could still be seen on the battlefield after several decades of exposure (Herodotus, *Histories* 3.12). Though hard won, the Persian victory at Pelusium freed the road to Memphis, where Cambyses deposed Psamtik III and claimed Egypt for the empire that had been created by his father.[8] The decades that followed are known as the Twenty-Seventh Dynasty or the (First) Persian Period of Egypt (ca. 526 – 400 BC).

[4] For introductions to Saite Egypt, see e.g. Lloyd, "Late Period," 282-86, Jansen-Winkeln, "Bild und Charakter," 165-82, Perdu, "Saites and Persians," 140-49, Agut-Labordère, "Saite Period," 965-1027, and Leahy, "Egypt in the Late Period," 720-26.

[5] For Saite royal monuments, see e.g. Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 63-91, and Der Manuelian, *Living in the Past*, 297-385. See also Youssef, "So Many Pharaohs," on a colossal statue of Psamtik I that was discovered at Matariya. For an overview of both royal and private hieroglyphic texts that can be dated to the Saite Dynasty, see Jansen-Winkeln, *Die 26. Dynastie*.

[6] See e.g. Perdu, "Saites and Persians," 142-49, and Agut-Labordère, "Saite Period," 986-95. Both also emphasize the military aspirations of the Saite Dynasty in the eastern Mediterranean.

[7] Cambyses' conquest used to be dated to ca. 525 BC. For the new date, see Quack, "Zum Datum der persischen Eroberung Ägyptens," 228-46.

[8] The departure point for reconstructions of Cambyses' conquest of Egypt is usually the *Histories* of Herodotus, Book Three of which provides an extensive account of the invasion – including the battle at Pelusium and the siege of Memphis; see e.g. Cruz-Uribe, "Invasion of Egypt," 10-60, and Kahn, "Note on the Time-Factor in Cambyses' Deeds," 103-12. For a recent critique of its reliability, see Irwin, "Herodotus' *Logos* of Cambyses' Egyptian Campaign," 95-141.

Though Cambyses' conquest of Egypt must have been a momentous event on the international scene, contemporary accounts of the invasion are regrettably scarce.[9] One of the earliest and rare Egyptian versions of the conquest can be found in the autobiography of Udjahorresnet, a high-placed official who served under the reigns of Amasis, Psamtik III, Cambyses, and Darius I.[10] The autobiography consists of a hieroglyphic inscription that covers part of a naophorous statue. It may originally have stood in the temple of Neith at Sais.[11] The sections that relate to Cambyses' reign are concentrated beneath the left and right arms of the figure, and on the naos which it holds between its hands. The Persian conquest is described in the following terms: "The Great Chief of all foreign lands, Cambyses came to Egypt, the foreign peoples of every foreign land being with him. He gained majesty of this land in its entirety. They established themselves in it, and he was Great Ruler of Egypt and Great Chief of all foreign lands."[12] After this succinct description, the text primarily emphasizes the importance of Udjahorresnet's role in ensuring a smooth transfer of power to the Persian invader. One of the first things Udjahorresnet claims to have done, for example, was to compose an Egyptian throne name for Cambyses: the king would be known in Egypt as Mesutire, i.e. "Offspring of Re." In addition, Udjahorresnet would have showed the king the greatness of Sais, the former dynastic capital of Egypt, and the splendor of its goddess Neith.[13] Throughout the text, Cambyses appears to have been more than willing to cooperate: on the request of Udjahorresnet, he purified the temple of Neith, ousting a group of foreigners who had dwelt there; he commanded that

[9] Aside from Egyptian texts that are dated to Cambyses' reign in Egypt (on which see below), the earliest allusion to the conquest is included in the Bisitun inscription of Darius I. The Old Persian and Elamite texts simply state that Cambyses went to Egypt; the Babylonian text adds that he went "with troops" (*itti uqu*); see Bae, "Comparative Studies," 88-91.

[10] For an edition of Udjahorresnet's autobiography, see Posener, *La première domination perse*, 1-26 no. 1. An English translation is provided by Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 117-22 no. 4.11. For recent studies of the statue and the man which it commemorates, see and Wasmuth and Creasman, "Udjahorresnet and His World."

[11] The statue has been housed in the Vatican since the eighteenth century. The history of the statue before the Vatican's acquisition remains obscure; see Ruggero, "Udjahorresnet's *Naoforo Vaticano*," 149-65, and Wasmuth, "Statues of Udjahorresnet," 196-99.

[12] Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 118 no. 4.11 c. Compare Posener, *La première domination perse*, 6-14 no. 1 B.

[13] See ibid., and Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 118 no. 4.11 c-d. For a discussion of the composition of Cambyses' Egyptian throne name, and its possible religious context, see Ladynin, "Udjahorresnet and the Royal Name of Cambyses," 88-99.

offerings should be given to the goddess and that all her festivals should be organized as before; and he even entered the temple himself, and touched the ground before the deity's cult statue.[14]

To some extent, the picture of "pharaonic continuity" that is painted by the autobiography of Udjahorresnet – a text which was probably written during the reign of Darius I – is corroborated by texts that were contemporary with Cambyses' reign of Egypt. At present, ca. nine Egyptian texts can be dated to this timespan. They consist of an unprovenanced seal and seal impression, a sculptural fragment with the beginning of Cambyses' name in paint from the palace of Apries at Memphis, two inscriptions on an Apis epitaph and Apis sarcophagus from the Serapeum at Saqqara, and ca. four demotic papyri from Asyut.[15] The inscriptions on the Apis monuments, for example, confirm that Cambyses adopted the Egyptian throne name "Mesutire": the name features twice on the Apis sarcophagus, directly followed by "Cambyses," and twice on the Apis epitaph.[16] In addition, the monuments show that he adopted an Egyptian Horus name as well: "Smatawy," i.e. "The one who joins the Two Lands."[17] What is more, the texts on the seals, the Apis inscriptions, and the date formulae of the papyri indicate that the Persian king was consistently referred to by traditional Egyptian titles. He was the "Pharaoh," "King of Upper and Lower Egypt," "Lord of the Two lands," and the "Beautiful God" who "lives forever."[18] This policy of adopting the royal traditions of the recently conquered region was likely meant to legitimate Cambyses in the eyes of the Egyptian population. A similar policy had been implemented by Cyrus after his conquest of Babylonia: though the Persian king was known by the traditionally Elamite title "king of Anshan," contemporary Babylonian texts simultaneously referred to him as "king of Babylon" and "king of Sumer and Akkad."[19] Identical titles had been claimed by the kings of the Neo-Babylonian Dynasty. Even if we allow

[14] See Posener, *La première domination perse*, 14-17 no. 1 b-C, and Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 118 no. 4.11 e-f.

[15] See Hodjache and Berlev, "Objets royaux," 37-39 (seal and seal impression), Petrie, *Palace of Apries*, 11 no. 31 (sculptural fragment), Posener, *La première domination perse*, 30-36 nos. 3-4 (Apis inscriptions), Spiegelberg, *Demotische Inschriften und Papyri*, 42-48 nos. 50059-60, 52-53 no. 50062, and Shore, "Swapping Property at Asyut," 200-206 (papyri from Asyut). The Asyut papyri are currently being studied by Jannick Korte at Heidelberg University.

[16] See Posener, *La première domination perse*, 30-36 nos. 3-4, and Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 122-24 nos. 4.12-13.

[17] See ibid.

[18] See ibid., Hodjache and Berlev, "Objets royaux," 37-39, and Spiegelberg, *Demotische Inschriften und Papyri*, 42-46 no. 50059, 52-53 no. 50062.

[19] See e.g. Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 70-75 nos. 3.21-22.

for some self-aggrandizement on Udjahorresnet's part, it is plausible that local officials such as he would have played an important role in the integration of the new Persian rulers.

Aside from a general continuity in pharaonic ideology and occasional collaboration with local elites, however, it is equally clear that Cambyses' conquest of Egypt brought fundamental changes to Egyptian society. Simply put, Egypt became reduced to a province of a far-flung empire that was centered on Iran. This process of provincialization included, among other things, the installation of a Persian satrap as head of the country, the presence of imperial garrisons at various sites in Egypt, and the redirection of people and precious goods to the east. The first two elements of this process are visible in Egyptian documents from the reign of Darius I onwards.[20] The third element is already reflected in cuneiform documents from the reign of Cambyses. On 31 December 524 BC, for example, a Babylonian named Iddin-Nabû sold a slave and her three-month-old daughter in Babylon. The resulting sale document identified the slave as an "Egyptian" from "the plunder of his bow" (Camb. 334, l. 4).[21] The tablet implies that Iddin-Nabû had participated in Cambyses' conquest of Egypt, returned to Babylonia ca. two years after the invasion, and reaped the benefits by selling an Egyptian woman whom he had seized during the war. Though unique in its evocative detail, the text does not stand alone. In the years that followed 526 BC groups of Egyptian extraction pop up in the private documents of Borsippean families, and in the administrative documents of the Ebabbar temple at Sippar.[22] During the reign of Darius I such migration continued. The documents of the Persepolis Fortification Archive show that groups of Egyptian laborers – some of which numbered in the hundreds – travelled through southwestern Iran in the early fifth century BC.

[20] The first satrap of Egypt known from Egyptian documents is Pherendates, who is attested in the second half of the reign of Darius I; see e.g. Martin, "Demotic Texts," 289-95 C1-3. According to Herodotus, a satrap called Aryandes had been installed by Cambyses but was executed by Darius I (Herodotus, *Histories* 4.166). The first Aramaic documents from Elephantine, which document the best-known garrison of Achaemenid Egypt, also date to the reign of Darius I; see e.g. Porten and Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents*, 2:118-19 B5.1, 103-5 B4.2. A late fifth century BC letter claims that some of the Judeans had already lived on the island before the reign of Cambyses; see ibid., 1: 68-71 A4.7, and compare Herodotus, *Histories* 2.30.

[21] For an edition of the text, see Strassmaier, *Inschriften von Cambyses*, 190-91 no. 334, and Peiser, *Texte juristischen und geschäftlichen Inhalts*, 292 no. XII. The text is also known from two duplicates; see Pinches, *Inscribed Babylonian Tablets*, 73-76 no. 17.

[22] For a group of Egyptian Carians at Borsippa, see Waerzeggers, "Carians of Borsippa," 1-22. For Egyptians at Sippar, see Strassmaier, *Inschriften von Cambyses*, 176-77 no. 313, and Hackl and Jursa, "Egyptians in Babylonia," 158-60. For further comments, see 2.5.2-2.5.3.

Many of these groups were probably put to work on royal construction sites.[23] The texts are a vivid reminder that Udjahorresnet's autobiography shows us only one side of a complicated process, in which different groups of Egyptians would have experienced the Persian conquest in fundamentally different ways.

Indeed, that there were some groups in Egyptian society that chose a very different relationship with the Persian imperial regime than Udjahorresnet had done is clear from the decades that followed Cambyses' conquest: the history of Persian-Period Egypt was characterized by a series of rebellions. In the present study, "rebellion" is defined as armed resistance, which is aimed at the overthrow of an established government, and which is waged by the subjects of said government. The term will be used interchangeably with "uprising" and "revolt." Etymologically speaking, the latter may be understood as a "turning back" to a specific political order rather than a "war against" one.[24] In the case of Achaemenid Egypt these concepts appear to be conjoined: the episodes of armed resistance against Persian rule largely resulted in the (short-lived) establishment of native kings who adopted the pharaonic traditions that had been current under the Saite Dynasty.[25] Such rebellions and associated "rebel kings" left their traces in a number of different sources. Greco-Roman historians describe some of the episodes, for example, and refer to a handful as ἀπόστασις.[26] The latter is commonly translated as "rebellion" or "revolt"; it carries the connotation of a "defection" or "departure from" a previous order.[27] At times, Greco-Roman accounts include descriptions of battles between imperial and rebel forces, and an emphasis on the number of soldiers who died as a result of them.[28] Egyptian sources, by contrast, do not provide us with narratives of the rebellions, but with contemporary letters and contracts that sometimes refer to periods of violent unrest, and to non-Persian kings who ruled parts of Egypt.[29] When such references concern the same time

[23] See e.g. Wasmuth, "Egyptians in Persia," 134-36, Wasmuth, *Ägypto-persische Herrscher- und Herrschaftspräsentation,* 76-84, Henkelman, "Anhang," 273-363, and section 2.5.3.

[24] See e.g. Richardson, "Fields of Rebellion," xx n. 11.

[25] One may contrast this with the Babylonian rebellions of the Persian Period, at least one of which might have been aimed at usurping the universal kingship of the Persians, rather than the reestablishment of local Babylonian rule – though the evidence is admittedly scarce; see Beaulieu, "An Episode in the Reign of the Babylonian Pretender," 17-18.

[26] The word is recorded in different verbal forms; see Rottpeter, "Initiatoren und Träger," 10, and 2.2.1-2.2.2.

[27] Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 218-19.

[28] This is the case in descriptions of the rebellion of Inaros; see e.g. 2.2.2.

[29] For an elaborate overview of these sources, see 2.4.

period, and/or can be combined with non-Egyptian sources that more explicitly speak of a period of political resistance, we can be reasonably certain that we are dealing with a rebellion.[30] At present, the following Egyptian rebellions can be identified in the historical record. The first occurred in ca. 521 BC, five years after the Persians had invaded the Nile Valley. The rebellion followed Cambyses' death in the first half of 522 BC, and the succession struggle which his death engendered in Iran. The result was that at least a part of Egypt was reclaimed by an Egyptian man, who adopted the trappings of a traditional pharaoh. This man is known today as Petubastis Seheribre, or Petubastis IV.[31] Though Egypt was eventually reconquered by Darius I, who succeeded Cambyses as king of the Persian Empire, a second rebellion broke out in ca. 487/86 BC, shortly before Darius I's death. It was defeated by Xerxes, Darius I's son and successor, in ca. 485/84 BC.[32] A third rebellion followed in ca. 463/62 BC, at the start of the reign of Artaxerxes I. This rebellion took at least six years, and perhaps as much as ten years, to subdue.[33] In the decades that followed, parts of Egypt appear to have been claimed by a variety of Egyptian and Libyan rulers. In their case, it is unclear whether they were the leaders of additional rebellions, or the beneficiaries of a change in policy. It is possible that the Persian government began to allow the existence of (semi-)autonomous kings in the Delta to prevent further military conflict.[34] Regardless, a fourth rebellion broke out in ca. 404 BC: under the leadership of Amyrtaios II, Egypt successfully seceded from Persian rule, and remained independent for more than fifty years.[35] Even when Artaxerxes III reconquered Egypt

[30] For cases in which it is uncertain whether we are dealing with a rebellion, or with different phenomena – such as local kings whose rule was condoned by the Persian Empire, or episodes of (the threat of) violence which may not have been aimed at the overthrow of the government – , see e.g. 2.2.3, and 4.3.1.1. All sources for the Egyptian rebellions – which include, aside from Greco-Roman and Egyptian texts, Old Persian royal inscriptions, Greek inscriptions, Babylonian and Elamite sources, Achaemenid seals, and archaeological sources – are more elaborately discussed in Chapter 2.

[31] For Petubastis Seheribre's rebellion, see Chapter 3. Note that another episode of early Egyptian resistance is sometimes associated with Psamtik III. It is doubtful whether the episode should be understood as a rebellion, however, let alone a historical one; see section 2.2.1.

[32] See Chapter 4.

[33] See Lloyd, *Herodotus: Book II*, 1:38-43, and Kahn, "Inaros' Rebellion," 424-40.

[34] For a discussion of these kings, see 2.2.3. For a possible change in imperial policy, see e.g. see e.g. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 575-77, 596-97, and Hyland, "Aršāma, Egyptian Trade, and the Peloponnesian War," 253-54.

[35] See e.g. Lemaire, "La fin de la première période perse," 51-56, and Wojciechowska, *From Amyrtaeus to Ptolemy*, 22-72.

in ca. 343 BC – starting the so-called Thirty-First Dynasty or Second Persian Period (ca. 343 – 332 BC) – another rebel king undermined Persian authority.[36] Compared to the rest of the empire, the persistence and partial success of Egyptian resistance was quite exceptional.

The rebellions that plagued Persian Period Egypt from the sixth to the fourth century BC are well known among scholars of the Achaemenid Empire. Since the nineteenth century, histories of the Empire generally include a discussion of them, as do histories of Achaemenid Egypt.[37] These studies often emphasize that the rebellions were frequent and eventually successful. Nevertheless, despite the impact that the rebellions must have had on the Egyptian population and on the way in which the Persians governed the country, there are few studies which have analyzed them in depth. The primary concern of the studies that have been published thusfar has been the publication of previously unpublished sources and the chronological reconstruction of specific episodes.[38] Studies which attempt to go beyond this – for example

[36] See e.g. Huss, "Der rätselhafte Pharao Chababash," 97-112. The date of Artaxerxes III's reconquest is traditionally given as 343 or 342 BC. For arguments that the conquest should be dated to 340/39 BC, see Depuydt, "New Date for the Second Persian Conquest," 191-230. The thesis is rejected by Quack, "Zum Datum der persischen Eroberung," 230 n. 7.

[37] For the rebellions in general histories, see e.g. Rawlinson, *Five Great Monarchies*, 396-97, 444-47, 472-74, 481-82, Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, 110-13, 228, 235, 303-4, 308-9, 312, 343, 373-74, 491-93, Cook, *Persian Empire*, 59-60, 99-100, 127-28, 130-31, 207, Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 115, 161, 409-10, 525, 573-77, 619, 717-18, and Waters, *Ancient Persia*, 72, 115-16, 159-60, 176, 189-90, 196. For the rebellions in histories of and introductions to Achaemenid Egypt, see e.g. Wiedemann, *Geschichte Aegyptens*, 211, 236-37, 245-61, Kienitz, *Die politische Geschichte Ägyptens*, 55, 60, 67-75, Lloyd, "Late Period," 286-87, Ray, "Egypt 525 - 404 B.C.," 261-62, 275-76, 283-84, Perdu, "Saites and Persians," 150-53, Klotz, "Persian Period," 4, 7-8, Sternberg-el Hotabi, *Ägypter und Perser*, 57-58, and Leahy, "Egypt in the Late Period," 727-29.

[38] See e.g. Yoyotte, "Pétoubastis III," 216-23, Cruz-Uribe, "Early Demotic Texts," 59-66, and Kaper, "Petubastis IV," 125-49 (rebellion of 522/21 BC); Cruz-Uribe, "On the Existence of Psammetichus IV," 35-39, and Pestman, "Diospolis Parva Documents," 145-55 (rebellion of 487/86 BC); and Sachau, *Aramäische Papyrus und Ostraka*, 1:128-30 no. 35, and Agut-Labordère and Chauveau, "Les ostraca de 'Ayn Manâwir," 1-4 (rebellion of 404 BC). Studies on the rebellion of 463/62, which is prominently described in Greco-Roman texts, and the rebellion of the Second Persian Period, for which multiple sources have been published since as early as 1851, are more numerous - and sometimes go beyond questions of chronology; see e.g. Libourel, "The Athenian Disaster," 605-15, Bigwood, "Ctesias' Account," 1-25, Robinson, "Thucydidean Sieges," 132-52, Chauveau, "Inarôs, prince des rebelles," 39-46, Kahn, "Inaros' Rebellion," 424-40, and Quack, "Zur Datierung der Aršama-Dokumente," 53-64 (rebellion of 463/62 BC); and Spalinger, "Reign of King Chabbash," 142-54, Ritner, "Khababash and the Satrap Stela," 135-37, Huss, "Der rätselhafte Pharao Chababash," 97-112, Burstein, "Prelude to Alexander," 149-54, and Moje, "Zu den Namensschreibungen," 55-62 (rebellion of Second Persian Period).

by analyzing the social context of the rebellions or their wider political context in more detail – are rare. The handful that exists, moreover, has engaged insufficiently with the Egyptian sources that are available for the periods of unrest.[39] Over the years, this lack of in-depth engagement has resulted in misinterpretations that continue to hamper our understanding of Egyptian resistance. The most important issues relate to chronology ("when"), geography ("where"), social context ("who"), and causes ("why"). It is often unclear how long the rebellions lasted, for example, which parts of the country they affected, who initiated and supported them, and why they were waged in the first place.

As long as the aforementioned issues are unresolved, the Egyptian rebellions will remain – to some extent – enigmatic episodes. This is regrettable for two reasons. The most obvious reason is that a comprehensive study of the Egyptian rebellions is indispensable for a proper understanding of Achaemenid Egypt: the latter suffered from the unrest every thirty years or so. Even if the rebellions did not affect the entire satrapy, their occurrence must have had a significant impact on Egypt's general stability and governance. Another reason for studying the rebellions is their potential for understanding resistance in the Achaemenid Empire at large. As is well known, the political history of the Achaemenid Empire is traditionally based on ancient Greco-Roman texts.[40] This also applies to the rebellions that were waged against Persian rule. Though valuable, these texts were often written by men who lived beyond the borders of the Empire and who discussed events that had happened years, decades or even centuries before their lifetime. Both aspects have raised questions regarding their reliability.[41] For the study of provincial resistance, the Egyptian rebellions are valuable case studies as they can be studied both on the basis of Greco-Roman texts and on the basis of local and contemporary sources.[42] Because of this, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the

[39] The studies in question are Briant, "Ethno-classe dominante," 137-73, Rottpeter, "Initiatoren und Träger," 9-49, and Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West*. For their limited engagement with Egyptian sources, see section 1.2 below.

[40] For an introduction to Greco-Roman texts that are relevant to the study of the Persian Empire, see Lenfant, *Les Perses vus par les Grecs*, 3-20, Brosius, "Greek Sources on Achaemenid Iran," 658-68, and Bichler and Rollinger, "Greek and Latin Sources," 169-85.

[41] Criticism regarding the central role of Greco-Roman sources in reconstructions of the Persian Empire became especially vocal in the 1980s. See e.g. Kuhrt and Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "Introduction," ix-xiii, and the discussions by Harrison, *Writing Ancient Persia*, 15-18, Colburn, "Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and the Achaemenid Empire," 94-98, and McCaskie, "'As on a Darkling Plain,'" 151-58.

[42] See above. The same observation applies to the Babylonian rebellions of 522-21 BC and 484 BC, which are likewise documented by contemporary sources; see e.g. Lorenz, *Nebukadnezar III/IV*, and Waerzeggers and Seire,

rebellions' origins and progress, which – ultimately – may help us understand similar problems in other parts of the Achaemenid Empire.

The present thesis aims to contribute to a better understanding of Egyptian resistance against Persian rule – and of provincial resistance against the Persian Empire in general – by providing a thorough study of the first two Egyptian rebellions. These rebellions began in ca. 521 BC, at the start of the reign of Darius I, and in ca. 487/86 BC, at the very end of Darius I's reign. The reasons for studying these two rebellions rather than the revolts of the mid-fifth century BC and those that occurred later are explained below. Before we discuss the aims and structure of the present thesis, however, it is important to take a step back and to review the status quaestionis of the study of the Egyptian rebellions in more detail.

1.2 The study of the Egyptian rebellions

In 2012, a book was published that surveyed the political history of Achaemenid Egypt. The book was called *Trouble in the West: Egypt and the Persian Empire (525 – 332 BCE*), and was written by Stephen Ruzicka, a classically trained historian at the University of Carolina. At first sight, the Egyptian rebellions of the Persian Period appear to have been a primary concern of Ruzicka's study: the main topic of the book is the history of Egyptian-Persian conflict, from the revolts of the sixth and fifth centuries BC to the clashes between the Persian Empire and the independent Egyptians kings of the early fourth century BC. Ruzicka argues, in fact, that "Persia's primary concerns in the west" did not lie with the Greeks – as ancient Greek sources would have us believe – , but with the Egyptians.[43] However, as much as *Trouble in the West* highlights the rebellions of Persian Period Egypt, one cannot escape the impression that they are little more than illustrations for the book's larger thesis. Little is said about the exact reconstructions of individual revolts, and on which sources those reconstructions are based.[44]

Xerxes and Babylonia. For other Persian Period revolts that might be reflected in contemporary sources, see Waters, *Survey of Neo-Elamite History*, 85 (an Elamite royal stela that might be attributed to Athamaita, a rebel king who is mentioned in the Bisitun inscription of Darius I), Hyland, "Achaemenid Messenger Service," 150-69 (Elamite tablets from the Persepolis Fortification Archive that reflect imperial travel between the Persian court and Sardis, which may have been connected to the Ionian revolt against Darius I), and Wiesehöfer, "Fourth Century Revolts against Persia," 101 (a Babylonian chronicle which records the arrival of Sidonian prisoners at Babylon and Susa, probably in the aftermath of the Sidonian revolt against Artaxerxes III).

[43] Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West*, xx.

[44] See e.g. ibid., 23 (rebellion of 522/21 BC), 27-28 (rebellion of 487/86 BC).

As a result, how we know who initiated and supported the rebellions, which parts of the country they affected, and whether something can be said about their causes remains largely obscure.

Trouble in the West exemplifies a paradox that characterizes the study of the Egyptian rebellions more widely. As mentioned above, the rebellions are well known and frequently referred to in modern scholarship. It is acknowledged that the rebellions were recurrent, and even partially successful. On the other hand, the rebellions have enjoyed little study in their own right. To some extent, this paradox may be explained with reference to the limited information provided by Greco-Roman historiographical texts. The latter have long been used to reconstruct the political history of Achaemenid Egypt and of the Achaemenid Empire in general (see above). The primary focus of such texts, however, was the relationship between Greeks and Persians; events that affected other parts of the Persian-dominated world were occasionally mentioned, but rarely received the spotlight. In relation to the Egyptian rebellions, this means that some of the episodes are mentioned by Greco-Roman authors, but that the information provided on their origins, leaders, or geographical reach is generally scarce.[45] A typical example in this regard is the Egyptian rebellion of 487/86 BC. The rebellion is mentioned in the *Histories* of Herodotus, a late fifth century BC work that chronicles the history of the Greco-Persian Wars. The book claims that Egypt rebelled a few years after Darius I's failed campaign at Marathon. Darius I passed away before he could thwart the unrest; so it was Xerxes who eventually sent an army to Egypt and defeated the uprising. Nothing is said about the identity of those who initiated the rebellion, or the extent of its success in Egypt (Herodotus, *Histories* 7.1, 7.4-5, 7.7). By collecting references such as these, modern scholars have been able to reconstruct a rough timeline of the revolts that punctured Persian rule – but it is often impossible to provide details on the episodes.

The limited information provided by ancient Greco-Roman texts is, nevertheless, only a partial explanation for the scarcity of in-depth studies on Egyptian resistance. As is well known, the decipherment of hieroglyphs, demotic and cuneiform in the nineteenth century allowed scholars to study texts that were excavated from the former territories of the Persian Empire itself, and which were contemporary with the events discussed by Greco-Roman authors. Over the years, the ongoing excavations and publications of Egyptian sources have made Egypt one

[45] See the discussion in 2.2.

of the best-documented satrapies of the Persian Empire.[46] Though the majority of sources does not explicitly relate to rebellion, there is an important minority that does. As early as 1851, for example, a hieroglyphic inscription was found that mentioned the reign of a certain Khababash.[47] Subsequent finds indicated that Khababash had ruled parts of Egypt in the fourth century BC. He had probably led a rebellion in the Second Persian Period, during the reign of one of the last Persian kings. As this rebellion was not mentioned by Greek authors, the sources from Khababash's reign enlarged the list of Egyptian rebellions that were already known.[48] A more recent example consists of several temple blocks that were excavated in 2014. The inscriptions on the blocks indicate that they were made on behalf of Petubastis Seheribre.[49] The latter was identified as an Egyptian rebel king in the 1970s, who probably ruled (parts of) Egypt in 521 BC – at the start of the reign of Darius I.[50] Other finds that bear on this revolt consist of inscribed seals, demotic letters, and at least one Achaemenid royal inscription.[51] Thus far, such sources have mostly been used to corroborate the existence of rebellions that were already known, and to refine their chronological reconstructions.[52] Aside from this, they have received little sustained attention.

The limited role which sources from the reigns of rebel kings have played in studies of Egyptian resistance is evident when one looks at discussions regarding the rebellions' geographical

[46] For introductions to the textual and archaeological sources from Achaemenid Egypt, see e.g. Wuttmann and Marchand, "Égypte," 97-128, Vittmann, "Egyptian Sources," 155-62, and Wasmuth, "Egypt," 259-75. The Persian Period has received relatively little attention in Egyptology (see Colburn, *Archaeology of Empire*, 1-2), but this has been increasingly redressed in recent years: see e.g. Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West*, and Wojciechowska, *From Amyrtaeus to Ptolemy*, who survey the political history of Egypt in the sixth to fourth centuries BC, and Colburn, *Archaeology of Empire*, and Wasmuth, *Ägypto-persische Herrscher- und Herrschaftspräsentation*, who provide in-depth studies of contemporary texts and material remains from Achaemenid Egypt. One may also mention Qahéri, *Objets égyptiens*, who studies Egyptian sources that were excavated from the Persian heartland.

[47] Mariette, *Le Sérapeum de Memphis*, 54.

[48] See Huss, "Der rätselhafte Pharao Chababash," 97-99, Burstein, "Prelude to Alexander," 149-50, and Moje, "Zu den Namensschreibungen," 55-62.

[49] See Kaper, "Petubastis IV," 125-49.

[50] See Yoyotte, "Pétoubastis III.," 216-23.

[51] See Chapter 3.

[52] See e.g. Parker, "Darius and His Egyptian Campaign," 373-77, Pestman, "Diospolis Parva Documents," 145-55, Kahn, "Inaros' Rebellion," 424-40, and Agut-Labordère and Chauveau, "Les ostraca de 'Ayn Manâwir," 1-4. In all cases, Egyptian sources dated to Persian kings play an important – and perhaps even bigger role – than those that mention rebel kings.

reach. In 1953 Friedrich Kienitz argued that many of the Egyptian rebellions stemmed from the Delta. In particular, they would have been initiated by "libyschen Dynasten," whose rule was confined to the north of the country.[53] Kienitz based his arguments on two elements. First, he observed that several sources from southern Egypt were dated to Persian kings at times that Greek sources indicated the existence of Egyptian rebellions. The conclusion was that Upper Egypt must have remained under Persian control during the periods of unrest.[54] Second, some of the rebellions were explicitly connected to the Delta by Greek authors. The best-known example is the revolt of Inaros in the mid-fifth century BC. The fundamental narrative of the revolt is provided by the Athenian historian Thucydides, who included it in his late fifth century BC history of the Peloponnesian War. Contrary to Greek descriptions of other Egyptian rebellions, the narrative is quite detailed: Thucydides tells us that Inaros was a Libyan man, and king of the Libyans who bordered on Egypt. His powerbase appears to have been Marea in the far west of the Egyptian Delta. From there, he began a rebellion against Persian rule at the beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes I, and – with the military assistance of Athens – managed to occupy parts of (northern) Egypt (Thucycides, *Peloponnesian War* 1.104, 1.109-110).[55] Kienitz assumed that other rebellions of the Persian Period would have been comparable. In the case of the 487/86 BC revolt, for example, he noted as follows: "Vermutlich haben sich die Dinge genau so wie 25 Jahre später abgespielt. Nicht die eigentlichen Ägypter, sondern die Libyer des Westdeltas haben den Aufstand unternommen und Unterägypten den Persern entrissen."[56]

At present, the idea that (most of) the Egyptian rebellions had their roots in the Delta – and that their leaders had a Libyan background – is widely accepted. It is repeated in numerous articles and books on Achaemenid Egypt, including in Ruzicka's *Trouble in the West*: the latter consistently speaks of "Delta dynasts" when referring to the rebellions of the sixth to fourth

[53] See Kienitz, *Die politische Geschichte Ägyptens*, 67-75, esp. 73, 75.

[54] See ibid., 67, 69.

[55] See ibid., 69-72. The chronology which Thucydides provides for the revolt is not always clear-cut; see e.g. Kahn, "Inaros' Rebellion," 424-40, who prioritizes the chronology given by Diodorus of Sicily. See further section 2.2.2 below.

[56] See Kienitz, *Die politische Geschichte Ägyptens*, 67-68. A connection to the western Delta was also assumed for the "king of the Egyptians" of ca. 411 BC, who is briefly mentioned by Diodorus of Sicily, *Universal Library* 13.46.6 (see Kienitz, *Die politische Geschichte Ägyptens*, 73).

centuries BC.[57] In part, this emphasis on the Delta is justified. Based on what we know of the second half of the fifth century BC and the fourth century BC, the north of Egypt was an important theatre of political conflict. Greek sources that claim a connection between the Delta and some of the rebel kings suggest as much. Aside from Inaros, for example, Thucydides briefly mentions that a certain Amyrtaios was "king in the marshes" in the mid-fifth century BC, which is generally understood as a reference to the Delta (Thucycides, *Peloponnesian War* 1.112). In addition, both Greek and Egyptian texts show that the independent kings of the early fourth century BC all came from Delta towns – just like the Saite Dynasty had originated in the Delta town of Sais.[58] What has been little recognized, however, is that the role of the Delta is much less clear in the late sixth and early fifth century BC. As mentioned above, Herodotus does not reveal the geographical origins of the rebellion of 487/86 BC. Similar information is lacking on the rebellion of 521 BC.[59] More importantly, contemporary sources from Egypt show that both these and later rebellions did affect the southern part of the country. This was already evident in 1907, when a papyrus from Thebes was published that was dated to the first regnal year of Khababash – the rebel king of the Second Persian Period.[60] Sources that were published from the 1970s onwards have yielded further evidence: texts that are dated to the rebellions of 521 and 487/86 BC are now known from Meydum, Hou and the Dakhla Oasis;[61] a demotic ostracon shows that Inaros' reign was recognized at 'Ayn Manawir, a village in the Kharga Oasis;[62] and the same site has yielded evidence for a king who ruled in ca. 400 BC,

[57] See e.g. Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West*, 23, 27-28, 29-33, 35-37. For similar statements, see Ray, "Egypt 525 - 404 B.C.," 275-77, Briant, "Ethno-classe dominante," 148-51, Rottpeter, "Initiatoren und Träger," 24-28, Colburn, *Archaeology of Empire*, 246-47, and Leahy, "Egypt in the Late Period," 727. The connection between the Delta and Libyans is partly based on geographical proximity – Libyans are known to have lived to the west of the Delta – , and partly on the political role that Libyans who had migrated to (northern) Egypt played in the centuries that preceded the Persian Empire. For an introduction to Egypt's Libyan Period, see Naunton, "Libyans and Nubians," 120-39. The power of Libyan chiefs in the Delta was curtailed in the early Saite Period; see Perdu, "Saites and Persians," 141-42.

[58] See ibid., 152-57, and Wojciechowska, *From Amyrtaeus to Ptolemy*, 22-72.

[59] See section 2.2.1.

[60] See Spiegelberg, *Der Papyrus Libbey*, 1-6.

[61] See Yoyotte, "Pétoubastis III.," 216-23, Cruz-Uribe, "On the Existence of Psammetichus IV," 35-39, Pestman, "Diospolis Parva Documents," 145-55, Cruz-Uribe, "Early Demotic Texts," 59-66, Vittmann, "Two Administrative Letters," 433-50, and Kaper, "Petubastis IV," 125-49.

[62] See Chauveau, "Inarôs, prince des rebelles," 39-46.

roundabout the time that Egypt seceded from Persian rule.[63] When Kienitz wrote his study on Persian Period Egypt, many of these sources had not yet been published. The continued emphasis on the Delta in more recent studies of Achaemenid Egypt shows, however, that the "new" Egyptian sources have received little attention outside of their initial publications.[64]

The limited impact which contemporary Egyptian sources have had in modern discussions of Egyptian resistance is regrettable for multiple reasons. One reason is that the sources can change our understanding of the rebellions' eventual success: they can show us which parts of the country were affected by the unrest, and whether the rebellions were confined to a specific region. In light of the aforementioned texts, for example, it should be clear that many of the rebellions did reach beyond the borders of the Delta – contrary to the communis opinio.[65] Second, contemporary Egyptian sources can provide us with a glimpse of the rebellions' social background. When an Egyptian contract is dated to the reign of a rebel king, for example, it tells us that the contracting parties recognized his reign rather than that of a Persian king. It is therefore important to take a closer look at the individuals mentioned in the texts – even if we cannot be certain whether they were active supporters or merely "passive" bystanders, who happened to live in a region that changed from Persian to Egyptian hands.[66] Third, information about geographical reach and social context may eventually illuminate the rebellions' causes.

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[63] See Chauveau, "Les archives d'un temple," 44-47, and Agut-Labordère and Chauveau, "Les ostraca de 'Ayn Manâwir," 1-4.

[64] This is especially clear in the case of Briant, "Ethno-classe dominante," 137-73, and Rottpeter, "Initiatoren und Träger," 9-49. Both studies are rare attempts at studying the Egyptian rebellions of the Persian Period in more detail. Nevertheless, the studies by Yoyotte, "Pétoubastis III.," 216-23, Cruz-Uribe, "On the Existence of Psammetichus IV," 35-39, and Pestman, "Diospolis Parva Documents," 145-55, which provided evidence for the rebel kings of 521 and 487/86 BC, were omitted by Briant, "Ethno-classe dominante," 137-73. The study did recognize the existence of some sources that indicated unrest in southern Egypt, but it was argued that they may have referred to local affairs rather than nation-wide troubles. In addition, the true center of all organized political resistance was said to be the Delta (see ibid., 140-47). Rottpeter, "Initiatoren und Träger," 9-49, took the discussion one step further: he argued that the main agents of the rebellions were Greeks, who would have fueled unrest in Egypt for their own political ends, and Libyans who lived in regions to the west of the Nile Delta. By contrast, the Egyptians remained "grundsätzlich passiv" (see ibid., 27) Southern Egyptian sources that could be attributed to the rebellions were said to be obscure or insignificant (see e.g. ibid., 14, 16-17, 24-25 n. 73).

[65] Moreover, it has recently been argued that Petubastis Seheribre's temple blocks from the Dakhla Oasis indicate that this rebel king had his powerbase in southern rather than northern Egypt; see Kaper, "Petubastis IV," 125-49, and section 5.2.1.

[66] On the issue of political recognition in contracts and letters, see the discussions in 5.2.2.2 and 5.3.2.1.

At present, the causes of Egyptian resistance and the motives of the rebel leaders are a contested subject. The unrest has been variously connected to Egyptian xenophobia, periods of weakened Achaemenid control, self-interested opportunism on the part of Delta dynasts, and socioeconomic grievances. The latter may have been the result of excessive imperial taxation and the obligation to pay tribute to Persia.[67] Though all of these factors might have played a role at one point or another, little effort has been made to connect specific causes to the geographical and social context of individual revolts. The latter should arguably take pride of place: different groups in society will have had different reasons for supporting Egyptian secession. In other words, before we can ask why people resisted Persian rule, we need to ask *who* resisted Persian rule.

1.3 Outline of the present study

As mentioned above, the present thesis aims to contribute to a better understanding of resistance against Persian rule by providing a thorough study of the first two Egyptian rebellions. These rebellions began in ca. 521 BC, at the very start of the reign of Darius I, and in ca. 487/86 BC, at the end of the reign of the same king. The reason for studying these two rebellions rather than the ones that came after is twofold. First, of all the Egyptian rebellions against Persian rule the first two are among the least studied. In part, this is because Greek references to the rebellions are brief, while Egyptian sources that refer to the relevant rebel kings were only identified in the late twentieth and twenty-first century. Consequently, knowledge of later rebellions has sometimes colored their reconstruction. The rebellions are often assumed to have originated in and to have been confined to the Delta, for example, while sources that are contemporary with the episodes suggest otherwise (see above). A second reason for studying the first two Egyptian rebellions is their connection to political events in other parts of the Persian Empire. The rebellion of 521 BC was part of a large-scale crisis, in which multiple imperial provinces attempted to secede from Persian rule. Among them were Babylonia, Assyria, Media and Elam.[68] The political context of the 487/86 BC rebellion was less strained; but the rebellion's defeat in ca. 485/84 BC was followed by two rebellions in

[67] For the various causes that have been proposed, see e.g. Kienitz, 67-69, Ray, "Egypt 525 - 404 B.C.," 275-77, Briant, "Ethno-classe dominante," 138-43, Sternberg-el Hotabi, "Politische und sozio-ökonomische Strukturen," 162-66, and Rottpeter, "Initiatoren und Träger," 28-30.

[68] For an introduction to this crisis, see Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 135-141, and Chapter 3.

Babylonia.[69] The significance of this contemporaneity is bilateral. On the one hand, an in-depth study of the Egyptian rebellions can contribute to our understanding of near-contemporary events in other parts of the Persian Empire. On the other hand, the rebellions which broke out outside of Egypt provide comparative material for those inside Egypt. The rebellions in Babylonia are especially important in this regard. Aside from Egypt, Babylonia is one of the few imperial provinces that has yielded local and contemporary sources which can be used to study resistance.[70] In addition, the size and density of the Babylonian cuneiform corpus far outstrips that of the Egyptian sources.[71] Comparing the two provinces can therefore open our eyes to gaps in the Egyptian record, and the extent to which these gaps have influenced our understanding of events. The potential for such comparison disappears after 484 BC, as Babylonia – unlike Egypt – did not rebel again.[72]

In order to illuminate the "when," "where," "who," and "why" of the first two Egyptian rebellions, the present thesis is structured as follows. First, **Chapter 2** provides an introduction to the variety of sources that can now be used to study Egyptian resistance. These sources range from Greco-Roman histories and Achaemenid royal inscriptions, to demotic contracts, Aramaic letters, and Achaemenid seals. The chapter also evaluates what kind of data each group of sources provides on the rebellions, and how different groups of sources compare to one another. Second, **Chapters 3 and 4** provide detailed chronological reconstructions of the rebellions of 521 and 487/86 BC. In the first case, an important aim is to argue for the historicity of the rebellion and its connection to the Egyptian king Petubastis Seheribre – both of which have sometimes been doubted. In the second case, the focus lies on the start date of the revolt.

[69] See Waerzeggers, "Babylonian Revolts against Xerxes," 150-73.

[70] The Babylonian rebellions have been quite extensively studied in the past two decades; see e.g. Lorenz, *Nebukadnezar III/IV*, Beaulieu, "An Episode in the Reign of the Babylonian Pretender Nebuchadnezzar IV," 17-26, and Bloch, "Contribution of Babylonian Tablets," 1-14, on the unrest in 522-21 BC, and Waerzeggers, "Babylonian Revolts against Xerxes," 150-73, Kessler, "Urukäische Familien versus babylonische Familien," 237-62, Baker, "Babylon in 484 BC," 100-16, and Waerzeggers and Seire, *Xerxes and Babylonia*, on the rebellions of 484 BC.

[71] See section 2.5.2.

[72] A possible reference to a later Babylonian rebellion occurs in the Uruk King List, which refers to a certain Nidin-Bēl, whose reign would have preceded Darius III; see Grayson, "Königslisten und Chroniken," 97-98. The opinions are divided, however, on whether the entry refers to a historical Babylonian rebel king, whether the name is the throne name of a Persian king, or whether the entry is a scribal mistake. See e.g. van Dijk, "Die Inschriftenfunde," 58, Stolper, "Mesopotamia," 240, and Safaee, "A Local Revolt," 51-56.

It argues that the rebellion began earlier than what is often believed, and that additional Egyptian documents are therefore relevant to the rebellion's reconstruction. The conclusions of these chapters lay the groundwork for **Chapter 5**. Chapter 5 studies the geography and social context of the first two rebellions, with particular attention for Egyptian texts that can be attributed to the relevant rebel kings. An important aim is to illuminate the rebellions' impact in the south, and whether they may have originated from southern rather than northern Egypt. Closely intertwined with this is the issue of social context, as sources which provide some insight into the "where" of the rebellions are often our primary evidence for the "who" as well. Finally, **Chapter 6** considers the causes of the rebellions and the motives of its leaders. Though an in-depth discussion of this issue lies beyond the scope of the present thesis, the conclusions of the preceding chapters suggest several avenues that are worthy of further exploration. For example, it is argued that the imperial response that followed the rebellion of 522/21 BC may have led to grievances among some inhabitants of southern Egypt – who subsequently supported the rebellion of 487/86 BC. In addition, the chapter reviews how the conclusions of the present thesis may be applied to the rebellions of the mid- to late fifth century BC, which – eventually – led to Egypt's secession from the Persian Empire in ca. 400 BC.