

Retort to the Daily Telegraph's article against Cyrus the Great

Greetings to the Distinguished Staff of The daily Telegraph Newspaper of England,

A number of my colleagues and students have bought the following article to my humble attention:

Cyrus cylinder's ancient bill of rights 'is just propaganda'

A 2500 year old Persian treasure dubbed the world's 'first bill of human rights' has been branded a piece of shameless 'propaganda' by German historians.

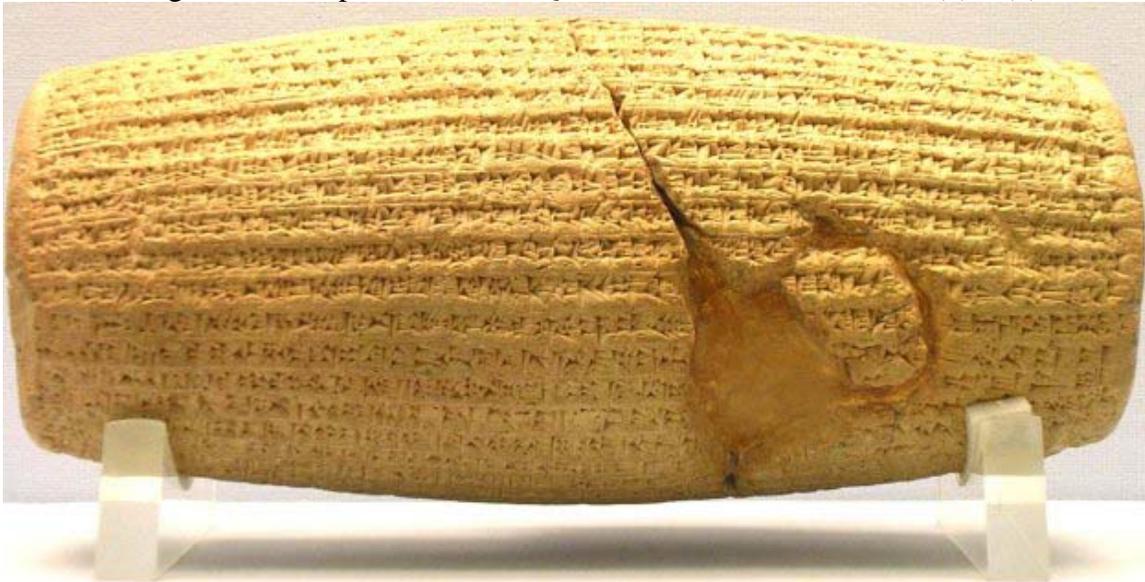
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/germany/2304424/Cyrus-cylinder's-ancient-bill-of-rights-'is-just-propaganda'.html>

UK's Daily Telegraph

By: Harry de Quetteville

Date: July 21, 2008

It is rather surprising that the Daily telegraph would choose to print what can at best be characterized as half-truths or “theories” generated by a very select group of revisionists. This has obliged me to respond to Mr. de Quetteville’s citations in items (1) – (5).



The Cyrus Cylinder now housed in The British Museum. The policies advocated by Cyrus in this Cylinder are corroborated by independent Greek and Biblical sources as well as by a number of other archaeological findings in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), Egypt and western Anatolia (in Modern Turkey).

(1) ...German historians...claim that the UN is unjustly celebrating the rule of a man [Cyrus the Great] every bit as despotic as any other land-grabbing leader...Klaus Gallas...told Spiegel magazine...that the UN had given the Cyrus scroll false

authority...professor Josef Wiesehöfer...derided it [the Cyrus Cylinder] yesterday as "a propaganda inscription...It has become a very celebrated document...Cyrus himself ordered it done, trying to make himself appear righteous. The real king was not more or less brutal than other ancient kings of the near east, like Xerxes, but he was cleverer."

These statements are basically false if not misleading. While much of their allegations will be addressed in the following items (2-5), there are two immediate issues here:

- a] The quotes cited from a select group of “historians”
- b] The notion that Cyrus the Great fabricated false evidence for posterity

Allow me to briefly examine these points below.

a] **Selective quoting of “historians”**. Mr. de Quetteville uses the plural term “*historians*”, to back his claims however that plural set contains just three members (Klaus Gallas, Josef Wiesehöfer and Tom Holland). No details are provided (i.e. numbers, University affiliations, reputations, etc.) as to the rest of the presumed “historians” that concur with his views.

The reality is that the overwhelming majority of the academic establishment is widely divergent from the views of Mr. de Quetteville and his “historians”. Mr. de Quetteville is perhaps unaware of the vast historiography that has acknowledged Cyrus the Great’s constructive role in history. Below is a handful of references for the benefit of Mr. Quetteville:

Boyce, M. (1979; repr. 2000). Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices. London: Routledge.

Brandenstein, W. & Mayrhofer, M. (1966). Handbuch des Altpersischen. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Frye, R.N. (1984). The History of Ancient Iran. Munich, Germany: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung.

Hicks, J. (1975). The Persians. New York: Time-Life Books.

Hinz, W. (1976). Darius und die Perser: E. Kulturgeschichte d. Achameniden (Holle vergangene Kulturen). Göttingen, Germany: Holle.

Kriwaczek, P. (2002). In Search of Zarathustra: The First Prophet and the ideas that Changed the World. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson.

Mallowan, M. (1985). Cyrus the Great. In I., Gershevitch (Ed.), Cambridge History of Iran, Great Britain, Cambridge University Press, pp. 392-419.

Olmstead, A.T. (1963). History of the Persian Empire. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

Spatari, N. (2002). L'enimiga Delle arti Asittite: Nella Calabria UltraMediterranea. Calabria, Italy: Musaba.

William-Roberts, P. (1995). Journey of the Magi: In Search of the Birth of Jesus. Toronto, Canada: Stoddart Publishing Co.

This on-line resource may also be of interest:

Some Notes on the Characterization of Cyrus the Great in Jewish and Judeo-Persian Writings

By: Annon Netzer

<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/famous/Cyrus/cyruscharacterizationjp.pdf>

Please note that many more academic sources will be provided, especially in items (3-4). In addition to western historians, Mr. de Quetteville may be surprised to learn that **favorable citations of Cyrus the Great continue to endure among western writers and reporters**, including those of **The Daily Telegraph, The International Herald Tribune, The New York Times, The Guardian and The Independent**:

Kings and legends of ancient Persia: Persepolis survived in Iranian psyche

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/09/16/opinion/melik17.php>

International Herald Tribune

By: Souren Melikian

Date: September 18, 2005

Rewriting Victors' View of Persian History

http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/14/arts/design/14pers.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

By: Alan Riding

Date: September 14, 2005

Why the Greeks were green with envy: The British Museum's exhibition of magnificent 2,500-year-old artworks from the Persian Empire is a revelation

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?xml=/arts/2005/09/13/bagreek13.xml>

UK's Daily Telegraph

By: Richard Dorment

Date: September 13, 2005

An Exceptional Empire: The US could learn from the Achaemenid dynasty's policy of Tolerance

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/sep/10/usa.comment>

The Guardian

By: Hywel Williams
Date: September 10, 2005

US forces should take a lesson from the Persian kings
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/sep/07/iran.tisdallbriefing>
The Guardian
By: Simon Tisdall
Date: September 7, 2005

Persian Fire: The first world empire and the battle for the west, by Tom Holland
<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/persian-fire-the-first-world-empire-and-the-battle-for-the-west-by-tom-holland-505072.html>
The Independent
By: Paul Cartledge
Date: September 2, 2005

The National Geographic Magazine has also provided an interesting article on Iran and its ancient legacy:

Persia: Ancient Soul of Iran
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/08/iran-archaeology/del-giudice-text>
The National Geographic
By: Marguerite Del Giudice
Date: August issue 2008

b) **Cyrus and the fabrication of history**. The statement “*Cyrus himself ordered it done* [meaning Cyrus ordered the cuneiform to be written], *trying to make himself appear righteous*” is a half-truth. Yes, Cyrus did order the Cylinder to be written, however what Professor Josef Wiesehöfer fails to mention is why are other sources (i.e. independent Biblical, Mesopotamian and Greek ones; see items 2-3 below), consistent with the statements of the Cyrus Cylinder? **The Jews never altered their references to Cyrus in the Bible even after the downfall of the Achaemenids. The Greeks, who were the enemies of the Achaemenids, have also provided favorable historical references of Cyrus in their archives.** As will be clearly seen in items 2-3, the statement that Cyrus “*ordered*” his own history fails to be verified when objectively consulting: (1) the main (primary) historical sources and (2) the studies that have been made by archaeologists, linguists and historians

*(2)...author and historian Tom Holland...wrote...**"It's** [Cyrus' legacy in Human Rights] **nonsense, absolute nonsense,**" he said. He added that **conquering a huge empire in the ancient world did not come without a list of atrocities, and "he staged several salutatory atrocities when he invaded."***

I as a humble historian am embarrassed at Dr. Holland's weak command of the facts. The fact of the matter is that there is no “*list of atrocities*” or “*several salutatory atrocities when he* [Cyrus] *invaded*”. Dr. Holland's assertion, as we will see below, is

baseless. Simply put, there is (literally) no concrete evidence in history to back up these claims. To the contrary, the evidence widely diverges from that which Dr. Holland attempts to portray.

We will first examine the events that took place after Cyrus' battles with Lydia and Babylon. Cyrus' treatment of the Jews following the fall of Babylon will be briefly addressed. In addition, the alleged "evidence" that writers such as Tom Holland are using to base their entire array of revisions is also examined.

a] Lydia. King Croesus of Lydia (reigned 560 to 546 BC) had invaded Cappadocia in 547 BC in an attempt to outflank the newly established Achaemenid state of Cyrus (Herodotus, I, 76-77). Cyrus defeated Croesus and captured the Lydian capital, Sardis.

King Croesus himself was neither executed nor mistreated in the slightest. In fact, Cyrus treated him with honor and granted him a high position in his court: Croesus accompanied Cyrus back to Ecbatana where he was accorded the highest respect. The fact that Cyrus spared Croesus is attested to by Greek sources (i.e. Herodotus, 1:151-153) as well as established historians such as I.M. Diakonoff (Media, in The Cambridge History of Iran Vol. 2, pp. 36-88, 1985), M. Mallowan (Cyrus the Great, in The Cambridge History of Iran Vol. 2, pp.392-419, 1985) and J. Cargill (The Nabonidus Chronicle and the Fall of Lydia, in American Journal of Ancient History, 2. pp. 97-116, 1977).



A European depiction of King Croesus receiving tribute from a Lydian peasant. Despite being defeated by Cyrus in battle, he was accorded a status equal to the Achaemenid royalty. Croesus accompanied Cyrus back to Ecbatana as a member of the royal Achaemenid entourage.

b] Babylon and Mesopotamia. Another example is Cyrus' entrance into Babylon-city. Morale in Babylon had plummeted mainly due to the neglect of the god Marduk by King Nabonidus (consult Yamauchi's article "Nabonidus", pp.1170-1171 in the Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, edited by C.F. Pfeiffer, Chicago, 1970).

The high level of disaffection against Nabonidus resulted in the defection of an important portion of the Babylonians to Cyrus. The leader of the pro-Cyrus Babylonians was Gubaru (Ugbaru) the disaffected Babylonian governor of Gutium who had served with the late King Nebuchadnezzar II (530-652 BC).

The main battle was against the Median wall which spanned 48-50 kilometers with Opis on the Tigris River to Sippar on the Euphrates River. The main battle was fought at Opis (September, specific date unknown, 543 BC) with Cyrus being supported by Gubaru (consult A.R. Burn, Persia and the Greeks: The Defense of the West. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962, p.54-56). More will be said on the Opis battle and the narration of this event in the Nabonidus Chronicle in [e] below. Sippar was captured “*without a battle*” (E.M. Yamauchi, Persia and the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997, p.86) on October 10, 543 BC.

More importantly, the city of Babylon also fell on October 12, 543 BC without recourse to combat. The Nabonidus Chronicle clearly states that Gubaru and his troops then entered Babylon-city “*without a battle*” (Yamauchi, 1997, p.86).

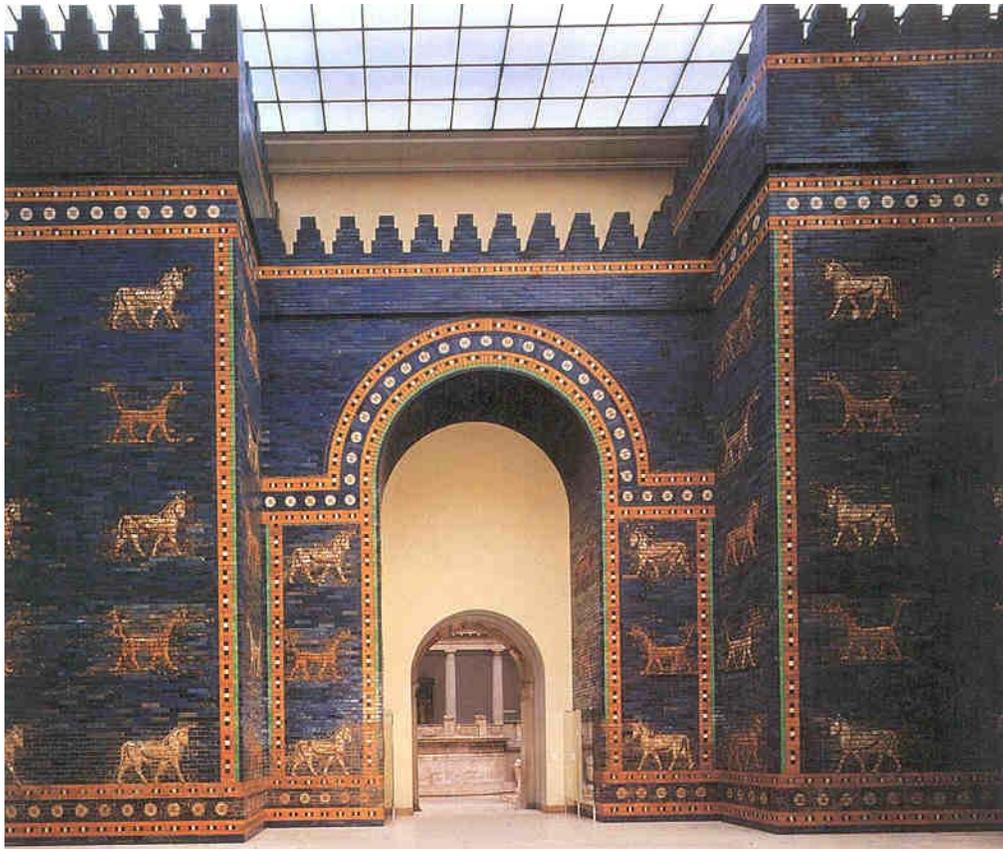
It is important to state this very clearly: Cyrus **entered Babylon-city on October 29, 543 BC, a full 17 days after the arrival of Gubaru** to that locale. When Cyrus entered Babylon-city, the inhabitants welcomed Cyrus as a liberator and not some crude conqueror.

Cyrus' arrival occurred just as the inhabitants of Babylon were engaged in celebrations and festivals, as corroborated by Greek sources (Herodotus, I, 19; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 7. 5.15). The Nabonidus Chronicle also states that “*Cyrus entered Babylon...the state of peace was imposed on all the city, Cyrus sent greetings to all Babylon*” (Nabonidus Chronicle, III, 12-22; see ANET (Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament), Pritchard, 1955, p.306). The inhabitants of Babylon-city are recorded as having laid branches before Cyrus as he entered through the city gates:

“On the third day of the month of Arahshamnu, Cyrus marched into Babylon, and they laid down green branches in front of him ...Cyrus then sent his best wishes to the residents living there. His governor, Gubaru, then installed leaders to govern over all Babylon.”

[Consult Professor M.M. Annan's “The Prophecy of Daniel”; citation from Babylonian Chronicles, Available on-Line at:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/2199556/daniel>]



The Ishtar Gate, now housed in the Berlin Museum. When Cyrus entered Babylon-city through the Ishtar gates, the city's inhabitants laid branches in his path. As noted by Graf, Hirsch, Gleason, and Krefter: "Cyrus proved a tolerant conqueror: when he entered Babylon...he ordered his troops to show respect for the city's temples and religious customs." [D.F. Graf, S.W. Hirsch, K. Gleason, and F.H. Krefter, A Soaring Spirit. New York:Time-Life Books, 1988, p.15]

It would appear that Mr. de Quetteville's "historians" have neglected to consider these sources of information which are also corroborated by Greek sources. Dr. Holland's allegation of Cyrus' "*list of atrocities*" is more rooted in fiction than in fact.

c] The liberation of the Jews. One of the most interesting aspects of the Biblical sources (especially Isaiah) is that they corroborate the policies of the Cyrus Cylinder, especially with respect to the liberation of oppressed peoples such as the Jews.

To summarize, Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II had sacked the Temple of Jerusalem in 597 BC and 586 BC. It was in the second attack that Nebuchadnezzar II exiled the Jews to the Babylonian Captivity. The quote we will display comes from the 2nd Isaiah (also known as the Deutero-Isaiah). This is also the name given to chapters 40-55 of the book of Isaiah. Below are a few quotes:

'I am the Lord, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; (44.25)...Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid...(45.1) Thus says the Lord to His anointed [Messiah] to Cyrus -whose right hand I have held...(45.2)...For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.

It is clear from the 2nd Isaiah that the Jews did not record Cyrus as one who “*staged several salutatory atrocities when he invaded*”. Instead, he is cited as “*My shepherd*” and “*His anointed*”.



The West Wall in Jerusalem. After his conquest of Babylon, Cyrus allowed the Jewish captives to return to Israel and rebuild the Hebrew temple. It is believed that approximately 40,000 did permanently return to Israel.

Mr. de Quetteville and Dr. Holland are silent with respect to these Biblical references. What is certain is that these references fail to substantiate the narratives as proposed by The Daily Telegraph.

It remains a question as to how Mr. de Quetteville and his “historians” have arrived at the conclusion that Cyrus “*staged several salutatory atrocities when he invaded*”. There simply is no historical basis for this assertion. The only way one can concur with Mr. de Quetteville’s conclusions about Cyrus is to embrace the irrational notion that the Bible does not exist or that the Jews simply “made it all up”.

d] Some additional Examples.

1] The Jewish Temple at Elephantine. A memorandum written by Delailah (the governor of Samarra) and Bagoas (the Iranian governor of Judah) addresses the need to rebuild the Jewish Temple at Elephantine . The document states of the need to:

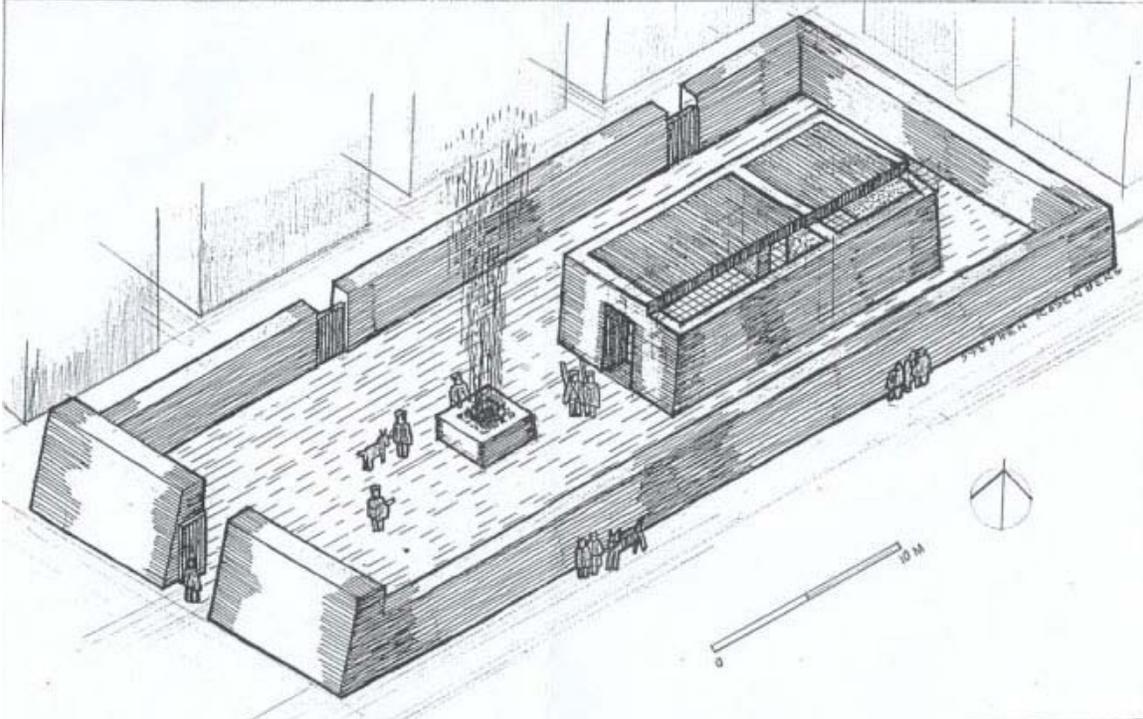
“...to build it [the Jewish Temple at Elephantine] on its site as it was before, and the meal-offering and incense to be made on the altar as it used to be”.

[Consult ANET (Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament), Pritchard, 1955, p.492]

As noted by Professor Emil Kraeling this passage indicates that this memorandum is:

“...a directive presumably suggesting that the rebuilding be done at government expense”

[E. Kraeling, The Brooklyn Aramaic Papyri. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953, p.107]



A reconstruction of the Jewish Temple in Elephantine in Egypt. The Achaemenids subsidized the repair and reconstruction of Jewish temples as a matter of state policy.

In other words, it was a matter of official Achaemenid government policy, as founded by Cyrus, that the empire subsidize the repairs and reconstruction of non-Iranian temples. This memorandum regarding Elephantine was **issued after Cyrus the Great had passed away**; Egypt was never conquered during Cyrus’ reign, this was done during the reign of his son Cambysis (reigned 530-523 BC).

It is fairly certain among the majority of reputable historians that the Jewish community was able to largely rebuild itself during Achaemenid rule. An excellent reference for this topic is:

Yamauchi, E. M. (2004). The Reconstruction of Jewish Communities during the Persian Empire. The Journal of the Historical Society, 4(1), 1-25.

2] The Temples in Mesopotamia and Egypt. After the completion of his conquests, Cyrus took great care to attend to the needs of the local populace. There are records that clearly show that Cyrus ordered the Enunmah Temple at Ur, the Eanna Temple at Uruk, and a host of other temples at Babylon to be repaired.



The remnants of the Eanna temple and ziggurat, Uruk in modern Iraq. The Achaemenids provided consistent support for the repair and reconstruction of the local temples and structures in Mesopotamia during their rule.

During the reign of Cambyses funds were released from the Royal treasury to rebuild the Temple Sais in Egypt (A. Gardner, Egypt of the Pharaohs. London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p.366-367). Darius the Great (549-486 BC) also supported reconstruction projects in Egypt as evidenced by his financial support for the complete reconstruction of the Temple of Amon at Hibis (near the Khargah Oasis) (M.F. Gyles, Pharaonic Policies and Administration 663-323 BC. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: North Carolina Press, 1959, p.70)



The remnants of the Temple of Amon in Egypt. Achaemnid kings such as Cambyses and Darius the Great consistently provided funds and support for the reconstruction and repair of Egypt's temples.

3] Western Anatolia. The Achaemenids also supported reconstruction projects in Anatolia, especially in the areas bordering European Greece. Dramatic evidence for this was found by a team of French archaeologists along the ancient Lycian coast in modern southwest Turkey. What is significant about this expedition is the discovery of a decree that was written in 3 languages: Greek, Lycian and Aramaic (the official language of the Achaemenid Empire). **The decree is almost identical to the Cyrus Cylinder or cuneiform) – it clearly respects the rights of the local populace and endeavors to support their material needs.** Note that this is dated to 358 BC, just two decades before the invasions of Alexander the Great, a clear indication that Cyrus' original policies were practiced to the final days of the empire.

For more information on the discoveries of the French archaeological team, please consult the following sources:

Bryce, T.R. (1978). A recently discovered cult in Lycia. Journal of Religious History, 10, 115-127.

Metzger, H. (1979). Fouilles de Xanthos VI: Le Stelle Bilingue de Letoon. Paris: Klincksieck.

Teixidor, J. (1978). The Aramaic text in the trilingual stele from Xanthus. Journal of Near Eastern Studies, 37, 181-186.

None of these aforementioned cases regarding the Jews, Egypt, Mesopotamia or Anatolia are mentioned by Mr. de Quetteville or by any of his select "historians". This is understandable as by doing so, they would expose the inherent weaknesses of their paradigm.

Instead, the “historians” of Mr. de Quetteville tend to rely on what they believe to be a “smoking gun” in terms of their allegations against Cyrus. This is examined closely below.

e] Citing one flawed translation as “evidence”.

The select “historians” who castigate Cyrus repeatedly point to the Nabonidus Chronicle, which narrates the victory of Cyrus the Great at Opis. The main text of the translation had been made by A. K. Grayson in 1966. Below is what he translated from the Nabonidus Chronicle:

"In the month of Tishri when Cyrus(II) did battle at Opis on the [bank of] the Tigris against the army of Akkad, the people of Akkad retreated. He carried off the plunder (and) slaughtered the people."

Note the following two words: “slaughtered” and “the people”.

As we will see shortly below, **Grayson’s translation is incorrect.** A number of researchers were aware that Grayson’s work was flawed, but the “translation” seemed to catch on, and helped generate a small generation of anti-Cyrus writers.

Thanks to the persistence of a number of dedicated and well-trained researchers, the Grayson translation was recently re-evaluated with tragic results. I say “tragic” because it goes to show how academic mediocrity can lead to disastrous consequences, especially in the political and popular venues.

It was Shahrokh Razmjou who finally put forward the issue and consulted Professor Wilfred G. Lambert of the University of Birmingham, England, in 2007. Professor Lambert is the world’s foremost expert in the cuneiform.

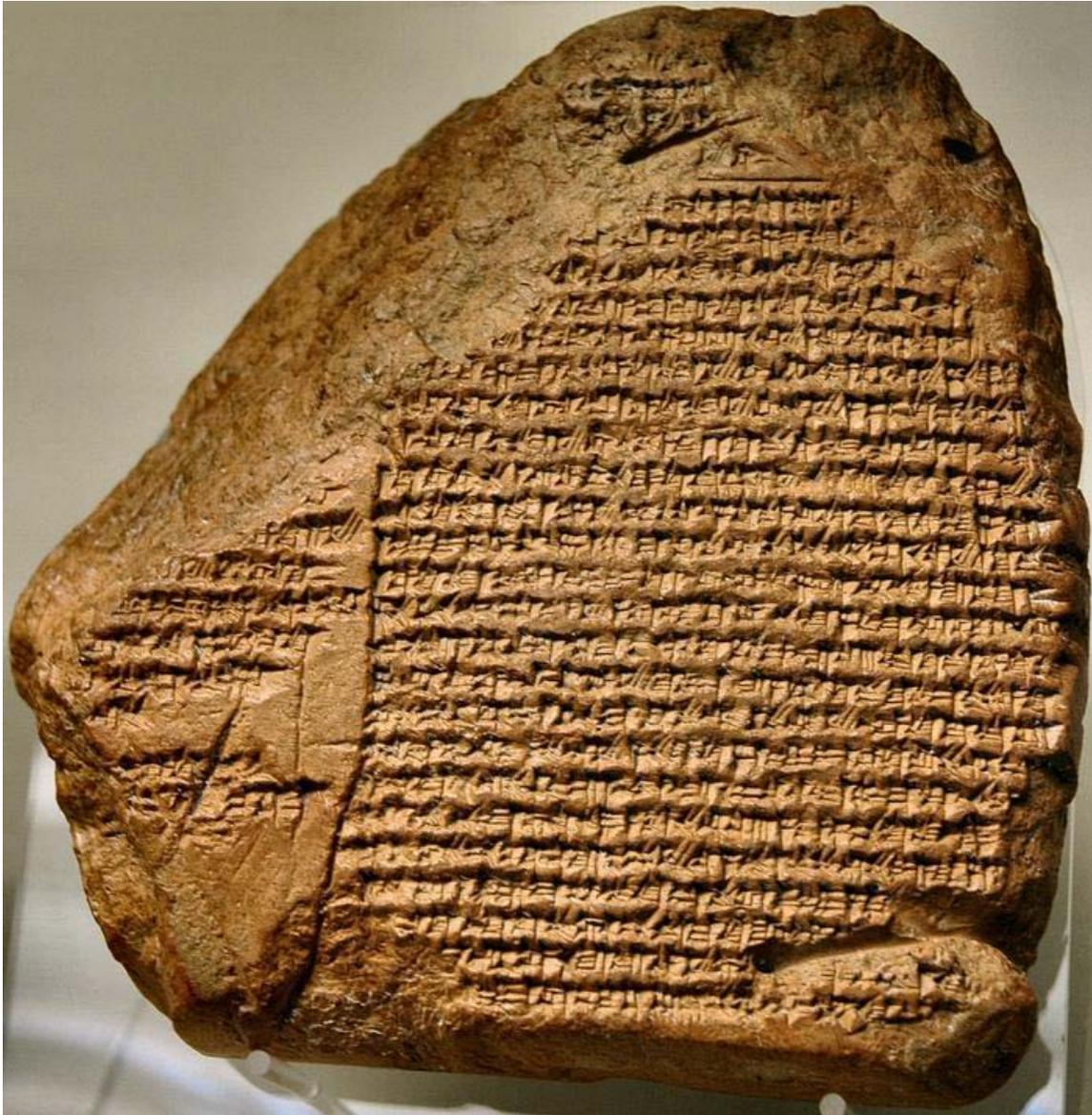
Razmjou asked Professor Lambert to review Grayson's translation. Lambert immediately noted that the translation was false. Here is the correct translation:

"In Tishri, when Cyrus did battle with the army of Akkad at Opis, on the [bank] of the Tigris, the soldiers of Akkad withdrew. He (Cyrus) took plunder and defeated the soldiers (of Akkad)."

Notice the following corrections made by Professor Lambert:

- 1] "**slaughter**" in Grayson's translation is incorrect – the correct translation is "**defeated**".
- 2] "**the people**" in Grayson's translation is incorrect – the correct translation is "**the soldiers**".

In another twist of irony, it is worth noting that A. K. Grayson had been a student of Professor Lambert in the past!



The Nabonidus Chronicle now housed in the British Museum. The flawed translation by A. K. Grayson has now been corrected by Professor Wilfred G. Lambert of the University of Birmingham, England.

Lambert's translation was published in the 2007 publication of the French journal N.A.B.U which Cyrus Kar has kindly forwarded to me for distribution (please see the three scanned images below this line).

N.A.B.U.

Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires

2007

N°1 (mars)

NOTES BRÈVES

01) In Support of Joachim Oelsner's Identification of LBAT 1500¹ – This short note is in support of Joachim Oelsner's identification of LBAT 1500 (BM 34387) as an astrological fragment relating to the Amurru-stars hitherto known from *The Great-Star List*,² and in my opinion the *mukallimtu* of *Nabû-zuqup-kēnu*, 81-7-27, 81.³ In his previous note, J. Oelsner demonstrated that the stars of LBAT 1500: 2'-8' match Amurru stars V-XI, and suggested that LBAT 1500 1' and 10' too matched the list of Amurru stars IV and XII: ^{mul}KAK.SI.SÁ and ^{mul}KA₅.A. During recent work on my Astrolabe project at The British Museum,⁴ I had the opportunity to re-examine LBAT 1500 and I can now verify that the traces of signs in lines 1' and 10' correspond to Amurru-stars IV and XI. The following collations, edition, and table make these synchronisms clear:

Collations:

LBAT 1500 1':



LBAT 1500 10':



Edition:

1'	[^l MU]L. ^l KAK.SI ^l [SÁ ...	1'	['Th]e Arro[w ...
2'	^l MUL.MAŠ.TAB.BA.[GAL.GAL ...	2'	'The [Great] Twins [...
3'	^l MUL.BIR a-na ...	3'	'The Kidney,' fo[r ...
4'	^l MUL.NIN.M[AH ...	4'	Ninm[ah ...
5'	^l MUL.LUGAL a-na ...	5'	'The King,' f[or ...
6'	^l šal-bat-a-nu 'a ^l -[na ...	6'	Mars, f[or ...
7'	^l MUL.AL.LU[L ...	7'	'The Cra[b' ...
8'	[^l] MUL.SI[M.MAH ...	8'	'The Swal[low' ...
9'	[(x)] DIŠ KUR DIŠ x [... ⁵	9'	[(.)] ... [...
10'	[^l MU]L. ^l KA ₅ .A ^l [...	10'	['Th]e Fox' [...

Line/Star in BM 34387

1'	[^{mu}] ^l KAK.SI ^l [SÁ]
2'	^{mul} MAŠ.TAB.BA.[GAL.GAL]
3'	^{mul} BIR
4'	^{mul} NIN.M[AH]
5'	^{mul} LUGAL
6'	šal-bat-a-nu
7'	^{mul} AL.LU[L]
8'	^{mul} SI[M.MAH]
10'	[^{mu}] ^l KA ₅ .A ^l

Great Star List Amurru-Star⁶

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I also concur with J. Oelsner's proposal that LBAT 1500 is astrological in character. I suggest that lines 3' and 5'-6', where the preposition *ana* occurs immediately after the star-name, indicate that these lines,

13) **Suicide in Akkadian** – The desperate princess Kirūm wrote to her father, “If my lord does not bring me back to Mari, I will ‘grab my nose’, jump from the roof” (*ašabbat appī ištu ūrim amaqqut*), *ARM* 10, 33 : 7-9 ; “je courrai à l’instant me jeter du toit”, J.-M. Durand, *LAPO* 18 (2000) 444 no. 1230. Another letter confirms this desperation, “Since my lord could not care less about me, either a woman is killed, or else she falls from a roof”, *AEM* 1/2 59 no. 304 : 45, after W. Heimpel, *Letters to the King of Mari* (2003) 292. Clearly, the woman intends to kill herself. A third letter has a similar threat, “(Otherwise) I will strangle myself or mount a roof and throw myself down” (*uštannaq ūlu ellīma ištu ūrim amaqqut*), *TCL* 18, 95 : 32-34, after K.R. Veenhof, *AbB* 14, 149. The verb *maqātu* “to fall” also means “to throw oneself down”, *CAD* M/1 242b (1.c).

The example in *AbB* 14 seems to show that we have to take the action on the roof literally. Nonetheless, the phrase could also be used figuratively, and indeed there are reasons to suppose that “to jump from the roof” is an Akkadian idiom for “to commit suicide”. In two cases it is a specific way to die :

(1) The OB liver omina in *YOS* 10, 17 include the following forecasts : “among the personnel / the acquaintances / the relatives of a man, someone will die” (49-51), “[...] will jump [fro]m the roof” ([...] *iš-ti*) *ūrim imaqqut*) (52), “[a man] will die a natural death (*mūt š[im]tišu imât*)” (53), [...], a priest, a noble will die” (54). A parallel text (J. Nougayrol, *RA* 44 [1950] 33-35) duplicates only lines 49-50, omitting the jump from the roof and what follows.

(2) In the dream oracles published by A.L. Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (1956) 328, Tablet C obv. 1, we come across this sequence : “he will die by a collapsing wall (*ina miqitti igāri imât*)” (82), “he will die the death (due to) sun-heat (*mūt šēti imât*)” (83-84), “he will die the death (due to) jumping from the roof” (*mūt mi[qi]ti ūri imât*)” (85). Note the distinction between the *ina miqitti* for the wall and the *mūt miqitti* for the roof, suggesting that the man will not die “through” a collapsing roof. This militates against Oppenheim, 283a, “he will die through a falling roof-beam”.

The omen for the king, “from the roof he will jump, *ta(...)*”, Oppenheim, 337 rev. 6, stands alone within the dream corpus.

There are two passages where jumping to one's death from the roof is premeditated :

(1) *STT* 1, 65 : 24, read and translated by A. Livingstone as follows : [*e*]-*li ut-ta-ra ana ma-qa-a-ti[i] ū-ri aq-qa-rat ZI-ti i[u-ta-r]a-an-ni*, “I repeatedly ascend the roof in order to fall down, but my life is too precious, it turns me back”; *SAA* III (1989) 32 no. 12 rev. 1, followed by B.R. Foster, *Before the Muses* (1996) 605, “I constantly go up to the roof to jump off, but my life is too precious, it turns me back”.

(2) In the Love Lyrics : “Fall from the roof on to a dagger (*ultu muḫḫi ūri ana muḫḫi patri muqtī*), get an iron spike in your side, [ge]t sharp arrows”; W.G. Lambert in H. Goedicke and J.J.M. Roberts, *Unity and Diversity. Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (1975) 118, Section V, col. B 28-30.

Above, we suggested that *miqitti ūri* means “suicide”. The other references (in liver omina) are isolated and do not help : Boissier Choix 63 : 6, 10, cited in *CAD* M/2 102a, now U. Koch-Westenholz, Babylonian Liver Omens (2000) 106 no. 6 : 7, 10 ; also 204 no. 27 : 68.

Of course, one can literally fall from a roof, by accident, and die, as mentioned in *Utukkū lemnūtu* : M.J. Geller, *FAOS* 12 (1985) 38 f., line 323 (Sumerian), *SpbTU* III 38 no. 64 V 13 (the line is lost in *CT* 16, 10 IV, end). In the next line, a man falls from a palm tree. And note this obscure passage on an exercise tablet : “Who fell from the roof, [...] the roof fence (*gisallu*)”, W.G. Lambert, *BWL* (1960) 280, BM 56488 rev. IV 4-7, now P. Gesche, *Schulunterricht in Babylonien im ersten Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (2000) 429 III' 4-7.

This omen forecast (astrology) remains a riddle : *ū-ru ana (ŠĒ) māti (KUR) i-ma-qt miqittu (RI.RI.GA) iššakkan (GAR-a[n])*, M. Leibovici, *RA* 50 (1956) 18, *KUB* IV, 63 III 32. Visible on manuscript B, *KUB* XXX, 9 III 14. In astrological omina, the forecasts refer to public life, not situations of private persons, like suicide. The original of this text is Old Babylonian ; U. Koch-Westenholz, *BiOr* 55 (1998) 186.

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14) **Cyrus defeat of Nabonidus** – The final defeat of Nabonidus by Cyrus occurred when Sippar fell to Cyrus without a battle and Nabonidus fled : A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (TCS 5) p. 109 14-15. The preceding passage has caused translators no problems, but there are serious difficulties when the context is studied. Grayson reads and renders :

12 ... *ina itiTašrīti mku-raš šal-tum ina Upēki ina muhhi [...]*
 13 *īdi-diq-lat ana libbi ummānini kurAkkadki ki ipušūšū (erasure) nišumeš kurAkkadki*
 14 *BALA.KI hubta (SAR) ihbut (SAR) nišemeš idūk ...*

“In the month Tishri when Cyrus (II) did battle at Opis on the [bank of] the Tigris against the army of Akkad, the people of Akkad retreated. He carried off the plunder (and) slaughtered the people.”

J.-J. Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes* (Paris, 1993) p. 204 agrees :

"Au mois de Tešrit, Cyrus ayant livré bataille à l'armée d'Akkad à Upû, sur la [rive] du Tigre, le peuple d'Akkad reflua. Il se livra au pillage et massacra la population."

The problems of this passage were brought to my attention by Shabrokh Razmjou, who was advising Cyrus Kar, an American filmmaker preparing a documentary film about Cyrus II. The main problem is that according to the accepted translation Cyrus defeated the Babylonian army at Opis, whereupon the people of the town withdrew, Cyrus plundered (presumably the town Opis) and slaughtered the population.

The difficulty is that after defeating the Babylonian army it appears that nothing more was done about that army, but instead the local town was looted and the population slaughtered. "Akkad" means "Babylonia," but while "the army of Akkad" is an appropriate designation for Nabonidus' troops, "the people of Akkad" should then mean "the people of Babylonia," which is absurd. There was no non-Babylonian population around Opis or Sippar. A solution which makes perfect sense is to take *nišû* in the common meaning "men" to refer to the Babylonian army. Cyrus did battle with the Babylonian army at Opis, that army retreated, Cyrus looted their camp, then he caught up with them and defeated them.

The verb *dâku* for "defeat" is well known, and while it also has a sense "kill," "slaughtered" and "massacra" are exaggerations. CAD N/II p. 286 accepts the meaning "workmen, soldiers" for *nišû*, but the more concise CDA p. 255 stays with "people" and does not specify.

Thus the translation of the passage should read:

"In Tishri when Cyrus did battle with the army of Akkad at Opis, on the [bank] of the Tigris, the soldiers of Akkad withdrew. He (Cyrus) took plunder and defeated the soldiers (of Akkad)."

The brevity of the last sentence is characteristic of the style of these late Babylonian chronicles.

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15) *Tiš-atal's Visit to Nippur* – In a recent Festschrift,¹ R. L. Zettler has published an Ur III tablet from Inana's temple in Nippur, which concerns *Tiš-atal* of Nineveh. This document, which dates to the ninth month of the year *Šu-Suen* 3, records a visit of *Tiš-atal* to Nippur, in the company of eighty other Ninevites. Interestingly, the same state visit is commemorated in a tablet from Ešnunna, which is dated to the same year and month.² There, *Tiš-atal*, together with an escort of over 100 men, receives travel provisions from Babati, the governor of Ešnunna. Since the Nippur document was written on the twenty-ninth day of the ninth month, it follows that the Ešnunna stopover took place prior to *Tiš-atal's* sojourn to Nippur.

The publication of the Nippur tablet by Zettler is most welcome, as it adds important new information to our knowledge of the political history of Ur III times. Unfortunately, however, Zettler's edition misses one key point, and this is the purpose of *Tiš-atal's* visit to Nippur. Crucial for this point are lines 4-5, which Zettler reads [...]ka / 'nam'-a-érim íb-ku, "[*Tiš-atal*, city ruler, (and) 80 men, Ninevites,] ... (they) swore an oath." For the break in line 4 he proposes a restoration [é^dInanna]-ka, offering the following argumentation: "As in various legal texts, the line may have recorded the place where *Tišatal* and his retinue swore the oath. Given the tablet's findspot and the association of Inanna/Ištar with Nineveh, it is tempting to suggest a restoration [é^dInanna]-ka." It is certain, however, that the break is to be restored [é^dNin-urta]-ka, based on the data from *Puzriš-Dagan* sources. As noted many years ago by this author,³ those sources contain mentions of the animals (one sheep and one goat in each case) that were expanded, evidently for a sacrifice, on the occasion of collegial oath-taking by various foreigners in the temple of Ninurta. Since the surviving examples date either to the last or the first two years of a given reign, the individuals in question most probably took an oath of allegiance on the accession of the new king. This is confirmed by the fact that *nam-érem ... kud* is not just any "oath": while in the general legal context it means an assertory oath (or "oath-cum-curse"), in the context of international relations it signifies specifically the sanctification of a treaty.

Thus, *Tiš-atal* and his eighty Ninevite companions came to Nippur to swear their allegiance to *Šu-Suen*, and perhaps even to conclude a treaty with him. As is shown by the collective form *íb-kud*, the oath was taken by all of them. This indicates that all these Ninevites enjoyed high social status; most probably, they were *Tiš-atal's* kinsmen. While these facts are beyond doubt, the historical background of this event is less obvious. Given its date (the ninth month of *Šu-Suen's* third regnal year), it is unlikely that its occasion was *Šu-Suen's* accession.

As already considered by Whiting,⁴ this visit must have been connected with the campaign against *Šimanum*, which took place in the year *Šu-Suen* 2.⁵ According to one of *Šu-Suen's* historical inscriptions,⁶ the avowed cause of the campaign was the banishment from *Šimanum* of a Sumerian princess that had been sent there some years earlier as a prospective bride (*é-gi₄-a*) for one of the members of its royal house. As demonstrated by P. Michalowski on the basis of the administrative documents from *Puzriš-Dagan*,⁷ the princess in question was *Kunši-matum*, who, in the beginning of *Amar-Suen's* reign (or perhaps even during the last years of *Šulgi*), became an *é-gi₄-a* of the *Šimanum* ruler named *Pušam*, with an objective of marrying his

Suffice it to say that Cyrus had defeated a military opponent at Opis - there is no record of any harm being selectively inflicted upon the civilians in the Nabonidus Chronicle.

The only “*slaughter*” that one finds is that committed by the Babylonian King Nabonidus as noted in the Nabonidus Chronicle (see prior references in this article regarding ANET- Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament):

In the month of Tashritu, at the time when Cyrus battled the forces of Akkad in Opis on the Tigris river, the citizens of Akkad revolted against him, but Nabonidus scattered his opposition with a great slaughter.

The only “*slaughter*” that has been recorded by history is that made by Nabonidus, not Cyrus. The Akkad citizens had probably risen in revolt against Nabonidus in anticipation of the eminence of Cyrus’ victory.

Objectively speaking, the case is closed; there is no evidence to back any “*list of atrocities*” by Cyrus, as alleged in The Daily Telegraph.

e] A Suggestion. Perhaps Dr.s Holland, Gallas, Wiesehöfer and Mr. de Quetteville may wish to take a few notes from Harvard Professor Emeritus Richard Nelson Frye who is considered as the foremost authority in the field of Iranian studies with over 4 decades of research and publications to his credit. Professor Frye notes that:

“It was no accident that Xenophon chose Cyrus to be the model of a ruler for the lessons he wished to impart to his fellow Greeks. In short, the figure of Cyrus has survived throughout history as more than a great man who founded an empire. He became the epitome of the great qualities expected of a ruler in antiquity, and he assumed heroic features as a conqueror who was tolerant and magnanimous as well as brave and daring. His personality as seen by the Greeks influenced them and Alexander the Great, and, as the tradition was transmitted by the Romans, may be considered to influence our thinking even now. “

[Frye, R.N., 2008, Cyrus II. Encyclopædia Britannica. 2008]

Professor Tom Holland may vociferously dismiss the two thousand year history of Cyrus as “*absolute nonsense*”, however, as noted earlier in this item, he has singularly failed to provide any concrete evidence to back these assertions.

Mr. de Quetteville however may be failing to distinguish between an opinion (i.e. *absolute nonsense*) and historical facts obtained as a result of careful and painstaking research. Opinions by themselves cannot transform or rewrite history. This type of thinking is mainly confined to the realms of political ideologues and conspiracy theorists. This will be further discussed in item (5).

(3) *it [Human Rights] is so Western in its philosophical underpinnings''.*

If I did not know better the statement appears somewhat immature, if not misinformed. It would appear that Mr. de Quetteville is attempting to convey the notion that Human Rights originate exclusively from the European hemisphere. If this is what Mr. de Quetteville believes, then he is contradicted by the Biblical sources as well as by the

ancient Greeks, if not the major thrust of mainstream historiography. Below we will discuss the citations made by the original Greek and Biblical sources. This will be followed by an examination of the ruins of the city-palace of Persepolis.

[a] **Biblical references**: As noted before, Mr. de Quetteville has chosen to completely ignore all Judeo-Christian references to Cyrus in the Bible. These pertain to historical events regarding Cyrus that were independently recorded by Jewish scribes.

Nebuchadnezzar II had destroyed the Jerusalem Temple by razing it to the ground. The treasures of the temple, many of these being holy items, were simply robbed and hauled off as loot to Babylon (i.e. Isaiah 64:11). Cyrus not only liberated the Jews from their captivity in Babylon but also permitted them to return home and to rebuild their destroyed temple in Jerusalem. The following quotes are from the **Book of Ezra**; these discuss the decree that Cyrus gave on behalf of the Jews to rebuild their temple:

(1.1) In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and put it in writing:

(1.2) 'This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: The Lord, the God of Heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. (1.3) Anyone of his people among you - may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. (1.4) ... provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.'



Ezra's uncle Mordechai was highly honored by the Achaemenids. Both Ezra and Mordechai are buried in the Tomb of Esther in modern-day Hamedan (ancient Ecbatana) in northwest Iran.

Cyrus also ordered that the sacred objects taken from the Jerusalem Temple to be given back to the Jews:

(1.5) Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites - everyone whose heart God had moved- prepared to go up and build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. ... (1.7) Moreover, king Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god [i.e., Marduk]. (1.8) Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithradates the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

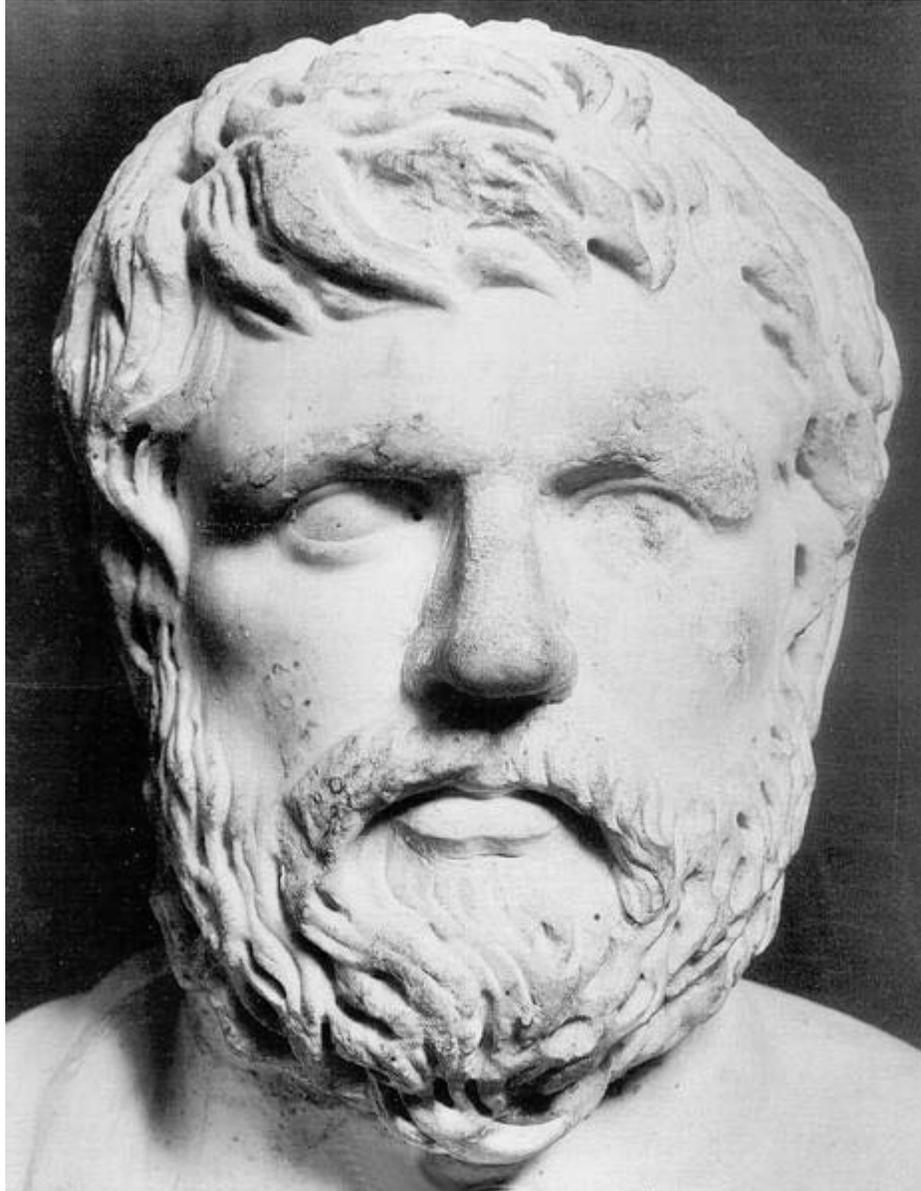


Cyrus in Babylon orders that the sacred religious objects of the Jerusalem Temple to be restored to their rightful owners, the Jews.

If human rights, entails respect for the customs and religions of all creeds and races, then Cyrus has, according to the primary sources, fulfilled this role. According to the Bible, Cyrus not only allowed the Jews to return home and to rebuild their temple, but also ensured that provisions and financial support would be provided in this endeavor.

But there is another point that may be made, namely the **opinions of modern-day Jews** with respect to Cyrus, whom they cite as “*Koresh*” in their Bible. While my “survey” is far from scientific, every single Jew whom I have had the pleasure of meeting since childhood, has noted to me that **Cyrus is held in very high regard among ordinary Jews and in the Synagogues**. These same friends have assured me that this historical view of Cyrus has been in place for close to 2000 years.

[b] **Greek sources and the legacy of the Cyropaedia in the Western World:** The Greeks, including Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), were very favorable in their citations of Cyrus the Great. The Greeks in fact had written a virtual compendium of Cyrus entitled the Cyropaedia of Xenophon.



Xenophon (431-355 BC) wrote a compendium of Cyrus, known as the Cyropaedia. The Cyropaedia has been consulted as a standard reference of just statesmanship by a number of prominent western leaders in history.

One interesting quote can be found with respect to a conversation between Cyrus and Croesus as cited by Xenophon:

"... some they weary themselves with counting, measuring, weighing, airing, and watching; and though they have so much at home, they never eat more than they can

hold, for they would burst if they did, and they never wear more than they can carry, for they would be suffocated if they did; they only find their superfluous treasure a burden."

(Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.2.20-21)

The cited example from the *Cyropaedia* reports on Cyrus' wisdom regarding the futility of hoarding too much wealth. Croesus however, is well known for having had a fondness for excessive riches.

Mr. de Quetteville, Professor Josef Wiesehöfer and other like-minded "historians" are more than welcome to dismiss the *Cyropaedia* as yet another piece of "*propaganda*" however:

- 1] **The *Cyropaedia* was not written by Cyrus** or the Iranians but by the **Greeks**
- 2] The European Greeks were **the enemies of the Achaemenids** at the time and were **not ruled by them**. What reason would the Greeks have to generate "*propaganda*" that would praise one of the kings of their enemies?

One of ancient Iran's most fierce opponents, Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) who conquered the Achaemenid Empire, held the highest respect for Cyrus the Great. When Alexander reached the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargardae, he paid his respects and ordered the tomb to be repaired and restored (i.e. Arrian, XXIX, 1-11; Quintus Curtius, VII, 6.20).



One of the greatest admirers of Cyrus the Great was no other than Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) who conquered Achaemenid Iran. He repaired the Tomb of Cyrus and also spared the frontier post of Kurtakh (known to the Greeks as Cyropolis) as this had originally been founded by Cyrus (Quintus Curtius, VII, 6.20).



Alexander the Great paid his respects to Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae, which is now a UNESCO world heritage site. Despite being at war with the Achaemenids, the Greeks openly praised Cyrus the Great as a just and benevolent ruler.

The Cyropaedia has endured the test of time and is with us to this day. It was certainly known to the Romans who respected it.

One example is Scipio Africanus (236-183 BC) who always had a copy of the *Cyropedia* (consult the introduction of Cawkwell, G. L., [The Persian Expedition](#), Penguin Classics, 1972).



Scipio Publius Cornelius Africanus Major was a major Roman statesman as well as a General during Rome's Punic wars. He regularly read the Cyropaedia.

History's most famous Roman, Julius Caesar (100-44 BC), also consulted the Cyropaedia.



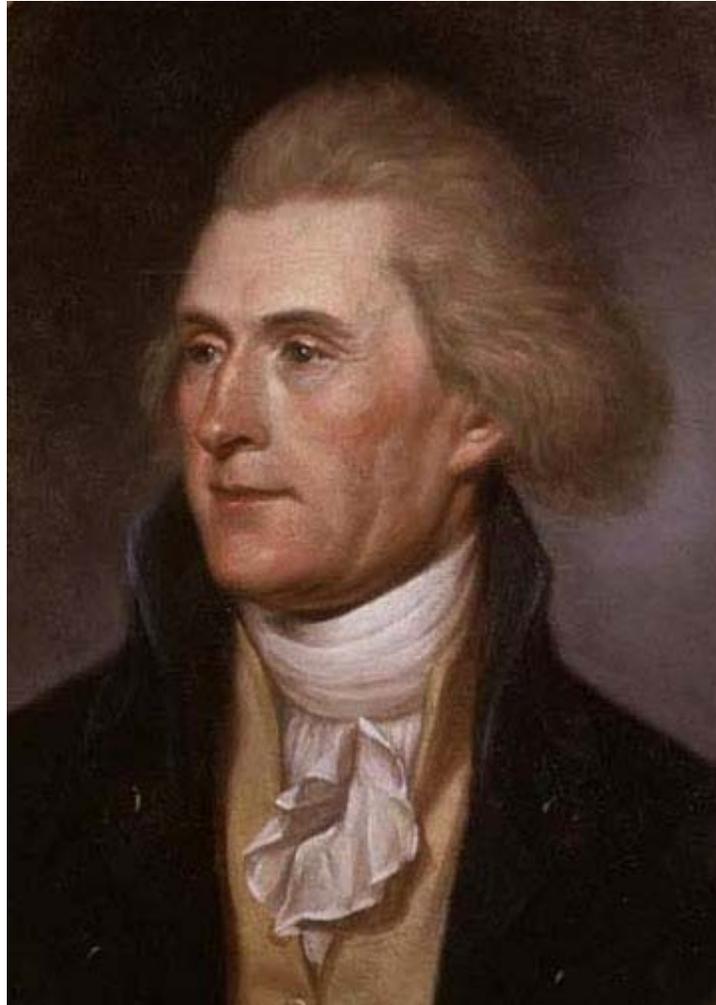
Julius Caesar whose legacy endures in the western world to this day had studied the Cyropaedia.

There are also a number of prominent post-Roman European thinkers who consulted the Cyropaedia. One example is the empiricist British philosopher John Locke (1632-1704).



John Locke (1632-1704) is one of the foremost leading thinkers of the enlightenment and one of the proponents of liberal thinking in the western world. He was fully cognizant of the Cyropaedia, which may explain the parallels between his philosophies and elements of Zoroastrian thought followed by Cyrus the Great.

But perhaps even more interesting is the fact that **the Cyropaedia was known to and referenced by the founding fathers of the United States**. One example of this is President Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) who possessed 2 copies of the Cyropaedia.



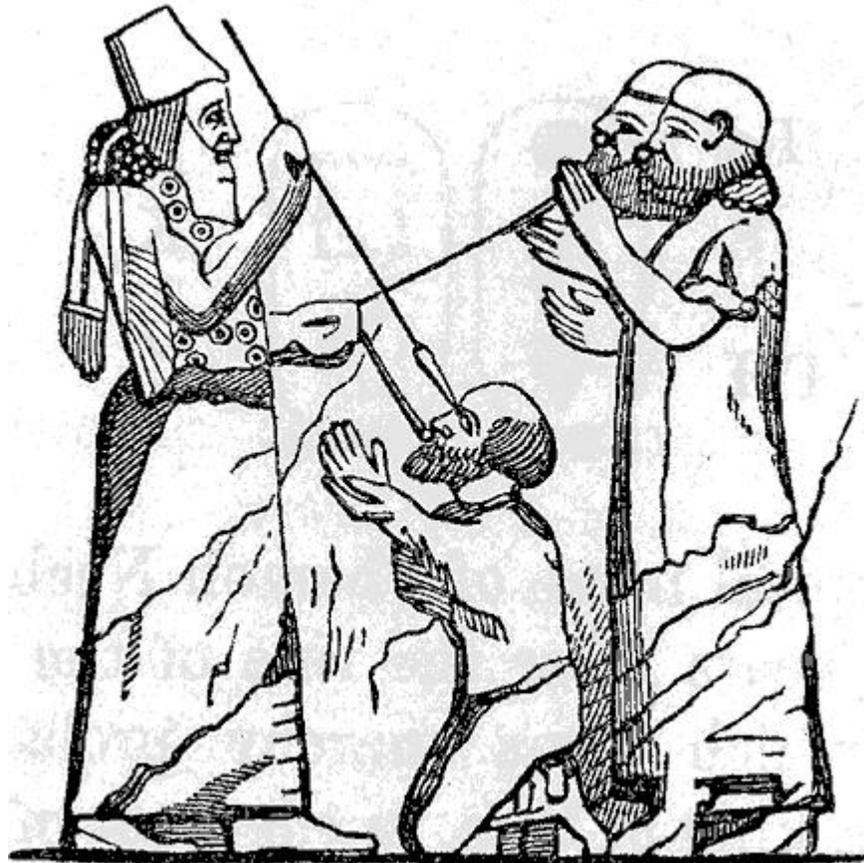
President Thomas Jefferson of the United States of America. Like many of the founding fathers and those who wrote the US Constitution, President Jefferson regularly consulted the Cyropaedia. The two personal copies of Thomas Jefferson's Cyropaedia are in the US Library of Congress in Washington DC. Thomas Jefferson's initials "TJ" are seen clearly engraved at the bottom of each page. These copies of the Cyropaedia have been filmed by Cyrus Kar who is producing a movie documentary entitled "In Search of Cyrus the Great".

Following Mr. de Quetteville's logic, are we to assume that all of the distinguished leaders and statesmen of history namely, Alexander the Great, Scipio Africanus, Julius Caesar, John Locke and Thomas Jefferson have all been victims of a two thousand year long conspiracy? This fantastic conspiracy theory would certainly provide an excellent script for a box-office Hollywood drama picture.

[c] **Persepolis**: Perhaps the most enduring legacy of the Achaemenids is the city palace of *Parsa* (E. Porada, The Art of Ancient Iran: Pre-Islamic Cultures. New York: Crown Publishers, 1965, p.793) known by the Greeks and the West as *Persepolis* (Greek: City of the Persians). Modern Iranians often refer to the site as *Takht-e-Jamshid* (lit. The Throne of Jamshid).

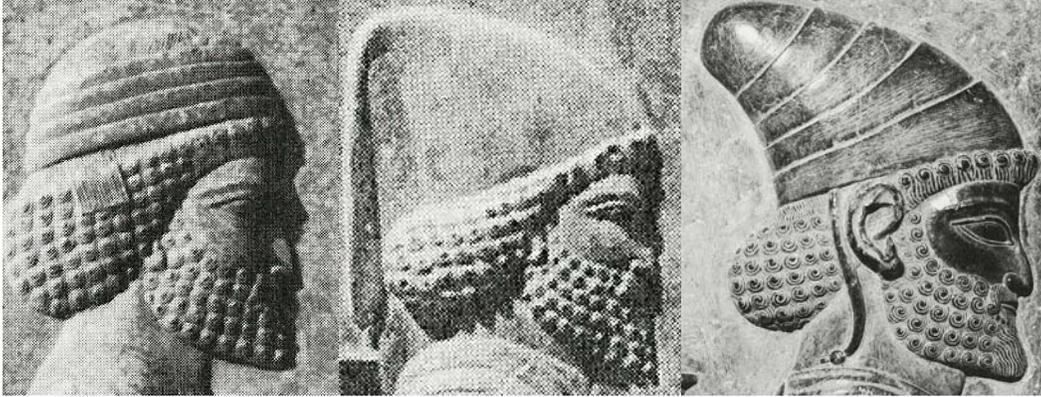
Few are aware that one of the most important functions of Persepolis was “...*the celebration of the Persian New Year festival which had acquired an imperial significance*” (W. Culican, The Medes and the Persians. London: Thames & Hudson, 1965, p.89).

Now-Ruz (lit. New Year) held March 21 of each year, is a celebration of harmony, respect, diversity, unity, revival and (like Christmas) involves the exchange of gifts. This celebration of cultural and racial diversity is exemplified by the artwork at Persepolis. As noted by Dawson “*Persian official art avoided the Assyrian celebration of barbarity*” (D. Dawson, The First Armies. London: Cassell & Co, 2001, p.208). Assyrian depictions are in fact vivid in their depictions of conquered peoples such as Arabs, Jews or Elamites being trampled, impaled, captured and humiliated.



Ancient Assyrians blinding their captives. Assyrian artistic portrayals are replete with images of captives and opponents being skinned alive, blinded, impaled, and their limbs, ears, etc. There are no such depictions of cruel violence in Persepolis.

The Achaemenids made no efforts to force their languages or theology upon their culturally diverse empire.



An Assyrian (left), Babylonian (center) and a Hebrew man (right) as depicted in Persepolis. The right figure has often been interpreted as having been an Assyrian or a Phoenician, however Kriwaczek (see reference list of books cited earlier) has noted that this figure represents a Jew from Babylon. In Persepolis, all races are portrayed in a dignified manner: there are no depictions of violence in which one race is engaged in crushing the other.

As noted by the late Professor A.J. Arberry:

“The government [of the Achaemenids] was markedly tolerant, and the religions and customs of the many subject peoples were carefully considered and often fostered in their own countries by the kings...”

[A.J. Arberry, The legacy of Persia. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953, p.8]



An Egyptian statue of Darius the Great, sculpted in Egypt around 510 BC, portraying him as the Pharaoh of Egypt. As noted by Professor Arberry “...Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius ruled in Babylon as kings of Babylon and in Egypt as Pharaohs...the Persians on the whole exercised clemency towards their vanquished foes; usually only traitors were treated with severity. They had none of the sheer brutality and delight in cruelty and large-scale massacre for their own sake shown by the Assyrians” (1953, p.8). Barely visible are the Egyptian hieroglyphs on the pedestal.

Mr. Holland and like-minded “historians” (inexplicably) label all information pertaining to the Cyrus Cylinder and the favorable historical citations of the Achaemenids as

“absolute nonsense” and maintain that Cyrus *“staged several salutatory atrocities”*. Professor Wiesehofer even proposes that the Cyrus Cylinder is itself a fabrication as Cyrus was *“trying to make himself appear righteous”*. The question is why would Cyrus need to lie about this in such gigantic proportions? The very premise of this is oxymoronic. It is simply impossible to “alter the evidence” of history in such a massive scale over such a long period of time. If this had been the case, surely the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans and Muslim historians who came long after the fall of the Achaemenids would have provided us with ample writings pointing to such a grand deception.

(4) ...desire to claim some eastern roots... [for the Cyrus Cylinder]

Mr. de Quetteville is attempting to dismiss the possibility that Europe’s heritage may have some *“eastern roots”*. All Civilization (“east” or “west”) and its array of achievements are essentially a synthesis of the human collective that spans all continents, races, religions and cultures. I would like to humbly point out that Europeans do owe much to *“eastern roots”* just as the entire world has immensely benefited from western European (Hellenic based) civilization. While a thorough discussion of this topic is far beyond the scope of our commentary here, I would like to take this opportunity to suggest the following excellent introductory texts for Mr. de Quetteville:

Title: The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization

Author: John M. Hobson

Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Year: 2004

ISBN-10: 0521547245

ISBN-13: 978-0521547246

Title: The East in the West

Author: Jack Goody

Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Year: 1996

ISBN-10: 0521556732

ISBN-13: 978-0521556736

**Title: Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam and World History
(Studies in Comparative World History)**

Author: Marshall G.S. Hodgson & (Editor)

Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Year: 1993

ISBN-10: 0521438446

ISBN-13: 978-0521438445

It is certainly beyond my ability to provide an exhaustive summary of what these books collectively expostulate upon, however the following points are examined in some detail by these publications:

1] The destinies of all mankind have been interrelated long before the onset of the 20th century

2] The fallacy of the notion that all rational thought and respect for human rights have an exclusively western origin

3] A thorough reassessment of the current Western views of “the East”, which is seen by some as having been backward or even static, especially with respect to systems of thought, learning, sciences and commerce.

4] The fact that Europe has assimilated many elements of “Eastern” origin, notably with respect to inventions, theology, systems of thought and government.

Mr. de Quetteville’s writing appears to suggest that he may be of the school of thought that is unfavorable towards suggestions that Western European culture may have multiple roots. Western civilization today may be (broadly) traced to Greco-Roman civilization, northwest Europe’s own unique heritage as well as influences from “the East”.

(5) For all the criticisms of the Cyrus cylinder, it is unlikely to change perceptions of it in Iran, where Cyrus and the cylinder are regarded with intense national pride. "It is a source of great pride," said Mr Holland, "but like many things said about Persia in Iran, it has to be taken with a big pinch of salt."

Mr. Holland’s statement may be dissected into four sections:

- a] “*Criticisms*” made by whom?
- b] The notion that the “*Criticisms*” are “*unlikely to change perceptions of it in Iran*”
- c] What is meant by “*in Iran*” and “*intense national pride*” in the Iranian political arena today?
- d] What is meant by “*big pinch of salt*”?

We will now proceed to analyze these four points.

- a] “*all the Criticism of the Cyrus Cylinder*”

Who and what are the major sources of “*all the Criticism*”? As noted in item (1), Mr. de Quetteville has provided just three “historians” to back his claims. This pales in comparison to the hundreds of other western historians and researchers that can be produced to counter the former’s “*criticisms*”. The other premise of simply labeling the cylinder as “*propaganda*” fails the test of scrutiny when consulting Greek, Mesopotamian and Biblical sources that overwhelmingly portray Cyrus as an honorable person.

- b] The notion that the “*Criticisms*” are “*unlikely to change perceptions of it in Iran*”

The “*perceptions*” are unlikely to change in the Western World as well. The reason is simple: the “*criticisms*” levied by Mr. Holland have failed to stand up to close scrutiny. Again, the handful of “historians” aside, the vast majority of dispassionate and politically unbiased scholarship, simply does not agree with the views of Mr. Holland.

The statement also displays an element of disrespect for the **people** of Iran (as opposed to politics). It implies that Iranians are void of receptivity to rational arguments. The Iranian people, like the rest of humanity, are very capable of absorbing criticism with respect to their past history, including Cyrus the Great. However, one cannot simply alter one’s view of reality simply to placate the “*perception*” of a passionate narrator who equates his writings with truth.

c] What is meant by: “*in Iran, where Cyrus and the cylinder are regarded with intense national pride*”?

This statement is indicative that Mr. de Quetteville is wholly unaware of the very complex social and political mosaic in Iran today. He is a member of the set of writers who choose to view Iran and Iranians in simplistic if not binary terms.

Mr. de Quetteville is evidently unaware of the state of education and official propaganda within Iran today. When he says “*in Iran*”, is he making any distinction between the **people of Iran** and the **current regime**?

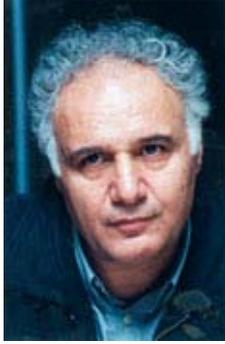
There are many (but certainly not all) elements in the current regime who are against the legacy of Cyrus the Great and have attempted to write out the history of pre-Islamic Iran (including Cyrus the Great) from the educational curricula of Iran since 1979. The main focus of these particular Mullahs is the pan-Islamic discourse which is in fact against the heritage of ancient (pre-Islamic) Iran, India and the west.

Second, there is a rich literary tradition of conspiracy theories against ancient Iran being promoted by these same pan-Islamists **within Iran**. The history of ancient pre-Islamic Iran is viewed with considerable disdain by the pan-Islamists of Iran. The pan-Islamic ideologues have been vigorously funding, supporting and perpetuating the publications of Nasser Pourpirar, a man who believes that the entire history of ancient Iran, including Cyrus the Great to be a “*hoax*” that has been “*...invented by Zionists, Americans the University of Chicago*”. For more information, please consult:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasser_Pourpirar

Below is Pourpirar’s website in Iran which promotes his views:

<http://www.naria.blogfa.com/>



Nasser Pourpirar (a fanatic anti-Semite) believes that the entire history of pre-Islamic Iran as well as Alexander the Great is a hoax that has been invented by the Jews and the Americans. His views on Cyrus the Great and the Cyrus cylinder are virtually identical to those of Mr. de Quetteville, Matthias Schulz of Der Spiegel Magazine, Tom Holland, Klaus Gallas, and Josef Wiesehöfer.

It is shocking to see how closely the writings of Mr. de Quetteville and his “historians” overlap with the conspiracy theories of Pourpirar, a virulent and venomous anti-Semite.

Writers such as Mr. De Quetteville are doing the pan-Islamists a great service: they are (a) repeating the nonsense of anti-Semite pan-Islamic conspiracy theorists and (b) promoting this same nonsense to the Western venue.

Mr. De Quetteville’s erroneous approach may perhaps be explained by the fact that he simply dislikes the people of Iran and the history of ancient Iran, as noted below.

d] ***“like many things said about Persia in Iran, it has to be taken with a big pinch of salt”***

It does not take much analysis to see that Mr. Holland is not just antagonistic towards Cyrus the Great. According to him, all positive contributions by the people of Iran, especially in history, are ***“to be taken with a big pinch of salt”***. But what is the basis of this authoritative demand?

This is not a scientific observation and is certainly void of any rational basis. The statement is a profoundly affective one. Specifically, Mr. Holland is exhibiting a fundamentally psychological process: when we passionately dislike an entity, we often view all facets of that entity in negative terms.

Having briefly discussed a plethora of sources, we are certainly safe to assume that the notion of human rights does indeed have ***“some eastern roots”***. History cannot be rewritten simply because one may dislike what history has to say. By rejecting our collective history, we are also denying the reality of our own pasts.



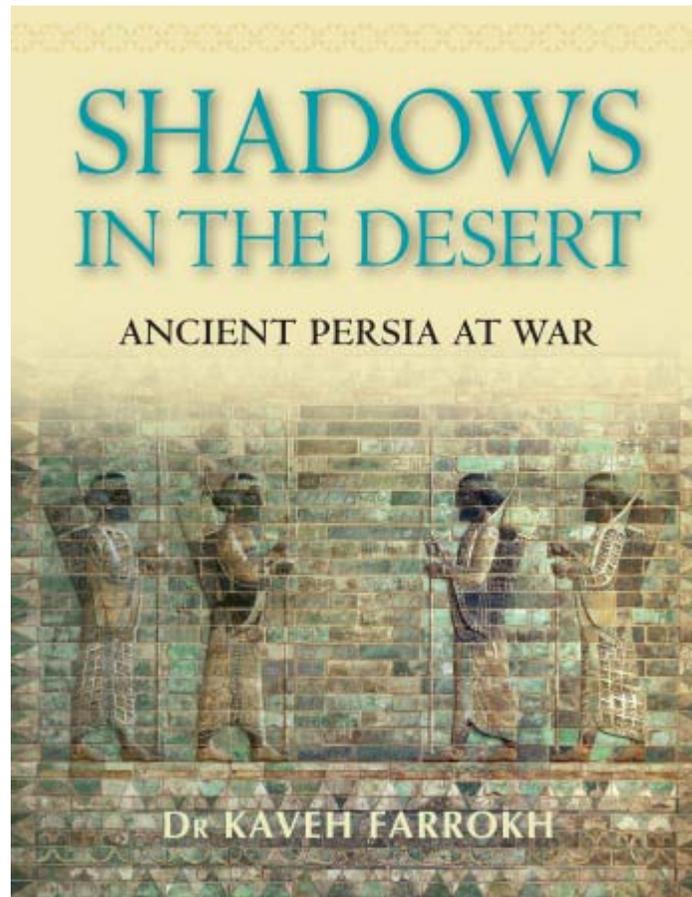
Cyrus the Great (c. 590-530 BC) as reconstructed by the late Angus McBride and Tim Newark. Cyrus' legacy has been commemorated by Biblical, Mesopotamian, Greco-Roman and European citations.

I wish to take this opportunity to invite Mr. de Quetteville to consult the list of books, research citations and links provided in this humble retort. This invitation is also extended to Tom Holland, Klaus Gallas and Josef Wiesehöfer. This will assist them in assembling a more informed and balanced view of history. More importantly, such an assemblage of knowledge will help ameliorate their less than exemplary command of the facts. We all make mistakes (indeed to err is human), and in that endeavor Mr. de Quetteville and his friends are as human as the rest of us.

Best Regards
Kaveh Farrokh

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Advisory Committee Member of the Dabiri Foundation

Recent Publication:



Title: Shadows in the Desert: Ancient Persia at War
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