

ALL THE KING’S MEN

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In a recent publication Thierry Petit has examined the story of Cyrus and Orontas in Xenophon *Anabasis* 1.6.1-11, detected a ritual expressive of subordination, associated that subordination with the term *bandaka*, and elaborated a parallel with mediaeval homage rituals.¹ To test his account of the episode and its implications I shall consider the evidence for ceremonial procedure, examine *bandaka* and certain other Iranian and non-Iranian words, and assess the impact of the mediaeval analogy.² I do not pretend to provide an exhaustive account of all the issues raised by Petit’s stimulating paper, and what follows is a dogmatic report on what I believe to be demonstrable rather than a thoroughly documented demonstration.

There are three phases in the story.³ Phase 1 Darius II gives Orontas to Cyrus as *hupekoos* (subordinate). Orontas then fights Cyrus at Artaxerxes II’s behest⁴ using the Sardis acropolis as base (Xenophon *Anabasis* 1.6.6). Phase 2 Cyrus and Orontas exchange *dexiai* (hand-shakes) at end of that conflict. Orontas then revolts and damages Cyrus’ land from a base in Mysia (ibid. 1.6.6-7). Phase 3 Cyrus and Orontas exchange *pista* (pledges) after Orontas has come to the altar of Artemis at Sardis and persuaded Cyrus that he has repented (ibid.1.6.7). But Orontas then tries to defect during Cyrus’ march on Babylon (ibid. 1.6.1-3, 8). Our key text is Xenophon’s account of the trial and execution of Orontas following this third act of disloyalty.

There are five further details. (1) Orontas is γένει προσήκων βασιλεῖ (related to the King: ibid.1.6.1) – so he was related to Cyrus too, and may count as an Achaemenid. (2) The trial is conducted before the seven ‘best’ Persians of Cyrus’ entourage plus a Greek mercenary general whose report is the source of Xenophon’s knowledge of the details.⁵ (3) Orontas

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1. Petit 2004. Briant 2002: 623 had already written that Cyrus’ closest confidants were bound to him by personal ties, symbolized by a handclasp before the gods (1.6.6-7).
 2. Rigorous separation of mediaeval and Achaemenid aspects is not easy, as there is a strong link between the general claim of a subordination ceremonial and the particular claim that it structurally resembles mediaeval homage rituals. Petit is in some degree using mediaeval parallel to justify a reading of Achaemenid evidence that might not otherwise seem to warranted.
 3. In each assertion of mutual loyalty is followed by actual or attempted breach of that relationship. In two cases his alternative loyalty is to the King; in the third this is neither asserted nor precluded.
 4. ταχθεῖς is Xenophon’s word – appropriate to positive appointment. At 2002: 342 (where there is a mistranslation of the French original) Briant assumes that the move from Phase 1a to Phase 1b corresponds to Artaxerxes’ perception of Cyrus as rebel – i.e. Artaxerxes takes him out of subordination to Cyrus.
 5. ibid.1.6.5. The trial was attended, and intervened in, by Clearchus. cf. Diod.15.10.2, where Greeks present at Tiribazus’ trial are invoked to confirm that one could not ask Delphi περὶ θανάτου. Both cases suggest that, perhaps surprisingly, the business of the life or death of a Persian noble was not one to be conducted only among peers and behind closed doors.

admits that Cyrus would not now believe he could again be *philos kai pistos* (friendly and loyal) to him (*ibid.* 1.6.8). So *philos kai pistos* describes his state during periods of loyalty to Cyrus. (4) Condemnation to death is signalled by seizure of Orontas' belt (*ibid.* 1.6.10). (5) As he is led away, 'those who did *proskynesis* to him before, did so then', even knowing he was about to die' (*ibid.*)

There are three ways to validate Petit's claim. (A) Does the *Anabasis* narrative actually suggest a ceremony? (B) Is there other direct evidence of such ceremonies? (C) Is there indirect evidence best explained by postulating such ceremonies?

A. The postulated ceremony has three elements. (1) Person A, who can be described as *hupekoos*, *bandaka*, *doulos* or *huperetes*, states a wish to serve Person B, and does *proskynesis*. (2) A mutual handshake and oath seals the relationship, in which A becomes *philos kai pistos* to B. (3) A invests B with certain perquisites, symbolised by the wearing of a belt. Various potential problems present themselves

First of all, Petit's argument amalgamates elements from all phases of relationship and the trial and is therefore methodologically vulnerable.

(a) Orontas' formal statement of a wish to serve Cyrus is extracted from a combination of Darius making him Cyrus' *hupekoos* (Phase 1) and Orontas persuading Cyrus he has repented of defection (Phase 2).

(b) We must assume not just that the Phase 2 exchange of *dexiai* is equivalent to exchanging *pista* at an altar in Phase 3 but that each implies the other, Xenophon having arbitrarily chosen to mention one in one case and then the other in the other. Xenophontic usage elsewhere allows, but does not compel, such an assumption: mutual *dexiai* are not always accompanied by oaths.⁶ And is Xenophon being arbitrary? The mention of the altar might suggest that the second reconciliation involved heavier symbols of restored trust – i.e. that the phases should be distinguished not amalgamated.

(c) The only *proskynesis* in the story is that done to Orontas on his way to execution. The identity of those who did it is unstated, but the fact that condemnation to death did not deprive him of social status need have nothing to do with subordination rituals. That the putative investiture ceremony involved *proskynesis* is mere assumption, and, as Herodotus (1.134) suggests that in social contexts Orontas would not do *proskynesis* to Cyrus, the assumption is disturbingly substantial.

Secondly, investiture with obligation-carrying perquisites does not figure in the *Anabasis* account. Evidence elsewhere about high-rank individuals gifting property against military or other service never says anything about the act of conferral (we hear only about it being an act of generosity, reward or honour on the part of the donor), so its inclusion in the ceremonial is heavily driven by the mediaeval parallel, and Orontes' belt is a doubtful help. Signalising condemnation by grasping the belt recurs in the case of Charidemus, a Greek exile who offended Darius III during a council of friends (Diodorus 17.30.4–5), but belt-wearing characterised Persians in general (Charidemus was dressing *à la perse*), and is surely too common in Persian and Greco-Persian iconography to mark a distinctive status – unless certain belts had specific features of material, design or colour that now elude us. It is more likely that belt-seizure is an example of clothing standing for the individual: compare e.g. the story about Artaxerxes I inflicting punishment on the cloak of a malefactor, not the man

6. cf. e.g. *Hell.* 4.1.15, 31, *Cyr.* 3.2.14, 4.6.10, 6.1.48, 8.4.25.

himself.⁷

Thirdly, although I shall return to terminology later, there are two points to note immediately. (a) *Huperetai* is certainly not relevant (*pace* Petit 2004: 181). The *huperetai* who take Charidemus away (Diodorus 17.30.5) correspond to those mentioned in other execution scenes⁸ and to the anonymous οῖς προσετάχθη in the present passage and are simply undefined servants. (b) *Hupekoos* is a banal term for imperial subjects, and three contexts with personal overtones – Tissaphernes' demand that Ionian cities be *hupekooi* to him (Xenophon *Hellenica* 3.1.3), Pharnabazus' prospect of making current fellow-slaves *hupekooi* (*ibid.* 4.1.36), and the *oikoi kai hupekooi* (houses/estates and subordinates) given to members of Cyrus' elite (*id. Cyropaedia* 8.6.5) – do not indicate that *hupekoos* signifies anything radically different in *Anabasis* 1.6.6. The first two belong in the ordinary dimension of imperial rule; the third is only pertinent if the *hupekooi* are satrapal courtiers – which they are not.

B. Directly parallel evidence for an investiture ceremony is elusive. One might anticipate help from Xenophon's other writings. But the vignettes in *Hellenica* and *Agesilaus* involving Otys, Spithridates, Agesilaus, Pharnabazus and his son concern political deals, marriages and Greek *xenia*-relations,⁹ and the chance to introduce something relevant in *Cyropaedia* is not taken. The account of royal-elite relations in Book VIII speaks only in collective terms, and the four depictions of individual bonds in the narrative (three of which involve defectors from the Assyrian camp) are disappointing. Gadatas does *proskynesis* to Cyrus (5.3.17), but there is no further formality, and the actual sealing of the pact between Pheraulas and his Sacan household-manager is undescribed.¹⁰ The deals of Abradatas and Gobryas with Cyrus are more interesting: there is performative language, the two men 'give' themselves to Cyrus and there is an exchange of handshakes in one case.¹¹ But these are alliances with non-Persians, and no more validate Petit's ceremony than does the episode in *Anabasis* VII where, after talk of becoming Seuthes' brother, getting land and marrying his daughter (7.2.25,38), Xenophon gives himself and his companions as *phili pistoi* (7.3.30) – a deal with a Thracian, in a context of Thracian-style gift-giving, and sealed by drink rather than hand-shakes (7.3.32). Xenophon is interested in trust and relations between ruler and ruled, but it is not clear that

7. See Plut.*Mor.*35E, 173D, 565A, Amm.*Marc.*30.8.4, Dio Chrys.37.45, with Stolper 1997. – For a different piece of belt symbolism cf. Hdt.8.120, with Lenfant 2002.

8. Plut.*Artox.*29 (Darius) and Diod.16.43 (Thettalion).

9. Xen.*Hell.*4.1.1-40, *Ages.*3.3,5, 5.4-5.

10. ταῦτα συνέθεντο is all that is said (8.3.48). Pheraulas is one of Cyrus' friends (8.3.28), who wishes (like Cyrus) to have time to devote himself to his own friends (8.3.44,50). Pheraulas and the Sacan are said to *philein* one another (50); but does that make the Sacan one of Pheraulas' *phili* in some sort of technical sense?

11. Abradatas takes Cyrus' right hand, saying φίλον σοι ἐμαυτὸν δίδωμι καὶ θεράποντα καὶ σύμμαχον. Cyrus formally says 'I accept' (cf. Agesilaus' response to Pharnabazus' son naming him *xenos*) and adds that Abradatas must σκηνοῦν σὺν τοῖς σοῦς τε καὶ ἐμοῖς φίλοις (6.1.48-49.). When Gobryas joins Cyrus he says ἦκω πρὸς σὲ καὶ ίκέτης προσπίπτω καὶ δίδωμίσο ἐμαυτὸν δοῦλον καὶ σύμμαχον, σὲ δὲ τιμωρὸν αἰτοῦμαι γενέσθαι, καὶ παῖδα οὔτως ὡς δυνατόν σε ποιοῦμαι, and then offers Cyrus use of his fortress, tribute, military service, and his daughter (4.6.1-12). Cyrus replies ἐπὶ τοῦτοις ἔγὼ ἀληθευομένοις δίδωμι σοι τὴν ἐμὴν καὶ λαμβάνω τὴν σὴν δεξίαν (4.6.9) and so provisionally promises to help avenge Gobryas's loss. Later he visits Gobryas's fortress and decides he is reliable; he therefore 'owes the promise' (5.2.8.), accepts the treasure, but not the daughter, thanks Gobryas for the chance to prove he will do no wrong and break no *sunthekai* (agreements) to misuse what Gobryas has offered and will honour him for his good services (5.2.11). There is certainly some formality here, but it is tied to rather specific circumstances.

in *Anabasis* 1.6 he understood himself to be describing a distinctive method of embedding a distinctive relationship.¹²

As for other sources, accounts of other post-rebellion reconciliations are inadequately specific,¹³ as is that of the way Cyrus made Amorges, Spitacas and Megabernes mutual *philoī*, though it involved handshakes and a curse on defaulters (Ctesias 688 F9[8]). I doubt we can reconstruct Achaemenid ceremonial from the interplay of *proskynesis* and kiss in Alexander's trial introduction of *proskynesis* – and if we did it would not match Petit's model.¹⁴

At the same time, Persians were not averse to ceremonial: it is readily imagined not just on the scale suggested by the iconography at Persepolis and Naqš-i Rustam or in relation to the tantalising 'giving of earth and water' (cf. Kuhrt 1988), but at an individual level of public reward for services rendered.¹⁵ Moreover evidence for ceremony can be thin even when formal relationships existed: for example, the direct evidence for a ritual to seal Greek guest-friendship is tiny.¹⁶ So Petit's claim is certainly not absurd. But it is not yet proved.

C. Where direct evidence is so elusive, the chances for indirect evidence are slim. Still, there are remarks to be made about terminology and other phenomena that might find illumination in terms of the relationship marked by the postulated ceremony.

On the terminological front there are words in *Anabasis* 1.6 - *hupekoos*, *pistos kai philos* – and words found elsewhere that have been explicitly or implicitly associated with that text, e.g. *bandaka*, *doulos*, *protoi* and *dokimotatoi*.¹⁷ Investigation will bring still other words to our attention. But the limits are reasonably clear. On the other front pertinence is trickier. Our concern is subordination of individual to individual, so any institutional feature with that characteristic is theoretically open to review, and the scope for *petitio principii* is almost limitless. For that reason, I shall say little under this head.¹⁸ It is arguable (for example) that,

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12. The other interesting covenant text in *Cyropaedia* is that between Cyrus and the Persians (8.5.24-27). This is a sort of bilateral defence treaty: Cyrus will intervene if someone attacks Persia or attempts to subvert its laws, Persians will help Cyrus if someone attempts to overthrow his *arkhe* or if any of the subjects rebel. At this stage Persia has its own king (Cambyses) but the situation subsists even when Cyrus is king and indeed thereafter too. There is also an arrangement that a 'member of the family' ὃς ἀν δοκῆ ἄριστος εἶναι will carry out religious functions when the King is not in the country. This is nothing to do with personal loyalty-bonds, though one might say that Xenophon's perception that the relationship of King and Persia was distinctive is probably correct: there is no satrap of Persia in *Cyropaedia* and there was probably none in reality either.
13. e.g. Xen. *An.* 2.4.1, Plut. *Artox.* 6.5, Diod. 15.90-93, 16.46.3, 52.3, Ctesias 688 F14[38,42], 15[50, 52-53], Ael. *VH* 6.14.
14. Plut. *Alex.* 54, Arr. *An.* 4.12.3-5, Chares *FGrH* 125 F14.
15. Status marked by nature or quantity of gifts received (Briant 1990: 97f); presumed ceremony of bestowal (*ibid.* 100). For ceremonies cf. Briant 2002: 303, 307, 337, citing e.g. *Esther* 6.9 (Mordecai paraded through city on royal horse etc. with proclamations); Hdt. 4.143 (the – perhaps public – comment of Darius about Megabyzus), Xen. *Cyr.* 8.3.23 (in the context of an existing procession), Hdt. 1.132.6, Strab. 15.3.17 (the present or prize for those fathering most children), Strab. 15.3.17, Arr. *Anab.* 7.4.7 (postulated annual wedding ceremonies at vernal equinox).
16. Xen. *Hell.* 4.1.39 (Agesilaus and Pharnabazus' son); *Il.* 6.119-236 (Diomedes and Glaucus); *Od.* 1.115ff (Telemachus and 'Mentes'), 21.11-42 (Odysseus and Iphitus). It involves formal statement of intention, naming of the *xenos*, and exchange of gifts.
17. Briant 2002: 327 brings the last pair in, via an association with *bandaka*.
18. I also suspect that in default of a terminological lead no compelling case could ever be made – despite what is said later about mediaeval parallels.

given appropriate limits, a ritually marked relationship distinct from function-oriented office might be a useful tool in directing the loyalty of mutually equal-status elite-members to the King rather than one another,¹⁹ a distinction between Persians (who could have such a link to the King) and non-Persians (who could not),²⁰ a neutral way of defining a satrapal court, an explanation of the way high-rank rebels could sometimes be re-admitted to favour, or even an explanation of Otanes' alleged privilege of being 'free' (albeit subject to the laws of the Persians).²¹ But neither such propositions nor the general sense of a nexus of personal relations, property tenure and duty of service emanating from Achaemenid sources (often in social contexts where the *mores* of Cyrus and Orontas are hardly directly relevant) suffice to validate the case. On the latter point, of course, the mediaeval parallel might be brought to bear. Petit hesitates to move from homage-ceremonies to feudo-vassalic relations (I return to that later), but does claim the ceremony would apply between Spithridates and his 200 horsemen, and they are a primary exhibit in Sekunda's explication (1988) of Xenophontic remarks about satrapal cavalry in terms of a world of dukes and knights. But Sekunda's model itself has a very modest base of direct evidence, too weak to sustain the burden of proving Petit's case as well. Another mediaeval issue – a general sense of rigidly hierarchical society – is something else to which I return later.

And so to terminology. Alongside office-titles (which in principle express the function of their holder)²² and broad designations of elite non-royal Persians, the sources for Achaemenid history do offer words that locate individuals in reference to another individual. That such terminology is sometimes used both where the King is and is not a party may enhance a sense of system. But are some of these terms labels that can be formally (so perhaps ritually) bestowed, and is there a label proper to our postulated ceremony?

Bandaka is a term applied by Darius to a number of high-ranking individuals who suppressed resistance to his rule, two of whom were also among the six comrades who originally helped him seize the throne,²³ and it is widely thought the *mot juste* for formal vassals. Sparse signs that it became a personal name in Babylonia and Lydia may not militate against this,²⁴ but the facts that Elamite and Akkadian translators rendered it banally as 'servant' and Darius himself also used it in DB §7 of the generality of subject peoples give one pause. The word only appears at Behistun. Absence of later application to individuals reflects a body of texts nearly devoid of named non-royal persons.²⁵ But the other absence is

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- 19. Briant 2002: 352; cf. 326, 332 etc.
 - 20. Power remained with Persians: Briant 2002: 349, 352.
 - 21. Can it be a privilege not to have a status that many aspire to? Yes: consider wage-slavery.
 - 22. Sometimes literal meaning is at variance with the actual status: cf. Henkelman 2003: 119f on *lipite kutira* = 'garment-bearer' and other cases. But this does not in itself authorize us to postulate formally bestowed titles that only express status. Nor does Aperghis' claim that *haturmakša* and *etira* sometimes represent rank, not function (1999: 157).
 - 23. DB §§ 25 (Vidarna), 26 (Dadarši [I]), 29 (Vahumisa), 33 (Taxmaspada), 38 (Dadarši [II]), 41 (Artavardiya), 45 (Vivana), 50 (Vindafarnah), 71 (Gaubaruva). The last two were among the original six companions (§68), but the six are not collectively called *bandaka*. Instead §68 states (in OP) that they acted with Darius as *anušiya* (variously rendered as 'faithful' or 'follower') or (Elamite / Akkadian) that they provided help. (The Aramaic version matches the OP one, but has no equivalent for *anušiya*.)
 - 24. Sb 9385 r.9 (Joannès 1990), Gusmani 1964: no.14 (translated in Dusinberre 2003: 230). Eilers 1989: 683a notes that *banda-* is an element in many (later) Iranian personal names.
 - 25. The only exceptions are Gobryas and Aspathines on the tomb-facade, but they have other and grander titles, and do not appear in a narrative context.

deliberate. At Behistun it is part of a formal statement of the extent and effectiveness of royal rule; later texts have such statements, but ‘they are my *bandaka*’ is missing.²⁶ Perhaps it was too honourable a term for ‘subject’ for the more authoritarian and egocentric post-Behistun discourse. But that it was a broad term for ‘subject’ seems inescapable. The Greek view that all subjects were *douloi* could thus reflect a negative translation of *bandaka* (cf. Missiou 1993) but, in any event, *bandaka* cannot uniquely denominate a distinct relationship limited enough to be feasibly enacted by ritual ceremony.

Nor does Old Persian offer an alternative. *Anušiya* and *marika*, both of which are sometimes implicitly canvassed, will not do. *Marika* at the end of Darius’ tomb-inscription means ‘young man’ and designates the crown-prince (Schmitt 1999). *Anušiya* appears at Behistun of supporters of Gaumata and the Lie-Kings,²⁷ Darius’ henchmen (§ 68) and the army of Darius’ father (§ 35). In each context the core idea (people who are on one’s side) is treated differently in the other languages: their authors do not attribute the word any special status, and there is no reason for us to assign it more than narrative content. Its application indifferently to Darius’ friends and enemies points the same way.

To see words as technical is a temptation when dealing with a limited corpus. But vagueness is characteristic of Old Persian. *Dahyu* (land / people) and *kara* (army / people) are notorious. *Data* has a resonance (hence import into other languages) but the traditional rendering ‘law’ is too restricted.²⁸ When Xerxes calls himself *mathišta* after Darius (XPf § 4), I hesitate to discern a technical term, given use of the same word for Margian and Elamite rebel leaders (DB §§ 38, 71). *Marika* can designate the crown-prince (see above), but Akkadian rendering of it as ‘servant’ and the comic poet Eupolis’ re-christening of the ‘slave’ Hyperbolus as *Marikas* attest less socially elevated applications (Cassio 1985). *Fratama*, found with *anušiya* in a phrase signifying ‘the principal supporters’ of Gaumata and the Lie-Kings, has been seen as an honorific title thanks to four Elamite bureaucratic texts.²⁹ But there are real problems with this (see Tuplin 2005), and I doubt *fratama* ever means more than ‘first’. The fact that a Greek cognate, *protos*, is sometimes linked with *bandaka* brings us to Greek terminology.

Protos itself can be dismissed, as can *dokimos*, *logimos*, *aristos*, *epiphanes*, *megistos*, *kratistos* and the like. Nothing suggests technical use or is distinctively Persian. Otherwise Greek texts disclose an elite society of (1) office-holders, (2) categories of birth or clear adlection such as Royal Relatives (real and created), Benefactors, Table-Sharers, or wearers of purple and / or royally gifted jewellery, (3) a general group of *hoi epi thurais* (‘those at the gates’, i.e. courtiers) and (4) people described as *pistoi* and *philoī*. Both words appear in *Anabasis* 1.6.8, and *pistos* has been seen as a Greek equivalent for *bandaka*. That only makes sense if *bandaka* has restricted scope – which (as we have seen) is not the case – but I shall pause a moment longer on the two Greek words.

The prominence of the *philoī* and/or *pistoi* of Kings or princes must be kept in proportion. The narrative of Persian history (as of any autocracy) organises individuals in relation to powerful figures. Security is paramount, so categorization of people close to those with power as trustworthy is banal – and natural for the Greek observer. Moreover, around autocrats even normal things like friendship look deliberated: those in power must be careful

26. Compare and contrast DB §7 with DNA §3, DPe §2, DPg §2, DSe §3, DSM §2, DSv §2, XPh §3.

27. §§ 13, 32, 42, 43, 47, 50.

28. Briant 1999: 1135, Stolper 1993: 60f, Stolper 1994: 340 n.14.

29. PT 36, 44, 44a, PT 1957-2, re-interpreted by Eilers 1955.

about their friends. We in turn must be careful not to assume we are dealing with Persian titles or ranks. It is striking that we hear in quasi-formulaic terms more about the King and his friends than e.g. the King and his advisers. But there are no quasi-Hellenistic rankings, and categorization of specially close king-elite relations in terms of friendship could actually represent a *Greek* vision. Old Persian *dauštar* is unattested here, and (despite the impression one might initially get from the elegantly persuasive treatment of Greek views of friendship in Konstan 1997³⁰) the semantics of *philos* are perfectly consonant. If so, it is not wholly banal. That the tyrant has no friends (as Greeks liked to say) but the Great King does shows they took for granted that he was a legitimate ruler, even if his subjects were *douloi*.³¹ And if Greeks positively chose to speak of friends (rather than picking it as the least bad match for some Persian term), they detected something of the mutual support and affective bond implicit in *philos* in the otherwise unequal relationship between the King and his chief associates.

These ruminations lead two ways. On the one hand, any occasional use of *philoī* and *pistoi* as quasi-titles (and very few texts even appear to display this³²) is a linguistic by-product of Greek interpretation, not evidence about Persian rankings, and there is no real chance of validating Petit's thesis through terminology. On the other, the vision of the King and his friends evokes a broader perspective. Our sources provide many titles and non-specific labels – and concomitant economic differentiation. But what sort of hierarchic society are we talking about? For Xenophon (in *Cyropaedia*) imperial management followed principles of military hierarchy, while the King was surrounded by a meritocratic elite entirely dependent upon him for its status: Xenophon has an agenda, but it starts from a view of reality. Herodotus' model of Persian society postulates family, phratry, clan and nation, rather broad status-distinction within the general population,³³ and a dominant king surrounded by a Persian elite within which the plainest differentiation is between Achaemenids and others (cf. Briant 1990). The first and third features are validated by Persian

30. He treats the 'King's *philos*' as a novelty of the Hellenistic world, but this is because it presupposes the relevant autocratic context, and Konstan's focus in the earlier part of his book is on the republican *polis*. (He virtually ignores the Achaemenid world – occasional citations of *Cyropaedia* are for evidence about Greek attitudes – presumably because it is a non-Greek environment; but that ignores the fact that Greek sources are describing it.) There is nothing unnatural to Greek usage or sentiment as presented by Konstan in the usage represented by 'King's friend'. The history of Agesilaus is also worth recalling here: cf. Cartledge 1987: 139ff.

31. In the same way, Isocrates can recommend Diodotus as *philos* to the legitimate regent Antipater (*ep.4*). Tyrants have flatterers, but the King's flatterers are not a formulaic stereotype, even if he suffers from eunuchs and women and dislikes unwelcome advice.

32. *Xen.Oec.4.6* (the King sends *pistoi* – not e.g. *τῶν πιστῶν τινας* – to review garrisons) is sometimes wrongly cited in this context, but *Xen.An.1.5.15*, where Cyrus intervenes in a brawl *σὺν τοῖς παροῦσι τῶν πιστῶν*, may be a case. Most editors and/or translators also put Aesch. *Pers.1f* (τόδε μὲν Περσῶν τῶν οἰχομένων Ἐλλάδ' ἐξ αἰαν πιστὰ καλεῖται, καὶ τῶν ἀφνεῶν καὶ πολυχρύσων ἔδράνων φύλακες κατὰ πρεσβείαν οὓς αὐτὸς Ξέρξης βασιλεὺς Δαρειογενῆς εὗλετο χώρας ἐφορεύειν in this category. But it may just mean 'we are loyal to the Persians who have gone to Greece, we are guardians of the palace, selected to mind the land because of our age' (for passive *καλεῖσθαι* in non-title contexts cf. *Choeph.321*, *Sept.929*). In the same play the Queen regularly addresses the chorus as *philoī*, which, though commonplace in Sophocles (19 examples in five plays), is unusual in Aeschylus (a possible exception is fr.47a.821) and Euripides (cf. only *Alc.935*, 960). Even so, it is impossible to be sure Aeschylus was prompted by a belief that *philos* was a title.

33. His comments on kissing and *proskynesis* in 1.134 presuppose three broad groups.

sources – family and phratry match Old Persian *vith* and *tauma*;³⁴ ‘Achaemenid’ is central to royal identity – and the central one should also be respected. It is not dissimilar to Darius’ picture, textual and iconographic: the king is special among the creatures of Ahuramazda and Persia is special among lands of the earth, but among Persians there is just a broad distinction between courtiers and others, with special members of the former only sketchily visible (cf. Stronach 2002: 387f). Otherwise there are those who accommodate themselves to his rule and those who fall victim to the Lie, and there are the strong and the weak. Darius has his agenda too, but it is one in which royal superiority obviates, rather than being based upon, elaborate hierarchy, and later Kings did not alter it. Another lexical point comes in here. In the Behistun text Darius says his family were *amata* (DB §3). The context calls for high status, but the word attracts from Elamite and Akkadian composers equivalents that do not meet this requirement. Šalup connotes no more than free status, and can be used of non-Iranians; *mar bane*, normally rendered ‘citizen’ or ‘free man’, is undemonstrative of significantly elite status.³⁵ Babylonian citizens included people of low socio-economic status, and one feels the author could have done better if *amata* had conveyed a vivid sense of elite rank. Use of *mar bane* for Darius’ fellow-conspirators and leading supporters of Gaumata and the Lie-Kings (groups defined by visible activity not status) and to render ‘strong’ (as opposed to ‘weak’) confirms that it only indicates a general sense of special status.³⁶ *Amata* was generically descriptive not technically terminological,³⁷ and the society it belonged to showed rather flat elite differentiation.³⁸ If it is true that the Persians pictured themselves as bees,³⁹ this expressed the same vision; and it is possible to see how Herodotus persuaded himself that the so-called Constitutional Debate was validated by Persian sources (3.80-83, 6.43).

We have come some way from Petit’s ceremony, and seen little to dispel initial doubts about

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34. The co-presence of the words in DB §§ 14 and 63 shows that they are not simply synonymous; since there were more kings in Darius’ *tauma* than the individuals named in his direct ascent line in §2, we may infer that *tauma* is the larger unit (*contra* Herrenschmidt 1976, Briant 1990: 79, Lecoq 1997: 170). This is consistent with use of *vith-* in words meaning ‘prince’ (cf. Vittman 1991/2: 159 for demotic attestation in CG 31174 of *vis(a)puthra, corresponding to *u-ma-su-pi-it-ru-ú* or *u-ma-as-pi-it-m-u* in BE 9.101, 10.15, an equivalent of *mar biti*, i.e. ‘son of the house’). The opening of DB amounts to a persuasive definition of Darius’ *tauma* as a royal family of Achaemenids (one including Cyrus and Cambyses), and Herodotus’ identification of the Achaemenids as a *phretre* is his attempt to capture the special character and importance of ‘Achaemenid’ as a category.
35. cf. Dandamaev 1981, Frame 1992: 230f.
36. DB §§ 13, 32, 42, 43, 47, 50 (Lie-King supporters); DB §13 (Darius’ helpers); DNB/XPL §2a (for OP *tunuva*, strong).
37. There is an odd resonance of the use of *azata* to mean both free and noble (de Blois 1985).
38. Rollinger 1998: 178 n.124, commenting on DB 3, says of *mar bane* that the author had to render specifically Persian *Gesellschaftsformen* with a Babylonian terminology that was insufficient. ‘Das Bemühen ist allerdings spürbar, einen besonders auszeichnenden gesellschaftlichen Status zu umreissen’. He does not comment on Šalup.
39. Roscalla 1998: 97-101. cf. the assertion (Hdt.7.61.2) that in ancient times the Greeks called Persians Kephenes (i.e. Drones) and an apparent allusion to the king of Assyria as a bee in *Isaiah* 7.18. Application of the image by Aeschylus to Xerxes in *Persae* 126-9 would reflect authentic Persian ideas, and one might also note the queen bee imagery in *Xen.Oec.* 7.17, 32-4, 38-9, which Pomeroy 1994: 240-2, 276-7 links to the Persian content of *Oec.4*. Can any of this cast light on the (?)bee that replaces an expected winged disk on a seal-image from Babylonia (Stolper 2001)?

his reading of the key text. What of its mediaeval overtones? I offer some bald assertions.⁴⁰

Ideally, a parallel established between two independently and plainly attested contexts could be used to explore ill-evidenced aspects of Achaemenid society. In fact, the utility of the postulated parallel is compromised by the part it plays in excavating the Achaemenid ritual in the first place.⁴¹ Another problem is that radically different discourses exist about the mediaeval world. Petit reflects a traditional discourse in which vassalage and feudal hierarchy were central to mediaeval society. But revisionism has questioned – indeed, pretty much rejected – this picture.⁴² Cross-period comparison thus becomes complex; and doubts about the applicability of traditional discourse across a wide geographical and chronological range evoke local and temporal variations that just make complexity even more complex.

One notes a contrast in the ritual gestures – *proskynesis* and hand-shaking as against a special manual act (vassal's hands between lord's hands) followed by a kiss. The mediaeval version suggests equality,⁴³ the Achaemenid one difference – and this in a context which could also be modelled in more egalitarian fashion. The ritual moment could, of course, be a suitable one to assert the alternative model, and if the ritual only operated (in Sekunda's terms) between king and duke and duke and knight, the egalitarian model might survive. But traditional discourse about feudalism has it over a larger number of levels. So the parallel is inexact, and the conclusion to be drawn unclear.

Less inexact, but troubling is another point. Reynolds insists there is no systematic terminology for homage and the supposed feudo-vassallic system (1994: 22ff). So the proposition that Petit's putative ritual does not map onto a stable technical vocabulary may not prove there was no ritual. But it does challenge its significance. No one is denying that rituals existed in the mediaeval environment, merely insisting that we should see them in a wider context of public representation of social relations. We can no more prove for Achaemenid times than mediaeval ones that a fixed ritual was confined to a specified situation.

Petit plays down fiefs and feudalism. This is unfair, as the putative fixed mediaeval ritual belongs to a larger traditional story about the fief-vassal nexus in mediaeval society; and his reason for dissociating Achaemenids from feudalism – that satraps' estates were not coterminous with territorial jurisdiction – makes assumptions questioned by revisionist discourse (Carolingian counts are not the only model) and may only show that Persia provides a different variety of feudo-vassal society. There is certainly an evidential gap here: the tenure of noble estates – e.g. the large entities within which Babylonian bow-land and *hatrus* lay (Stolper 1985) – generally elude surviving documentation. That Sekunda 1988 postulated dukes and knights and Stolper 1985 spoke of Babylonian 'manors' shows how beguiling the mediaeval analogy is: evidence for homage ceremonial might validate such talk

40. I am greatly indebted to my Liverpool colleague Marios Costambeys for assistance with historical material far outside my competence and (I am minded to think) far more complicated than most of what an Achaemenid historian usually has to contend with. Dr Costambeys bears no responsibility for any misuse of his advice of which I may be guilty.

41. It is a curious coincidence that an early piece of evidence for mediaeval commendation into vassalage concerns the return to submission of an erstwhile rebel, the nephew of Pippin (Reynolds 1994: 86, 98).

42. cf. Brown 1974, Reynolds 1994. See more generally Little & Rosenwein 1998: Part 2 (Feudalism and its Alternatives).

43. cf. Bloch 1961: 228, 446f.

– after all Petit explicitly envisages an investiture ceremony between ‘duke’ Spithridates and his 200 ‘knights’. Homage could exist independently of fief-holding⁴⁴ but – granted solid evidence for Achaemenid homage – it might seem hypercritical to detach it from the evidence for estate-holding. Solid evidence, however, is what we do not have.

Traditional accounts of feudalism located its emergence in post-Carolingian state-collapse, weak monarchy and privatised power.⁴⁵ This hardly sounds like the Achaemenid world. Anti-mutationists doubt there was any such clear cut change during the ‘long tenth century’,⁴⁶ while Reynolds actually affirms that the least bad fit between real conditions and the traditional feudal-vassal account came two centuries later amidst re-asserted royal power and the development of bureaucracy.⁴⁷ This actually sounds more like the Achaemenid world. But there is a contrast between a mediaeval system in which central control was eventually re-asserted by re-packaging a mess of existing property relations via artificial legal re-definition (producing a rule-bound feudal hierarchy that is a theoretical construct-after-the-event, not the key to thirteenth century political society) and an Achaemenid one in which existing tenure-service models are used to appropriate the fruits of victory in newly-conquered territory. Revisionist discourse insists that the status of the free men (noble or otherwise) as subjects of a supereminent king was far more important than their status as his or anyone’s vassals (e.g. Reynolds 1994: 46, 1997: 259f), and that horizontal social relationships occupied as much attention as vertical ones.⁴⁸ I think this applies to the Persians too, but in an era of imperial expansion the fief-vassal nexus could still be more significant than revisionists concede even for the thirteenth century.⁴⁹

Finally, feudalism evokes knighthood and incorporation of a warrior-mentality into systems of government. The Achaemenid resonance is debatable, since it is hard to assess how far we are there dealing with a warrior society.⁵⁰ On the other hand, many reject a romance-fuelled view of mediaeval knighthood anyway, so the distance may not be so great after all. But reducing distance does not make parallel. Achaemenid times reserved a far more important place for infantrymen than did the Middle Ages; Persian military ethos potentially

44. Revisionist discourse is insistent upon this; but it is true in more traditional discourse as well, if you go far enough back into the early mediaeval period.

45. Brief summary: Reuter 1999: 17f. Full exposition: Poly & Bournazel 1991.

46. See Barthélemy 1997. Some salient points are summarised in Barthélemy 1998.

47. Reynolds 1994: 74-5, 478f, Little & Rosenstein 1998: 111.

48. Hence examination of dispute-resolution or dispute avoidance in (relatively) local historical documents and wider evocations of the peasant communities attract more interest than feudal hierarchy: see Davies & Fouracre 1986, Althoff 2004.

49. When Reynolds 1994: 158 says that the combination of power politics and customary law will explain the relations of subjection that most 10-11th c. landowners found themselves in and that we do not need to bring grants of property on restricted terms or the personal submission of commendation into the issue, she says something that *mutatis mutandis* may apply to many people in the Persian Empire, but not necessarily to those whose property ownership derived from the *caesura* of Persian conquest.

50. Mitigation of that model in monumental royal iconography faces many counter-indicators, starting with the sweeping military successes of the first half-century of the empire’s existence and going on to the prominence of the horseman in non-royal funerary iconography and the presence of various armed figures on seals and coins. Fighting skills are part of the *curriculum vitae* of the elite Persian – witness Darius’ tomb-inscription (DNb §2g) or Herodotus’ assessment of the value put on bravery and of the content of Persian education (1.136) – but can we be sure that elite Persians felt set apart primarily on that ground?

affected a quite different functional and social variety of individuals. The world of the Immortals is radically different from that of the knight in shining armour.

To conclude. (a) The case for Petit's ceremony turns out to be quite vulnerable. (b) Persian society did not work in way implicit in any substantive version of Petit's thesis; people knew their place, but it was characteristically defined by function or in relation to the king. Perception of satraps as quasi-kings, if valid, reinforces this proposition: satrapal society is an image of royal society, not the next step of a hierarchical cascade. The Persian *ethno-classe dominante* affected some homogeneity, and it is hard to show this was a wholly misleading mask for external consumption. (c) This view is not undermined by any parallel between Petit's putative ceremony and mediaeval *commendatio*, because *commendatio* need have no major structural role and (more generally) because the mediaeval world of territorial monarchies is so far removed from the huge but unitary Achaemenid imperial state.

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