



## Xerxes: A Persian Life

*By Richard Stoneman*

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### **The first full-scale account of a Persian king vilified by history**

Xerxes, Great King of the Persian Empire from 486–465 B.C., has gone down in history as an angry tyrant full of insane ambition. The stand of Leonidas and the 300 against his army at Thermopylae is a byword for courage, while the failure of Xerxes' expedition has overshadowed all the other achievements of his twenty-two-year reign.

In this lively and comprehensive new biography, Richard Stoneman shows how Xerxes, despite sympathetic treatment by the contemporary Greek writers Aeschylus and Herodotus, had his reputation destroyed by later Greek writers and by the propaganda of Alexander the Great. Stoneman draws on the latest research in Achaemenid studies and archaeology to present the ruler from the Persian perspective. This illuminating volume does not whitewash Xerxes' failings but sets against them such triumphs as the architectural splendor of Persepolis and a consideration of Xerxes' religious commitments. What emerges is a nuanced portrait of a man who ruled a vast and multicultural empire which the Greek communities of the West saw as the antithesis of their own values.

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### Review

'Recent scholarly approaches to the lives of ancient Iranian monarchs have opted for the Reception Studies approach, filtering the rulers through the long-lens of ancient and modern historiography. Not so Richard Stoneman. He boldly bucks the trend and in his *Xerxes: A Persian Life* proves that it is possible to write a very good biography of a long-dead Persian. He takes a cradle-to-grave (or harem-to-ossuary) approach in doing so and tackles the complex, conflicting, multi-layered sources with gusto.'—Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, *THE*

(Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones *Times Higher Education* 2015-07-08)

“A biography that awakens curiosity and whets the appetite for more information.”—*Kirkus Reviews* (*Kirkus Reviews*)

“Stoneman shows Xerxes in an exciting new light.”? *Choice* (*Choice*)

“Stoneman succeeds in offering a re-examination, or a biography as he calls it, of Xerxes’ life and work. . . . A useful companion for everyone interested in the Greek-Persian wars, the civilizations of the Near East and especially those unfamiliar with the Achaemenid Empire.”—Michael Iliakis, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*

(Michael Iliakis *Bryn Mawr* 2017-03-17)

### About the Author

**Richard Stoneman** is Honorary Visiting Professor, University of Exeter, and the author of numerous books. He lives in Devon, UK.

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