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

Wijnsma, U.Z.

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Chapter 6

Conclusion, Causes and Consequences

Between the sixth and fourth centuries BC, the population of Achaemenid Egypt witnessed at least five rebellions against Persian rule. The first broke out in ca. 521 BC, a few years after Cambyses had conquered the Nile Valley. The others followed in ca. 487/86 BC, ca. 463/62 BC, ca. 404 BC, and between ca. 343 and 332 BC. Additional rebellions may have occurred in the second half of the fifth century BC, though our understanding of these episodes is lacking due to a scarcity of available sources.⁸⁹³ In 1988, Pierre Briant observed that scholars of Achaemenid Egypt often mentioned the rebellions of the Persian Period, but that none “pris le problème à bras le corps.”⁸⁹⁴ Questions such as “Qui se révolte? Où? Quand? Pourquoi? Contre qui?” still needed to be answered.⁸⁹⁵ Briant himself explored the possibility that socio-economic grievances – such as imperial over-taxation – may have led to the outbreak of the rebellions. In addition, he argued that all truly organized political resistance had come from the Egyptian Delta.⁸⁹⁶ It should be clear from the preceding chapters that the present thesis does not share the latter conclusion. Nevertheless, the questions that Briant raised remain relevant today. This study has attempted to provide an answer to some of them. In doing so, special weight has been given to the rich source base that can be used to reconstruct the rebellions (Chapter 2), as well as questions regarding the rebellions’ “when” (Chapters 3 to 4), “where,” and “who” (Chapter 5). The findings of the study can be summarized as follows.

First, the Egyptian rebellions of the sixth to fourth centuries BC have traditionally been studied on the basis of Greco-Roman texts. Other sources, including contemporary Egyptian texts, have received comparatively little attention.⁸⁹⁷ The present study has emphasized that the rebellions can and should be studied on the basis of a variety of sources. These sources include traditional Greco-Roman histories, but also Achaemenid royal inscriptions, hieroglyphic, demotic, Aramaic, and material sources from Egypt, contemporary Greek inscriptions, Achaemenid glyptic, and cuneiform sources

⁸⁹³ See 1.1 and 2.2.

⁸⁹⁴ Briant, “Ethno-classe dominante,” 138-39.

⁸⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 139-43, 147-51.

⁸⁹⁷ See 1.2 and 2.1.

from Babylonia and Persia.⁸⁹⁸ Each group of sources provides us with a different perspective on Egyptian resistance. For example, the rebellion of ca. 521 BC is only scarcely reflected in Greco-Roman histories; yet, it is mentioned by the most elaborate Achaemenid royal inscription that has been preserved (the Bisitun inscription), and has yielded a comparatively large number of Egyptian sources that are dated to a rebel king.⁸⁹⁹ The rebellion of the mid-fifth century BC, on the other hand, is discussed at length by Greco-Roman histories, and appears in contemporary Greek inscriptions; yet, Achaemenid inscriptions do not refer to the unrest, and only one Egyptian source has been found that dates to the rebellion's leader.⁹⁰⁰ Despite these differences, the sources indicate that the rebellions of the sixth to fourth centuries BC shared several characteristics. Among other things, the rebellions were violent political conflicts, which included clashes between armed rebels on the one hand and soldiers who served the Persian Empire on the other; they resulted in the installation of local kings, who often claimed traditional pharaonic titles; they were generally defeated only after additional imperial forces were sent to Egypt; and they could result in the destruction of buildings, the deaths of soldiers and civilians, and the enslavement and/or deportation of parts of the population.⁹⁰¹ It is important to observe that only the Babylonian rebellions of the sixth to fifth centuries BC are better documented.⁹⁰² The Egyptian rebellions are therefore important case studies for scholars who are interested in the study of provincial resistance in the Achaemenid Empire.

Second, of all the Egyptian rebellions of the sixth to fourth centuries BC, the first two rebellions are among the least studied. The present thesis has therefore discussed both rebellions in depth. This began with a detailed look at the sources that can be attributed to the rebellions in question, and what these sources can tell us about the rebellions' chronology. To start with, the rebellion of ca. 521 BC is now documented by the Elamite and the Babylonian version of the Bisitun inscription, by a group of early Persian Period Egyptian sources that mention a pharaoh called Petubastis Seheribre, by one – and possibly two – Greco-Roman texts, and by a small dossier of Babylonian tablets. Taking all sources into account, it is probable that the rebellion began in the early months of 521 BC. This was a few months after Darius I had claimed the throne of the Persian Empire. The end date of the rebellion remains uncertain, but it is plausible that it lasted until 519 or even the middle of 518 BC. This was in year three or four of Darius I. The latter reconstruction implies that the Egyptian rebellion was the

⁸⁹⁸ See 2.2-2.5.

⁸⁹⁹ See 2.2.1, 2.3.1, 2.4.1.1, and Chapter 3.

⁹⁰⁰ See 2.2.2, 2.4.2.1, and 2.5.1.

⁹⁰¹ See 2.6.

⁹⁰² See 2.5.2.

longest-lasting rebellion of the Bisitun crisis. More importantly, it upends the idea that the rebellion had only lasted several months, or even that it never existed.⁹⁰³ As for the second Egyptian rebellion against Persian rule: the episode is now documented by two Greco-Roman texts, a handful of Egyptian texts, and possibly by an Achaemenid royal inscription. By taking an in-depth look at the relevant sources, the present thesis has argued that the rebellion began in 487/86 BC, and probably in 487 BC specifically. This was in year thirty-five of Darius I. The rebellion was defeated in 485/84 BC, i.e. in year one or two of Xerxes. Egyptian sources show that a rebel king called Psamtik (IV) ruled parts of Egypt between these two dates. This reconstruction indicates that the rebellion may have begun more than a year earlier than what has often been assumed. In addition, it draws our attention to several Egyptian sources from 487 BC that may bear on the rebellion, but which have previously gone unnoticed. The latter include texts from Thebes, which were part of one or several demotic archives that ended in 487 BC.⁹⁰⁴

Third, the Egyptian rebellions of the sixth to fourth centuries BC have often been connected to the Delta, and/or to the Libyan population of North Africa. The example par excellence is the rebellion of the mid-fifth century BC. The latter was led by Inaros, king of the Libyans, who began his rebellion from a town in the western Delta.⁹⁰⁵ It is possible that later rebellions were likewise connected to the north of Egypt.⁹⁰⁶ The present thesis has argued, however, that this observation does not apply to the rebellions of ca. 521 and 487/86 BC. Egyptian sources that were published in 2015 indicate that the first rebellion may have originated in the Dakhla Oasis. From there, it spread to the province of Heracleopolis and possibly to Memphis. Those who recognized the reign of the rebel king Petubastis Seheribre included high-ranking Egyptian officials – notably a treasurer called Psamtik, and a chief of Heracleopolis called Hormaakheru – , and soldiers who probably received land in exchange for military service.⁹⁰⁷ As for the rebellion of 487/86 BC: the sources that are presently at our disposal do not reveal where it originated. However, it clearly had an impact in southern Egypt. Demotic sources show that rebels might have been present in the region of the first cataract, near the island of Elephantine, and that the reign of the rebel king Psamtik IV was recognized at Hou, a town in the Qena Bend. The people who recognized Psamtik IV included Egyptian soldiers, and several men who worked as gooseherds for the Domain of Amun. In addition, the present study has argued that

⁹⁰³ See Chapter 3.

⁹⁰⁴ See Chapter 4.

⁹⁰⁵ See 1.2, 2.2.2, and 5.1.

⁹⁰⁶ See 2.2.3-2.2.4.

⁹⁰⁷ See 5.2.

members of the Domain of Amun at Thebes might have recognized Psamtik IV as well.⁹⁰⁸ By contrast, men who were intimately connected to the imperial administration of Egypt, such as Athiyawahya, the Persian governor of Coptos, and Khnumemakhet, an Egyptian who worked for Farnava, a Persian official with broad authority over Upper Egypt, continued to recognize Persian kings. These sources are a testament to the political fragmentation that accompanied the revolts.⁹⁰⁹ It is important to observe that similar observations can be made regarding Inaros' rebellion in the mid-fifth century BC: sources from southern Egypt that are dated to Persian kings have sometimes been used as *termini post* and *ante quem* for Inaros' rebellion, or – more often – as evidence that the entirety of southern Egypt would have remained under Persian control while the rebellion was confined to the Delta.⁹¹⁰ However, all of these sources were written by people like Athiyawahya and Khnumemakhet.⁹¹¹ We should therefore consider the possibility that some inhabitants of the (southern) Nile Valley recognized Inaros' reign, even though others continued to recognize Persian kings. Indeed, that even this quintessentially “Delta” rebellion had an impact in southern Egypt is clear from a demotic ostrakon that was published in 2004: it shows that Inaros' second regnal year was recognized at ‘Ayn Manawir, a village in the Kharga Oasis.⁹¹²

A conceivable fourth and fifth step would be to study the causes and consequences of each Egyptian rebellion against Persian rule. In other words, what may have led people to risk their lives for a change in government, and how did the imperial administration respond in the aftermath of the rebellions' defeat? One may also wonder whether the Empire's response was effective, or whether it simply fueled new grievances that may have led to additional resistance. It should be clear from Chapters 2 to 5 that Greco-Roman texts give us little indication in this regard.⁹¹³ If the *Stratagems* of Polyaeus refers to the rebellion of ca. 521 BC, then this second century AD author believed that the Egyptians had rebelled because of the “ὠμότητα” of the satrap Aryandes (*Stratagems* 7.11.7).⁹¹⁴ The word can be translated as rawness, savageness, fierceness, or cruelty.⁹¹⁵ Some scholars have suggested that it

⁹⁰⁸ See 4.3.1.1, 4.4.2 and 5.3.

⁹⁰⁹ See 4.3. and 5.3.2.1.

⁹¹⁰ See Kahn, “Inaros' Rebellion,” 427-30, and Kienitz, *Die politische Geschichte Ägyptens*, 69-70, Ray, “Egypt 525 – 404 B.C.,” 276-77, and Leahy, “Egypt in the Late Period,” 727.

⁹¹¹ See Posener, *La première domination perse*, 125-26 no. 31, Porten and Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents*, 2:22-28 B2.3-2.4, 2:54-57 B3.1, 4:236 D17.1, Martin, “Demotic Texts,” 351-55 C29, and the discussion in 4.3.3.

⁹¹² See Chauveau, “Inarôs,” 39-46, and 2.4.2.1.

⁹¹³ See 2.2.1-2.2.4, 3.4.2, 4.2, 5.2.3, and 5.3.3.

⁹¹⁴ See 2.2.1 and 3.4.1.

⁹¹⁵ See Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 2034.

may have referred to financial misconduct. In the words of Pierre Briant: “It is possible that Aryandes changed the standard used in Egypt for paying tribute in weighed silver. (...) Perhaps the Egyptians, exhausted by the burden of assessments imposed by Aryandes, brought their complaint to the Great King, who then came to restore order.”⁹¹⁶ What happened after the rebellion’s defeat is not described. Ca. thirty years later, the second Egyptian rebellion against Persian rule would have been caused by the burden of military levies that were meant to support Darius I’s campaign against Greece (Herodotus, *Histories* 7.1).⁹¹⁷ After the rebellion’s defeat, Xerxes “laid Egypt under a much harder slavery than in the time of Darius,” and installed a new satrap over the province (Herodotus, *Histories* 7.7).⁹¹⁸ In a similar vein as Aryandes’ cruelty, the “slavery” (δουλοτέρην) mentioned by Herodotus has sometimes been interpreted as a reference to imperial taxation.⁹¹⁹ In addition to this, scholars have speculated on the causes of the Egyptian rebellions on the basis of other sources as well. For example, some have described the rebellions as “Hungeraufstände,” which would have been led by an impoverished population.⁹²⁰ Though contemporary Egyptian sources do not corroborate this explicitly, recent studies of ancient volcanic eruptions – which, via a chain reaction, may have led to substantially lower Nile floods – give some credence to the idea that the inhabitants of Achaemenid Egypt grappled with food shortages. This applies, among others, to the years and months leading up to the 487/86 BC rebellion.⁹²¹ In addition, it has been pointed out that many of the rebellions began during periods of imperial instability. The best-known example is the Bisitun crisis in 522/21 BC, which would have

⁹¹⁶ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 410. The connection between Aryandes’ cruelty and financial misconduct is heavily influenced by a story in Herodotus, which claims that Aryandes had minted his own silver coins; this act eventually got him executed on the charge of rebellion (*Histories* 4.166). See also Briant, “Ethno-classe dominante,” 141-42, Tuplin, “The Coinage of Aryandes,” 74-76, Sternberg-el Hotabi, “Politische und sozio-ökonomische Strukturen,” 163, and van Alfen, “Herodotus’ ‘Aryandic’ Silver,” 24-25. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the story in Herodotus should probably be disconnected from Polyaeus’ account, as Herodotus implies that Aryandes was executed many years after the Bisitun crisis (see 3.4.1).

⁹¹⁷ Herodotus does not comment on the cause of the rebellion explicitly, but implies as much: after Darius I’s defeat at Marathon the king “sent messengers to all cities commanding the equipment of an army, charging each to provide much more than they had before provided of ships and horses and provision and vessels of transport. By these messages Asia was shaken for three years, the best men being enrolled for service against Hellas and making preparation therefor. In the fourth year the Egyptians, whom Cambyses had enslaved, revolted from the Persians” (Godley, *Herodotus*, 3:301).

⁹¹⁸ Godley, *Herodotus*, 3:309.

⁹¹⁹ See Briant, “Ethno-classe dominante,” 140-41.

⁹²⁰ See Sternberg-el Hotabi, “Politische und sozio-ökonomische Strukturen,” 155.

⁹²¹ See Ludlow and Manning, “Revolts under the Ptolemies,” 154-71, esp. 171. See also entries 284-85 in tab 1 of Supplementary Data 5 by Sigl, Winstrup, and McConnell, “Timing and Climate Forcing,” 543-549. The collected data do not extend beyond 500 BC.

afforded Egyptians with a perfect opportunity for secession.⁹²² All of these factors may have played a role in the outbreak of violent political conflict in the sixth to fourth centuries BC. Nevertheless, it is important to observe that the aforementioned explanations remain rather nonspecific. (Over-)Taxation, military levies, and famine may have affected different parts of Egypt in different ways. It would therefore be interesting to explore regional differences, and to what extent they can be connected to the social and geographical context of each individual rebellion. It is hoped that the present thesis, and especially the conclusions of Chapter 5, can serve as a stepping stone for research in that direction. We may assume, after all, that the “why” of the rebellions was intimately connected to the “who” and the “where.” The same applies to the Empire’s response following the rebellions’ defeat. Though an in-depth discussion of these issues lies beyond the scope of the present thesis, the following paragraphs discuss three possible avenues of further research.

First, one possible avenue of further research concerns the regional consequences of the rebellion of ca. 521 BC. In the past few decades, it has become increasingly clear that the Southern Oasis was an important locus of development in the Persian Period. This began with the reign of Darius I. In the Dakhla Oasis, for example, traces of a cartouche have been found on a temple block at Amheida that might be dated to the reign of the Achaemenid king.⁹²³ In the Kharga Oasis, elaborate inscriptions show that large parts of the temples at Hibis and Qasr el-Ghueita were built under Darius I.⁹²⁴ The foundation date of the mudbrick temple at ‘Ayn Manawir is less clear, but it was at least built before 443 BC, which is when the temple is first mentioned in demotic ostraca from the site.⁹²⁵ As discussed in Chapter 5, the royal development of the Southern Oasis had already begun under the Saite kings. Amasis especially had left numerous inscriptions behind at temple sites in the Dakhla Oasis, as well

⁹²² See e.g. Ray, “Egypt 525 – 404 B.C.,” 261-62. Later rebellions were sometimes connected to the death of a Persian king and the accession of a new ruler as well; see Ray, “Egypt 525 – 404 B.C.,” 275-76, and Rottpeter, “Initiatoren und Träger,” 28-29.

⁹²³ See Kaper, “Epigraphic Evidence from Dakhleh Oasis in the Late Period,” 171-72. See also Kaper, “Temples of the Late Period,” 53, who attributes additional temple blocks with empty cartouches to Darius I’s construction work at Amheida.

⁹²⁴ See e.g. Wasmuth, *Ägypto-persische Herrscher- und Herrschaftspräsentation*, 224-39, Colburn, *Archaeology of Empire*, 112-23, and Darnell, “Antiquity of Ghueita Temple,” 29-40.

⁹²⁵ See Chauveau, “Les archives d’un temple,” 39. See also Wuttmann, Bousquet, Chauveau et al, “Premier rapport préliminaire,” 393-402, and Colburn, *Archaeology of Empire*, 109-12. In addition, a bronze door hinge inscribed with the name of Darius in Old Persian cuneiform is said to have been found at Kharga, and may have belonged to one of the aforementioned temple sites; see Michaélides, “Quelques objets inédits,” 91-93, and Schmitt, *Die altpersischen Inschriften*, 10, 99 (DKa).

as in the Bahariya and Siwa Oases to the north. These islands of the Western Desert could be agriculturally exploited, and had the potential to become important hubs for long-distance trade.⁹²⁶ However, now that the Dakhla Oasis has been identified as the center of power of the Egyptian rebellion during the Bisitun crisis, it is conceivable that at least part of the Persian Period presence in the oasis was intended to prevent it from becoming a locus of resistance in the future. Indeed, this was already suggested by Olaf Kaper in 2015.⁹²⁷ It has since been entertained by Henry Colburn and Melanie Wasmuth.⁹²⁸ One might also go a step further: Persian Period development of the Southern Oasis was predominantly focused on Kharga, while the latter had received little to no attention in the preceding centuries.⁹²⁹ One may therefore consider the possibility that the Dakhla Oasis was stripped of its regional importance in the aftermath of Seheribre's rebellion, and that a new center was consciously developed at Kharga to the east.

A second possible avenue of research concerns regional developments that may have led to the outbreak of the rebellion of ca. 487/86 BC. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the king of the second Egyptian rebellion, Psamtik IV, was recognized at Hou. It was also suggested that he gained a foothold at Thebes, and that he may have been recognized by members of the Theban Domain of Amun.⁹³⁰ This latter step is admittedly speculative. Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe that several Egyptian sources suggest that priests and officials connected to the Domain of Amun may have had cause to join the rebellion. First, when Cambyses conquered Egypt, one of the highest-ranking people at Karnak was the God's Wife of Amun. This office was traditionally fulfilled by a woman from the royal family, often a daughter of the king of Egypt.⁹³¹ The last God's Wife, Ankhnesneferibre, was a daughter of Psamtik II. She succeeded to the office in 586 BC, and was still God's Wife in the months leading up to Cambyses' invasion: her name and likeness feature on a chapel at Karnak together with those of Psamtik III.⁹³² Ankhnesneferibre's heir apparent was Nitocris (B), a daughter of Amasis. However, after 526 BC mention of both women and of the office of God's Wife of Amun disappears.⁹³³ Though it is often assumed that these women had been installed at

⁹²⁶ See 5.2.1.1.

⁹²⁷ See Kaper, "Petubastis IV," 144-45; the statement is repeated in Kaper, "Temples of the Late Period," 53-54.

⁹²⁸ See Klotz, Colburn, "Pioneers of the Western Desert," 105, Colburn, *Archaeology of Empire*, 99-110, 124, and Wasmuth, *Ägypto-persische Herrscher- und Herrschaftspräsentation*, 231 n. 687.

⁹²⁹ See Colburn, "Pioneers of the Western Desert," 86-114, and Colburn, *Archaeology of Empire*, 95-130.

⁹³⁰ See 4.4.2 and 5.3.

⁹³¹ See Ayad, *God's Wife*, 15-28.

⁹³² See *ibid.*, 27-28.

⁹³³ See *ibid.*, 28, 153-54.

Thebes to ensure that the royal family had a strong foothold in the region, the disappearance of the office in the Persian Period must have entailed a significant administrative as well ideological change.⁹³⁴ Second, the Persian Empire's general policy towards the Egyptian temples is sometimes studied on the basis of P. BN 215, a third century BC demotic papyrus which records several narrative, prophetic and legal texts that relate to the sixth to fourth centuries BC.⁹³⁵ One passage, known as "Cambyses' decree," suggests that the temples had lost (part of their) royal support during Cambyses' reign. For example, they were expected to collect their own building wood, firewood, flax and shrubs – commodities that had been donated to them during the reign of Amasis.⁹³⁶ Though it has sometimes been suggested that Darius I would have retracted the "oppressive" policies introduced by Cambyses, neither P. BN 215 nor contemporary evidence bear this out.⁹³⁷ In fact, papyri from Thebes suggest that something had indeed changed in the late sixth century BC: during the Saite Period, legal texts show that the Domain of Amun had raised tithes on the sale of land that was nominally theirs in the Theban and Coptite nomes. The tithe was collected by scribes of the Domain of Amun.⁹³⁸ In year twelve of Darius I (511/10 BC), however, this same tithe was collected by "representatives of Thebes" (*rdw n Nwt*).⁹³⁹ These representatives may have been state agents. Although the papyrus states that the agents were to transfer the tithe to the God's Offering of Amun, it is possible that they redirected

⁹³⁴ For the office of God's Wife as a means for royal control over Thebes, see e.g. Ayad, *God's Wife*, 15-16, 23, 154, Naunton, "Libyans and Nubians," 125, 138, and Perdu, "Saites and Persians," 142.

⁹³⁵ See Spiegelberg, *Die sogenannte Demotische Chronik*, Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 124-27 no. 4.14, 393-94 no. 9.60, 397-98 no. 9.65, and Quack, "So-Called Demotic Chronicle," 27-34.

⁹³⁶ See e.g. Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 125-26 (c), Agut-Labordère, "Le titre du 'Décret de Cambyse,'" 45-54, and Wespi, "Das Gesetz der Tempel," 189-91. The third century BC text states that three (Memphite) temples were exempted from some of the regulations. In the absence of a sufficient number of contemporary texts, it is unclear whether they were the only temples that enjoyed exemptions, or whether the original decree – assuming it was historical – would have included a longer list of exceptions. See e.g. Agut-Labordère, "Le titre du 'Décret de Cambyse,'" 45-54, who argues that the original list would have been longer. Compare Agut-Labordère, "Royal Taxes," 247-60, from which it is clear how little we know about Persian Period royal taxes in Egypt.

⁹³⁷ Darius I is often celebrated as a "great benefactor" of Egyptian temples; see e.g. Cook, *Persian Empire*, 99, Klotz, *Adoration of the Ram*, 5-8, Perdu, *Saites and Persians*, 151-52. Though Darius' construction works in Egypt are indeed noteworthy when compared with that of other Persian kings (see 2.4.1.1), it should not blind us to policies that may have been ill received (see 2.5.3, and below).

⁹³⁸ See Vleeming, "Tithe of the Scribes," 343-44, and Pestman, *Les papyrus démotiques de Tsenhor*, 73 v. The Domain of Amun also raised taxes on harvests; see Donker van Heel, "Abnormal Hieratic and Early Demotic Texts," 43-47.

⁹³⁹ See Vleeming, "Tithe of the Scribes," 347, and Pestman, *Les papyrus démotiques de Tsenhor*, 71-73 no. 10.

a part of it to the royal treasury.⁹⁴⁰ A similar phenomenon is documented by Ptolemaic papyri, which show that some of the temple revenues at Thebes were redirected to state coffers.⁹⁴¹ Incidentally, the latter policy has been connected to the outbreak of the Great Thebaid Revolt in the third century BC.⁹⁴² Third and finally, it may be noteworthy that Egyptian silver was weighed against stones in a treasury in Thebes during the Saite Period. From at least the reign of Darius I onwards, the silver was weighed against stones in the treasury of the temple of Ptah at Memphis instead.⁹⁴³ Taken together, it is plausible that the regional power of Thebes, and especially that of the Domain of Amun, was gradually curtailed by Cambyses and Darius I.⁹⁴⁴ It would be interesting to investigate how these changes may have related to Darius I's investment in the Southern Oasis following the rebellion of ca. 521 BC. For example, some scholars have suggested that Thebes was an important center from which the Southern Oasis – and especially the Kharga Oasis – was “colonized” in the early Persian Period.⁹⁴⁵ Indeed, demotic and hieroglyphic rock graffiti near Armant, a site just south of Thebes, refer to Darius I, Amun, and Amun of Hibis;⁹⁴⁶ and temple inscriptions at Hibis and Qasr el-Ghueita explicitly invoke the Theban triad of Amun, Mut and Khonsu – in fact, some of the inscriptions are copies from temple hymns that are known from the walls at Karnak.⁹⁴⁷ As the regions were closely interconnected, one may wonder whether some of the measures that were intended to bring the rebellious Southern Oasis into the imperial fold after ca. 518 BC could have backfired at Thebes – and whether they may have contributed to the outbreak of the rebellion in ca. 487/86 BC. Similar

⁹⁴⁰ See Vleeming, “Tithe of the Scribes,” 347, Pestman, *Les papyrus démotiques de Tsenhor*, 73 v, and most recently Agut-Labordère, “Royal Taxes,” 255-56.

⁹⁴¹ See Vleeming, “Tithe of the Scribes,” 344, 347-48, Pestman, *Les papyrus démotiques de Tsenhor*, 73 v, and Honigman and Veïsse, “Regional Revolts,” 307-8.

⁹⁴² See *ibid.*, 307-8.

⁹⁴³ See Griffith, *Catalogue of the Demotic Papyri*, 76, Vleeming, *Gooseherds of Hou*, 87-89, Jurman, “Silver of the Treasury of Herishef,” 62, and Colburn, *Archaeology of Empire*, 223.

⁹⁴⁴ For a similar conclusion, see Agut-Labordère, “Beyond the Persian Tolerance Policy,” 319-28. For other possible changes at Thebes, see Klotz, *Adoration of the Ram*, 8. See also Masson, “Le quartier des *prêtres*,” 593-623, for evidence of an early Persian Period destruction/abandonment level at Karnak (though not attributed to e.g. Cambyses' invasion by the author). Note that the religious infrastructure at Thebes was not entirely neglected: the name of Darius – presumably Darius I – appears on a pillar and several minor temple objects that were found at Karnak (Traunecker, “Un document nouveau,” 209-13).

⁹⁴⁵ See Klotz, *Adoration of the Ram*, 8-9, and Colburn, “Pioneers of the Western Desert,” 103-4.

⁹⁴⁶ See Di Cerbo and Jasnow, “Demotic and Hieroglyphic Graffiti,” 32-38.

⁹⁴⁷ See Darnell, Klotz, and Manassa, “Gods on the Road,” 3-4, 12-13, and Klotz, *Adoration of the Ram*, 11.

questions apply to towns like Hou and Coptos, which were likewise connected to the Kharga and Dakhla Oases.⁹⁴⁸

A third and final avenue of further research that will be mentioned here are the consequences of the second rebellion. As discussed in Chapter 4, Xerxes reconquered Egypt in 485/84 BC. The *Histories* of Herodotus claims that Egypt was subsequently subjected to a state of even worse slavery than it had suffered under Darius I's reign (Herodotus, *Histories* 7.7). Though difficult to qualify, there are indications that Xerxes' reign was indeed a period of change: his name does not appear on Egyptian temple walls, and the wealth and autonomy of the Egyptian elite appears to have been reduced, as indicated by the scarcity of monumental private tombs, statues, and stelae that can be safely dated to the reigns of Xerxes and his successors.⁹⁴⁹ Some scholars have assumed that this "policy of greater repression" was itself a factor in the outbreak of the third rebellion in the mid-fifth century BC.⁹⁵⁰ A comparison with contemporary Babylonia complicates this assumption, however. In the summer of 484 BC, i.e. shortly after the second Egyptian revolt was defeated, part of the Babylonian population rebelled. The rebellion lasted several months, and mainly affected the northern part of the province. When the rebels were bested, a large number of northern Babylonian archives came to an end. In addition, archives from Uruk show that families who had roots in the north disappeared from important temple posts in the south, and were replaced by local men.⁹⁵¹ This targeted post-revolt policy – by which those implicated in the resistance were replaced with *homines novi*, who owed their position to the imperial regime – was successful: Babylonia does not appear to have rebelled anew.⁹⁵² It goes without saying that this comparison throws doubt on the "negative feedback loop" hypothesis in Egyptology, which assumes that Xerxes' policies were necessarily counter effective. Why some Egyptians did rebel in the remainder of the fifth and fourth centuries BC requires further study. As is the case with the first two rebellions against Persian rule, the causes of these rebellions need to be assessed on a case-by-case

⁹⁴⁸ For the administrative and religious connection between the Southern Oasis, Thebes, and towns in the Qena Bend – a connection which is already evident before the Persian Period –, see e.g. Klotz, "Administration of the Deserts," 901-3, 906-7, Darnell, Klotz, and Manassa, "Gods on the Road," 5, 12-13, and Colburn, "Pioneers of the Western Desert," 104.

⁹⁴⁹ See 2.4.1.1-2.4.1.2.

⁹⁵⁰ See Ray, "Egypt 525 – 404 B.C.," 275-76; see also Lloyd, "Late Period," 286.

⁹⁵¹ See Waerzeggers, "Babylonian Revolts against Xerxes," 160-63, Kessler, "Urukäische Familien versus babylonische Familien," 237-62, Waerzeggers, "Network of Resistance," 89-91, Beaulieu, "Uruk before and after Xerxes," 189-206, and the discussion in 4.4.2.

⁹⁵² It is possible that Babylonia rebelled in the fourth century BC, but the historicity of the revolt is debated; see Grayson, "Königslisten und Chroniken," 97-98, van Dijk, "Die Inschriftenfunde," 58, Stolper, "Mesopotamia," 240, and Safaee, "A Local Revolt," 51-56.

basis, and should be carefully connected to the “who” and “where” of the revolts. Only one general and possibly contributing factor can be mentioned here: throughout the Persian Period, Egypt lay on the periphery of the imperial realm. It was well connected to Sudan in the south, Libya in the west, and the Mediterranean – including the independent city-states of mainland Greece – in the north.⁹⁵³ It is therefore conceivable that even if Xerxes effectively curtailed the risk of rebellion in southern Egypt – which was a, if not the, locus of resistance in the sixth and early fifth century BC – , the province remained an attractive staging ground for anti-Persian resistance in the eyes of both locals and foreigners. Indeed, it may not be coincidence that the third rebellion in Egypt was initiated by a Libyan, who was king of the Libyans that bordered on Egypt, and who was clearly supported by Greek military forces.⁹⁵⁴ As far as our present evidence suggests, none of these characteristics applied to the Egyptian rebellions of ca. 521 and 487/86 BC. It is therefore possible that a new era had started in the mid-fifth century BC – one in which foreign powers began to play a more decisive role in attempts to “liberate” Egypt from Persian rule, and one in which the Delta – rather than southern Egypt – became the primary locus of resistance.

⁹⁵³ That the Persians themselves identified Egypt as a peripheral border region is suggested by Achaemenid glyptic; see the discussion in 2.5.4.

⁹⁵⁴ See 2.2.2. For the role that Egypt’s geographical position may have played in the rebellions, see already Lloyd, “Late Period,” 287, and Rottpeter, “Initiatoren und Träger,” 24-28.

