

PERSIA AND THE IRANIAN PLATEAU: NOTES FOR THE TEACHING OF
ANCIENT HISTORY IN COMPULSORY EDUCATION

*A PÉRSIA E O PLANALTO IRANIANO: APONTAMENTOS PARA O ENSINO DE
HISTÓRIA ANTIGA NA EDUCAÇÃO BÁSICA*

*PERSIA Y LA MESETA IRANÍ: APUNTES PARA LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA HISTORIA
ANTIGUA EN LA EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA*



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ABSTRACT: The article addresses the history of the Iranian Plateau and its people, including the Persians and their relations with the ancient Greeks at the beginning of what later became known as Western Civilization. The objective was to highlight that the teaching of ancient history in Brazil needs to be rethought to avoid frequent inaccuracies, generalizations and inconsistencies, among others, in much of the bibliography available on the subject. To achieve this, it was based on more recent archaeological and historical research, which are decisive theoretical contributions to understanding the people of the Iranian Plateau in their diversity and historicity. This is a basic, qualitative, exploratory, explanatory research that used bibliographic and documentary procedures. It was concluded that ancient people must be studied in a contextualized way. The people of the Iranian Plateau need to have their diversity understood and cannot be treated as if they were all the same. Thus, although the Persians are the best known and studied people on the plateau, they were not the only ones, neither the first nor the last in that region. Thus, the article discusses a topic on which there is little research in Brazil and seeks to collaborate with the task of teaching ancient history in the country, in this case about the people of the Iranian Plateau. Therefore, it deals with the role of the Persians in the origins of the West, but seeks not to limit itself to this issue. Finally, the relevance of the study of antiquity in Basic Education is highlighted and some notes are made to contribute to this important task.

KEYWORDS: Iran. Old World. Education. Teaching. Iranian Plateau.

RESUMO: *O artigo aborda a história do Planalto Iraniano e de seus povos, entre eles, os Persas e suas relações com os gregos antigos no início do que posteriormente ficou conhecido como Civilização Ocidental. Objetivou-se evidenciar que o ensino de história antiga no Brasil precisa ser repensado para evitar imprecisões, generalizações e incoerências frequentes, entre outros, em boa parte da bibliografia disponível sobre o tema. Para isso, apoiou-se em pesquisas arqueológicas e históricas mais recentes, que são contribuições teóricas decisivas para compreender os povos do Planalto Iraniano em sua diversidade e historicidade. Trata-se de uma pesquisa básica, qualitativa, exploratória, explicativa e que utilizou-se de procedimentos bibliográficos e documentais. Concluiu-se que os povos antigos devem ser estudados de modo contextualizado. Os povos do Planalto Iraniano precisam ter sua diversidade compreendida e não podem ser tratados como se fossem todos iguais. Desse modo, embora os Persas sejam o povo mais conhecido e estudado do planalto, eles não foram os únicos. Assim, o artigo discute uma temática sobre a qual existem poucas pesquisas no Brasil e procura colaborar com a tarefa do ensino de história antiga no país, neste caso sobre os povos do Planalto Iraniano. Portanto, trata do papel dos Persas nas origens do Ocidente, mas procura não se limitar a essa questão. Por fim, salienta-se a pertinência do estudo da antiguidade na Educação Básica e faz alguns apontamentos para contribuir com esta importante tarefa.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Irã. Mundo Antigo. Educação. Ensino. Planalto Iraniano.*

RESUMEN: El artículo aborda la historia de la meseta iraní y su gente, incluidos los persas y sus relaciones con los antiguos griegos al comienzo de lo que más tarde se conoció como la civilización occidental. El objetivo fue resaltar que la enseñanza de la historia antigua en Brasil necesita ser repensada para evitar frecuentes imprecisiones, generalizaciones e inconsistencias, entre otras, en gran parte de la bibliografía disponible sobre el tema. Para lograrlo, se basó en investigaciones arqueológicas e históricas más recientes, que son contribuciones teóricas decisivas para comprender a los pueblos de la meseta iraní en su diversidad e historicidad. Se trata de una investigación básica, cualitativa, exploratoria, explicativa que utilizó procedimientos bibliográficos y documentales. Se concluyó que los pueblos antiguos deben ser estudiados de forma contextualizada. La gente de la meseta iraní necesita que se comprenda su diversidad y no se les puede tratar como si fueran todos iguales. Así, aunque los persas son el pueblo más conocido y estudiado de la meseta, no fueron los únicos, ni los primeros ni los últimos en esa región. Así, el artículo aborda un tema sobre el cual hay poca investigación en Brasil y busca colaborar con la tarea de enseñar la historia antigua en el país, en este caso sobre los pueblos de la Meseta iraní. Por tanto, aborda el papel de los persas en los orígenes de Occidente, pero no busca limitarse a esta cuestión. Finalmente, se destaca la relevancia del estudio de la antigüedad en la Educación Básica y se realizan algunos apuntes para contribuir a esta importante tarea.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Irán. Mundo Antiguo. Educación. Enseñanza. Meseta Iraní.

Initial remarks

Persia is a well-known reference in the Western imagination. Generally, the word refers to the famous Persian carpets, to Cyrus, the founding king of the Achaemenid Empire, to the Persian Medallion, to the expression Persian *market*, to the cartoon cat Garfield, a Persian cat, to Lima of Persia, to Queen Atossa (550 to 475 BC), one of the oldest known cases of breast cancer in history and its respective extirpation, among many other references (BURNS, 1997; CAUTI, 2015; MUKHERJEE, 2012).

However, behind such a well-known reference there may also be a profound lack of knowledge of the people, cultures and civilizations that developed on the Iranian Plateau, home of the Persians, but not only them (SÁNCHEZ, 2011; DARYAEE, 2012; PINTO, 2018).

The expression *Persia* can refer to different peoples, located at different historical moments and, often, alluding to different cultures. Where today the country called Iran is located, located on the Iranian plateau, was the place where several cultures and civilizations developed: Elamites, Guthi, Lulubi, Kassites, Medes, Persians, Parthians, Sasanians, Safavids and the Iranian Arabs. Therefore, the practice of calling all these people Persians, although common, is devoid of historical accuracy (PINTO, 2018).

It turns out, however, that the Persians became so well known, mainly due to the war with the Greeks, the famous Medical (or Greco-Persian) Wars, that they began to be used as a reference to name everything and everyone in the region where they lived, or namely, the Iranian Plateau⁴.

It is in this sense that some history books refer to the *Empires of Persia*. Some authors use the expression *Persia* as equivalent to *Iranian Plateau*. This practice, however, is not very appropriate and encourages misunderstandings (SÁNCHEZ, 2011; PARKER, 1995). There are numerous studies on Ancient History in Textbooks that point out several inconsistencies in the treatment of this topic (SILVA, 2000; FUNARI, 2004; BARNABÉ, 2014; CASSIANO, 2017; ASSUMPÇÃO; COSTA CAMPOS, 2020). There are even published studies on Ancient History in Higher Education (MORALES, 2017). However, specifically on the topic of the people of the Iranian Plateau in their diversity and their relationship with teaching in Basic Education, no studies were found.

The notoriety of the Persians may overshadow the other peoples of the Iranian Plateau (SÁNCHEZ, 2011; DARYAEE, 2012; PINTO, 2018). It is true that some of these people who emerged after the Persians and inherited some of their cultural and religious characteristics began to claim affiliation with them. This is the case with the Safavids. However, it is almost always a cultural or even historical claim whose objective is to build new nations based on the glorious past of the ancient Persians. Finally, until 1935, the current country called Iran adopted the name Persia, which certainly contributed to the historical misunderstanding of what happened in that region (BURNS, 1997).

It is important to highlight that the term *Persians* derives from the Greek word *Persís* which comes from *pārsa*, a word from the ancient Persian language. The term *Persís* was a transposition into the Greek language of the name of the region known as *Persis* (Pars, Parsa), current province of Fars in modern Iran. This term has been widely used in the West since ancient times, under the influence of Greek historians. Currently it refers predominantly to the Achaemenid Empire, started by Cyrus, which was constituted by the Persian people (SÁNCHEZ, 2011).

As for the term Iran, it comes from the word *Aryans* (from the ancient Persian *ariya*, plural *ariyanam*), which throughout history acquired the meaning of Land of the Aryans and later designated the idea of the existence of human races. In other words, the term *Aryan* came

⁴Just as an example, medical wars were covered in three films: 1) *The 300 of Sparta* (1962) by Rudolph Maté; 2) *Zack Snyder's 300* from 2007; 3) *Rise of an Empire* (2014) by Noam Murro.

to refer to the Indo-European peoples who dominated the Iranian plateau region at the end of the second and beginning of the first millennium B.C. (SÁNCHEZ, 2011; DARYAEE, 2012). This is the term preferred by the inhabitants of the Iranian Plateau and since 1935 it has been used to name the country in the region. In short, they stopped using a name that had become westernized and started using one whose origins date back to a local language. Brazilian historian Felipe Ramos de Carvalho Pinto explains the historical changes that occurred with the term Iran.

It is in this sense [...] that, etymologically, the word “Iran” means “land of the Aryans”, [...] “in the ancient Sanskrit language, Iran means ‘land of the Aryans (nobles)’”, (such a statement) is only partly true. In fact, Iran derives from *eran*, which in Sasanian times (224 to 651) meant “[territory] of the *Ariya*”, with the official designation of its territory *being eran shahr* (the same territory had been called by the Parthians (247 BC). 224 AD by *ariyan shahr*). Partially inaccurate, however, as there is a false correspondence between the modern expression, “Aryan”, and the expression *ariya*, (the latter) which occurs in numerous ancient sources from different periods, such as the Avesta, inscriptions in Naqsh-e Rostam and Bisotun, Vedic texts and even in Greek texts. Although the first term is inspired by the second, its meaning (Aryan as a race) is closely linked to 19th century Europe, the development of modern science and the idea that humanity is divided into races, and denotes a large racial group that brings together modern Indians, Europeans and Iranians, to whom he attributes psychological and biological characteristics. [...] If the *Aryia* saw themselves as different from the *Anaryia* (non- *Ariya*), such a designation was devoid of any biological criteria, and certainly did not encompass either Europeans or modern Indians. Partially true, as the idea of “Aryan” really acquired a racial meaning in 20th century Iran, and is undoubtedly underlying the (diverse) speeches [...] given (in current Iran) (PINTO, 2018, p. 50-51, our translation).

In this way, this article seeks to contribute to clarifying the trajectory of the people of the Iranian Plateau, notably among the Portuguese-speaking public. Currently, the increase in Iranian studies, or even persiological studies, as some prefer, is notable; An example of this is the Iranian Encyclopedia, an English-language ⁵website that provides a large volume of studies and knowledge about the people who lived on the Iranian Plateau. In addition to this, there is also the Perseus Digital Library website, with various textual sources and translations. Both free.

However, in Portuguese the situation is not so favorable, the availability of material is lower compared to other languages. There are notable efforts in Brazil, for example, to fill gaps,

⁵The Iranian Encyclopedia project aims to cover more than three thousand years of history and has been financed by Western governments and entities, as the current Iranian government does not look favorably on the project, which aims to cover the entire history of the Iranian Plateau since pre-history to the present. The reason for the Iranian government's disapproval comes from religious differences. See COHEN, Patrícia. The challenge of completing a tome on Iran. **Folha de São Paulo**, São Paulo, September 5th. 2011 .

but these do not always address the topic of this study (FUNARI; SILVA; MARTINS, 2008). This disadvantage ends up being reflected in the Teaching of Ancient History, which reproduces commonplaces and simplifies the history of one of the oldest regions that were populated by human beings.

Methodology

The present study is characterized as basic research with a qualitative approach. As for the objectives, this is an exploratory and explanatory investigation that had bibliographic and documentary studies as procedures.

It refers to historical-conceptual research, and to carry it out a bibliographical review of several publications focused on the study of the peoples of the Iranian Plateau, which are cited in this article, was carried out.

Despite the existence of numerous publications, certain misunderstandings, inaccuracies and even confusion prevail that may reflect on the Teaching of Ancient History in Basic Education. Therefore, we sought to highlight the importance of studying the history of Antiquity and made notes to collaborate with this important task.

Thus, in this study we sought to focus on the study of the people of the plateau, and not just the Persians, to situate and contextualize them in order to assist in a better understanding of their history.

The Iranian Plateau and its inhabitants

Initially, it is necessary to remember that the study of the people who lived on the Iranian Plateau, the current territory of the country called Iran, or the Iranian peoples, goes beyond the study of Persia. The Iranian plateau was inhabited by several people before and after the Persians and the history of the Iranians is neither limited nor restricted to their history (ALVES, 2013).

Before the Persians, Iranian territory was inhabited by the Elamites, Guti, Lulubi and Kassites. After the Persian empire declined and was dominated by the Macedonians, the Parthian, Sasanian, Safavid empires and peoples emerged in Iranian territory, in addition to the later domination of Muslims, the Iranian Arabs.

Despite the fact that the Persians were the most famous inhabitants of the Iranian Plateau, this does not justify focusing all analysis only on the Persian period. This is also not

justified by the dynamics of the story itself. Today the Persians are a well-known reference across the planet, but their ancient territory is currently inhabited by another people, of another culture and religion, the Muslims or Iranian Arabs. These, by the way, are proud to inhabit the territory of the ancient Persians and admire certain works of their culture, such as the story of Laila and Majnun (NIZAMI, 2003), among others. However, they do not connect with them in important aspects such as religiosity, for example (ONCKEN, 1930).

The Iranian Plateau and its location

The Iranian Plateau is located in the Southwest Asian region, also known as the Middle East. This region is considered by the United Nations to be one of the macro-divisions of Asia. It is a large geological formation on the southern Eurasian plate (ONCKEN, 1930).

Traditionally, however, Egypt, although a majority African country, is linked as part of the Middle East. This is due to its cultural and religious characteristics, which bring it closer to the other countries that make up this space. The same occurs with Turkey, which despite having a small part of its territory in Europe, is also traditionally linked to the Middle East.

The borders of the Iranian plateau are: South: Persian Gulf; North: Montes Alborz (Elburz); West: Montes Zagros; East: Indocuche Mountains (Hindu Kush). The plateau has three large rivers: the Karun, the Atrak and the Safid.

Settlement of the Iranian Plateau

The Iranian plateau has been inhabited since prehistoric or primitive times (PINSK, 1994). During this period, the region was inhabited by other primitive ancestors, such as Neanderthals.

The first evidence of deliberate burial in human history is the Neanderthal burial not much more than 100,000 years ago. One of the most poignant burials took place a little later, around 60,000 years ago, in the Zagros Mountains of northern Iraq (now Iran). An adult male was buried at a cave entrance; his body had apparently been placed on a chamber of flowers with healing potential, judging by the pollen found around the fossilized skeleton (LEAKEY, 1995, p. 148, our translation).

It is known that the Iranian plateau lies at the crossroads of Africa, the place of origin of human beings, Asia and Europe. Therefore, the region was a place for many wanderings, as anthropologist Richard Leakey (LEAKEY, 1995) attests.

It is known that the region was also a place for sapiens to travel towards India and China. The settlement of human elements in the region is ancient and is related to the history that subsequently developed there. Thus, in this region, over the centuries, numerous ethnic groups invaded the Iranian Plateau, establishing several communities, of which the oldest known is that of Sialk (GHIRSHMAN, 1976).

Traces of human presence in the area covering modern Iran date back to the Neolithic period, when hunting tribes lived in the Alborz and Zagros mountains and in a region close to present-day Pakistan. But the Iranian nation began to be built four thousand years ago, from a group of people from Central Asia, known as Indo-Europeans, who shared a similar language. The Indo-Europeans achieved vast military and logistical superiority over other peoples after domesticating the horse, which allowed them to explore increasingly distant horizons (ADGHIRNI, 2014, p. 125, our translation).

Gutis, Lulubi, Cassites and Elamites

French historian Michel Mourre points out that the first people of the Iranian Plateau were the Gutis, Cassites and Elamites. In addition to these, there were also the Lulubi (GHIRSHMAN, 1976). The Elamites were the first to found an organized state on the Iranian Plateau and the first to also establish a civilization, whose capital was in the city of Susa. Despite being settled on the Iranian Plateau, these people have always been geographically and historically linked to the Mesopotamians.

Persian history begins with the mountain peoples settled in southwestern Iran⁶, in the Zagros ranges, the Elamites, the Gutis and the Kassites⁷. Over the course of the third and second millennia, these people were in struggle with the various powers that successively exercised hegemony in Mesopotamia; constituted a permanent threat to land traffic between the Mediterranean East and Asia (MOURRE, 1998, p. 697, our translation).

The use of the concept of civilization in this study requires contextualization and notes for the area of teaching. This concept emerged in the 19th century, in the context of European imperialism and based on the foundation of so-called evolutionism, which did a disservice, because it shaped perceptions of linear-evolutionary-valuative-hierarchical schemes that are difficult to undo, such as the famous triad terminological: *savagery, barbarism and civilization*. However, in this article, the concept of civilization in 19th century terms, in the singular, is no longer used.

⁶In Portuguese from Portugal, it is written Irão and not Irã as in Brazilian Portuguese.

⁷Some authors write the name of this people as Kassites in Portuguese.

With the advancement in anthropological, ethnographic, historical and cultural research in the 20th century, several prejudices embedded in 19th century analyzes were noticed. In this way, the concept of civilization underwent a reconfiguration and began to be used in the plural, referring to societies that had a certain stability, duration, continuity and social and cultural cohesion, and no longer to supposed biological superiorities.

From the evolutionary perspective of the 19th century, civilization is the opposite of barbarism. Civilized societies are those that promote religion, morals and good customs. And it is assumed that primitive or prehistoric societies lived in a state between original savagery and true civilization. With the emergence of anthropology, it is understood that civilization is not an attribute of evolved societies. All human societies know a form of civilization that we call “culture”. The traditional use of the word “civilization”, in the singular, therefore tends to disappear. From now on we talk about “civilizations”: Chinese, Greek, Western civilizations, and we can also talk about African civilizations. The term civilization then refers to a cultural area, stable in the long term, marked by some great characteristics of its own (DORTIER, 2010, p. 77-78, our translation).

For some analysts, the concept of civilization resembles traces of social Darwinism and imperialism, and scares current anti-Eurocentrics and decolonialists, for example, a situation that is the result of misuse of the concept in the past, notably in the 19th century. This fear is well-founded. A definition of the concept of civilization along these reprehensible lines, which is currently rejected, is precisely formulated by the historian Carlos Renato Carola.

Mainly from the 18th century onwards, an explanatory model of seeing and ordering history based on three powerful ideologies took hold in Western culture: civilization, progress and evolution. In some ways, they still dominate intellectual thought in the West.

The idea of “civilization” advocates a supposed cultural superiority of a society in relation to others. The modern ideology of “progress” exalts economic and technological development as an unquestionable indicator of the definitive advance of human culture over the forces and resources of nature. It is the meaning of “evolution” – which first expressed the progressive development of species in the natural world, according to the Darwinist theory of the 19th century – quickly transitioned to the human social world and established a hierarchy between cultures, societies and institutions (CAROLA, 2009, p. 173, our translation).

However, the concept of civilization retains its relevance in the historical-archaeological sense and not in the evolutionary sense of the 19th century. Therefore, it is used to signal the change from primitive societies, in the sense of being first and original and not backward, to complex societies, which are understood as those with greater internal social diversification (DANIEL, 1970; FERNANDES; ROVAI; LANDINI, 2014; KUPER, 2008; PASTENAK,

2009; PINSKY, 1994; TRIGGER, 2003; WEBER, 1970). The historian Fernand Braudel precisely defined that civilizations are cultures endowed with continuities (BRAUDEL, 1989).

Therefore, it was in this updated sense of the concept of civilization that we refer to the Elamites. As for the Lulubis, almost everything we know about these people comes from Mesopotamian sources. They were tribal people who inhabited the Zagros mountains, western region of the Iranian Plateau. They were a warlike people who besieged the Mesopotamian kingdoms countless times, and everything indicates that they were subjugated by King Naram-Sin, who reigned from 2254 BC. to 2218 BC. Several of his attacks produced instability in southern Mesopotamia and contributed to the end of the Akkadian Empire. They were later overshadowed by other, more militarily powerful peoples who developed in the region (SCHRAKAMP, 2012).

The Gutis were a people formed by pastoral tribes who inhabited the mountainous region of the Zagros in the northeastern part of the Iranian Plateau. They were always described in a pejorative way in Mesopotamian sources, as “*hordes of Gutis*” and “*countless as locusts*”. The oldest known reference dates back to 2200 BC. in Mesopotamian cuneiform inscriptions.

The Gutis did not have a writing system or irrigation or agricultural techniques, and it is believed that during the fifty years of domination (2150 to 2100 BC) over the Mesopotamians, they interrupted the system of administrative tablets and released the animals into nomadic herds across Mesopotamia, which caused food prices to rise.

Everything indicates that it was the gutis who led the Akkadian dynasty to its final decline. Around 2100 BC., they were defeated by Ur-Nammu, king of the Mesopotamian city of Uruk. For centuries, the gutis remained an archetypal citation of the enemies of the Mesopotamians, including in the literature of the time (LEICK, 2010).

The Kassites, on the other hand, were referred to as a “*barbarian*” people who came from the Iranian Plateau and invaded Mesopotamia and dominated it for approximately five centuries. It is important to note, with regard to the Cassites, that recent research and discoveries have partially changed the view that has been held about them in recent decades.

Of all the people who inhabited ancient Mesopotamia, the Cassites are the most mysterious. Some authors saw their origin in southwestern Iran where they later retreated. Unlike the Hurrians, they did not write anything in their own language (...) Kassite is not a Semitic language and is not related to Sumerian, Hurrian and other languages spoken in the Near East nor to Indo-European languages. However, the Cassites may have had ancient contacts, direct or indirect, with the Indo-Europeans. The Cassites first appeared in Mesopotamia in ancient Babylonian times in the form of isolated individuals or groups, and later organized into tribes called the “house of a given chief”.

The oldest references date back to around 1800 BC. A century later a Kassite named Kastililiash became king of Hana. It was at this moment and in this region that the long history of the Kassite dynasty began. The Kassites take Babylon after the Hittite incursion that put an end to their 1st dynasty (c. 1595 BC). It is admitted that the first Kassite sovereign of this city was Agum II (SANTOS, 2011, p. 51-59, our translation).

According to Brazilian historian Sinval F. Medina, the Kassites were not as “civilized” as the Mesopotamians, and from his perspective, they would have even contributed to the cultural collapse in the region, a controversial thesis today.

Kassites: barbarian people from Central Asia who, in 1750 BC. invaded Mesopotamia, putting an end to the old Babylonian empire. Due to their low cultural stage, the Kassites were unable to take advantage of the legacy of the Babylonian civilization. The southern part of Mesopotamia fell into a period of regression that lasted approximately six hundred years. The strange way of life of the Kassites, pasturing huge herds of horses, introduced this animal on a large scale into Mesopotamia, causing a true revolution in the means of transport at the time. The knowledge accumulated over centuries by Sumerians, Akkadians and Babylonians was not lost in the whirlwind of barbarian invasions. They were assimilated by a Semitic people from the banks of the Tigris, the Assyrians, who, sometime later, would create a formidable empire (MEDINA, 1968, p. 63, our translation).

However, of all the people before the Persians, the Elamites were the ones who stood out the most (GIORDANI, 1992). They developed a complex society in the region and are traditionally considered to be the first civilization on the Iranian Plateau. Its geographical location is referred to in ancient sources as “*east of Sumer (in Mesopotamia)*” (HAMDANI, 1978). Several historians, from a Mesopotamian perspective, report that the Elamites were located on the “periphery” of Mesopotamia (LEVEQUE, 1991). They dominated part of the Mesopotamian peoples and were also dominated by them. They were defeated by the Assyrians and then by the Persians, who incorporated them into their empire.

Elam – a happy name given by biblical translators – a great nation that occupied an undetermined territory located approximately what is now known as the current country called Iran, although at the time of its maximum splendor it reached as far as Afghanistan, the Caspian Sea and northwestern Mesopotamia. Its written history spans almost three millennia (BC), although its language was used until the 11th century AD (CIFUENTES, 2013, p. 11, our translation).

Included in the Persian empire, or Achaemenid empire, the Elamites, over the centuries, stopped being mentioned, and everything indicates that they were absorbed by the imperialist practices of the Persians.

Medes and Persians

Traditionally, the Aryans or Indo-Europeans are considered to be the starting point of the history of Persia (MACKEY, 2008). This perspective, however, has been questioned by more recent studies, which seek to reconstruct and rescue the trajectory of all the people who lived on the Iranian Plateau (CULICAM, 1971).

From approximately three thousand years ago, the people called Medes and Persians, both Aryans, arrived in the Iranian plateau region. Initially, the Medes settled in the north and the Persians in the south. From the 8th century BC, the Median emperor named Déjoces managed to unify under his command all the peoples of the Iranian plateau region, including the Persians. At this time, the Elamites were linked to Mesopotamian history and did not figure, for example, in the initial expansion plans of either the Medes or the Persians (SPEAKE, 1999).

Herodotus, considered the father of history, narrates the episode of Déjoces' ascension to the throne and the formation of the Median kingdom. It also narrates the domination of the Medes under the Persians carried out by Fraorte, son of Déjoces.

C1 — Déjoces gathered all the Medes into a single nation, reigning over them. This nation comprises several peoples: the Búsios, the Paretacênios, the Estrucatas, the Arizandos, the Búdios and the Magi (HALICARNASSO, 2001, p. 109, our translation).

CII — Upon his death, after a reign of fifty years, his son Fraorte succeeded him on the throne. The kingdom of Media was not enough for the latter's ambition. He first attacked the Persians, subjecting them to his rule (...). (HALICARNASSO, 2001, p. 109, our translation).

The Persians remained under the rule of the Medes until Cyrus, around 550 BC. On this date, Cyrus, then prince of the Persians, organized a rebellion against the domination of the Medes. This rebellion was successful and reversed the political situation that existed until then on the Iranian Plateau. From then on, the Medes became vassals of the Persians, which resulted in the founding of the Achaemenid Persian Empire.

The Persian nation contains several tribes, as listed here. [...]: the Pasargadios, Maráfios, and Maspianos, the first being the most civilized of all. The Achaemenids, from whom the Persian kings descend, constitute a branch of the Pasargadian tribe (HALICARNASSO, 2001, p. 125, our translation).

An important aspect to be highlighted is that the neighboring region of Mesopotamia was inhabited before the Iranian Plateau by Semitic peoples. The Assyrian empire, for example, located in Upper Mesopotamia, dates back to at least 2 thousand years BC. Another important

piece of information to understand the history of the region is what happened in India. Aryan people, also coming from the North, similar to the Medes and Persians, occupied the Indian region and established the Vedic culture of India there (CULICAM, 1971).

Thus, it is important to emphasize that the Aryans who occupied the region of current Iran were the origin of Persia, and in the region of India they gave rise to the Vedic culture of the famous caste system. These same people, in the region of Greece, were also at the origin of the Greeks and related to the decline of Cretan society. Thus, the Greeks and Persians, who later became involved in wars and disputes, such as the medical or Greco-Persian wars, apparently descended ancestrally from the same Aryan people (PINSK, 1980).

The Persian Empire (Achaemenid Empire): from Cyrus to Alexander

The history of the Persian Empire is the history of the first World Empire (HOLLAND, 2008). It is, in a way, a meteoric trajectory. Both the rise and fall of the Persian Empire were relatively rapid by the standards of the ancient world. In total, the Persian Empire existed for 219 years, beginning with Cyrus' ascension to the throne and the subjugation of the Medes in 550 BC and ending with the domination of the Persians by Alexander the Great in 330 BC. (FRANCO JR; FILHO, 1994; BRIANT, 1996, 2010).

In total, the Persian Empire had twenty-one kings⁸. Gradually, they became masters of the ancient world. Scholar David Asheri argues that the Persians created a new model of domination. This consisted of economically exploiting the subjugated, while respecting their culture, religion, laws and even part of their political elites. This became known as “*respect in defeat*”. This principle was also applied to the Persians themselves by Alexander the Great on the occasion of the Macedonian conquest (ASHERI, 2006). This way of conducting imperialist politics was new in the ancient world.

Later, world empires, starting first from Mesopotamia. Its origin was the need to prevent the constant attacks of nomads on cultivated land, through the domination of all surrounding countries and the nomads themselves. Thus, the empires of the Assyrians and Egyptians were born; and finally, a new form, that of the Persians; perhaps following the model of this the Hindus, and later the Chinese (JASPERS 1965, p. 73, our translation).

The most emblematic example of this policy of “*respect in defeat*” was the outcome of what became known as the Babylonian Captivity (598 BC 538 BC). For six decades, the Jews

⁸See Appendix I at the end of this article, about the Persian kings, which was prepared to collaborate with the Ancient History Teaching task. It was not possible to draw up tables for all the peoples of the Iranian plateau.

were exiled to the city of Babylon by order of Nebuchadnezzar II. The city of Jerusalem was besieged, looted and the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed. Part of the population went to Egypt and the rest were forcibly taken to Babylon.

When Cyrus II dominated Babylon, he allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the Temple. This, at the time, was used as a way to demonstrate the novelty that the Persian Empire intended to implement. In other words, benevolence for the orderly and zealous subjugated. Today we know that Cyrus also wanted to police the border with Egypt, settling in the region a people linked to the Persians and owing great benevolence (BROSIUS, 2006; JAGUARIBE, 2002).

Furthermore, as Mario Liverani demonstrates, the situation of Israel in the Persian period, or Persian Yehud, was not very pleasant, although better, compared to the previous period.

The groups of Jews who returned to Palestine thanks to Achaemenid imperial edicts found a region that only to a certain extent corresponded to the model they expected of an empty and available land, as it housed more or less important groups of different origins. These were peasant communities that had remained on their lands, that is, they were not deported; These were deportees from other origins who had settled in the region since Assyrian times; these were bordering peoples who had taken advantage of the relative emptiness to expand (the coastal cities) or to move (the Edomites); These were, finally, groups resulting from the most diverse mergers (LIVERANI, 2008, p. 323, our translation).

Iran: between Mesopotamia and India

Another important aspect to be highlighted is the geographical and cultural location of the Iranian plateau. Geographically, it is located on a plateau between two regions that had good hydrography. To the west was Mesopotamia, with the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. To the east was India and the famous Ganges and Indus rivers.

This geographical border, over the centuries, also became a cultural and political border, as a civilization different from that of Mesopotamia and India developed on the Iranian Plateau; namely, the Persian Empire. This, despite receiving influences from both regions, can safely be said to have had the most decisive Mesopotamian influences (ASHERI, 2006; SÁNCHEZ, 2011).

Throughout Persian history, there is a greater involvement of them with Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Greeks than with the eastern peoples. Although the Persians established small

domains in the Hindu world, which later became a satrapy, the majority of their conquests were, however, in the West: Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece (ASHERI, 2006; SÁNCHEZ, 2011).

This is an important question, because it explains, during the following centuries, the existence of several similarities between the people of the ancient world, given their geographical proximity, which also became cultural and political similarities.

The famous thesis of philosopher Karl Jaspers can be fully applied here. According to Jaspers, during the period from 800 BC. to 200 A.C., China, India, Persia, Egypt and other Middle Eastern civilizations shared several cultural characteristics in common. He called this period the Axial Age. This would be one of the reasons why several ancient peoples had certain similarities (JASPERS, 1965).

Ancient Persia or Achaemenid Empire

After the conquest of the Medes by Cyrus (Cyrus II, the Great) in 550 BC., the expansion continued. Cyrus conquered a vast region that extended from Anatolia (present-day Turkey) to Afghanistan and Arabia (AYMARD; AUBOYER, 1998).

Cyrus was succeeded by his son Cambyses, who ruled the Persian empire from 529 to 522 BC. During his reign, expansion continued. Among the main achievements of Cambyses, the domination of Egypt in the famous Battle of Pelusa stands out (SÁNCHEZ, 2011).

After the death of Cambyses, a problematic transition of power occurred. The successor was Darius I, who came to power through a coup. Darius made numerous reforms that became famous and established a pattern that was later imitated by several other empires, such as the Macedonian (or Alexandrian) and Roman.

Darius reformed the administrative system, divided the Persian Empire into satrapies, which enjoyed a certain political and legal autonomy, each of them governed by a satrap chosen by Darius himself, who came to be called King of Kings.

He reformed the system of laws, imposing harsher penalties. In the economy, he unified the monetary system by creating the currency called Dárico, which began to circulate throughout the empire and favored the development of trade. He created mandatory conscription for the army and the institution of remuneration for the military. In politics, he moved the capital from Pasargadae to Persepolis and created the famous Royal Road, 2,400 kilometers long and with 111 stopping and rest stations that connected Susa to Sardis in Anatolia, present-day Turkey (AYMARD; AUBOYER, 1998).

On a military level, however, Darius did not achieve the same success. He waged war against the Greeks, at the time a marginal people in the Persian world as a whole, and ended up defeated. It was the first major defeat of the Persians since their rise as an empire in the time of Cyrus the Great. This war became known as the First Medical War, or Greco-Persian war. It was there that the famous episode of the Battle of Marathon took place.

Darius's succession fell to his son Xerxes, grandson of Cyrus. Xerxes resumes the war against the Greeks in the war, which became known as the Second Medical War. Although the Persians achieved victory in the first phase of the war, they ended up defeated. This war became famous mainly for the Greeks. It was there that the notorious episodes of the Battle of Salamis and the Battle of Thermopylae took place ⁹(SÁNCHEZ, 2011).

The Greeks, in the end, were victorious and the war ended with the battles of Plataea and Mycale, both favorable to the Greeks. Several scholars highlight the importance of the Medical Wars for the cultural-identity formation of the Greeks and, later, the West.

Many, though not all, Greeks sought a common unity in terms of shared kinship at least two generations before the invasion of the Persians. However, it is true that the Persian invasion had an effect on the way the Greeks saw themselves. [...] In the seventh and sixth centuries BC, the East was an object of exotic fascination for the Greeks, or at least Greek elites, but the Persian invasion and the concomitant rise of democracy in several Greek cities - a practice that served the marginalization of many elite practices - generated a negative view of this region. The word 'barbarians' - both adjective and noun - recorded only occasionally before the invasion, now comes into common use to designate not only the Persians, but all other groups of non-Greeks, without any differentiation (HALL, 2001, p. 220).

A sense of Greek unity was forged only when the isolated city-states came together to face the threat posed by Persia, under the command of Darius and his son Xerxes, in the early years of the 5th century BC. The Greeks then adopted the description of "barbarian" for their common enemy. They said that the *barbaroi* stuttered like idiots, or that they babbled like babies, or that they grunted like animals - *bar bar*. Hence the name. More refined and courteous terms for foreigners, heterophone, "another speech," and "another language," insisted on the primacy of the Greeks. The initial mark of the barbarians was a language deficiency (KUPER, 2008, p. 41-42, our translation).

After the defeat, Xerxes returns to the Iranian Plateau and ends his life building and decorating palaces. He died murdered by two advisors and was succeeded by Artaxerxes (Artaxerxes I Longímanus).

From the second medical war onwards, the Persian Empire entered a process of slow decline, which had as a motivating factor more internal causes than the wear and tear in the war

⁹ This battle was the subject of the 2007 film *300* (the movie).

with the Greeks. Several Persian kings would still interfere in Greek affairs and their wars, but the project of subjugating Greece was not resumed.

Various internal rebellions, corruption, dynastic and palace disputes ended up undermining much of the empire's strength. From 464 to 330 BC., eight Persian kings headed the empire, which increasingly showed signs of insufficiency and inability to deal with growing problems (AYMARD; AUBOYER, 1998).

In the 4th century BC., the quarrel with the Greeks is resumed from another perspective, now on the initiative of a nation that considered itself culturally Greek and militarily superior to the classical cities of Greece, notably Athens and Sparta. This nation that emerged on the political scene at the time in the Mediterranean world was Macedonia, which ironically, in the past, at the time of the Medical Wars, had already been subjugated by the Persians and had even lived as a subjugated kingdom for a period.

However, from the reign of Philip II, Macedonia gradually began to specialize in the art of war and the development of new techniques and weapons, which guaranteed it growing military and political power. This project was continued after the assassination of Philip II by Alexander the Great, his son and heir.

The last Persian king, or Achaemenid king, was Darius III, who ruled from 336 to 330 BC. He became known as the king who lost the empire. After facing several internal revolts with increasingly increasing difficulties, he was unable to resist the Macedonian invasion. He died murdered by satrap Bessus during the persecution promoted by Alexander the Great, who intended to capture Darius III. One of his daughters, called Estatira, even married Alexandre (SÁNCHEZ, 2011).

The Iranian Plateau after the end of the Persian Empire (Achaemenid Empire)

After the death of Alexander, the Great, in 323 BC., the Iranian Plateau, seat of the ancient Achaemenid dynasty, found itself involved in a tangle of wars and disputes that devastated the entire Mediterranean region and most of the ancient Eurasian world (BRIANT, 2010).

Alexander wanted to dominate the “whole world”, go to China, subjugate Carthage, India and even Rome, the latter, it should be noted, which in his time was not yet a great empire. It began its expansion by dominating the Persian Empire and advanced a little on India. He died with his project of conquest unfinished and never taken up by any of his successors.

After his death, the destinies of the Iranian Plateau were absorbed into the set of Hellenistic disputes and, for centuries, it merged with one of the new kingdoms that were created by Alexander's successors, the Seleucid Empire, until centuries later it regained its autonomy (SÁNCHEZ, 2011).

Hellenistic Persia (Seleucid Period)

After the fall of the Persian Empire, Macedonian rule came, which was marked by the constant presence of wars. Alexander's early death, aged just 33, in 323 BC. precipitated the subsequent development of numerous wars that involved the entire Mediterranean world (MOUREAU, 1978).

Alexander's generals, called diadochi, divided the empire he conquered into several kingdoms, and the first century after his death was marked by a wide range of military conflicts between Alexander's successor generals and the heirs of those generals, called epigones, who plunged the ancient Mediterranean world into a scenario of constant belligerence, including Persia.

At the end of this troubled period, the Iranian Plateau came under the control of the Greco-Macedonian kingdom of the Seleucids. This period is also known as the time of Hellenistic rule. The Greco-Macedonian Seleucid Empire had a troubled life and difficult relationship with the other Hellenistic kingdoms of Ptolemaic Egypt, the Kingdom of Cassander and Lysimachus in Europe. However, after numerous divisions and rearrangements, the Iranian Plateau remained in the Seleucid Empire until 250 BC. W.

In 250 B.C., Seleucid rule over the Iranian Plateau was removed by the rise of a new Aryan kingdom in Asia, the Parthians, ruled by the Arsacid dynasty. Initially they dominated only the southern banks of the Caspian Sea, but after the defeat of the Seleucid Empire by the Romans, they established themselves and conquered the Iranian Plateau (MOUREAU, 1978).

The Parthian Empire (Parthia)

Originally, the Parthians were a nomadic people who lived in the Iranian Plateau region. It was later included in the Persian Empire as a satrapy, a period during which these people experienced a certain flourishing. At the time of the Macedonian invasion, they were subjugated and then included as a satrapy of the Seleucid Empire. In the Seleucid era, it was called *Partiana* (ARAUJO, 2018).

In 247 B.C., Partiana organized a revolt against the Seleucid king Antiochus II, which was led by Arsaces (Arsácio I), who, after the victory, established a new kingdom and a new dynasty: the Arsacids.

The Parthian Empire expanded rapidly and occupied vast territories, ranging from Mesopotamia to India, and, similar to the Persians, they also divided their kingdom into satrapies. The capital of the Parthian Empire was the city of Ecbatana.

The Parthian Empire was involved in several wars with Rome, which, at this time, was an expanding empire and increasingly interfered in the affairs of the Middle East and the Iranian Plateau. Rome, however, never managed to defeat the Parthian Empire and the two regularly ended conflicts with a balance of powers in the region. The Romans never managed to impose any rule on the Parthian Empire (MOUREAU, 1978).

During the reign of Artabanus III, the Parthian Empire became very rich due to successful agriculture and trade. At this time, the Parthians knew how to take advantage of the Silk Road, which carried Chinese luxury products to be sold to the Romans.

The end of the Parthian Empire was due to a civil war that undermined the foundations of its regime and government. In 224 B.C., the Arsacids were defeated and a new dynasty rose to power, the Sassanids.

During the existence of the Parthian Empire (247 BC to 224 AD) it is necessary to emphasize that they reestablished the political autonomy of the Iranian Plateau, and also absorbed the cultures that circulated in the region. Thus, despite numerous demonstrations of philo-Hellenism and other Western influences, the Parthians stood out in producing original art and architecture. Also highlighted is the artisanal work with ivory (MOUREAU, 1978; DABAT, 1995; BORGONGINO, 2023).

The Sasanian Empire

The Sasanians were a Persian people who managed to dominate the Iranian Plateau and subjugate the Parthians. They founded a new dynasty, which remained vigorous and powerful for more than four centuries (224 to 651), until Muslim rule (MOURRE, 1998).

In the golden period, the Sasanian Empire extended over a vast area stretching from Syria to India, from Georgia to the Persian Gulf. Its western borders were always in conflict with the Romans and, later, the Byzantine Empire. They developed a well-equipped army and were recognized as notable knights.

The Sasanians inherited the territory of Achaemenid and Parthian Persia. They were declared enemies of the Parthians, whom they considered foreign usurpers accustomed to the Greek and Hellenistic influence of the time of Alexander and the Seleucids. To this end, they declared themselves legitimate heirs of the Achaemenids and intended to reestablish the glory of the times of Cyrus the Great and Darius.

During its existence, the Sasanian Empire was fiercely opposed to the Romans and the Byzantine Empire. He adopted Mazdaism (or Zoroastrianism) as his official religion, which lasted until the 7th century AD. On a social level, the Sasanians replaced Parthian “feudalism” with a centralized and highly hierarchical government, reorganizing the provinces and placing each of them under the government of a Sasanian prince (MOUREAU, 1978; DABAT, 1995; BORGONGINO, 2023).

The height of Sasanian power occurred under the reign of Kosroes I (531 to 579), who invaded Syria, conquered Antioch and deported the famous metal craftsmen to his lands. But his son, Cosroes II, overstepped by invading the Byzantine Empire, Jerusalem and Egypt, in addition to trying to invade the city of Constantinople. Such military adventures weakened their forces, especially after the retaliation of the Byzantines, which opened an opening for the invasion of the Muslim Arabs who came from the south.

The Arabs won decisive and significant victories after 611, and in 637, they ruined the Persian army and took its capital. Another Arab victory in 642 opened the way to domination of the Iranian Plateau. Within a few years, the Arabs managed to completely dominate the plateau. In 651, the final defeat occurred and Iran became part of the Islamic Empire, and gradually became culturally and religiously Islamized, a situation that was never reversed (MOURRE, 1998).

Final remarks

After going through the history of the Iranian Plateau, some aspects stand out as final considerations.

First, the teaching of ancient history needs to advance in this aspect. It is not very accurate, in fact, it is quite vague, to teach only the history of Persia and forget what happened on the Iranian Plateau before and after the Persians. Again, the history of the Iranian Plateau is not limited to the history of the Persians, as this article sought to demonstrate.

Second, judging by several textbooks and even some history manuals, the history of the Persian Empire needs to be properly contextualized in the broader movement of the history of the Middle East region and the Mediterranean basin, properly connected with the Aryan migrations, etc.

Third, regarding the history of Persia, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that many sources, films and reports, like those of Herodotus, are records of other peoples about the Persians, therefore, they generally contain distorted and even prejudiced views; Therefore, it is necessary to make this consideration and pass this on to students, so that they understand that all historical accounts are human constructions and reflect part of the conceptions of each author.

The fourth and final aspect concerns the formation of the so-called Western culture, or Western Civilization, as some prefer. In this article, we discussed that the Greeks and Persians were people with common ancestry among the Indo-Europeans and later differentiated. It was during the medieval wars that the West's initial identity took shape and its first historical manifestation.

For all those who deal with teaching history, both in Brazil and in other Western countries, it is essential to understand the relationship between Persia, and the other peoples of the Iranian Plateau, with the Greeks and other European peoples in antiquity. Do not presuppose a “homogeneous other” on the eastern side. After all, it was at that moment, with Greco-Persian relations, that Western culture was formulated, later experiencing a long development that reaches us. Therefore, precision is essential for an adequate understanding of this culture (BURUMA; MARGALIT, 2006).

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Appendix I

Kings of Achaemenid Persia

Achaemenid dynasty

	Name of the King	Date of Reign	Main achievements
01	Hakamanish (Achaemenes in Greek)	w. 705 -605 BC?	Probably historical figure shrouded in legends. It is mentioned in the Behistun Inscription. He is considered the eponymous ancestor who gave its name to the Achaemenid dynasty and the first Persian king and founder of the Achaemenid dynasty.
02	Anshan Teipes (City of Anshan or Anzan, now Tepe Malyan – Tall-i Malyan – in Iran)	? – C. 640 BC	Son of Achaemenes and king of the city Anshan. It is cited in the Behistun Inscription and the Cyrus Cylinder. He probably had two sons who gave rise to two branches of the Achaemenid dynasty. They were his sons: Cyrus I and Araramnes.
05	Cyrus I	640 – 580 BC	Son of Teipes of Anshan and grandson of Achaemenes. He was king of Anshan. It is considered that Cyrus I ended his life as a vassal of the Median kings Cyaxares or his son Astyages. He was succeeded by his son Cambyses I.
06	Cambyses I of Anshan – Cambyses the Elder	580 – 559 BC	He was the Persian king of Anshan, father of Cyrus II the Great, the founder of the Persian Empire. It is mentioned in the Cyrus Cylinder and in the Cyropédia. In his time, the Persians were still vassals of the Medes. He married Mandane, daughter of King Meda Astyages. He and his son Cyrus II fought against Median rule over the Persians. He was succeeded by his son Cyrus II the Great.
07	Cyrus II the Great	559 to 529 BC	Son of Cambyses I and princess Meda Mandane and grandson of King Meda Astyages, whom he defeated and became king of the Persians and Medes. Apparently, Cyrus had the support of part of the Median nobility who were dissatisfied with King Astyages. He stood out for his military feats, which made Persia the center of the largest empire ever constituted. He dominated Lydia and Babylon. He was the king who freed the Jews from Babylonian Captivity and author of the Cyrus Cylinder. Died in the Battle of the Massagetas. The Greek Xenophon wrote a book about him called Cyropaedia. He was succeeded by his son Cambyses II.
08	Cambyses II – Cambyses the New	529 to 522 BC	Eldest son of Cyrus II the Great. His reign began in 529 and his greatest achievement was the conquest of Egypt during the reign of Pharaoh Psametic III in the famous battle of Pelusa. He ordered the death of his younger brother named Esmérdis. He stabbed the Egyptian sacred bull called Apis, which resulted in a serious offense against Egyptian religious beliefs. He died on a trip when he was returning from Egypt to Persia to fight an uprising. He left no son and was succeeded by the wizard Gaumata, who pretended to be his brother Smerdis. Gaumata assumed the throne for a short period and was dethroned by Darius I.
09	Wizard Gaumata (Pseudo-Esmerdis, or Pseudo-Bardia)	522 a. W.	Bardia (or Bardiya) was the youngest son of Cyrus II, the Great, and was murdered on the orders of his brother Cambyses II. The wizard Gaumata impersonated him during the period in which Cambyses was busy with the military campaign that resulted in the domination of Egypt and took the Persian throne with the help of some nobles. When he

			found out about the usurper Cambyses II, he began a journey back to Persia to depose him, but he died on the way. According to the Behistun Inscription Gaumata reigned for seven months (11/03/522 to 29/09/522). He was murdered by a conspiracy by Darius I and six other Persian nobles.
11	Darius I the Great	522 to 486 BC	Author of the Behistun Inscription. It was a great consolidator. He was responsible for the administrative organization of the Persian Empire, dividing it into satrapies. He created a single currency for the empire, which facilitated trade, in addition to the famous Estrada Real. He started the war with the Greeks and ended up defeated. This first war with the Greeks became known as the First Medical War. He was a close relative of Cambyses II and belonged to one of the most powerful Achaemenid families.
12	Xerxes I	485 to 465 BC	Son of Darius I and grandson of Cyrus II the Great. Author of the inscription of Xerxes. He is mentioned in the Bible as Ahasuerus (Cf. Ezra, 4-6). He put down a rebellion in Egypt and one in Babylon that he himself had provoked. He organized a powerful military contingent to avenge the defeat of Darius I, his father, and punish the continental Greeks. This episode gave rise to the Second Medical War. It was during this war that the famous episode of the 300 of Thermopylae occurred. At the end of the war, the Persians were defeated again in the Battle of Salamis and the Battle of Plateia. Xerxes returned to Persia, from where he no longer interfered in the political life of Greece.
13	Artabanus of Persia (Artabanus of Hyrcania)	465 to 464 BC (Seven months)	He was regent of the young emperor Artaxerxes I and probably one of the assassins of Xerxes I together with the eunuch called Aspamitres. After the murder they allegedly accused Darius, eldest son of Xerxes I, and incited his younger brother Artaxerxes to kill Darius and take the throne. He ruled for seven months until Artaxerxes assumed the throne. Finally, everything indicates that Artabanus and his fellow conspirators also tried to kill Artaxerxes I, who, with the help of his brother-in-law Megabizo, had Artabanus and his associates killed.
14	Artaxerxes I Longimanus	464 to 424 BC	History records that he had a larger right hand than his left, hence his nickname Longímanus. He faced several rebellions during his reign. He attempted a policy of weakening Greek naval power without much success. He was the king responsible for welcoming the Greek general Themistocles, responsible for the Greek victory in the Second Medical War. At the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, the Athenian and Spartan Greeks asked for the support of Artaxerxes I, who died without deciding which city to support. He was a practitioner of Zoroastrianism. He appointed the Jewish priest Ezra as responsible for the civil affairs of the Jewish nation. It was the king who completed the construction of the Hall of One Hundred Columns. He had several wives. He was succeeded by Xerxes II.
15	Xerxes II	424 to 423 a. W.	He was the son and legitimate heir of Artaxerxes I Longimanus. He governed for just 45 days. He was murdered by a half-brother called Sogdiano.
16	Sogdian	423 a. W.	He was the son of Artaxerxes I Longimanus with a concubine from Babylon called Alogina. He was responsible for the assassination of Xerxes II and ruled for six months and fifteen days. He was murdered by his half-brother named Oco.
17	Darius II Notus	423 to 404 a. W.	He was the son of Artaxerxes I Longimanus with a concubine from Babylon called Cosmartidene. He was responsible for

			the murder of Sogdiano. Darius was married to his half-sister named Parisatis, daughter of Artaxerxes I Longimanus. He took part in the Peloponnesian War in favor of Sparta. He retook some Greek cities in Asia that were reincluded in Persian rule. He faced several revolts during his reign, including one in Egypt and another in Babylon. He was succeeded by his son Artaxerxes II Mnemon.
18	Artaxerxes II Mnemon	404 to 358 a. W.	He was the eldest son of Darius II and Parisatis, thus a grandson of Artaxerxes I Longimanus. He was married to Statira and with her he had children Darius and Artaxerxes III Hollow. He had a long and troubled reign. It is said that he had 360 concubines and approximately 115 children. It was considered inefficient, which greatly contributed to the weakening of the Persian Empire. His reign was marked by the loss of Egypt. He was succeeded by Artaxerxes III Hollow.
19	Artaxerxes III Oco	358 to 338 BC	He was the son of Artaxerxes II and Statira. His reign was characterized by a continuous struggle to maintain the Persian Empire. He regained control over Egypt after a campaign marked by much cruelty and desecration of Egyptian temples. He died at the age of 94. One of his daughters, named Parysatis, later married Alexander the Great. During his rule part of Athens' rule over the Aegean Sea was transferred to the Persians. During his reign, Macedonia, governed by Philip II, became a strong, independent and militarily equipped kingdom. He was succeeded by his son Artaxerxes IV.
20	Artaxerxes IV	338 to 336 BC	He was the youngest son of King Artaxerxes III Hollow. Despite his short reign, it was in him that the definitive elements for the decline and ruin of the Persian Empire were launched and consolidated. He was involved in numerous conflicts with Philip II of Macedonia. Everything indicates that he died of poisoning by Bagoas, an influential minister of the Court. He was succeeded by Darius III.
21	Darius III	336 to 330 BC	He was the last Achaemenid king. He was a cousin of Artaxerxes IV. It was during his reign that the Persian Empire was conquered by Alexander the Great. He had two daughters who married Alexander the Great and another with Alexander's general named Hephaestion. Despite managing to contain some revolts, he was unable to resist the Macedonian invasion led by Alexander. He died murdered by satrap Bessus during the persecution promoted by Alexander the Great who intended to capture Darius III.