

ACHAEMENID ROYAL INSCRIPTIONS

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With the support of a grant from the Provost's Program for Academic Technology Innovation, Gene Gragg and Matthew W. Stolper are preparing an electronic study edition of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions to be published on the World-Wide Web. They are assisted by Richard Goerwitz (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1993), whose electronic Bible Browser provided a model vehicle for examining groups of texts in many simultaneous versions of the Bible; and by Michael Kozuh, graduate student in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. Most of the project tasks are done on Hewlett-Packard X-Terminals donated to the Oriental Institute by the LaSalle National Bank.

Transliterations of the inscriptions in Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian (and, where appropriate, in Aramaic or Egyptian) will be accompanied by text-critical apparatus, glossaries, grammatical indexes, bibliographic apparatus, and some graphic apparatus (for example, plans indicating the locations of architectural inscriptions or photographs of exemplars). The first stage of the project will present the royal inscriptions from Persepolis and nearby Naqsh-e Rostam, where the Oriental Institute carried out excavations between 1931 and 1939. There, rulers from Darius I (522–486 B.C.) to Artaxerxes III (358–338 B.C.) left some thirty inscriptions, most of them in two or more languages, hence altogether sixty-nine texts.

In its current state, the application gives access to editions and glossaries of all the versions of these inscriptions. Individual versions can be inspected in their entirety; two or more versions of an inscription can be compared section-by-section; the glossaries can be searched, and the results of the searches are linked to the corresponding sections of the texts; and the texts themselves can be searched for sequences of characters, with the results displayed as lists of glossary entries, lists of sections of texts, or both, again with links to full glossary entries and full displays of text. These components will soon be linked to a catalog, with basic text-critical apparatus and commentary, and to a master bibliography. Later additions are to include working translations of the several versions of the inscriptions; a running list of citations in scholarly and critical literature, linked to the cited passages; and site plans and pictures.

The inscriptions on Achaemenid monuments in Iran were the basis for the decipherment of the cuneiform scripts. The decipherment laid open vast, dimly known or unknown areas of the pre-Achaemenid history of the ancient Near East and most explorers of these areas left the Achaemenid texts themselves to subspecialists. Yet the corpus remains fundamental source material for classical and Biblical historians, Achaemenid historians, and scholars in Old Persian and Elamite among other languages of ancient Iran.

PHILOLOGY

The most conspicuous characteristic of these texts is the very fact that they are in more than one language, so close study or accurate use of them calls for a synoptic presentation for easy comparison among the versions or the elements of versions. Yet no handy synoptic edition has replaced F. H. Weissbach's magisterial *Keilinschriften der Achämeniden* of 1911, because the divergence and development of scholarship on the several languages make replacing it with an equally compendious and authoritative printed edition a forbidding undertaking. On the other hand, the flexibility of the electronic media now makes it possible to present useful working synoptic editions in stages, to be progressively corrected, interconnected, and enlarged.

Since the Achaemenid royal inscriptions offer a limited corpus of texts in wholly unrelated languages, accompanied by a large scholarly literature, the project should help develop programs, editorial standards and procedures, and a body of experience that can be put to use in the electronic presentation and analysis of larger bodies of texts and linguistic data.

When a smoothly working, edited version is ready, the URL will be announced in the Oriental Institute's *News & Notes*, among other places.
