We can see the cylinder of Cyrus (II) as a fragment of history which, evidently, gives rise to many questions. It is an object rich of personality. The genitive “of Cyrus” commonly used both in exhibition labels and academic studies seems to suggest that it belonged personally to Cyrus, a sense amplified by the perception of oneness of such artifact. By the way, we don’t know if Cyrus ever saw the Cylinder. Surely he knew the message of the text and, maybe, some parts of it were publicly declaimed by the king himself. Notwithstanding this, most probably it was not Cyrus to compile it, even if the king is speaking in the first person in the text, just like our statesmen in Italy read speeches written by their ghostwriters. This is not a blame for Cyrus. Rather it shows the existence of an organized state apparatus, in which there was a chancellery with a well-defined political discourse and a well-tested communication practice.

It is somewhat astounding to find a medieval fresco depicting Cyrus as a luxuriant vine in a cloister in Northern Italy, among the green valleys of the Alps. Herodotus related the dream of the Median king Astyages, according to which his daughter should have given birth to a vine – her son Cyrus – covering the whole Asia. The cloister is in Bressanone, and the fresco is dated to the 15th century BC. (It is a mere assonance, but it is curious that the city of Bressanone is named Persenù in Ladin, a vernacular language of the area.)
At the Bagatti Valsecchi house museum in Milan, we can find even 16th century tapestries with four episodes of the cycle known as Stories of Cyrus. On a tapestry, below the figure of Cyrus in throne, this motto is embroidered: ‘war brings fame, but a kingdom is founded on justice and liberality’.

Therefore, both on tapestries and in a fresco in Italy, Cyrus is a positive figure, image of the enlightened monarch, whose reign brings peace and justice: exactly the same message of the Cylinder. It is interesting to note that both the Bible (above all Isaiah 45) and Herodotus (Histories I) concurred, with their different traditions and perspectives, in moulding this image of Cyrus in the West. Two episodes of the Stories at the Bagatti Valsecchi museum are related to the battle against the Massagetae as recounted by Herodotus, while the other two, concerning the edict in favour of the Hebrew people, are from the Bible.

(Marginally, one of the most venerated saints in Naples, where is located our University, bears the name Cyrus. He was a physician from Alexandria in Egypt and died around 300 AD; probably
he took the name from the Achaemenid king, eight centuries after the son of Cyrus conquered Egypt. Even today, the name Cyrus (Ciro in Italian) is widely attested among Neapolitan people."

Coming back to the Bible, the passages related to Cyrus are especially focused on the royal chancellery and its communication practice. In the Bible book of Ezra 1:1 it is stated that Cyrus, in order to communicate his royal will, ‘had (causative verbal form) the (i.e. his) voice (qol) spread and also (gam) in (be) writing (miktab)’, i.e. with an edict. Then follow, in a somewhat pleonastic way, the usual introductory formula ‘Thus Cyrus said’. This form is widely attested in the books of the Bible; it is well-known also from the Achaemenid inscriptions, since Darius the Great on (θατι dārayavaš xšāyāt̥a). In the book of Ezra 1:8, we read that ‘Cyrus, the king of Persia, had some vessels (keli, a generic term) brought out (yaša’) and counted (safar) by the treasurer (gezbar) in front of (le) the prince of Judah’. The word for treasurer, gezbar, elsewhere gizzavar, is a loanword from Old Persian *ganza-bara-; the name of the treasurer, Mithredat, is clearly Iranian (*miθradāta), too. The vessels were, precisely, ‘at (’al) the hand (yad) of the treasurer’. This expression is a reminder of Aramaic lyd, attested on the Aramaic texts on stone vessels from Takht-e Jamshid, in turn a calque of Akkadian ša qat and, perhaps, of Elamite kurman (if kurman in the administrative documents from Takht-e Jamshid is connected to the word kurpi ‘hands’ in the Bisotun inscription). The translation given above is a literal one: obviously, the meaning has to be transposed, so ‘at the hand’ means ‘under the responsibility of’, ‘to bring out’ means ‘to release’, and ‘to count in front of’ means ‘to attest’ or the like.

More words should be spent on the asserted oneness of the Cylinder. First of all, it is certainly not unique for its shape and material: clay cylinders are attested in several instances from Mesopotamia.

| Period                | Site Foundation Deposits | Pitha Foundation Deposits | Human Burial Deposits | Animal Burial Deposits | Pigeon | Sheep | Goat | Pig | Cattle | Horse | Camel | Chaff | Clay | Plaster | Terracotta | Urn | Cylinder | Plaque | Vessel | Obelisk | Priest | Chalice | Cheesepipe | Cylinder & Mask | Other Deposits |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------|------|------|-----|--------|-------|-------|-------|------|---------|---------|-----|---------|--------|-------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| Parthian              |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Seleucid              |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Achaemenid            |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Neo-Babylonian        |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Neo-Assyrian          |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian |             |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Old Babylonian        |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Old Assyrian          |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Neo-Sumerian          |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Akkad     |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Early Dynastic III   |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Early Dynastic II    |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Early Dynastic I     |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| Post Dynastic        |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |
| ‘Uziel’              |                         |                           |                       |                        |        |      |      |     |        |       |       |       |      |         |         |     |         |        |       |        |        |         |         |         |

Key: — not attested; ? uncertain; the width of each vertical bar is proportional to the frequency of the practice.

(Ellis, Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia, fig. 36)

Going back in time, two cylinders of Gudea, the Sumerian sovereign of the 22nd century BC, are known. A four-sided prism (i.e. a parallelepiped of clay, similar to a standing quadrangular stone), ca. 30 cm high, provides a chronological list of the Larsa dynasty (20th-18th century BC).
In the neo-Assyrian period, pentagonal, hexagonal, octagonal and decagonal prisms were also used for writing royal inscriptions. Barrel cylinders and prisms of Sargon II (four cylinders with the same text from Khorsabad, prisms A and B from Niniveh), Sennacherib (Bellino and Rassam cylinders, Taylor prism), Esarhaddon (Eanna cylinder, various prisms) and Assurbanipal (Rassam cylinder and many others) are known. Prisms are well attested for Esarhaddon while cylinders were especially used for Assurbanipal.

But especially in the neo-Babylonian period, i.e. just few decades before Cyrus, the barrel cylinder seems to have been the favourite support for royal inscriptions. From the last Babylonian king Nabonidus we have ca. 20 royal inscriptions written on cylinders, some known by several exemplars. They are collected by the German assyriologist Hanspeter Schaudig in his comprehensive study on Nabonidus and Cyrus inscriptions published in 2001.

The inscriptions on cylinders and prisms attracted the interest of scholars for their richness both for the study of language and history. For example, Giovanni V. Schiaparelli, the famous Italian astronomer and historian of sciences who died exactly a hundred years ago, used the text of the so-called “Taylor prism” of Sennacherib to study cuneiform (Archivio della Specola di Brera, A 427/002 SCH).

Even if poorly attested, barrel cylinders were used also at Shush by the Achaemenid king Darius. Fragments attest that the building inscription DSf was written on such a support at least in its Elamite and Babylonian versions (DSf/AE 09 and DSf/AB 024-026 in MDP 53). Otherwise, Darius, Xerxes and Artaxerxes (I) seem to have preferred the stone table (DSz/AE and DSaa/AB, XPf/OPa, A1Pb/AB) or metal plaque (DPh) as a support for their inscriptions actually placed in building deposits.
Leaping after Cyrus, in post Achaemenid times, even Antiochus I Soter (c. 324-261 BC), the Seleucid king, had his cylinder written; it was found in Borsippa, c. 18 km South-West of Babylon.

Cylinders and prisms might be solid or hollow. The cylinder of Cyrus is solid. The hollow ones were manufactured like a pot on the potter’s wheel. The size varies considerably, ‘ranging from less than ten centimeters in length to more than thirty’; for example, the prism of Tiglath-Pileser I (c. 1100 BC) from Assur is more than half a meter high. The shape of cylinders varies from a barrel cylinder to nearly a true cylinder. They are inscribed along their main axis whereas each face of a prism is inscribed as a column, i.e. perpendicularly to the main axis. Prismoid, i.e. barrel prism written along the main axis like cylinders, were also used, like the one of Sargon II from Khorsabad.

There are also cylinders and prisms used for writing other textual typologies besides royal inscriptions. Most of such prisms are pierced with a hole along the axis; also some hollow cylinders with royal inscription have these holes. Perhaps they have been intended to receive a stick as rotation device; such a device could be used for easy displaying, storing or copying the text. According to Ellis, such device was useful in inscribing the cylinder without touching its wet clay with the scribe’s hands.

How did come in use such a peculiar shape?
In our opinion, the model for the cylinders is the cylinder seal. Seals were very important tools in the ancient Near East. They were a kind of signature and identity card, not only for individuals but also for institutions and offices, just as a stamp before the digital revolution; it means property and was as personal as a cellular phone or a credit card today. Seals were generally figurative so the
cylinders are like clay cylinder seals whose surface is thoroughly written. The cylinder of Cyrus is a
great seal whose written legend occupies the whole surface, including the room usually left for
figurative parts in cylinder seals. A low stone prism of Esarhaddon with text and figuration (ME
91027) can be placed in the middle between cylinder seals and cylinders, also for its size; it is in
stone as a cylinder seal but its text is a building inscription as in a cylinder.

There is also, probably, another compulsory reason for this shape. Just think of a lasting support
for a writing. Probably you will think of a stone or marble slab; here in Iran you have also the
beautiful glazed tiles which delight us foreigners visiting Esfahan and other Iranian monuments. But
slabs and tiles are for monumental public writings. If you want to preserve the same message in a
hidden place, you may think of a metal plaque densely engraved with writing; yes, this is a problem
for us usually writing on paper with ink. What if you write in a three-dimensional script like the
cuneiform on a plastic support? You can mould a clay tablet as usual or, maybe, for many reasons,
you want something less usual than a tablet. So you can mould the clay in a more particular and
symmetrical fashion: the cylinder or the prism. These were probably the most economic solutions in
terms of space. The barrel shape can be a consequence of the wheel manufacture. In this way we
can connect the cylinders to the clay cones, both for their shape (being somewhat half a barrel
cylinder) and functions.

Last but not least, the cylinder is a perfect solid and the power of the written words could be
magically repeated by its surface without ends. We can see a sort of continuity both in time (the
durable support) and in space (the continuous surface). In our opinion, the rotation axis was a
consequence of the shape of such a support and was used to display the text, maybe also to let the
text magically “speak” by itself, rotating the support on the stick.

A general treatment of these kinds of support was written by Richard S. Ellis; Hanspeter
Schaudig and, recently, Rocio Da Riva dealt especially with the exampless from neo-Babylonian
period. Prof. Adriano Rossi, director of the DARIOSH Project for Achaemenid epigraphy, gave a
still unpublished lecture discussing the relationships between these supports and the functions and
typologies of their texts. That is what we try to do in what follows.

Above, we told that you had to hide the text you want to preserve for long time. This was
because cylinders and prisms were often found in building deposits, i.e. small closets or hidden
recesses somewhere in a building, not only in the foundations but often in the brickwork instead of
a brick.
In order to understand these deposits, we have to think about memory lasting in time: memory of the name of the king, memory of his deeds, i.e. war campaigns and, especially, building activities. Only the king was the true leader and builder. In these tasks the king can show his power, as the most valiant and skilled craftsman. Also in iconography, the king was shown as a mason (see the stone plaque of Ur-Nanshe from Lagash, dated to 25th cent. BC, the foundation figure of Ur-Nammu from Uruk and the two stelae of Assurbanipal) or architect (Gudea) in Mesopotamia.

The building was nothing without its sponsor: the name of the king was relevant as much as the memory of the building: in Sumerian, the royal inscriptions were called simply MU.SARA ‘written name’; the Akkadian word is *mušarû*, a loan from Sumerian, which ‘almost exclusively refers to royal inscriptions or the objects bearing them’ in neo-Assyrian and neo-Babylonian deposit inscriptions. So, to write one’s own name meant to have an inscription written.
Since epigraphists heeded little attention to the archaeological contexts, we must be very careful in distinguishing building inscriptions (i.e. inscriptions whose content relates the construction of a building) from deposit inscriptions (i.e. inscriptions found in a building deposit), i.e. distinguishing the text from the context. Obviously, the two can overlap but not always. For example, one of the Achaemenid inscriptions found with certainty in a building deposit (DPh at the corners of the apadana at Takht-e Jamshid) does not mention building activities.

Unfortunately, the archaeological context of the Cyrus cylinder is not known. Its discoverer, Hormuzd Rassam, spoke generically of the ‘ruins of Jimjima’ (a mound at Babylon) in his *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod* (1897); precedently, in a letter of the same year of the discovery (1879), he said that it was found at Omran, another mound at Babylon. We have to thank the curators of the exhibition here at the National Museum if we can see this very letter in the catalogue. Since at Omran there was the temple of Marduk, this findspot seemed to be reliable to Christopher Walker. So we have to rely only on its particular shape to infer that the cylinder of Cyrus was found in a building deposit. While we have to guess that the cylinder of Cyrus was a deposit inscription, we are sure that it is a building inscription, even if this is far to be its main theme.

In our opinion, the cylinders as a support cannot be linked exclusively to building deposits. Some cylinders were buried in building deposits, but others had a display purpose. Many cylinders have been found in archaeological contexts that cannot be defined building deposits. It is also possible that the cylinders and the prisms with holes for a rotation device were used for display, the others for building deposits.
Moreover, cylinders and prisms were used for writing other textual typologies besides royal inscriptions. Conical and cylindrical “tablets” inscribed in Elamite are known from the administrative archives found in the fortification wall of Takht-e Jamshid; the difference with the supports of the royal inscriptions is both in scale (the “tablets” are smaller, since they had to be handled easily) and in the refinement of the shape. Several cylinders and, especially, four- and six-sided prisms were used for recording mathematical texts in the Old Babylonian period; they are regular and quite small, around 15-20 cm high. It is striking that these prisms, surely not destined to be buried in building deposits, have holes. If this is the case, the cylinder of Cyrus, being solid and without holes, in all probability was placed in a building deposit.

![Image of cylinder and prism](image)

3.1.3. MS 2723. A 6-sided prism with a metrological table for system C, basic unit silica, from ‘1 shekel of barley = 1 (60^1 silica) to 2 (60^6 gur = 10 (60^5 silica), altogether 159 lines.

(Friberg, A Remarkable Collection of Babylonian Mathematical Texts, fig. 3.1.3)

However, we can assume that cylinders for display could be placed in a building deposit after been displayed, maybe after the death of the king, i.e. using the building deposit as a favissa, since the memory of the preceding king was somewhat sacred for the new ruling king. The kind of support of the newly identified fragments with the text of the Cyrus cylinder could prove the existence of display copies.

The cylinder of Cyrus is not peculiar even for its formulary. We are sure you know it very well but let us recapitulate the main points.

The beginning of the text is unfortunately broken. There are three possibilities:

1. W. Eilers and P. Lecoq restored the name and the royal titulary of Cyrus.
2. Schaudig restored inu ‘when’ as in the so-called Ebabbar cylinder of Nabonidus; the name of a god, probably Marduk, would have followed in a sentence like ‘When Marduk ordered that the city had to be renewed’.
3. In our opinion, it seems likely that the text opened with the name of the god, in this case Marduk, invoked as the addressee of the text. This is a common opening in royal inscriptions from Mesopotamia, too. We find it in many Achaemenid inscriptions where Ahuramazda is the invoked god.

According to the approach held by our DARIOSH research project that we have mentioned before, each inscription can be understood as a kind of message, a sort of letter devoted to the god. So the name of the god, as the addressee of the text, stands at its beginning. Only after this incipit we found the name of the king with his titulary. A similar pattern can be found in some middle-Elamite inscriptions, especially the ones of Shilhak-Inshushinak (IRS 23): they begins with the name of the god preceded by the vocative particle e ‘o’; then a list of epitheta follows; finally the name of the king, preceded by u ‘I’, and his royal titulary are stated.

The recent identification of a fragment of the first two lines of the cylinder of Cyrus by Irving Finkel seems to confirm our hypothesis: the translation given by the catalogue of the exhibition is ‘Marduk, king of the whole of heaven and earth’; the first part of the word ‘Marduk’ is broken, so
there is still a possibility, as Finkel suggested, that *inu* ‘whjen’ precedes the name of the god. The mention of ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ contains a possible connection to the trilingual Achaemenid inscriptions where ‘Ahuramazda made (*banû*) the heaven and the earth’.

The first half of the text runs as follows. An insignificant person (*maṭû*) was installed (*šakānu N*) as lord (*ēnu*) of the country (line 3). He did some wrong things in the religious sphere: he made an imitation (*tamšīlu*) of the temple Esagila (l. 5), made rituals (*parsû*) not appropriate (*simtu*), ceased (*baṭālu Š*) the regular offerings (*sattukku*) (l. 6), got rid (*gamāru*) of the worship (*palāhū*, see also l. 24) of Marduk (l. 7) and did (*epēšu, Gtn*) evil (*lemuttu*) against Marduk’s city (l. 8). At last, the cry of the people was heard by Marduk who sought (*barû*) a righteous (*išaru*) prince (*malku*) (l. 12); Marduk took (*tamâhu*) his hands (*qatuššu*) and nominated (*nabû*) his name (*nībītu*), Cyrus, the king of the city of Anshan (l. 12). Then Marduk ordered (*qabû*) Cyrus to reach (*alâku*) his city (l. 15); Marduk delivered Nabonidus, the insignificant person here named for the first time, into Cyrus’ hands (l. 17).

In our opinion, we are dealing here with the same theme of the re-establishment of the right cult mentioned also in the inscription of Xerxes conventionally called “daiva inscription” (XPh), found in Takht-e Jamshid. The lexicon is entirely different, testifying that the cylinder of Cyrus and the inscription of Xerxes have been compiled by two different scribal schools, the first with Babylonian scribes, the second with Persian ones; in this respect, it is meaningful that the Old Persian syntagm *artācā brazmanī*, maybe to be translated ‘at the proper time and in the proper manner’, is rendered phonetically as *artasha’ biraazammanni* in the Babylonian text of the “daiva” inscription. However, the main theme is more or less the same.

In the “daiva” inscription we find *isinnu* ‘festival’ instead of *parsû* ‘ritual’; and *isimmu* is attested in the so-called “Verse Account of Nabonidus”, actually a propaganda text of Cyrus (Schauig 2001, P1.II.11): ‘may I left aside (*ezēbu*) the *isinnu* (and) cease (*baṭālu Š*, used with *parsu* in l. 6 of the Cylinder) the New Year festival (*zagmukku*). The Babylonian term for ‘demon’, *lemmutu*, is derived from *lemuttu*, exactly the term used to indicate the evil inflicted by Nabonidus to Babylonia in the cylinder of Cyrus.

The second half of the text begins on line 20.

Cyrus speaks in the first person: ‘I, Cyrus’; his titulary follows a Babylonian tradition, rather different from that typical of the Achaemenid inscriptions of Darius and Xerxes; also in Egypt Darius used the native titulary of a pharaoh. The use of the first person is known from the middle-Elamite inscriptions, but it is rarely attested in Mesopotamia, except for the inscriptions of Assurbanipal and the neo-Babylonian inscriptions. In the Cylinder anāku ‘I’ precedes the titulary, as in Old Persian and Elamite royal inscriptions, while it follows the titulary in the neo-Babylonian inscriptions.

Prof. Daryoush Akbarzadeh drew our attention to the genealogy, which is not so frequent and so articulated in Assyrian and Babylonian royal inscriptions, while it is emphasized even in the post-Achaemenid Iranian dynasties. A similar genealogy is not given in the Old Persian inscriptions bearing the name of Cyrus, but in Darius' ones (especially Bisotun); however, the much-debated inscriptions bearing the name of Cyrus from Pasargadae should be compared from a functional and typological point of view to label inscriptions, i.e. short texts without titulary written just to impress the king’s name on basreliefs (e.g. XPe). On the Cylinder, the genealogy is further underlined by the syntagm zēru (*NUMUN*) ḍārū ša šarrītu ‘everlasting line of kingship’ (l. 22); zēru (*NUMUN*) ḍārū is attested also in the inscription of Darius at Bisotun (DB/AB §4).

Afterwards, the content of the first half of the text is briefly rephrased in the first person. At the end of this section, Marduk is said to have ‘kindly (*damqiš*) blessed (*karābu*) Cyrus with well-being (*šalimtu*)’ (l. 28). The text of the Cylinder is rich in the semantic field of well-being and joy: the
‘well-being’ is attested three times (also on ll. 25 and 33); the similar concept ʿṭūbu ‘joy’ occurs twice times (ll. 22 and 34); the verb hadû ‘to rejoice’ occurs once (l. 26). This is the semantic field of Old Persian šyāti- and Babylonian dumqu in the trilingual Achaemenid inscriptions, which is the well-being during the lifetime, as stated in the “daiva” inscription: ‘may I see the well-being (dumqu) in life and may I become blessed (artama, loan from Old Persian) after death’ (XPh/AB ll. 39-40 and 45-46).

Then the relationships between Cyrus and the other kings and peoples are exalted. Together with the list of tributaries (ll. 30-31), a passage finds an echo in the above-mentioned “daiva” inscription of Xerxes, even if with a different lexic. The text of the Cylinder runs as follow: ‘I gathered (pahāru D pret. 1sg.=3sg.) their people (ŪG metišū) and I gave (tiṭaru D pret. 1sg.=3sg.) (them) back their settlements (dadmī)’ (l. 32, see also l. 10), while in the “daiva” there is ‘I beat (dāku) these countries (mātu) and I cause them to dwell (wašābu Š) on their land (qaqqaru)’ (XPh/AB ll. 27-28).

In the last paragraphs, a mention is made of some offerings, unfortunately in a broken passage: x kur.gimšen (kurkū) ‘geese’, 2 UZ.TUR gimšen (paspasu) ‘ducks’ and 10 tu.gur4 gimšen.meš (sukannīnu) ‘doves, pigeons’. These same birds are attested in the offerings known from Sippar in this same period. In the Elamite administrative texts from Takht-e Jamshid, geese can be found on two tablets dealing with provisions ‘consumed before the king’ (sunki tibba makka). The geese (paspas, a loan from Akkadian) are preceded by ippur and followed by šudabah and kuktukka. Unfortunately, the kinds of fowl referred to with ippur, šudabah and kuktukka are unknown. The relative proportions are roughly comparable.

In the last paragraphs, the restoration of the wall and of the ditch of Babylon is mentioned, giving a further possibility for the findspot of the Cylinder. It seems possible that the cylinder was deposed in the masonry of backed bricks (agurru) of the wall. According to the text of the cylinder, ‘a written name (šītru + šumi)’, i.e. an inscription, of the neo-Assyrian king Assurbanipal was found in that wall. In Walker’s opinion, it was probably the cylinder L6, where we can find the invocation of Marduk as maker of heaven and earth at the beginning, followed by the theme of the restoration of regular offerings.

In conclusion, as we saw, the cylinder of Cyrus is not unique for its support or for its formulary, but surely it is unique for its synthesis and fusion of Babylonian and Iranian elements. Cyrus himself was a unique personality: he started a new era in the history of the Near East. The resonance that was given to his deeds and attainments came up till us, as Cyrus wished, feeding even the European culture of Middle Ages and Renaissance. How many names of kings and entire civilizations have been completely forgotten! But Cyrus’ figure keep on living and its fame keep on spreading, as the presence of Cyrus cylinder shows here in his land, marking a further advancement in our understanding of his kingdom and historical role.

We are especially grateful to Azadeh Ardekani, director of the National Museum of Iran, and to Daryoush Akbarzadeh, head of the Inscription Department and scientific advisor to our DARIOSH Project, for inviting us here in this special occasion.

Thanks to the Museo Bagatti Valsecchi (Milan) for kindly granting permission to use the photographs of the tapestries of Cyrus.