



The Persian Empire

Lindsay Allen

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Beginning in the sixth century BCE, Persian kings ruled a vast, culturally diverse empire that stretched from northern Libya to central Asia. The regime and its rich multicultural traditions prospered for 250 years until its invasion, and eventual defeat, by Alexander the Great's army in 331 BCE. Yet until the British Museum's exhibition in the summer of 2005, the Persian perspective of this landmark event in world history will have been largely neglected. In one of the few accounts available, *The Persian Empire* provides a comprehensive and accessible portrayal of one of the world's first land-based dynastic kingdom.

In her cultural and political history of the development of this power, Lindsay Allen—whose posts in the Ancient Near East departments of the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art make her one of the leading authorities on Persia—surveys written sources, art objects, warfare, politics, archaeological sites, and daily life during Persian rule. She traces the evolution of the monarchy, showing how it fostered unprecedented international communication and cultural exchange, and describes how the Persian expedition into Greece in the early fifth century BCE became a defining moment that established a European identity apart from an Asian one. Throughout, lavish illustrations bring to life the traditions of this ancient Middle Eastern civilization and finally place Alexander's invasion within a Persian context. As the subject experiences renewed interest, *The Persian Empire* promises to be the definitive work on one of the most powerful dynasties in ancient history.

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