

**Source A**

[135] No race is so ready to adopt foreign ways as the Persian; for instance, they wear the Median costume because they think it handsomer than their own, and their soldiers wear the Egyptian corselet. Pleasures, too, of all sorts they are quick to indulge in when they get to know about them – a notable instance is pederasty, which they learned from the Greeks. Every man has a number of wives, and a much greater number of concubines.

[136] After prowess in fighting, the chief proof of manliness is to be the father of a large family of boys. Those who have most sons receive an annual present from the king – on the principle that there is strength in numbers. The period of a boy's education is between the ages of five and twenty, and they are taught three things only: to ride, to use the bow, and to speak the truth. Before the age of five a boy lives with the women and never sees his father, the object being to spare the father distress if the child should die in the early stages of its upbringing. In my view this is a sound practice.

[137] I admire also the custom which forbids even the king himself to put a man to death for a single offence, and any Persian under similar circumstances to punish a servant by an irreparable injury. Their way is to balance faults against services, and then, if the faults are greater and more numerous, anger may take its course. They declare that no man has ever yet killed his father or mother; in the cases where this has apparently happened, they are quite certain that inquiry would reveal that the son was either a changeling or born out of wedlock, for they insist that it is most improbable that the actual parent should be killed by his child.

[138] What they are forbidden to do, they are forbidden also to mention. They consider telling lies more disgraceful than anything else, and, next to that, owing money. There are many reasons for their horror of debt, but the chief is their conviction that a man who owes money is bound also to tell lies.

Herodotus, *Histories*, I.135-38

**Source B**



*Coin of King Darius I*

**Source C**

[8] Darius the King says: 'In these countries, the man who was loyal I treated well, who was disloyal, I punished severely. By the favour of Ahura Mazda, these countries obeyed my law. As I said to them, thus they used to do.'

*Bisitun Inscription Modern Iran*

**Source D**



*Relief from Persepolis, Modern Iran*

## **Ancient History Taster Session 2020**

The four sources above are written about the Persians. The first writer, Herodotus, was born on the edges of the Persian Empire, but was not Persian. The other three sources were found inside what was the Persian Empire.

1. Do you think that Herodotus portrays the Persians in a positive way?

2. Are the 'cultural changes' that the Persians take from other cultures more materialistic or religious?

3. What details given by Herodotus agree with the images and messages?

4. What does the passage suggest about the social hierarchy in Persian culture?

5. Who do you think 'Ahura Mazda'?