

# Xerxes

Countries



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Xerxes Debate – Prosecution Building Programs \* Economic decline was related to his excessive building programs. \* Even though his building programs were impressive he neglected other parts of the empire. \* Olmstead: “ Xerxes was more interested in completing the magnificent structures begun by his father than he was in testing the formidable military machine. ” \* Josef Wieshofer: Persepolis was one of his “ favourite past times”, was “ hardly independent” of Darius’ style, was an “ imitation of standards. ” \* “ Xerxes spent considerable time, energy and resources on massive construction programs. - Granger Foreign Policy \* Failure to expand into Greece was a lack of military ability. \* He sent a squadron of ships to blockade the channel before Salamis which resulted in the fleet being destroyed. \* Battle of Salamis: lack of loyalty within his navy and land troops. \* Regardless of how big and revolutionary the military was, Xerxes still failed. \* Didn’t actually get involved, sat and watched. Religious Policy \* Sacrilege; destroyed temples (Egypt and Babylon), melted down the statue of Bel Marduk. “ Xerxes was a religious fanatic who deviated from the religious tolerance of his predecessors...he has become a paradigm for religious bigotry, fanatically interfering in sacred matters where his predecessors had kept a distance. ” - Granger \* Wasn’t a pragmatic religious ruler; killed priests, took their land, melted down the statue of Bel Marduk resulted in the discontinuation of the New Year’s Festival. \* Babylonian people resented the reign of Xerxes and did not consider him their king and archaeological evidence after this incident, Xerxes ceased calling himself the King of Babylon.

Relationships \* Weren't strong with the nobility; was assassinated by a member of his nobility Character \* Various ancient sources charge him with impetuosity, arrogance, sadism, madness and glibility. \* “ small, blubbering, ruled by women and eunuchs, cruel in victory, spineless in defeat. ” – Greek propaganda \* “ deeply flawed ruler, one to follow passion rather than reason. ” – William Culican and Augustine Alletz Comparison to Other Kings \* The Greeks liked to compare Xerxes with other Persian kings to highlight his faults.

In their comparison with Darius and Cyrus, Xerxes is hardly the ‘ hero among kings’ as he is named in Persian inscriptions. Rather, he is the bad king, the ruthless despot, not at all in the tradition of the good and just Persian kings of the past. \* Xenophon: Describes Cyrus as modest, tolerant and wise and the hero of Persia. Whereas Xerxes is depicted as an ambitious, often cruel and despotic Oriental ruler, described as a courtly womaniser, concerned only with Persian expansion and greatness. Concluding Statement Greek sources agree on his bad rule, even though they are bias, this viewpoint is backed up by Roman and modern sources. \* Rodgers: “ as Xerxes had failed in war and in civil organization so also did Xerxes fail to surpass his great predecessor. ” \* His megalomaniac motives, his attempt to master nature and ignore the gods, the sacrilegious destruction of foreign temples, his apparent cold-blooded disregard for the lives of his men and his mutilation of Leonidas’ body, together with his love of luxury.