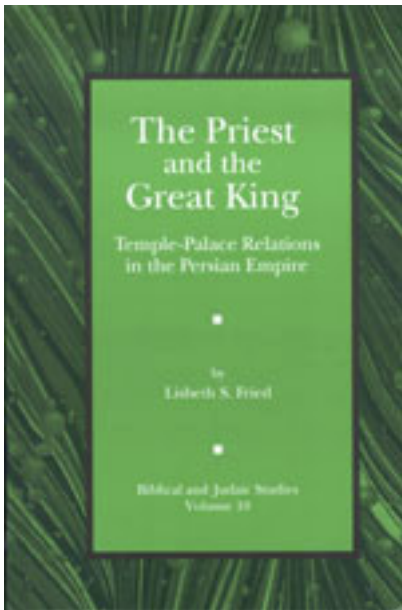


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**Fried, Lisbeth S.**

***The Priest and the Great King: Temple-Palace Relations in the Persian Empire***

Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego 10

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Lisbeth Fried's *The Priest and the Great King* is an ambitious monograph in the Biblical and Judaic Studies series from the University of California, San Diego. The subject of Fried's inquiry is the nature of the relationship between the Achaemenid administration and temples throughout the empire. Fried examines this relationship in order to determine the system of imperial governance and control in Achaemenid Persian Empire, especially with a view to the situation in Yehud. Particularly, Fried is concerned to evaluate the relative merits of three major theories: (1) the bureaucratic model of imperial control proposed by Eisenstadt, which assumes that empires exercise strict control over their territories in order to ensure that resources are directed from the periphery toward the center and concomitantly do not allow local elites to cultivate power and control local resources; (2) the theory of imperial authorization for local customs and norms commonly associated with Frei and Koch; and (3) the theory of self-governance that posits limited exercise of control from an imperial center except to ensure that taxation runs smoothly. In the introduction, Fried anticipates her own conclusion that Eisenstadt's theory best explains Achaemenid imperialism. Although her initial research may not have been conceived in this way, there is a sense in the monograph that this early hypothesis shapes the conclusion with the evidence filtered to achieve the desired result.

Still, it is impressive the way that Fried considers and goes about her task. Rather than limiting the analysis to the situation in Yehud, Fried assumes that the relationship between the Achaemenid administration and the Jerusalem temple was likely similar to the relationships between the Achaemenid administration and temples in other parts of the empire—an eminently reasonable proposition. As such, Fried sets out to “examine the three hypotheses against archival and inscriptional data from the temples of the western satrapies of Babylon, Egypt, and Asia Minor” (6). In the course of this analysis, Fried sifts through an awesome catalogue of primary texts. On that basis alone, Fried ought to be commended and this monograph considered a worthwhile addition to professional or personal libraries. On the other hand, it also makes the task of evaluating Fried’s evidence very difficult: requiring the expertise of an Assyriologist, Egyptologist, a specialist in Achaemenid Asia Minor, and a biblicalist.

In analyzing temple-palace relations in Babylonia, Fried primarily surveys the archival data from the temples of Eanna at Uruk and Ebabbar at Sippar. Fried notes that the extant archives are mostly limited to the Neo-Babylonian period and the early Achaemenid period to Darius and that they contain seemingly banal commercial and economic information. She analyzes this data for its most salient contributions to the problem at hand: the identity of the temple personnel, their relationship to the central administration, and the nature of the allocation of resources. Fried concludes that the highest positions in the temple were appointments of the central administration or responsible to it, either directly to the Great King or his satrapal governor, and that the Achaemenids stopped payments to the temples so that the resources flowed only one way, from temple to palace. This, she argues, comports with Eisenstadt’s theory of imperial control rather than the other theories of imperial authorization and self-governance.

Apart from the conclusions themselves, Fried rightly observes that the situation in Babylonia, as a satrapy near to the central administration in Persia, may not reflect the situation throughout the rest of the empire, especially in peripheral regions. As such, Fried’s next discusses temple-palace relations in Egypt. In contrast to the situation in Babylonia, Fried observes that there is a greater wealth of archival material. Her analysis starts with a general overview of the native Pharaonic administration of the temples in the pre-Achaemenid periods and then continues with the impact of the Persian administration. She argues that the great majority of temples in Egypt fell into disrepair and did not receive support from the Persian government. Those that remained were subject to strict oversight by the Persian satrap and legal systems. Fried reaches this latter conclusion primarily on an interpretation of texts from Elephantine, those of the priests of Khnum as well as the Jewish community.

The next geographical domain for Fried's analysis is Asia Minor. In this chapter she scrutinizes five major inscriptions that she considers representative: Darius's Letter to Gadatas, a stela describing a border dispute between Miletus and Myus, the Donation of Droaphernes, a decree of Mylasa against the opponents of Mausolus, and the Trilingual Inscription of Xanthus. In each case, Fried provides the text, an evaluation of the date, place, and purpose of the inscription, and the relevant historical context for it. It is noteworthy that Fried defends the authenticity of the inscription of Darius's Letter to Gadatas, which has been the subject of some dispute. Again, Fried concludes that the inscriptions are inconsistent with the theories of imperial authorization and self-governance and consistent with Eisenstadt's theory of imperial control.

At this point the monograph turns to the subject of temple-palace relations in Yehud. In this last chapter Fried starts out with an overview of the sources, in particular their different character as literary rather than archival or inscriptional sources, and provides an analysis of the temple-building project in light of the broader ancient Near Eastern typology to which it conforms. This is followed by a consideration of the ideological presentation of Cyrus in Isaiah as well as a systematic analysis of the governance in Yehud. The last sections of the chapter are an interpretation of the missions of Nehemiah and Ezra as well as later developments in light of the Eisenstadt bureaucratic model. Naturally at this point, Fried is concerned to show that the situation in the rest of the empire, as argued in the previous chapters, applies to the situation in Yehud.

In general, the monograph is characterized by a lucid and easily readable writing style. The organization, in particular, is excellent with chapters and subdivisions that follow logically and consistently with the overall direction of the argument. The synthetic, macro-level approach is also very appealing, especially when scholarship seems increasingly focused on finer points and ever-narrower specialties. In pursuing such an approach, however, Fried suffers from one of the characteristic problems in any such study, namely, the tendency to homogenize. She posits a very monolithic and static administrative system that changes neither with time, geography, or strategic interests.

Also, this reader could not help but feel that Fried is not so much concerned to evaluate the three hypotheses as she is to prove that Eisenstadt's model is the correct one. This in turn creates a certain suspicion that Fried is not always fairly representing scholars such as Frei and Koch, Briant, and Dandamaev. Indeed, in considering the work of these scholars, there is a distinctive element of the argument that Fried appears largely to ignore. In the overall structure of the argument, Fried and these scholars are not all that dissimilar. They would all agree, for example, that the Achaemenids imposed Persian administrators throughout the empire and that these administrators could exert considerable control over their territories—the point to which Fried goes to considerable

lengths to prove. Where these scholars diverge, however, is on the question of internal autonomy, and Fried seems not to appreciate the nuance(s) implied by her colleagues on this question. Rather, she argues that the adjudication of various disputes by Persian administrators, as reflected in the many archival and inscriptional texts she analyzes, proves the lack of autonomy. Yet the evidence of the very privileges and rights claimed in these disputes by the parties may very well serve as an indicator that, in the absence of any disputes, the parties otherwise enjoyed a significant degree of internal autonomy. The Persian adjudication is the attempt to reconcile the autonomy of two or more parties, obviously to the satisfaction of the Great King. Also, the simple fact that the Persian administration did not require allegiance to its religious system in the provinces further suggests a degree of internal autonomy, which Fried never really addresses in the monograph. Finally, because Fried limits herself to temple-palace relations, she does not consider other political relationships that bear on her evaluation of the Eisenstadt bureaucratic model, whereas these are taken into consideration by the scholars she disputes. Notably, there is no discussion, for example, of the Eshmunazer Sarcophagus Inscription, which testifies to a situation that significantly undermines Fried's thesis of a homogenous administration that exerted strict control everywhere in the empire through governors and temple appointments. Indeed, the political situation in the Phoenician cities, and also within the Qedarite Arabic kingdom, in this period ought to bear on Fried's analysis.

Overall, there is no question that Fried's monograph deserves careful attention by those who are interested in the Achaemenid Persian period and specifically the issue of temple-palace relations in Yehud and throughout the empire. Her analysis is an important contribution to the ongoing debate about imperial control and the state of autonomy of subject peoples during this period.