

Save Ancient Studies Alliance
Summer 2022 Texts-in-Translation Reading Group

Life and Times in Ancient Persia

The Persian (Achaemenid) Empire contained a diverse collection of ethnicities, religions, and geographic regions. Spanning from the reign of Cyrus II (The Elder) in the mid-6th century until the final days of Darius III in the 330s BC, the Persian Empire was larger than any preceding empire in history. In this reading group, we will examine various types of evidence from the ancient Persian Empire, ranging from Persian royal inscriptions, court documents, inventories, the Hebrew Bible, Greek and Roman literature, and archaeological remains. Rather than simply restating the biased judgements of Greek and Roman literature, we hope to capture a more nuanced picture of this important empire in world history. We adopt a thematic approach, rather than a strict chronological one, to avoid the temptation of a “rise and fall” narrative.

Your SASA Educational Ambassadors:

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DATES (8-weeks):

Fridays @ 2 pm EDT

June 10th - July 29th

LOCATION: (Provided by SASA)

Zoom Meeting Link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83629893158?pwd=REFjdWdxSjBYZGQzQXFEMjVZVzNsUT09>

Zoom Meeting ID

836 2989 3158

Zoom Meeting Password

230047

READING GROUP GOOGLE FOLDER: (PDF Readings and Session Recordings)

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kK1mjCkcpCQ92rKXXrKs6f5uS0Dy6u3L?usp=sharing>

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Week 1 (6/10) Introduction: An Overview of the History, Geography, and Origins of the Persian Empire and the Broader Ancient Near East

Week 2 (6/17) Government, Politics, Leadership, and Administration of Cyrus II, Darius I, and the Later Achaemenid Rulers

Week 3 (6/24) Economic Ideals, Trade, and the Implications for the Extended Empire - Archaeological Evidence from the Provinces and Satrapies

Week 4 (7/1) Palace Life of the Royal Court and the Elites: Art, Architecture, Tombs, and Burials

Week 5 (7/8) The Fortification/Treasury Archives and other Written Records from the Provinces

Week 6 (7/15) Religions in a Multicultural Empire

Week 7 (7/22) Wars and Conflict - A Different View of the Greco-Persian Wars and Other Military Structures

Week 8 (7/29) The End of the Story? Alexander's Conquests, Parthians, Sasanians, and the Legacy of Ancient Persia

DETAILED READING SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Introduction: An Overview of the History, Geography, and Origins of the Persian Empire and the Broader Ancient Near East)

- Introductory Chapters: Waters (2014: 5-18) and Benzel, *et al.* (2010: 9-24) [readings in the Group Google Folder above]
- Additional Reading: [D. Stronach - Excavations i. In Persia](#), Nylander 1971 [on Google Drive]

- Life and Times in Ancient Persia PowerPoint Overview [readings in the Group Google Folder above]

Week 2 (Government, Politics, Leadership, and Administration of Cyrus II, Darius I, and the Later Achaemenid Rulers)

- Territorial Imagery: [DPH](#), [DSab](#), [DPg](#), [DPd](#), [DPe](#), [Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.134](#)
- Geographic Reach: [Empire Lists](#)
- [The Cyrus Cylinder](#)
- The Ascension of Darius I
 - Darius' [Behistun Inscription](#)
 - [Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.61-79](#)
- Satrapies: [Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.89-97](#), [Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 1.7.6](#), [Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 3.1.10-15](#); [IG IV 556](#) (translation in the Google Drive), [\[Aristotle\], *Economics*, 2.1345b-1346a](#), [Nehemiah, 5.14-18](#)
- Royal Roads: Hallock 1969: PF 1315, 1318, 1335, 1351, 1550, 1361, 1501, 1544, 1477, 1555, 1672; Herodotus, *Histories*, [5.52-54](#), [7.239.2-3](#), [8.98](#), [Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 1.5.4-8](#), [Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 8.6.17-18](#), [IG II² 141](#) (honors of Straton of Sidon), [Nehemiah, 2.7-9](#)

Week 3 (Economic Ideals, Trade, and the Implications for the Extended Empire - Archaeological Evidence from the Provinces and Satrapies)

- See “Week 3 Readings” (taxes, tribute, gifts, resource management) [on the Google Drive]
 - “Revenues, resources, obligations”: taxes, mineral resources, labor obligations, the duty to supply the royal table, and satrapal and royal levies
 - “Precious metal payments”: silver taxes, the transmission of taxes
 - “The system in practice”: records of grants and duties, management of resources and revenues
- See “Week 3.1 Readings” (slavery) [on Google Drive]
 - “Organisation and production of labour” (Kuhrt’s intro to Ch. 16)
 - “A Slave Sale in Persepolis”
 - “A Slave marked in Egyptian is sold in Babylonia”
 - “The Battle of Lade,” “The Fall of Miletus,” and “The Capture of Naxos” (note what happens at the end of each)
 - “The Royal Banqueting Staff”
- More to Read: [Economy iii. in the Achaemenid Period](#)

- Life and Times in Ancient Persia PowerPoint Week 3 [on Google Drive]
- Chapter Six *Mechanics of Empire*: Waters (2014: 92-113) [on Google Drive]
- “*Slaves and Households in the Ancient Near East*” - Article from Oriental Institute Seminar 7 [on Google Drive]
- Multiculturalism: [Multicultural Societies](#), [R. Rollinger - Teispid and Achaemenid Persia](#)
- Additional Reading: [Persian Slavery and Zoroaster Ethics](#) , [The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods in Palestine](#), [ROLE OF COHESION AND REUNIFICATION](#)
- More Additional Reading on Slavery - Semantic Perspectives: [BARDA and BARDA-DĀRI i. In the Achaemenid Period](#)

Week 4 (Palace Life of the Royal Court and the Elites: Art, Architecture, Tombs, and Burials)

- Palace Centers
 - Life and Times in Ancient Persia PowerPoint Week 4 [on Google Drive]
 - Persepolis: [DPa](#), [DPf](#), Diodorus Siculus, *Library*, [17.70.1-2](#), [71.1, 3-8](#); [XPa](#), [XPc](#), [XPf](#); [A3Pa](#); [3D images of Palace of Artaxerxes](#)
 - Susa: [DSe](#), [DSf/DSaa](#), [DSz](#), [Statue of Darius](#); [D2Sa](#); [A2Sa](#), [A2Sd](#)
 - Ecbatana: [A2Ha](#), [A2Hb](#), [A2Hc](#), [Polybius, Histories, 10.27](#)
 - Pasargadae: [Palace S](#), [Palace P](#), [Gate R](#), [Tomb of Cyrus](#)
- Behistun: [Behistun](#), [Behistun \(3\)](#)
 - Chapter Four *From Cyrus to Darius I - Empire in Transition*: Waters (2014: 59-65) [on Google Drive]
- Royal Gardens and *Paradeisoi*
 - [PFa 33](#) [in Google Drive]
 - [John Curtis Presentation - Gardens in Ancient Iran](#)
 - [David Stronach: Ancient Persian Gardens](#)
 - [Persian Gardens: Meanings, Symbolism, and Design](#)
 - [Wouter Henkelman: The Fruits of Parsa](#)
 - [Xenophon, Oeconomicus, 4.13-14](#)
 - Xenophon, *Anabasis*, [1.2.7](#), [1.4.10](#)
 - [Xenophon, Hellenica, 4.1.15-16](#)
 - Quintus Curtius Rufus, *History of Alexander the Great of Macedon*, [7.2.22](#), [8.1.11-16](#)
 - [Plutarch, Artaxerxes, 25.1-2](#)
 - [Plutarch, Alcibiades, 24.5](#)
 - “Week 4 Paradeisoi” [on Google Drive]
 - “*Paradeisos* workers at Mishbashiyatish”

- “The *paradeisos* of Ammashish”
- “Wood-handlers(?) in a *paradeisos* near Persepolis”
- “Deposits at *paradeisoi* for distribution”
- “Darius I’s estates”
- “Artystone’s estates”
- “The dissolution of Hystaspes’ household”
- Imperial Spectacles
 - A (possibly fictional) procession of Cyrus the Elder: [Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 8.3.1-34](#)
 - Procession of Xerxes: Herodotus, *Histories*, [7.40-41](#)

Week 5 (The Fortification/Treasury Archives and other written records from the provinces)

- Life and Times in Ancient Persia PowerPoint Week 5 [on Google Drive]
- “Week 5 Persepolis Tablets” [on Google Drive]
 - “Sectors of Agricultural Production”
 - “Annual calculations of expenditure”
 - “Aspects of bureaucracy”
 - “Treasuries”
 - “Craftsmen”
 - “The Labour Force”
- Additional Resources: [Administrative Realities](#), [Arta - An Old Persian Administrative Tablet](#), [Arta - Fortification Archive Project 5](#), [Persepolis Fortification Seal - Tablet MDP 11 308](#), [Anatolian Crossroads: Achaemenid Seals from Sardis and Gordion, Chapter 62 - Archives from Persepolis](#), [Social Networking Analysis - PFA](#), [Achaemenid Heartland in Greek and Elamite Sources](#), [Tablets Mentioning Forced Labour](#)

Week 6 (Religions in a Multicultural Empire)

- Life and Times in Ancient Persia PowerPoint Week 6 [on Google Drive]
- Divine protection for a royal building: [A2Ha](#)
- God and king intertwined: [DSk](#), [AmH](#), [AsH](#)
- *Daiva* Inscription from Persepolis ([XPh](#))
- Greek perceptions of Persian religion
 - [Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.131-132](#)
- The Magi
 - Herodotus, *Histories*, [7.37.2-3](#), [7.113.2](#), [7.191.2](#)
 - Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, [8.1.23](#), [7.3.1](#)

- The Sun and Mithra
 - [Herodotus, *Histories*, 7.54](#)
 - Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, [1.2](#), [29.7](#)
 - Quintus Curtius Rufus, *History of Alexander the Great of Macedon*, [4.8.11](#)
 - [Strabo, *Geography*, 11.14.9](#)
- Royal Rituals
 - Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, [3.1-2](#), [26.1-3](#)
 - [Herodotus, *Histories*, 9.110.2-111.1](#)
 - [Diodorus Siculus, *Library*, 17.114.4-5](#)
 - Quintus Curtius Rufus, *History of Alexander the Great of Macedon*, [10.5.17](#)
 - [The Royal Ritual Landscape at Persepolis](#)
- “Week 6 Religion” [on Google Drive]
 - “The Persian Authorities and Local Cults”
 - The satrap of Egypt and the priests of Khnum
 - Persian authorisation of a Jewish cult observance(?)
 - A quarrel between the Jewish and Egyptian communities on Elephantine
 - The citizens of Xanthus found a new cult
 - Persian dedications to local cults
- Additional Resources: [OLD PERSIAN TEXTS - The Avesta](#) , [Pre-Zoroastrian religions of Iran](#) , [Rituals Inside Late Babylonian Temples?](#), [Jong, A. F. de. \(2021\). The religion of the Achaemenid rulers](#) , [Henkelman, Wouter F.M. “Humban Auramazdā:” Persian Religion in the Achaemenid Period / La religion perse à l’époque achéménide \(2017\): 273–346](#) , [An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion: Readings from the Avesta and the Achaemenid Inscriptions](#) , [The Forgotten Female Figurines of Elephantine](#), [The cult of the Iranian Goddess Anāhitā](#) , [Indo-Iranian Religion](#), [The Moral Deities of Iran and India and Their Origins](#), [Temple Architecture in the Iranian World before the Macedonian Conquest](#) , [History of the Anahita Temple](#), [A model of chartak from Parhar](#), [Religion of the Saka](#),

Week 7 (Wars and Conflict - A Different View of the Greco-Persian Wars and Other Military Structures)

- Life and Times in Ancient Persia PowerPoint Week 7 [on Google Drive]
- The King as Hero: Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, [10.1-3](#), [11.1-3](#), [16.1-2](#), [24.1-3](#)
- Composition of the Persian Army at Thermopylae: Herodotus, *Histories*, [7.61-80](#)
- The “Immortals”/”Ten Thousand”: Herodotus, *Histories*, [7.40-41](#), [7.55](#), [7.83](#), [8.113](#) (see also, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, [Immortals](#))

- The Battle at Thermopylae (480 BC): Herodotus, *Histories*, [7.201-233](#); Diodorus Siculus, *Library*, [11.1-11](#)
- The Battle of Cunaxa (401 BC): Xenophon, *Anabasis*, [1.8.1-29](#)
- Additional Resources: [World History Encyclopedia - Ancient Persian Warfare, Strength & Structure of the Persian Army](#), [Persia - A fearsome military](#)

Week 8 (The End of the Story? Alexander's Conquests, Parthians, Sasanians, and the Legacy of Ancient Persia)

- Life and Times in Ancient Persia PowerPoint Week 8 [on Google Drive]
- The three main battles of Alexander's campaign
 - Granicus River: Arrian, *Anabasis*, [1.13-16](#)
 - Issus: Arrian, *Anabasis*, [2.10-14](#)
 - Gaugamela (Arbela): Arrian, *Anabasis*, [3.13-16](#)
- Alexander Conquers Persia [in Google Drive]
 - "The Battle of Gaugamela and the Surrender of Babylon"
 - "The Autobiography of Somtutefnakht"
 - "The Autobiography of Petosiris"
 - "Alexander's Entry into Babylon"
 - "Alexander's Victory in a Babylonian Prophecy"
- Alexander through Persian Eyes
 - [Alexander Through Persian Eyes](#)
- Alexander adopts Persian customs
 - Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, [45](#), [47.3-4](#), [71.1-3](#), [74](#)
 - [The Persian Policies of Alexander the Great](#)
 - BONUS: Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Alexander Romance*, [2.20-41](#)
- Parthian Inscriptions
 - <https://parthiansources.com/texts/>
 - These are mostly short inscriptions (except for the lengthy last one) with useful and brief introductions.
 - [Greco-Iranian Legacy of Anatolia](#)
 - Crassus and Arsaces at Carrhae: Plutarch, *Life of Crassus*, [18](#), [21](#), [23-26](#), [31](#), [33](#)
- Sasanians
 - [The Karnamik-I-Ardasir, or Records of Ardashir](#)
 - [The Story of King Vahahran & His Queen](#)
 - [Ardashir I](#)
 - [New Perspective on "The Land of Heroes and Giants"](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Achemenet: <http://www.achemenet.com/en/>

Achaemenid Royal Inscriptions (Penn): <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/ario/>

Achaemenid Royal Inscriptions (Livius): <https://www.livius.org/sources/content/achaemenid-royal-inscriptions/>

The Inscriptions of Cyrus II and His Successors: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/ribo/babylon8/>

Oriental Institute (University of Chicago): <https://oi.uchicago.edu/>

PROSOBAB (Prosopography of Babylonia): <https://prosobab.leidenuniv.nl/>

Encyclopædia Iranica: <https://www.iranicaonline.org/>

History of Persia Podcast: <https://historyofpersiapodcast.com/>

Persepolis Reimagined (The Getty): <https://persepolis.getty.edu/>

Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies (CAIS): <https://www.cais-soas.com/essays.html>

A VERY SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

In lieu of a specific bibliography of works related to this reading group, we have listed some important scholars whose works have been influential. Works by these scholars can be considered reliable and useful (it is by no means an exhaustive list). NB: the distinction between “classic” and “recent” is not hard and fast. Use [Google Scholar](#) or perhaps [Academia.edu](#) to locate works by these scholars.

“Classic” Works:

Briant, Pierre.

Calmeyer, Peter.

Cameron, George.

Dandamaev, M. A.

Hallock, R. T.

Herzfeld, Ernest E.

Lewis, David M.

Olmstead, A. T.

Nylander, Carl.

Roaf, Michael.

Root, Margaret Cool.

Sami, Ali.

Sancisi-Weerdenburg, Helen.

Schmidt, Erich F.

Stolper, Matthew W.

Stronach, David.

Tilia, Ann Britt.

Tilia, Giuseppe.

Select Recent Scholars:

Brosius, Maria.

Canepa, Matthew P.

De Jong, Albert

Dusinberre, E. R. M.

Garrison, Mark B.

Henkelman, Wouter F.B.

Kuhrt, Amelie.

Liverani, M.
Lee, John W. I.
Miller, Margaret.
Nagel, Alexander.
Petit, Th.
Rollinger, R.
Schmidt, R.

Sherwin-White, S. M.
Tuplin, Christopher.
Vallat, F.
Waters, Matthew.
Weiskopf, M.
Wiesehöfer, Josef.