

3.61, The Magos Who Is Not Smerdis

We first hear about the upstart magoi-brothers at 3.61.1. One of them (M¹) is the *éminence grise* behind the plot. The other (M²) is not only a dead ringer for Smerdis son of Kyros but actually has the very same name; τοῦτον τὸν ἄνδρα, H. continues at 61.3, ἀναγνώσας ὁ μάγος Πατιζειίθης ὡς οἱ αὐτὸς πάντα διαπρήξει, εἶσε ἄγων ἐς τὸν βασιλῆιον θρόνον.

So M¹, we now learn, is called ‘Patizeithes’. Stein comments ‘Auffällig daß der Name erst hier genannt wird’. Powell (critical note to his translation) agreed, and decided H. must have named him on first appearance, so ‘restoring’ τὸν ἕτερον <Πατιζειίθεα> at 61.1. De Sélincourt translated accordingly; and Marincola’s revision allows it to stand.

It would indeed be odd to name this important villain so late in the story. But this is not the only oddity. Just as odd is that when he is named, at 61.3, he is named so casually – ‘ὁ μάγος Πατιζειίθης’.¹

And equally odd is that M¹ is only ever named once again: by Prexaspes, at 63.4.

But oddest by far, to conclude this priamel, is the fact that quite apart from the issue of nomenclature H. has a particularly distinctive way of referring to M¹:

61.1, authorial narrative: ἐπανιστέαται ἄνδρες μάγοι δύο ἀδελφοί, **τῶν τὸν ἕτερον κατελελοίπεε τῶν οἰκίων μελεδωνόν ὁ Καμβύσης.**

63.2, the Persian messenger in Egypt: ‘ὁ δέ μοι μάγος, **τὸν Καμβύσης ἐπίτροπον τῶν οἰκίων ἀπέδεξε,** οὗτος ταῦτα ἐνετείλατο.’

63.4, Prexaspes works out what must have happened: ‘ἐγὼ μοι δοκέω συνιέναι τὸ γεγονός τοῦτο, ὃ βασιλεῦ· οἱ μάγοι εἰσί τοι <οἱ> ἐπανεστεῶτες, **τόν τε ἔλιπες μελεδωνόν τῶν οἰκίων Πατιζειίθης** καὶ ὁ τούτου ἀδελφεὸς Σμέρδης.’

65.5, Kambyses’ great deathbed speech: ‘οἱ δὲ ὑμῖν μάγοι κρατέουσι τῶν βασιληίων, **τόν τε ἔλιπον ἐπίτροπον τῶν οἰκίων** καὶ ὁ ἐκείνου ἀδελφεὸς Σμέρδης.’

It seems to me that in repeatedly employing this periphrastic circumlocution H. is doing something peculiar and unusual, and the only explanation I can think of is that *he does not know a name for him*.² ‘The magos whom Kambyses left in charge of the palace’ is a description which acquires a nicely sinister and suggestive aura through its very imprecision. An actual name would *spoil it*;

¹Powell – for whom of course this is his *second* naming – proposed deletion of ὁ μάγος.

²Or perhaps, just, on the Herostratos principle, that he refuses to use it. Dareios had no such compunction at Behistun; but might H., who knows that naming is faming, be using the Herostratos principle on D.’s behalf?

it would negate the whole point.

‘Patizeithes’, then, which could have been used a dozen times but is used on only two occasions – neither, as we have seen, where it should naturally have been introduced – will be a marginal note, which has twice invaded the text, added by some learned and influential scholar who believed himself to have tracked down the name.³

Or rather, the *title*. Modern scholars from How & Wells through Legrand (83n1) to Asheri are in agreement that the word is to be linked with the modern *Padishah*, defined by the *OED* as ‘A Persian title, taken as equivalent to ‘Great King’ or ‘Emperor’; applied in Persia to the Shah, in Europe usually to the Sultan of Turkey, in India ... to the Great Mogul, and (before 1948) by natives to the sovereign of Great Britain as Emperor of India; also extended by Orientals to other European monarchs.’ Asheri gives references for a hypothetical original **pati-khšayathia*.⁴ The ancient annotator probably knew this, and when he wrote in his margin or his hypomnema ‘patizeithes’ he was glossing μελεδωνὸν τῶν οἰκίων, ‘Comptroller of the Royal Household’, perhaps ‘Vice-regent’.⁵ Only later was it misunderstood as a proper name.⁶

The word can be deleted without loss, and indeed with improvement of the general run of the text, in both cases.⁷

What other examples of allusive anonymity like this (apart from women)? ‘The man with the tattooed head’, 5.35.2 (OK, he’s a slave, we don’t want or need to know his name). Much better: the thief who plagued Rhampsinitos (2.121), never named.⁸

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³Compare 1.71.2 ‘His name was Sandanis’, expelled by Jacoby [where? *RE?*] and spurned by Rosén, though not by Asheri; Legrand inclines rather to think the phrase misplaced.

⁴The preposition *pati* (equivalent of Greek ποτί, πρὸς) readily forms noun-compounds, inc. the toponym Patigrabanā and the tribal name Pātiš^huvari; see Kent 194f. The second component would be from the root *xšāyathiya-*, ‘king, rule’; and a verb *pati-xšay-*, ‘have lordship over’, is actually attested, *ibid.* 181.

⁵So why wasn’t it opposite 61.1, not here?

⁶Difficult to say how this reconstruction might relate to the allegation in the Hdt. scholia that ‘Dionysios of Miletos said this man was called Πανξοῦθης [*sic*]’ (687 F *2). On Dionysios, see K Meister in *OCD*³.

⁷At 61.3 ὁ μάγος is quite adequate: M¹ is ‘the magos’ *par excellence*, the one who gave the orders to the messenger at 62.2 and 63.2. Later H. switches to a Behistun-type ‘mono-magic’ model, but we are not there yet.

⁸I suspect because the story was actually told of Amasis; see Griffiths 2001.