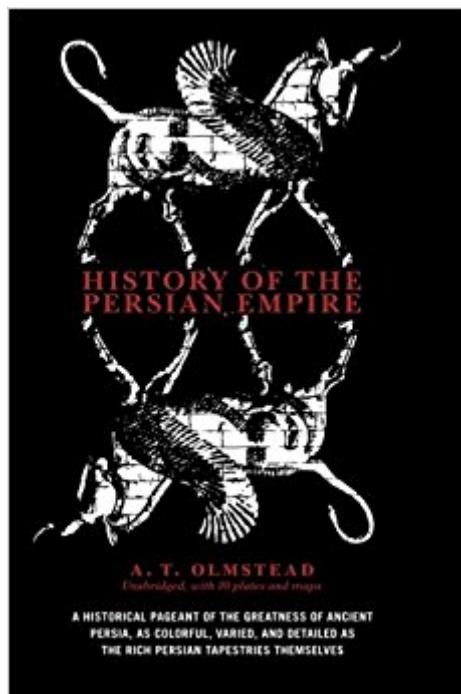


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History Of The Persian Empire



Synopsis

Out of a lifetime of study of the ancient Near East, Professor Olmstead has gathered previously unknown material into the story of the life, times, and thought of the Persians, told for the first time from the Persian rather than the traditional Greek point of view."The fullest and most reliable presentation of the history of the Persian Empire in existence."•M. Rostovtzeff

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

At the foot of the Mount of Mercy in southeastern Persia, Darius the Great built his capital, Persepolis-symbol of Persian glory for two centuries. At its height the Achaemenid Empire, with its power centered in this city, reached from the Nile and Greece eastward to India. Dominating the major travel routes between East and West, it was the meeting ground of the great cultures of the ancient world.

An impressive work of scholarship. The author is at great pains to show that the Persians were every bit as civilized as the Greeks, yet even he acknowledges that most of what we know about them comes from Greek historians. Yet even so, the Greeks come off rather worse by comparison in this historian's analysis. Olmstead sees the Persians as noble, honorable, and generous; the Greeks as brutal, dishonest, perfidious, and rapacious. He has some choice words to say about Alexander's behavior at Persepolis, and while he acknowledges that the Persians could not achieve victory over the Greeks on the battlefield, he points out that they could easily buy it with gold. If the Persians had written more about themselves, the western tradition might not be so biased in favor of

the Greeks, but fortunately for themselves and for western civilization, the Greeks were prolific writers, while the Persians seemed to have used writing chiefly for business transactions. Hence a noble race is silent.

The encyclical accounting of the Persian Empire. Olmstead was the first author to give an account of the Persians from their perspective. He begins well before Cyrus the Great and runs through the entire Achaemenid period recounting the conquest and administration of the empire until its demise by Alexander's onslaught. Olmstead goes into exceptional detail in giving accounts of the inscriptions and palace mural carvings at the ruins of Persepolis and other locales. His account of Zoroaster is also noteworthy from a liturgical perspective, though the dating of Zoroaster's life has changed since Olmstead passed away in 1945. Overall, a fantastic exposure to the Persian Empire. Best read in conjunction with one or two later works to optimally digest newer discoveries and conclusions.

I read this book in 1979 just before traveling to Iran. Once there, my Iranian friend and I traveled from the Shomal (the northern border of Iran on the Caspian Sea) nearly to the southern border, stopping at many of the sites I'd learned about while reading this book. My traveling companion learned more about his own country's history from me than he'd learned while getting a PhD, and I have this book to thank for that. It is very detailed and comprehensive, but it isn't a boring read for anyone with a real interest in the subject. Highly recommended! The book's only real shortcoming is the paucity of photos; the few it contains are small, not terribly clear and black & white.

when the subject is a history, the occidental culture should learn with this book of how much we owe to the oriental culture. it is odd to know that the Persian comes from the same indo-european origins of Greeks and Romans. it is odd to know that all we know about geometry, astronomy, mathematics and finances were developed by Persians. the only flaw, if I can say, is that the author writes too much details about the buildings and too few to writes about events and persons who rise and fall the persian empire.

Can't beat this price!

This book is utterly remarkable. Well written and incredibly comprehensive iteration of the scope, flow and detail of the empire that was Persia, from early pre-Empire times to the Alexandrian

conquest (and a bit beyond). It discusses legal, social, military, architectural, religious and business practices, inter-familial rivalries, conquests, etc., in remarkable detail, and it even puts Biblical history of the Jews in exile in context. It captures aspects of the ruling style and methods of the Mede and Persian rulers. It is simply a great and literally huge book, by a Professor whose depth of knowledge and love of his subject is inspiring, even several decades after his death.

Good product.

This is the unabridged version of this book, and as such it is very comprehensive. It was published in 1948 (the paperback version in 1959, but I do not believe that the book was updated between 1948 and 59 as the author died before the 1948 publication date). I mention these dates because the book represents pre-WWII scholarship and as such does not contain the results of more recent archeology, or the more recent discovery and decipherment of written documents. As such, this book is a bit dated, both in terms of the information provided and the style of writing. I rate this book 3.5* rounded up to 4, based on the following: This book relies heavily on the work of Greek historians such as Herodotus, and quotes liberally from them. It is very comprehensive, perhaps a bit too much so from my perspective. After a while I found the hundreds of names, many of which are the same for different individuals, to become overwhelming and I became confused as to whose son did what to whom. Furthermore, the book contains whole sections of descriptions of what clothing, hairstyles and building looked like, but does not relate this to the black and white photographs presented in the book. These photographs, printed on the same coarse paper as the rest of the books, are therefore murky and indistinct. While I found a lot of interesting material in this book, I do not recommend it to someone interested in an overview of Persian history. I would recommend it more to someone who is extremely interested in the subject of Persian history and is willing to spend the time required to absorb the huge amount of material presented in the book. It is also useful if you are interested in a specific individual, such as Darius I or a specific time period, versus as a book to be read cover-to-cover, as I did. I would recommend Waters' *Ancient Persia* as a much more readable book, and one that condenses the material presented by Olmstead, resulting in a much more accessible book. Waters' photographs are on glossy paper (as is the rest of the book), and are therefore very clearly presented. It also contains numerous maps, whereas Olmstead's book contains fewer, which I found to be of much less value.

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