

Achaemenid Workshop 4

The Achaemenid Persian Empire and its Western Borderlands: A Change of Paradigm

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organized by Robert Rollinger, Julian Degen, Erich Kistler, Bernhard Palme, Florian Schwarz

Modern approaches to historical developments along the western borderlands of the Achaemenid Persian empire (ca. 550-331 BC) were traditionally shaped mainly through the lens of the two centuries long 'Greek'-Persian political and military competition whose eventful course is recounted by ancient Greek authors, our main literary sources on the subject. Ancient Greek, and particularly Athenian, political bias against the 'Persian' empire is also at the root of modern perceptions of the historical relations between Greece and Persia as a leading paradigm of clash of civilizations and perennial political, cultural and ideological distinctness and conflict between Europe and Asia, between West and East.

Over the past four decades research on the Achaemenid-Persian multiethnic empire has gained fresh impetus, owing, especially, to a growing interest in the provinces, regions and borderlands combining written and archaeological sources as well as innovative theoretical models of interpretation. Recent studies on the Achaemenid-Persian empire are increasingly focusing on the rich but diverse and multilingual archival written record of this empire, taking into consideration archaeological materials from new excavations and reexaminations of earlier finds. New theoretical approaches to 'empire' as a specific political structure, imperial borderland as zone of intense contact and impact (not to be confused with influence) and a constantly growing volume of specialized studies now offer a wider scope for explorations of the military, administrative and economic mechanisms of the Achaemenid-Persian empire, the ideology and political behavior of its rulers and the multifarious dialogues and discourse within the empire and beyond. These changed perspectives promise new insights into the empire's institutions and cultural expressions/realities as well as into the dynamics of networks of knowledge and discourse connecting and entangling the empire's varied subjects, neighbors and borderlands. Such new evidence and studies also provide a richer context for investigating interconnections and interactions between the Aegean and Achaemenid-Persian spheres of activity and impact, but also their complex interplay with other regions across the multiethnic contact zones spanning the western Achaemenid-Persian borderlands from the southeastern Mediterranean to the shores of the Black Sea.

Departing from the emphasis on rivalry that dominated scholarly discussions of Aegean – Achaemenid-Persian relations for a long time, this workshop seeks to offer vistas onto the varied testimony (written, archaeological, numismatic) that is presently available for the study of the multifaceted encounters between the Aegean and Achaemenid-Persian worlds and to new approaches to its interpretation; and to highlight the importance of these encounters as a mirror to broader patterns of political, social, economic and cultural phenomena promoted in the eastern Mediterranean region (and beyond) under Achaemenid-Persian imperial expansion and rule.

The conference is a follow-up of the preceding international meeting "The Achaemenid-Persian Empire and its Non-Western Borderlands: A Change of Paradigm" (Innsbruck, November 21-22, 2025), organized in the framework of the Austrian Academy of Sciences' Commission "Transformation Processes and Empire in the Ancient Afro-Eurasian Worlds."

Vide: [ÖAW-Tagung in Innsbruck – Universität Innsbruck](#)