



LEWIS, DAVID MALCOLM

LEWIS, David Malcolm (b. London, UK, 7.6.1928; d. Oxford, UK, 12.7.1994), distinguished historian and epigrapher of Greece in the fifth and fourth century BCE and, by extension, of the Achaemenid empire ([FIGURE 1](#)). Educated at the City of London School and Corpus Christi, Oxford, where he studied the traditional Classics curriculum in Greek and Latin, philosophy and ancient history (1945-1949). After National Service in the Royal Army Education Corps (1949-1951), he pursued graduate studies at Princeton, NJ with two leading historians of classical Greece, B. Merritt and A. Raubitschek, before returning to Oxford. From 1952-5, he was Senior Scholar, New College; 1954-5, Junior Research Fellow, Corpus Christi; 1955-1985, Tutor in Greek History, Christ Church. From 1956, he was also University Lecturer in Greek Epigraphy; in 1974 he was elected Fellow of the British Academy and, in 1985, he was given a Personal Chair in Ancient History by the University of Oxford. In the same year, he became a corresponding member of the Deutsches Archâologisches Institut. His close involvement in the study of classical Greek inscriptions is shown by his several collaborative works (1968, *Dramatic Festivals of Athens* (rev. ed. with J. Gould); *Greek Historical Inscriptions* (with R. Meiggs), 2nd rev. ed., 1988; 1967-1994, *Inscriptiones Graeci*, 3rd ed.). His stature as a historian of classical Greece is shown by his co-option into the editorial team responsible for the new editions of the three volumes of *Cambridge Ancient History* covering the sixth to fourth centuries BCE; he was senior editor for volumes V and VI.

These sections of the *Cambridge Ancient History* cover the period of the



Achaemenid empire, from its rise to its conquest by Alexander the Great between 334 and 323. David Lewis was among the first historians of classical antiquity to appreciate how impossible it is to understand the Greek history of this period without studying the great Persian empire, on whose frontier, and in whose shadow, the small Greek polities existed and developed. Most striking was his realization of the importance of the Elamite Persepolis texts (G. G. Cameron, *Persepolis Treasury Tablets*, Chicago, 1948; R. T. Hallock, *The Persepolis Fortification Tablets*, Chicago, 1969; “Selected Fortification Texts,” *Cahiers de la Délégation Française en Iran* 8, 1978) for gaining a realistic understanding of how the Achaemenid empire functioned, free of the literary and partisan distortions of Graeco-Roman historians. This is illustrated by the first chapter of his *Sparta and Persia*, based on the D. W. Bradeen Memorial Lectures, delivered at the University of Cincinnati in 1976, which came as a revelation to many conventional historians. He maintained active contact with, first, Richard Hallock and then, his successor, Matthew Stolper, at the Oriental Institute in Chicago, where the Persepolis tablets are housed at present, until the end of his life, working on tablets still only partly edited. These could bring exciting results, such as Lewis’ demonstration, in 1980, that Datis, the later Persian commander at the Battle of Marathon (490), had been in Sardis in 494, playing an otherwise unattested part in the Ionian Revolt against Persian rule (499-493). This fruitful exploitation of the Persepolis texts is further illustrated by the postscript he furnished to the reissue of A. R. Burn, *Persia and the Greeks* (London, 1984), and articles published in 1985, 1987, 1990 and 1994, as well as by the work of some of his DPhil students, such as Maria Brosius (*Women in Ancient Persia*, Oxford, 1996) and Morrison Handley-Schachler (“The *lan* ritual in the Persepolis Fortification Texts,” *Studies in Persian History*, 1998). On his death, the extensive data base he had created, together with his preliminary thoughts, on the Persepolis material was inherited by Christopher Tuplin, who based an article on the possibly seasonal movement of the Persian king on this legacy (“The seasonal migration of Achaemenid kings,” *Studies in Persian History*, 1998). As a highly trained classical philologist, Lewis was well aware of the difficulties posed by the Elamite language used by the administration at Persepolis, at least between 510 and 459 (as far as is known at present). In the late eighties, therefore, Lewis set up a small study group, consisting of colleagues and students, in Oxford to read, learn and discuss the problems faced by scholars trying to come to grips with this poorly understood language. Alongside this he produced studies on Greek-Persian relations (1989) and on an early European treatise on the Achaemenids (1991), while encouraging his student, R. B.



Stevenson, to re-evaluate fourth century Greek historiography of Persia (“Lies and inventions in Deinon’s *Persica*,” *Achaemenid History* II, Leiden ,1987) for her Dphil dissertation (now published: *Persica*, Edinburgh ,1997). The appreciation of scholars, worldwide, working on Persia’s early history of David Lewis’ contribution is shown by the fact that publication of the last of the annual, international workshops on Achaemenid History was dedicated to his memory (*Achaemenid History VIII: Continuity and Change*, Leiden ,1994). In a volume published in his honor in 1998, several colleagues contributed studies on aspects of the Achaemenid empire (*Studies in Persian History*). In the same year, the David M. Lewis Memorial Lecture was delivered in Oxford by the eminent French historian of ancient Persia, Pierre Briant, on the subject of the Xanthos trilingual inscription from late Achaemenid Lycia, which combined the two dominant aspects of Lewis’ academic life – epigraphy and early Persian history. Quantitatively, his contribution to early Iranian history was not enormous, particularly as his work was always expressed in a concise, highly compressed style, demanding close attention from the reader with some of the most valuable material hidden in his dense and detailed footnotes. But it was consistently of very high quality, opening the eyes of traditional historians to the value of the Persian evidence and the impossibility of making sense of classical history without placing the Achaemenid empire center stage.

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