ANCIENT PERSIAN

When ancient Persian conquerors created a vast empire from the Mediterranean to the Indus, encompassing many peoples speaking many different languages, they triggered demographic changes that caused their own language to be transformed. Persian grammar has ever since borne testimony to the social history of the ancient Persian Empire. This study of the early evolution of the Persian language bridges ancient history and new linguistics. Written for historians, philologists, linguists, and classical scholars, as well as those interested specifically in Persian and Iranian studies, it explains the correlation between the character of a language's grammar and the history of its speakers. It paves the way for new investigations into linguistic history, a field complementary with, but distinct from, historical linguistics. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

KEVIN T. VAN BLADEL is Professor of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations at Yale University. He is also author of *The Arabic Hermes* (2009), *From Sasanian Mandaeans to Sabians of the Marshes* (2017), *Written Middle Persian Literature under the Sasanids* (2024), and numerous articles on Arabic, Greek, Iranic, Sanskrit, and Syriac textual traditions.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 21:25:47, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009727709

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 21:25:47, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009727709

ANCIENT PERSIAN

A Linguistic History

KEVIN T. VAN BLADEL
Yale University

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 21:25:47, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009727709



Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009727723

DOI: 10.1017/9781009727709

© Kevin T. van Bladel 2026

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, with the exception of the Creative Commons version
the link for which is provided below, no reproduction of any part may take place without the
written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

An online version of this work is published at doi.org/10.1017/9781009727709 under a Creative

Commons Open Access license CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 which permits re-use, distribution and
reproduction in any medium for non-commercial purposes providing appropriate credit to the
original work is given. You may not distribute derivative works without permission. To view
a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009727709

First published 2026

Cover image: Achaemenid relief depicting tribute-bearers on the Tripylon at Persepolis.
Photo by DeAgostini/Getty Images.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
NAMES: Van Bladel, Kevin Thomas author
TITLE: Ancient Persian : a linguistic history / Kevin T. van Bladel, Yale University, Connecticut.
DESCRIPTION: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2026. |
Includes bibliographical references and index.
IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2026001863 | ISBN 9781009727723 hardback | ISBN 9781009727679 paperback |
ISBN 9781009727709 ebook
SUBJECTS: LCSH: Old Persian language – Grammar, Historical | Old Persian language – Social aspects
CLASSIFICATION: LCC PK6123 .V36 2026
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2026001863

ISBN 978-1-009-72772-3 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-72767-9 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
accurate or appropriate.

For EU product safety concerns, contact us at Calle de José Abascal, 56, 1°, 28003 Madrid, Spain,
or email eugpsr@cambridge.org

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 21:25:47, subject to the
Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009727709