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Persia, Greece and the Western Mediterranean
c. 525 to 479 B.C.

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PREFACE

In this volume we come to the transition from the archaic to the classical period in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is marked by the major events by which the Achaemenid empire of Persia came into conflict with the Greek city states, events which brought the concepts of Greek and Barbarian, freedom and despotism into the sharpest focus. But collision did not rule out influence, before and after the two years, 480 and 479, in which battle was most closely joined.

We begin by considering the geography and earlier history of the Iranian uplands where the Persian empire originated; it is now possible to do more than has previously been done in setting the archaeological against the literary picture; in the process it becomes clear how little we can say with confidence about the Median kingdom which Cyrus overthrew. But Cyrus' stature as a great leader can be more closely placed in its historical context and more justice than usual done to his son Cambyses.

That the empire survived for more than a generation was the work of Darius, who rescued it from disintegration and gave it solid institutions which carried it through the reverses sustained by his son Xerxes. The Persepolis excavations and the new texts which they produce are now making it possible to draw a picture of these institutions and their attendant culture which is at least partly independent of the Greek authors through whose eyes the empire has usually been seen.

The empire came to comprise many and varied areas, some with long histories of their own, and the composite Chapter 3 examines the impact of Persian rule upon them and what they in their turn brought to the empire; these stories will be resumed in Volume VI.

While Persia's empire grew in the last decades of the sixth century, the city states of the Greek mainland were warring with one another and incidentally gaining much experience of warfare on land and sea. By the turn of the century two states were pre-eminent. One was a newcomer to this position, Athens. Her prosperity under the long dictatorship of Pisistratus and his sons provided the economic base for a daring development towards a balanced and moderate form of democracy,

devised by Cleisthenes. The citizens were inspired with enthusiasm and vigour by the freedoms they enjoyed under their new constitution. They defeated their neighbours on land, crossed the Euripus to win possession of Chalcis and held off Aegina at sea. But Athens attracted only one adherent, Plataea. The other great state, Sparta, was the acknowledged leader of a large coalition of states. Her citizen soldiers had an unrivalled reputation in set battle, and in the last decade of the century she revised her method of consulting her allies in the coalition – so successfully that she was at once acclaimed as leader by the states which decided to defend themselves against Persia in 481 B.C. These developments are described in Chapters 4 to 6.

The civilization which the Greeks were to defend differed radically from the customs of the primitive tribal states of Europe and from the older civilizations of the Near East and Egypt. Chapter 7 provides some insight into the various aspects of this civilization: religious, political, social, literary and philosophical on the one hand, and artistic, architectural, economic and commercial on the other. It was the creation not only of the Greeks of the mainland and the Aegean islands, but also of the Greeks of the outer world, who had faced their own problems and grown to maturity with remarkable speed. Indeed the Ionian states of Asia Minor and their offshore islands led the way in maritime commerce, the development of coinage, monumental architecture, practical engineering and intellectual emancipation. Rational thinking, untrammelled by traditional tenets and prejudices and insistent on attaining the truth, was born in Ionia. The Greeks of the West laid the first foundations of medical theory, practised dissection of animals and realized that the human brain was the storehouse of knowledge.

The greatest contrast between the Greek city state and the Persian state lay in the freedom of the individual citizen and his participation in the making of political decisions. As long as the citizen of a Greek state worshipped the civic divinities, he was free to believe in whatever god or goddess he desired, but in his actions he was subject to the laws of the state. Moreover, the citizen body was free to change those laws and to conduct the foreign policy of the community. The Persian state, though recognizing a multiplicity of divinities, accorded primacy to Ahura Mazda, and his vicegerent on earth, the Great King, exercised absolute authority over all his subjects in all matters of religion, law and politics. A city state might aim to acquire some border territory from a neighbour. The ambitions of the Great King were limitless. He claimed to be 'the King of the lands of all peoples', and his aim was to bring all peoples under his own dominion. Where he succeeded, his rule was not necessarily harsh. But obedience to his authority was to be unconditional, and disobedience was punished with severity.

The contrast between Greek freedom and Persian authoritarianism was accentuated when the Great King supported or imposed pro-Persian dictators in the Greek city states which were within his empire. There was a very real fear that such dictators had come to stay; for, although the Scythians of south Russia eluded him, the Great King's forces advanced as far as Mt Olympus with very little opposition, and his ships sailed to attack Naxos, in the centre of the Aegean Sea. It was now or never if the Greek states of Asia Minor were to make a bid for their freedom. With immense courage they rose in rebellion. In the end they were defeated, but their rising was not in vain. For it showed to the city states of the Greek mainland what principles were at stake and what weaknesses there were in the war machine of Persia. So when Darius demanded their submission, a majority of them refused and fought and won. They turned back the tide of authoritarian rule, and they enabled the Western World to shape its own future on the principles of individual enterprise and political liberty. These epic struggles are described in Chapters 8 to 11.

The *Histories* of Herodotus of Halicarnassus in Asia Minor provide most of the information available to us about the Persians and the Greeks and the world of their time. Ever since he wrote some have regarded him as the father of history, an honest enquirer and reporter within the limits of the age; others have condemned him as simplistic, biased and even dishonest. Judgements of him vary also according to the subject about which he was writing. It is inevitable that the various authors who have contributed to this volume express different evaluations of his history. The editors have not thought it proper to suggest or impose an editorial line.

In Part III we turn to the countries of the Western Mediterranean. The early prehistory of these countries was described in Chapter XXXVII of Volume II, Part 2, and the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age and the beginning of the historical period in Italy are described now in Chapter 12. The centre of attention becomes Italy, which was destined to play the leading role in the West, where the Phoenicians and the Greeks were in competition with one another. The stimuli to progress were provided by three enterprising peoples: the Etruscans, the Carthaginians and the Western Greeks.

Our knowledge of the Etruscans, being based almost entirely on the results of systematic excavation, has increased greatly since the subject was treated in the corresponding volume of this history in 1926. We are now in a much better position to judge whether this talented people was indigenous to Italy or had come, as Herodotus believed, from the Eastern Mediterranean. The study of the Italic peoples in Chapter 14 and of their languages in Chapter 15 has made equally great strides, and it has become possible to gain a firmer understanding of the Italic background

from which Rome was to emerge as a city state of remarkable vitality and administrative abilities. That emergence will be the subject of Volume VII, Part 2.

The coming of Phoenician and Greek settlers to the Western Mediterranean and the growth of their colonial foundations were narrated in Volume III, Part 3, and we resume the story when Carthage had become the leading Phoenician state and the Greeks of South Italy and Sicily shared the distinctive civilization of the Greeks of the mainland and Asia Minor. The Phoenicians and the Greeks had been rivals from the start of their history in the Mediterranean world, and that rivalry reached a climax when Carthage invaded Sicily in the year when Xerxes invaded the Greek mainland. The Phoenician cities made common cause against the Greeks; but the Greek states weakened themselves by internecine strife both in Italy and in Sicily. One result of that strife was the establishment in many states of autocratic rulers who took advantage of unsettled conditions and hired mercenary soldiers. The rulers too fought against one another, and it was two of them who invited Carthage to mount her invasion. But the invasion failed disastrously. For Gelon ruler of Syracuse and Theron ruler of Acragas, who were linked to one another by dynastic marriages, combined their forces at Himera and won a resounding victory. The freedom of the Greek states in Sicily was assured for what proved to be a period of seventy years before the Carthaginians returned to the attack.

The scope of this volume differs in some respects from its predecessor of 1926. The activities of Solon and Pisistratus are not included (they figured in Volume III, Part 3). We felt that if we began with the tyranny of the Pisistratidae it would be easier to understand the interaction between the expansion of Persia westwards and the awareness of an increasing threat by the leading states of the Greek mainland. Since 1926 competent histories of Greek and Latin literature and Greek philosophy have been published, and we have abandoned the first edition's practice of providing separate chapters on literature and philosophy. Instead, we have included the ideas of literature and philosophy in the chapter or chapters which describe the developing culture of each period in this and succeeding volumes. We hope thereby to relate the political and military events more closely to their cultural background. The bibliographies of the first edition were quite short. Much larger bibliographies are needed in this volume in order to cope with the huge amount of scholarly publication over the last sixty years. In some subjects such as the Persian Wars in Greece we do not aim to be comprehensive, and we refer the reader to the first edition for most works of the period before 1926. In subjects on which less has been written it is possible to provide a fuller bibliography. We continue our practice of including a map reference

after a name in the Index, instead of compiling a separate index of names in the maps.

Dr I. E. S. Edwards and Dr E. Sollberger helped to plan the contents of this volume, and the present editors express their gratitude. The editors are also grateful to Professor E. T. Salmon who undertook the writing of Chapter 14 after the tragic death of Mr M. W. Frederiksen. He wishes to express his thanks to Drs A. La Regina (Rome), Gabriella D'Henry and G. De Benedittis (Campobasso) and A. Adamesteanu (Lecce) for their help. We express our sorrow at the death of Dr C. M. Kraay, and we are grateful to D. Nash and M. J. Price for revising Dr Kraay's section of Chapter 7. The typescript of the volume was already with the Press, when we were deeply grieved to hear of the death of Dr L. H. Jeffery. Dr J. D. Ray wishes to thank Dr I. E. S. Edwards and Dr A. B. Lloyd for their advice, and Professor M. Ostwald wishes to express his gratitude to Professor Homer A. Thompson for his help with archaeological matters. We have received nothing but courtesy and consideration from Miss Pauline Hire and other members of the Staff of the University Press; and this has greatly lightened our editorial load.

Line-drawings have been included throughout the volume where their presence was felt to enhance the text. Fuller illustration of the topics covered here will be found in the Plates Volume to accompany Volume IV.

The editors have again to thank David Cox of Cox Cartographic Ltd for the maps; and Marion Cox for preparing most of the illustrations throughout the volume.

The index was compiled by Lucy Pollard.

1986

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