



the sixth year; after the eclipse, Herodotos (1.74.3) remarked, both sides were somewhat more eager for peace, *τῆς μάχης τε ἐπαύσαντο καὶ μᾶλλον τι ἔσπευσαν καὶ ἀμφοτέρω ἐιρήνην ἐωυτοῖσι γενέσθαι*, but it is noteworthy that he does not state that the eclipse brought all hostilities to an end. Peace was brought, he remarks, by the diplomatic intervention of Syennesis the Kilikian and *Ναβύνητος*, Naby-netos (Nabun'aid; the name is given as *Λαβύνητος* in all manuscripts of Herodotos) the Babylonian,<sup>1</sup> and the treaty was sealed by the marriage of Astyages to Aryenis, daughter of Alyattes. Elsewhere (1.103.2) Herodotos again declares that the eclipse battle was fought in the reign of Kyaxares, and (1.16.2) that the Median opponent of Alyattes was Kyaxares. He also intends the reader to understand that there were after the treaty no hostilities between the Lydians and the Medians, by his remark that one reason why Kroisos attacked was his desire to avenge Astyages, *καὶ τείσασθαι θέλων ὑπὲρ Ἀστυάγεος Κῦρον* (1.73.1), and by his emphasis upon the strength of the marriage tie between Astyages and Aryenis. From Herodotos alone therefore it would be just to assert: (1) the Lydo-Median treaty was made not long after the eclipse battle; (2) Kyaxares was king of Media when in the sixth year of the war the eclipse battle was fought; (3) there were no hostilities between Lydia and Media from the time of the treaty to the overthrow of Astyages by Kyros.

No doubt with Herodotos in mind, Professor Page<sup>2</sup> in his publication of the new text remarks: "The 'war between Astyages and Alyattes' seems not to be recorded elsewhere." That is, however, not true. For, firstly, Cicero declares, in the *De Divinatione* (1.49.112), *Et quidem idem (Thales) defectionem solis, quae Astyage regnante facta est, praedixisse fertur*. Now the eclipse said to have been predicted by Thales was that which helped to bring the Lydo-Median war to a close (Herodotos 1.74.2). Cicero's statement therefore implies that Astyages was king of Media before the end of that war and contradicts the remarks of Herodotos that the eclipse battle was fought in the reign of Kyaxares. Secondly, other writers mention a war between Alyattes and As-

<sup>1</sup> At the time of the battle, 585 B.C., the king of Babylonia was Nebuchadrezzar, not Naby-netos/Nabonidus. Herodotos is often considered to have made a mistake here: but Naby-netos may have acted as agent for Nebuchadrezzar, as R. P. Dougherty pointed out (*Nabonidus and Belshazzar* [New Haven 1929] 35). Note also that king Naby-netos is said to have had a father of the same name (Herodotos 1.188.1): Herodotos may mean the father here.

<sup>2</sup> *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Part XXIX (London 1963) p. 45 note.

tyages. The Armenian version of the Eusebian Canon (p. 187 Karst) under Olympiad 49, 2 (583/2 B.C.) declares, "Die Sonne ward verfinstert nach Thales des Weisen Vorausverkündigung. Aliates und Aždahak (= Astyages) lieferten eine Schlacht"; and again under Olympiad 51, 2 (574/3), "Aždahak lieferte gegen die Lyder einen heftigen Kampf." Jerome dates the eclipse said to have been predicted by Thales in 586/5 B.C. (p. 177 Fotheringham); then mentions fighting between Astyages and Alyattes in 582/1 (Ol. 49, 3: *Alyattes et Astyages dimicaverunt*); and later states under 577/6: *Astyages contra Lydos pugnat* (Fotheringham p. 178).<sup>3</sup>

The Armenian version cannot be reconciled with Herodotos' statement that Kyaxares was king at the time of the eclipse battle, nor can Cicero's remarks. Moreover, Eusebius and Jerome both believed that there was fighting between Astyages and Alyattes and both claimed that the Lydo-Median war continued for some time, at least nine years, after the eclipse battle. It is the order of events which is significant here; the exact dates the chronographers offer do not here concern us, but in view of the evidence in *POxy.* 2506 fr. 98 that a war between Astyages and Alyattes was mentioned by Alcaeus, the repeated statements that Astyages and Alyattes were at war deserve attention.<sup>4</sup> It now appears most unlikely that Jerome and the Armenian version (or their source) have simply confused Astyages with Kyaxares.

### *The Problem*

The problem then is this: can the evidence for a war between Astyages and Alyattes be reconciled with Herodotos? Obviously it can if Astyages conducted the war on behalf of his father, who by 585 B.C., the year of the eclipse, may have been well advanced in years, since he had already been engaged in fighting the Skythians ca. 610 B.C. But this solution is too facile a compromise and cannot be presented *tout court*. For, as Grote insisted,<sup>5</sup> Cicero believed that at the time of the eclipse battle Astyages was already king: his words are ". . . defectionem solis, quae Astyage regnante facta est," and the manuscripts are, it seems, unanimous in giving the name Astyages.

<sup>3</sup> See also H. Kaletsch, *Historia* 7 (1958) 17.

<sup>4</sup> The papyrus has *διὰ τὸ συνίστασθ[αι] πόλεμον*. The words do not prove that a Lydo-Median war broke out under Astyages: they may mean that the war begun by Kyaxares was continued by his son. In Herodotos 7.225, for instance, *τοῦτο δὲ συνεστήκεε* means 'the battle went on. . .'

<sup>5</sup> *History of Greece*, Everyman Edition, vol. 4 p. 29 note.

Moreover Herodotos does state that Kyaxares *fought* (μαχεσάμενος) in the eclipse battle. The only eclipse suited to the data of Herodotos is that of 28th May 585 B.C. (Oppolzer No. 1489),<sup>6</sup> which late in the day was total near the Halys in central Asia Minor: to have made so great an impression on the two armies it must have been total and the belt of totality must have passed over the territory between the Lydian and Median empires. It is true that Cicero does not say that the eclipse took place during the Lydo-Median war, so that it might be argued that another eclipse, not that of 28th May 585 B.C., was meant: however, no total eclipse was visible in Asia Minor during the reign of Astyages ca. 585 to 550 B.C. except that of 28th May 585 B.C.; and even if Cicero's words are not taken as evidence for a war between Astyages and the Lydians, the statements of the chronographers and of *POxy.* 2506 fr. 98 provide ample proof that such a war was believed to have been fought.<sup>7</sup>

Our problem is thus to decide whether Kyaxares had died by May 585 B.C. or Herodotos was correct in stating that he was king at the time of the eclipse battle. Herodotos himself, if he thought the matter out, may have supposed that the eclipse was much earlier than 585 B.C. because in 1.130.1 he can be taken to give Astyages a reign of 35 years from ca. 594 to ca. 559, and mistakenly to date the overthrow of Astyages to the time of Kyros' accession.<sup>8</sup> But Astyages fell in ca. 550 B.C., in the sixth year of Nabonidus of Babylon; and if the thirty-five years assigned to his reign are approximately correct then Astyages came to the throne about 585 B.C. The number 35 in Herodotos (1.130.1) is not however impeccable, and cuneiform sources do not help to fix the accession date of Astyages.

### *Suggested Solution*

A solution which does least violence to Herodotos and to the

<sup>6</sup> *Canon of Eclipses* (Dover Ed. 1962) p. 60.

<sup>7</sup> Apollodoros dated the fortieth year of Thales in 585/4 B.C. for he gave the year of his birth as 624/3 B.C. (*FGrHist* 244 F 28): the chronographer almost certainly therefore dated the eclipse correctly to the nearest year. The date 585 for the eclipse recurs in Pliny, *NH* 2.12. See also F. Jacoby's Commentary on Apollodoros *loc.cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Hellenistic chronographers, followed by Eusebius, may have taken Herodotos' words in that sense (see Kaletsch, *Historia* 7 [1958] 20–23), but I am not sure that we have to follow them in convicting Herodotos of chronological inconsistency. He placed the accession of Kyros in ca. 558 (Kaletsch *op.cit.* 9), but in 1.130.1 is speaking of the Persian's rule over Media, which was conquered some time after Kyros became king of the Persians. H. Strasburger (*Historia* 5 [1956] 136) also supposes that Astyages, according to Herodotos, ceased to reign in 559.

remaining evidence may be set out as follows: (1) Kyaxares was king of Media *ca.* 590 at the beginning of the Lydo-Median war. (2) He died during the war. (3) Astyages conducted the war, after the death of Kyaxares; but (4) it is not certain whether Kyaxares or Astyages was king of Media at the time of the eclipse said to have been predicted by Thales. (5) Astyages was already king, no longer crown prince, when he married Aryenis, daughter of Alyattes. (6) There were no hostilities after the marriage.

### *Speculations*

We can now return to *POxy.* 2506 fr. 98. In the damaged lines above the names of Astyages and Alyattes it is apparent that Alcaeus mentioned Antimenidas his brother in the context of a 'Second Exile' and an 'Action at the Bridge'. The expression π[ρὸς] τῆι γεφύρῃ is Ionic, but gives no evidence that the 'Action', *παράταξις*, took place in Ionia (*Gephyre* could, as Mr W. G. Forrest points out, be a place name—hence, perhaps, the Ionic form was preserved). Next the papyrus shows that some people claimed that Alcaeus did not die in a certain Action (which may not be the same as the 'Action at the Bridge'); they held that the poet returned a third time from exile, his homecoming having something to do with the war between Astyages and Alyattes. The commentator is very reasonably supposed by Page (*The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Part XXIX, p. 44) to have referred to Alcaeus' mention of his brother in connexion with the 'Second Exile' and the 'Action at the Bridge' in order to refute an opinion that Antimenidas died before those events.

Unfortunately the remains of the commentary do not make clear whether or not the 'Action at the Bridge' was an engagement in the Lydo-Median war: we cannot therefore profitably enquire whether the Bridge was one of those across the Halys, which Herodotos (1.75.3) thought to have existed not later than the Pterian campaign of Kroisos in *ca.* 547 B.C.; but in the Lydo-Median war *ca.* 585 B.C. the Halys crossing of the Royal Road must already have been strategically important.<sup>9</sup> It is quite possible that Antimenidas, after his return

<sup>9</sup> Concerning the early importance of the Royal Road see especially W. M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (London 1890) 29. In the context of the Royal Road we may perhaps look in the papyrus for Asianic place names. In line 19 *περὶ τὰ* calls to mind *Τάουιον* on the road east of the Halys bridge. *ἐν*[.]*τ*[ in line 15 conceals a place name: there was an *'Ορμιστός* west of the Halys on the road in Phrygia, but the papyrus hardly leaves room for the name. Other supplements are of course possible (*cf.* Page, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Part XXIX, p. 45). Unfortunately there is no certainty that ]*εφ*[ in line 16 conceals ]*γεφύρῃ vel. sim.*

from mercenary service *ca.* 600 to 590 B.C. in Palestine,<sup>10</sup> fought in the Lydo-Median war, and the 'Action at the Bridge' may even have been at the Halys: but the speculation is without profit. Besides, the papyrus mentions the 'Action at the Bridge' before the outbreak of war between Astyages and Alyattes: thus the action may not have been part of that war.

Another hint that Alcaeus was interested in fighting in the interior of Asia Minor is however given in *POxy.* 2506 fr. 77, where somebody is said to have met death grievously struck by the blows of the Allienes, ὁ-|π Ἀλλιήνων. The termination looks, as Page says, Asiatic and there were two Phrygian places called Alia; but there is no evidence that the engagement was an episode in the Lydo-Median war.

#### *Conclusion*

It appears that the war between Alyattes and the Medes, which was in its sixth year in 585 B.C., was carried on by Astyages after his father's death. We do not know that either Alcaeus or Antimenidas fought in the Lydo-Median war, but it is plain that a Hellenistic scholar (perhaps Apollodoros), whom Eusebius and Jerome followed, had evidence, not given by Herodotos, that there was fighting between Astyages and Alyattes about a decade after the eclipse battle. As the new Alcaeus commentary shows, the evidence may well have been of the highest quality, namely the testimony of the aging poet himself.<sup>11</sup>

THE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY OF BELFAST  
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<sup>10</sup> For possible dates of his service in the Near East see D. L. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* (Oxford 1955) 224.

<sup>11</sup> I thank M. W. G. Forrest for helpful comments on a draft of this paper.