

# Navigating the reality of Persia in “Inventing the Barbarian”



# Mesopotamia

# Anatolia














# Egypt

# Sudan (Nubia)

# Iran

THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD 1069-664 BC		LATE PERIOD 664-332 BC		PTOLEMAIC PERIOD 332-30 BC	
Libyan Period	 Mummy E10797 850 BC   Stela E1353 800 BC  Nubia conquers Egypt 747 BC  Fine bronze working	Assyrians expel Nubians 667 BC  Demotic script appears 650 BC	 Cat Head E18826 500 BC	 Relief E19517 300 BC  Alexander the Great conquers Egypt 332 BC  Egypt ruled by Ptolemies	
NAPATAN PERIOD 1100-250 BC				MEROITIC PERIOD 250 BC-350 AD	
	 King Piya 747 BC  Nubia rules Egypt 747-656 BC  Sisters and daughters of Nubian kings (God's Wives) in Thebes  Nubians expelled from Egypt by Assyria 664 BC  King Taharqa 688 BC			 Ba Statue E22487 300 BC	 Snake Pot E22563 200 BC  Meroitic writing 200 BC  Meroe as capital
NEO-ELAMITE PERIOD 1000-539 BC		ACHAEMENID PERIOD 559-330 BC		SELEUCID PERIOD 323-247 BC	PARTHIAN PERIOD 247 BC-224 AD
 Disk Pin A25293 800 BC	Rise of Medes and Persians  Metalworking nomads of Luristan 1000-600 BC	Cyrus enters Babylon, Cylinder of Cyrus 539 BC	 Colossal Bull Head A24065 480 BC  Persian Empire expands, Athens sacked 480 BC  Reigns of Darius, Xerxes 522-465 BC  Persepolis built 520-465 BC	Alexander defeats Persians 331 BC	Capital at Ctesiphon 120 BC

# Ancient Near Eastern Cross-Cultural Time Line

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[Special Exhibits](#)

## Gallery Guide

[Museum Floor Plan](#)

## Ancient Near East Timeline

[The Edgar and Deborah  
Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery](#)

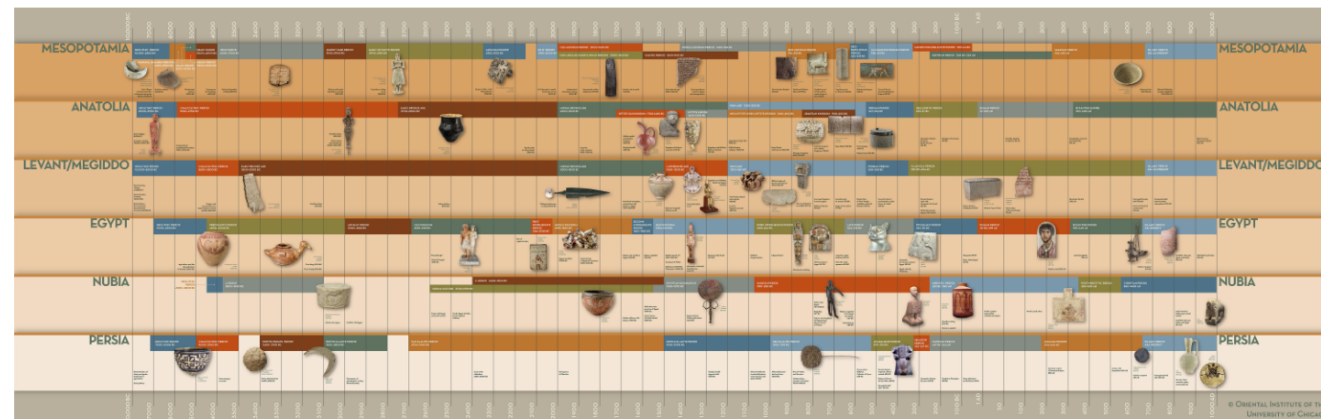
[The Yelda Khorsabad Court  
Gallery](#)

[The Dr. Norman Solhkhah Family  
Assyrian Empire Gallery](#)

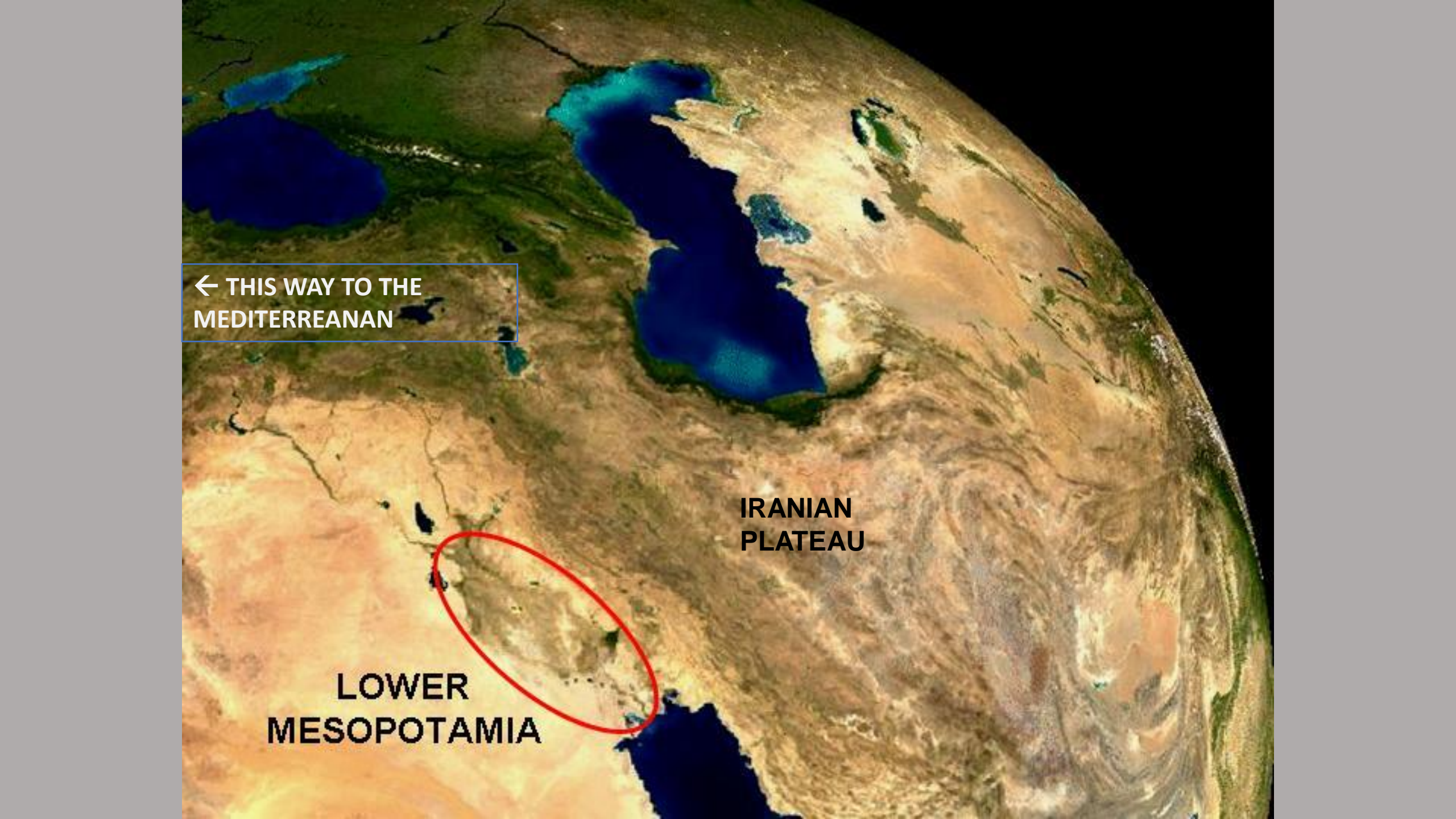
[The Henrietta Herbolzheimer,  
M.D. Syro-Anatolian Gallery](#)

[Download the Oriental Institute Museum Timeline \(PDF\)](#)

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A satellite image of the Middle East and surrounding regions. The Persian Gulf is visible in the upper right, and the Red Sea is in the lower right. The Iranian Plateau is a large, arid, brownish-yellow area in the center-right. Lower Mesopotamia is a smaller, more fertile area in the lower left, circled in red. A blue box with a white arrow points from the Persian Gulf towards the Mediterranean Sea, which is partially visible in the upper left.

← THIS WAY TO THE  
MEDITERRANEAN

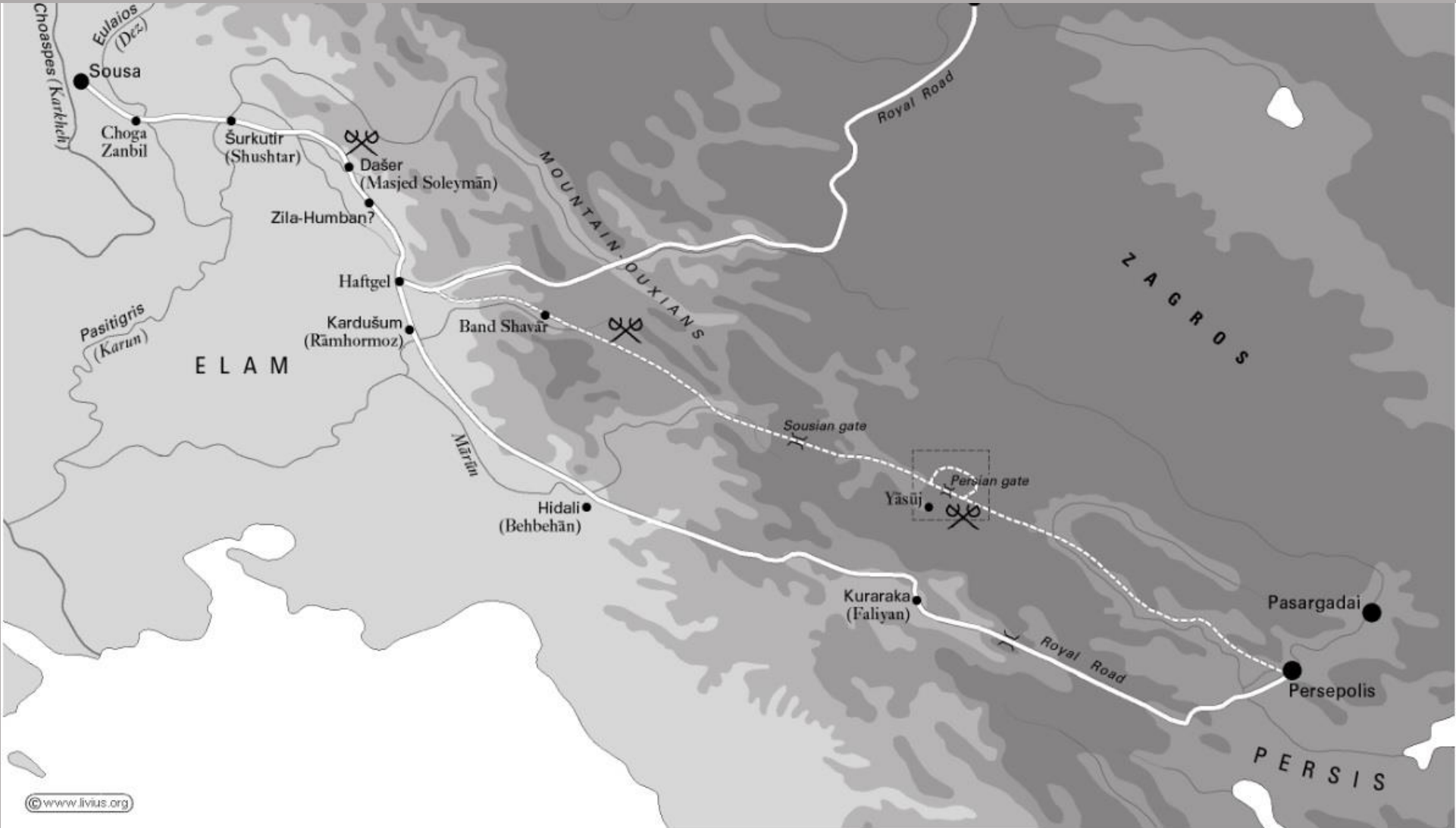
IRANIAN  
PLATEAU

LOWER  
MESOPOTAMIA













“Persépolis, le Paradis perse” (2016)







I am Xerxes, the great king, the king of kings, the king of all countries, having all kinds of human beings, king in this earth far and wide, the son of king Darius, the Achaemenid. The great king Xerxes says: What was done by me here, and was done by me farther off, I did by the grace of Ahuramazda. May Ahuramazda and the gods protect me, my kingdom, and what I did.





# Dynastic foundation, then refoundation





Ex[alted Marduk, Enlil-of-the-Go]ds, relented. He changed his mind about all the settlements whose sanctuaries were in ruins and the population of the land of Sumer and Akkad who had become like corpses, and took pity on them. He inspected and checked all the countries, seeking for the upright king of his choice. He took under his hand Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan, and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything...



Fragment of Tablet with Babylonian Cuneiform Inscription  
Clay. Excavated at Babylon, Dilbat, or Borsippa, Iraq, 1880–81. Achaemenid, 539–538 B.C. (?). British Museum, London (47134). Photograph © The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.





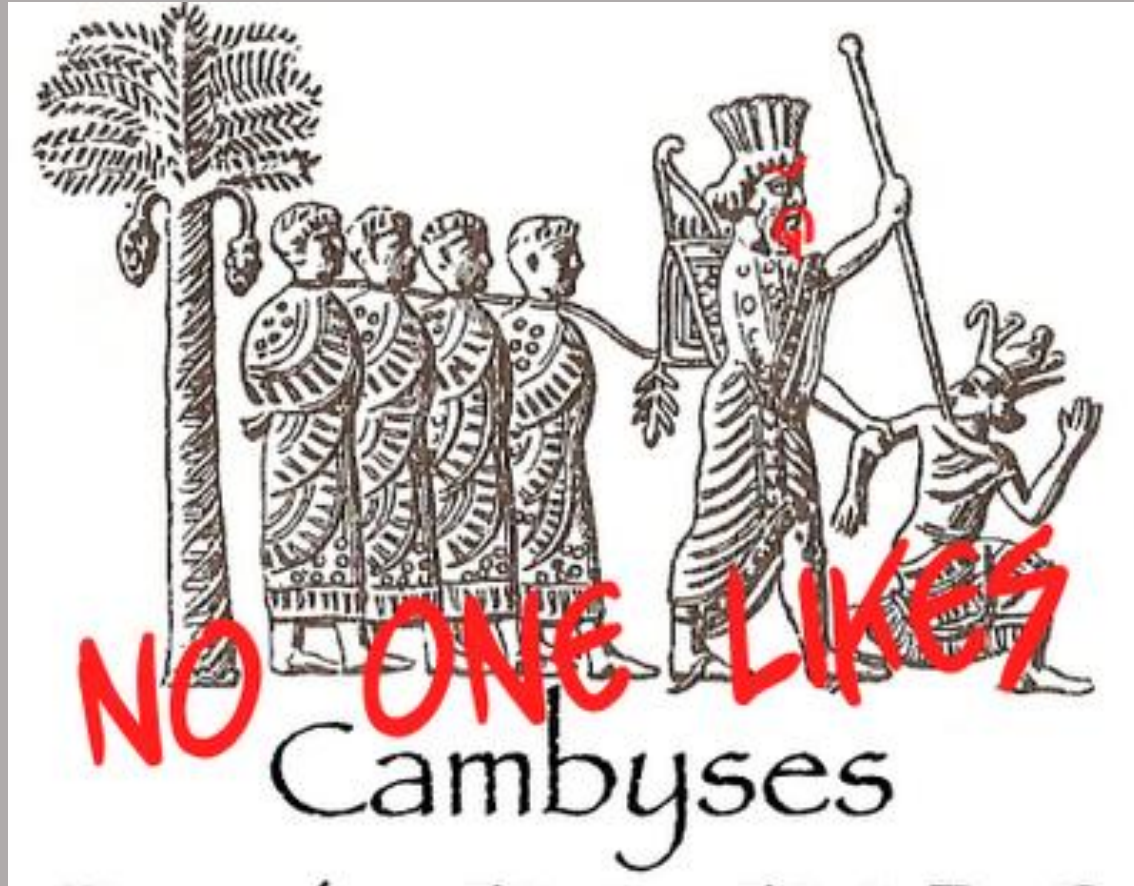




arte HD



“Persépolis, le Paradis perse” (2016)





The Great Chief of all foreign lands, Cambyses came to Egypt, the foreign peoples of every foreign land being with him. He gained majesty of this land in its entirety. They established themselves in it, and he was Great Ruler of Egypt and Great Chief of all foreign lands.

His majesty assigned to me the office of chief physician. He made me live at his side as 'friend' and 'administrator of the palace'. I composed his titulary in his name of King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Mesutire.















Tilia

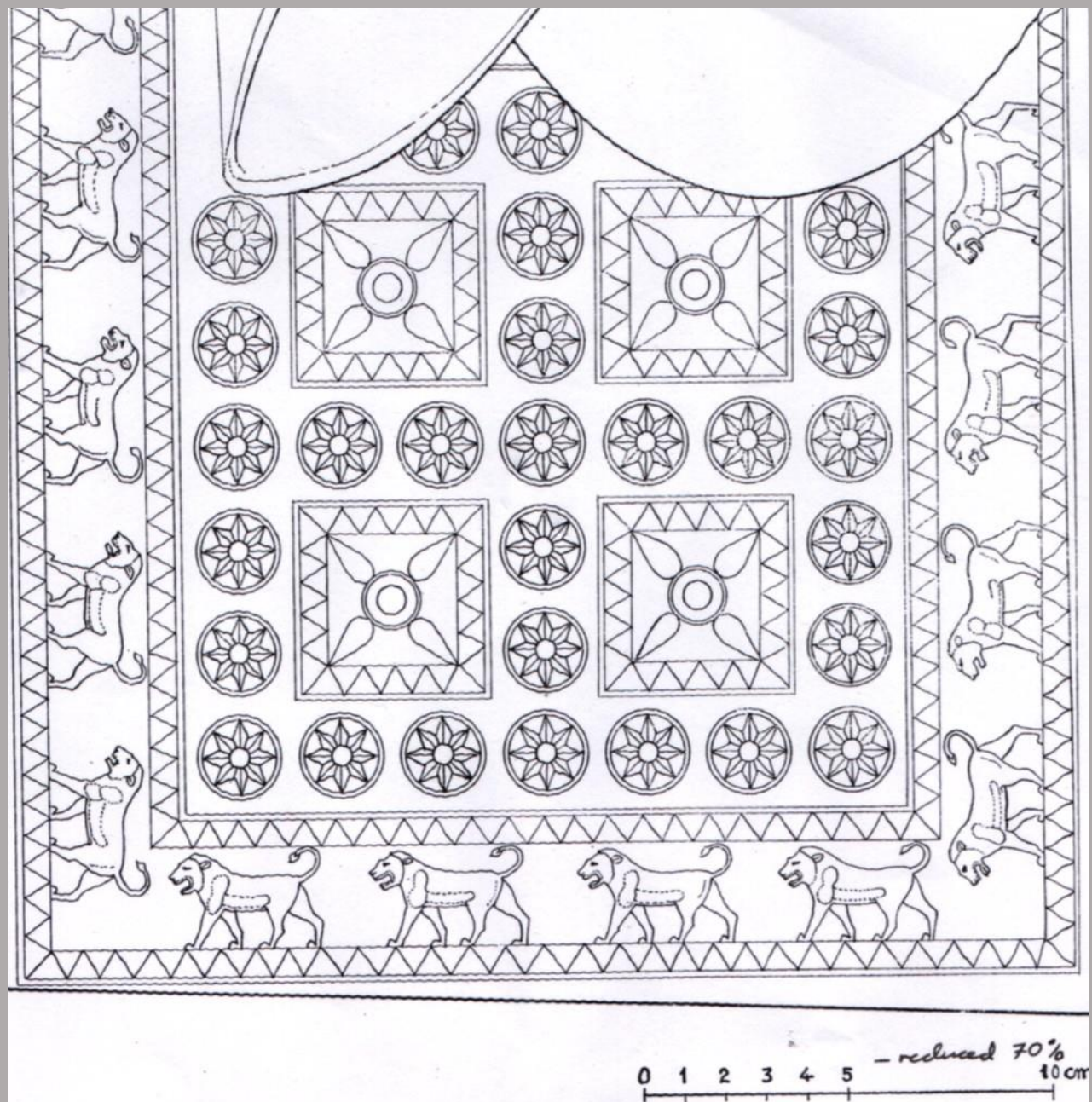


Fig. 3 - Reconstruction of pattern on throne-cover from audience scene on the western jamb, western doorway, in

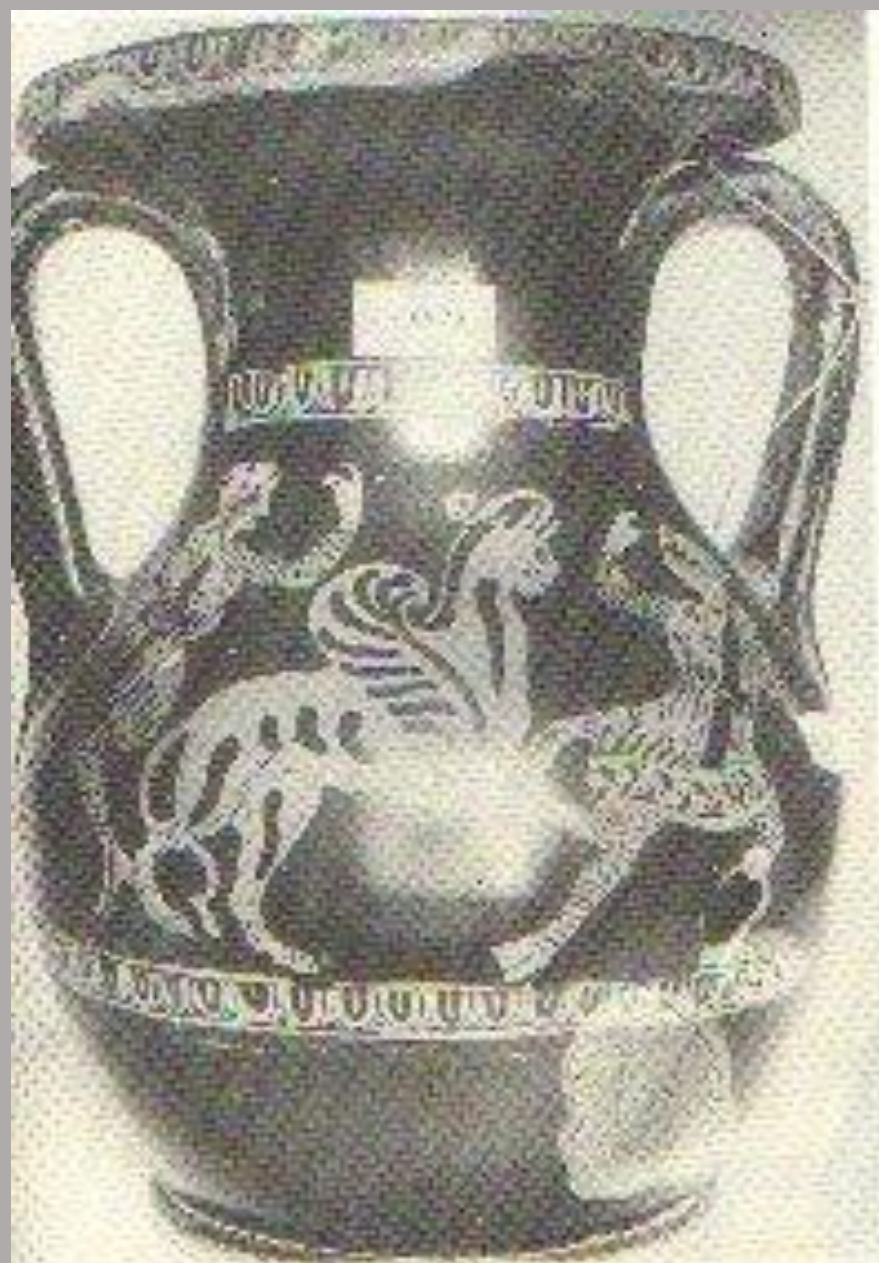














MMA







# Persepolis in pieces

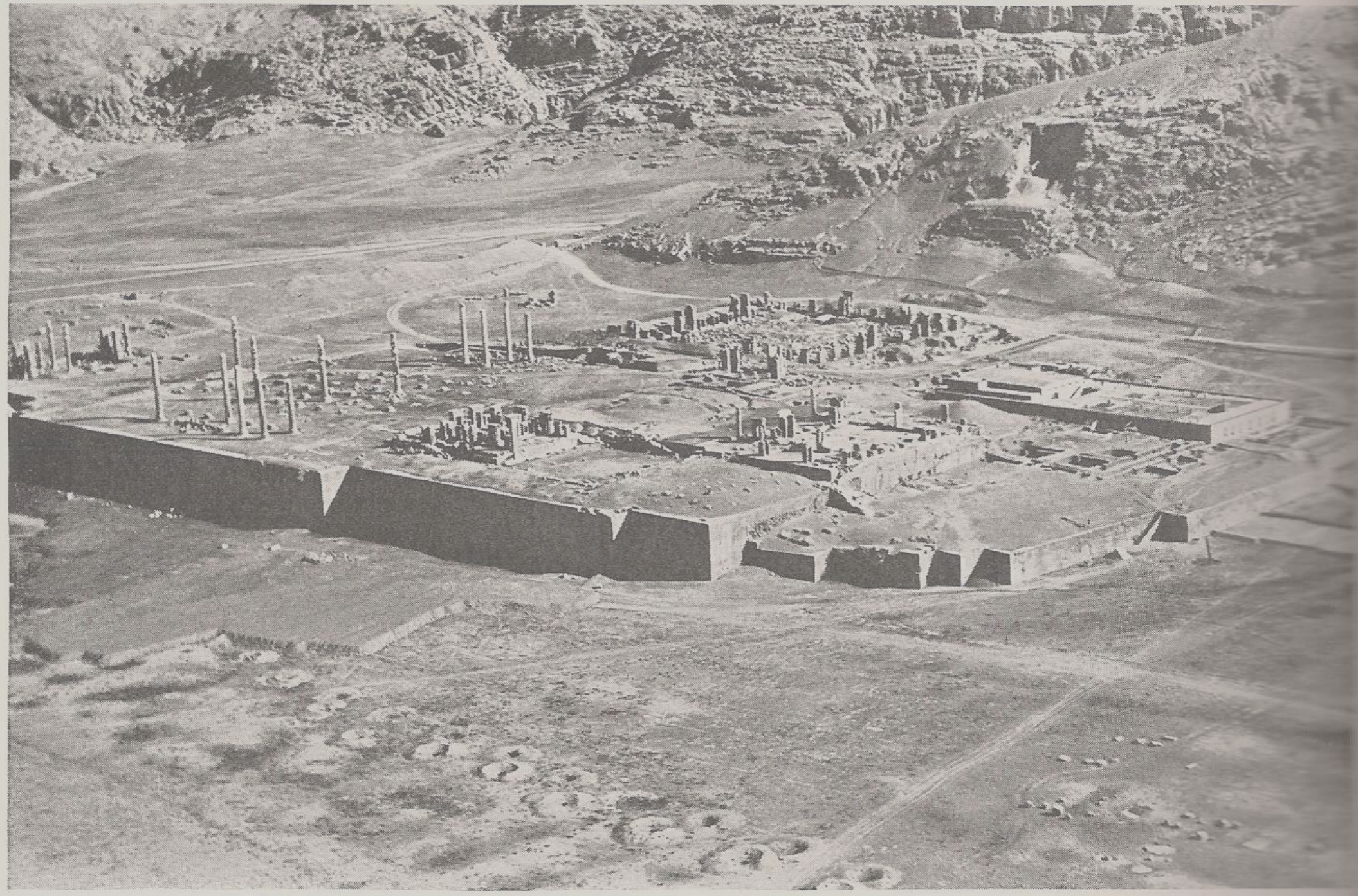


abandoned the enterprise in disgust and  
 despair, but for the superior temper and assiduity  
 of his hands, the relief was to have been the  
 chief monument of his career. It is now the  
 only one that will be remembered to some  
 extent.

My dear Mr. Secretary  
 I congratulate you on having obtained the  
 possession of so valuable and interesting a  
 piece of sculpture. It is really a beautiful  
 specimen, and I am sure will be a great  
 addition to your collection. I am obliged to  
 you for the idea of removing the other fragment  
 on which is part of the lotus of the griffin. It  
 would have been attended with so much  
 trouble and risk of fracture as it is better  
 not to attempt it. The fragment is a head  
 of a griffin, and I should be glad to see it  
 in your collection. I am, Sir, very  
 respectfully,  
 Yours,  
 J. H. H.

GRIFFIN KING.











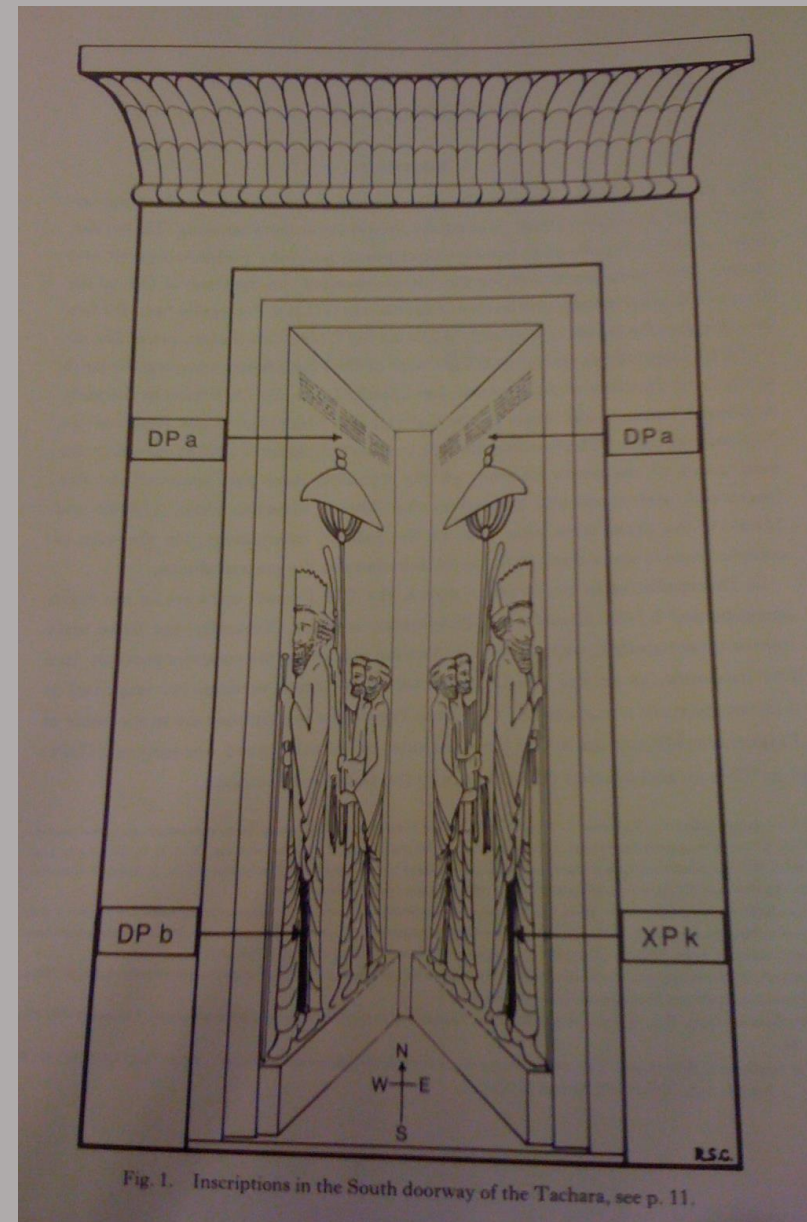
**1501** Shah Isma'il conquers Iran, founding the Safavid dynasty.

**1571-1629** reign of Shah Abbas I

**1589-1620** Persepolis named in European print publications (1590s & 1620s: British embassies to Iran). Then described by Thomas Herbert (1634).

**1667-94** First 'copies' of cuneiform characters are circulated or rumoured in Europe.

**1704-05** Cornelis de Bruijn creates the first detailed copies of cuneiform texts at Persepolis and brings the first fragments of stone to Amsterdam.



Above: Trilingual inscriptions in the doorway from portico to the main room in the Palace of Darius

**1793** Sylvestre de Sacy deciphers later 'Pahlavi inscriptions' (different script) from Naqsh-e Rostam, near Persepolis.

**1802 Georg Friedrich Grotefend** (1775-1853) presents *Praevia de cuneatis, quas vocant, inscriptionibus Persepolitanis legendis et explicandis relatio* 'Preliminary report...' in Göttingen; published 1805, published in English 1815.

**1835 Henry Rawlinson** copies the trilingual inscriptions of Darius and Xerxes at Elvend, near Hamadan.

**1844-47** Rawlinson copied the trilingual texts accessible on the cliff-face of Mount Bisotun, which tell the story of Darius I's rise to power (522-21 BCE).



Above: the Bisotun relief annotated and reversed in a Qajar-era carpet (mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century)



Before decipherment:

*Eighteenth century*

...distinguished by the splendour of the moon, which streamed full on the place, [were] characters like those on the sabres of the Giaour, and which possessed the same virtue of changing every moment. These, after vacillating for some time, fixed at last in Arabic letters, and prescribed to the Caliph the following words...

(Ancient inscriptions on the 'towers' of **Istakar** shape-shift in William Beckford's *Vathek*, 1798)



W. H. Sturt, del.

J. W. Cook, sculp.

V A T H E K .

*Near these were distinguished by the splendour of the moon, which streamed full on the place, characters like those on the sabres of the Giaour, and which possessed the same virtue of changing every moment. These, after vacillating for some time, fixed at last in Arabic letters.*

*London, Published by Richard Bentley, 1834.*

Above: frontispiece to an 1834 edition of *Vathek*



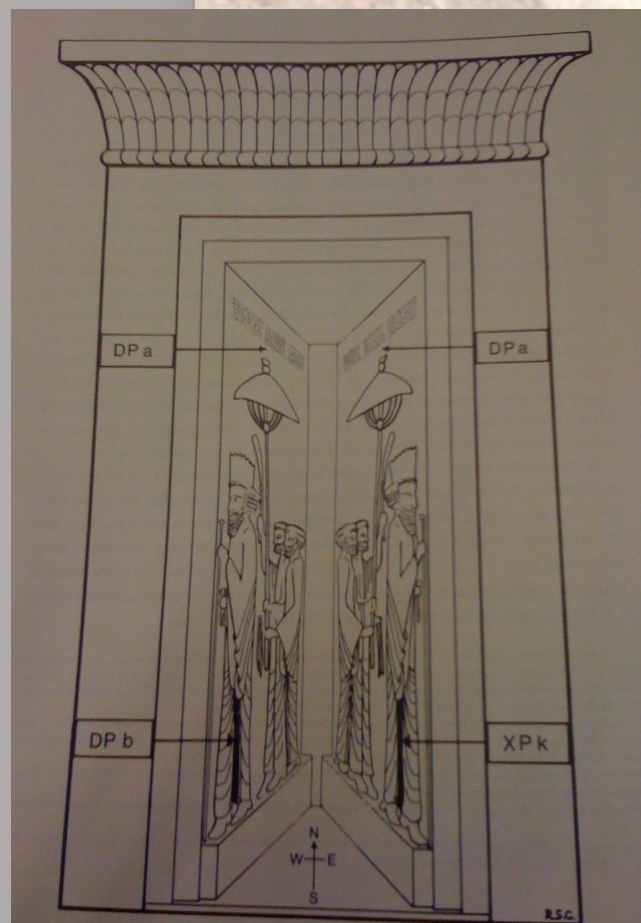
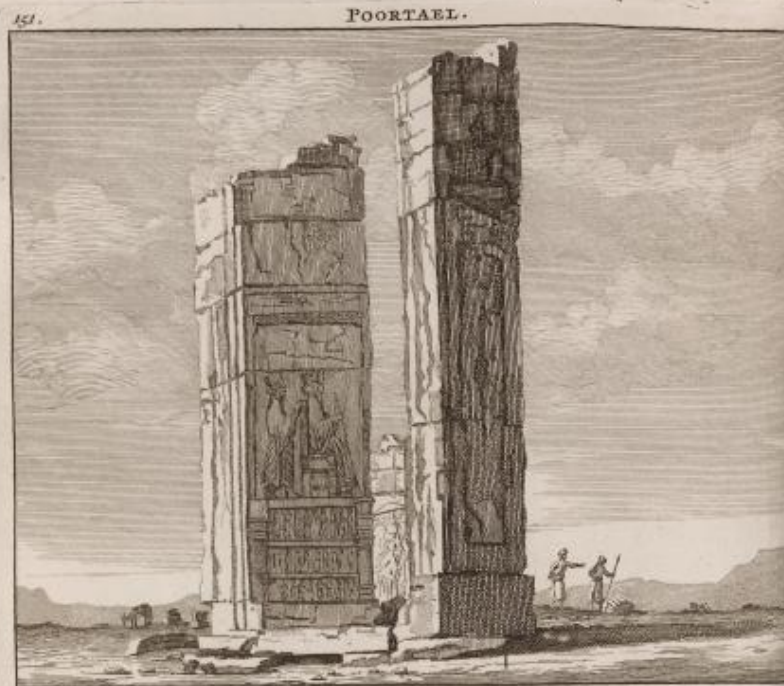


Fig. Inscriptions in the South doorway of the Tachara, see p. 11.







Above: fragments distributed by Cornelius de Bruijn to his patrons c.1711-1718.

Below: small fragment removed by Carsten Niebuhr in 1785. Now in the National Museum Denmark

Sir William Ouseley, Persianist

‘... all attempts to decipher their meaning have hitherto proved vain, and the most learned orientalists have afforded little more on the subject than conjecture. Yet it is probable that those sculptured marbles are the too faithful depositories of some important secrets: their inscriptions may contain records of illustrious actions, the memory of which has long been lost; political registers of the mightiest empire of the world; or religious mysteries, inscribed in characters known, perhaps only to a particular order, or certain number of the sacred function.’

EPITOME  
OF  
THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF  
*PERSIA.*  
EXTRACTED AND TRANSLATED FROM THE  
*JEHAN ARA*, A PERSIAN MANUSCRIPT,  
By W. OUSELEY, Esq.

“ Καλλιστὴ καὶ μεγίστη τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ  
“ ἡ τοῦ Κυροῦ Βασιλεία.” ΞΕΝΟΦ.



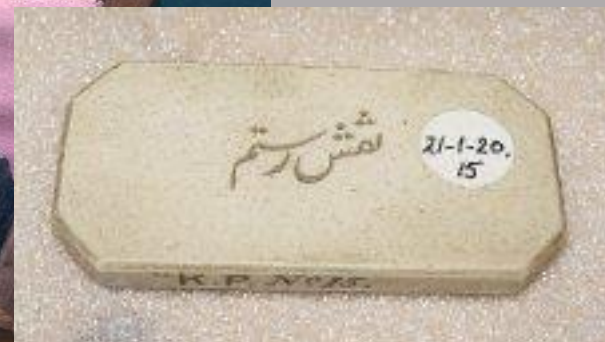
London:  
PRINTED BY COOPER AND WILSON,  
FOR MESSRS. CADELL AND DAVIES, STRAND.

1799.

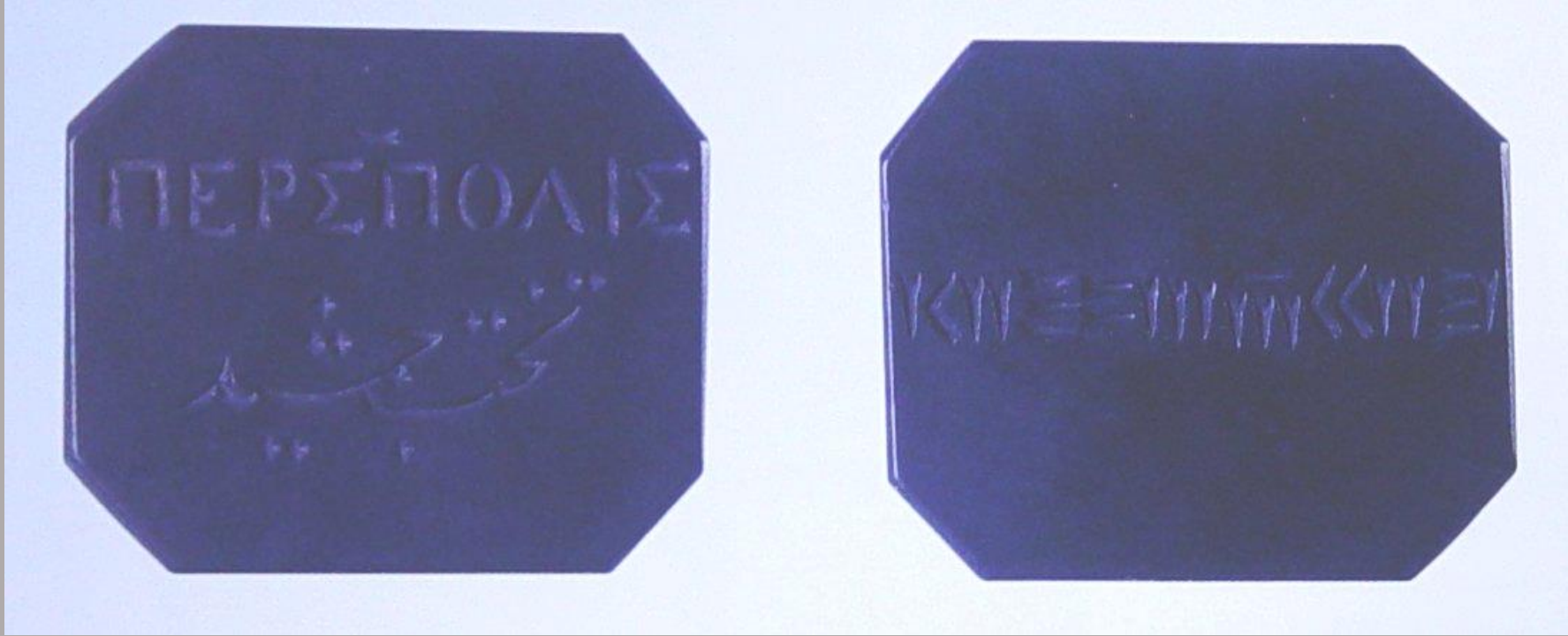


a/ā	i/ī	u/ū	k/ka	ku	x/xa	g/ga	gu	c/ca
[a/a:]	[i/i:]	[u/u:]	[k/ka]	[ku]	[x/xa]	[g/ga]	[gu]	[c/ca]
ç/ça	j/ja	ji	t/ta	tu	θ/θa	d/da	di	du
[ç/ça]	[j/ja]	[ji]	[t/ta]	[tu]	[θ/θa]	[d/da]	[di]	[du]
p/pa	f/fa	b/ba	n/na	nu	m/ma	mi	mu	y/ya
[p/pa]	[f/fa]	[b/ba]	[n/na]	[nu]	[m/ma]	[mi]	[mu]	[j/ja]
v/va	vi	r/ra	ru	l/la	s/sa	z/za	š/ša	h/ha
[v/va]	[vi]	[r/ra]	[ru]	[l/la]	[s/sa]	[z/za]	[š/ša]	[h/ha]

xšāyaθiya	būmiš	dahyāuš	baga	Auramazdā	Auramazdāha
king	earth	country	god	Ahuramazda	Ahuramazdaha
					(genitive)







ME 1821.1-20.14

‘Persepolis, Takht-i Jamshid...’

On the morning of the 23rd under a sun which made a fire-altar of the rock, I began my investigations. Certainly, a positive knowledge of the original names of ancient cities, is a great satisfaction to both historian and antiquary; but since these magnificent remains are sufficiently recognized... it seems to me a subject of no material consequence, that we do not know whether it was primevally called Elamais, Istaker, or Takht-i Jemsheed....

‘Darius the Great King, son of Hystaspes, an  
Achaemenian’

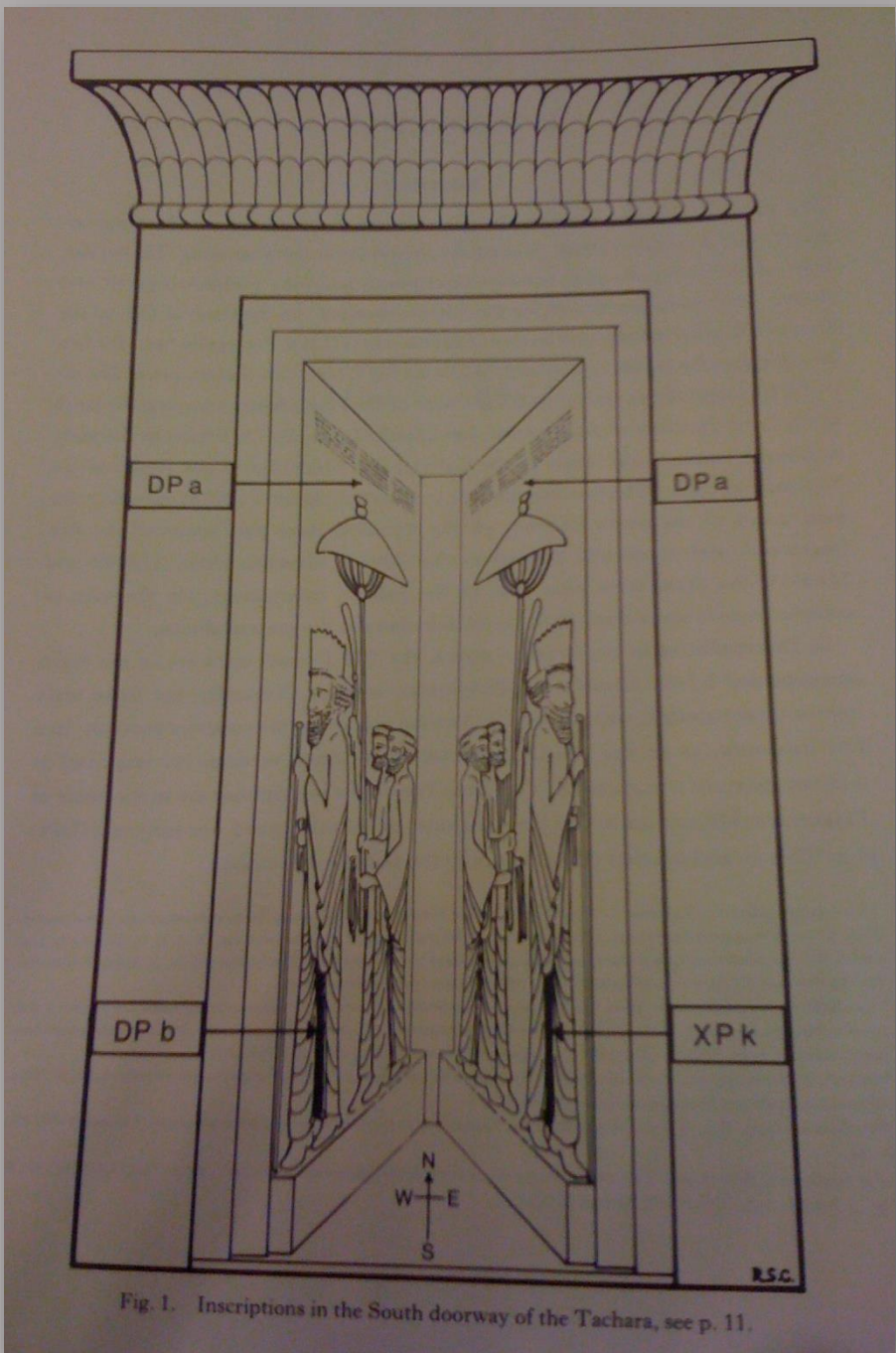


Fig. 1. Inscriptions in the South doorway of the Tachara, see p. 11.

‘Xerxes, son of King Darius, an Achaemenian’