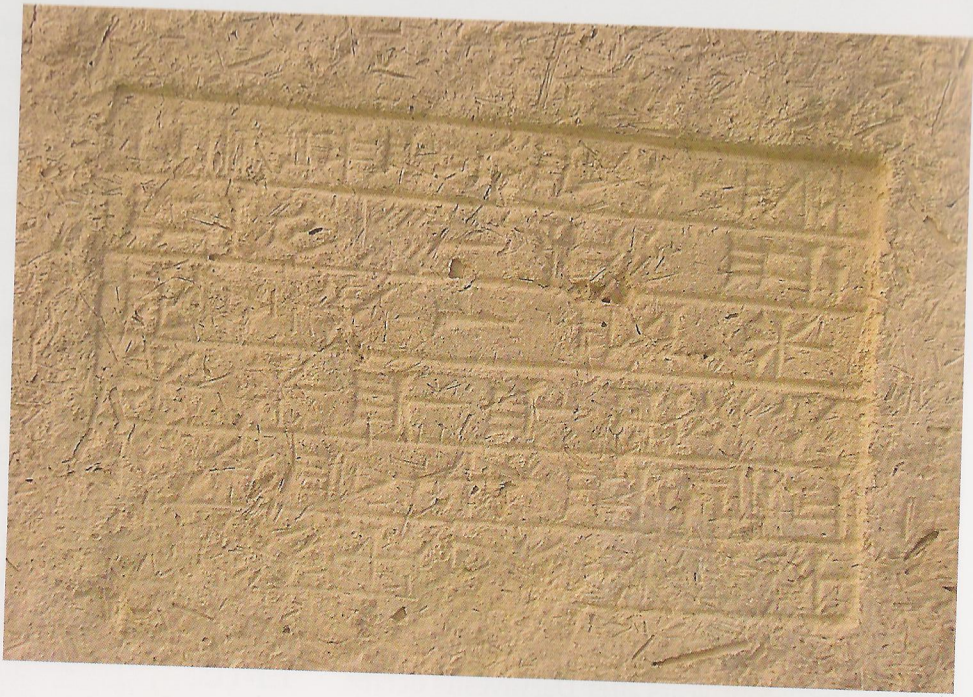
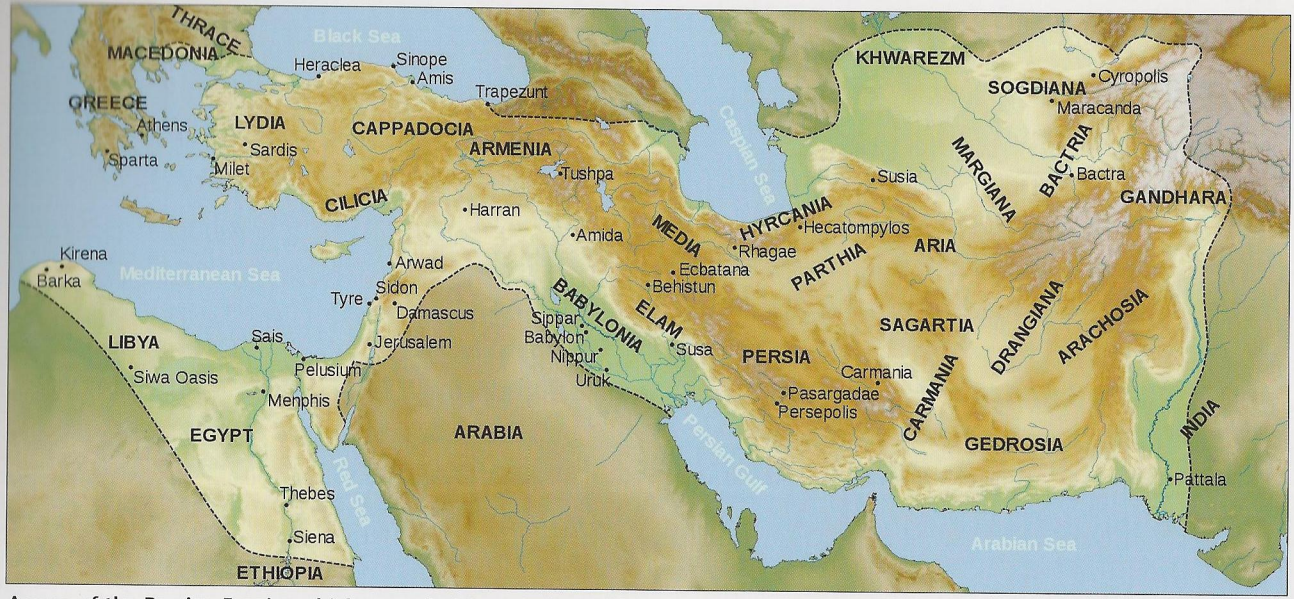
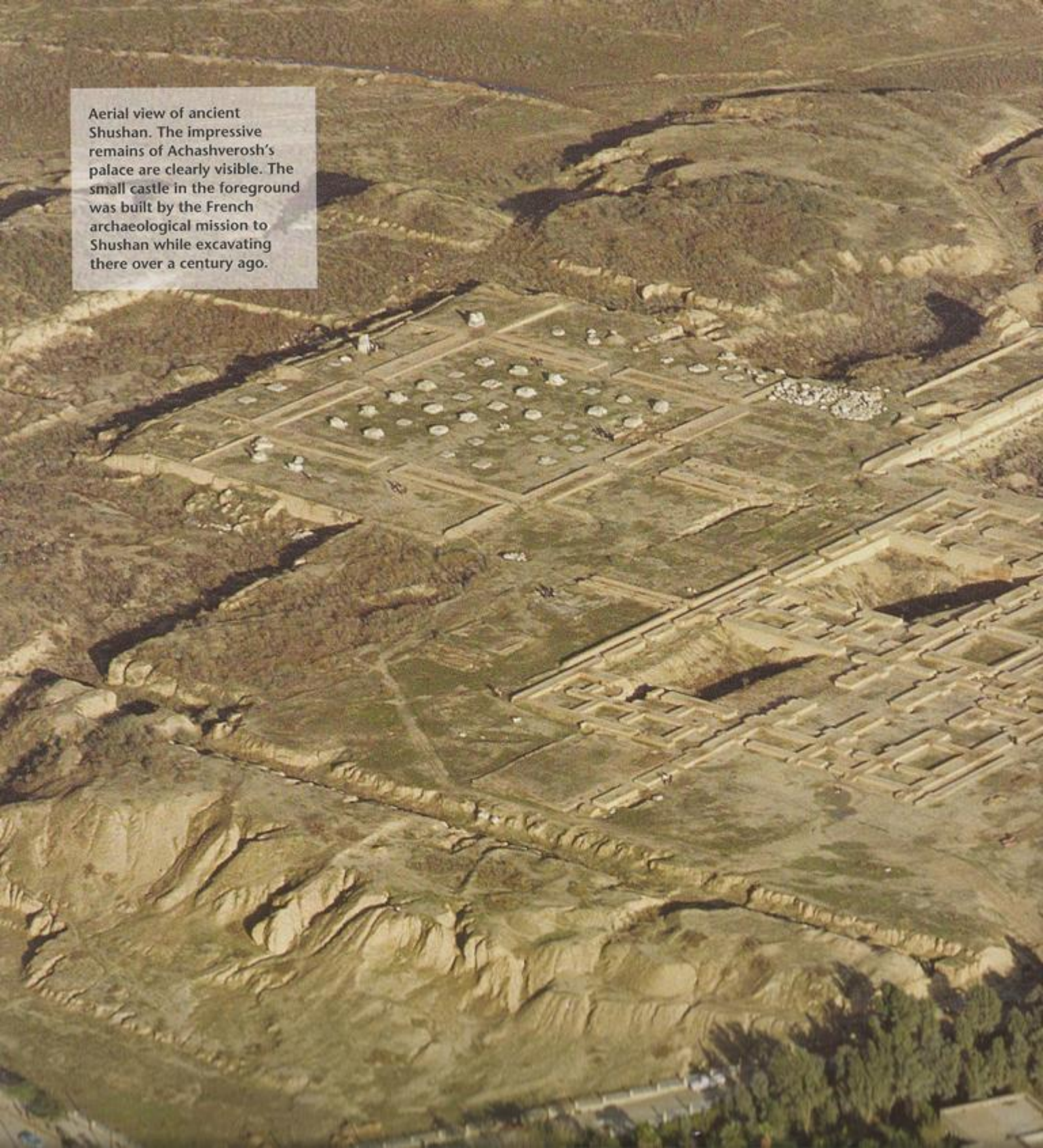


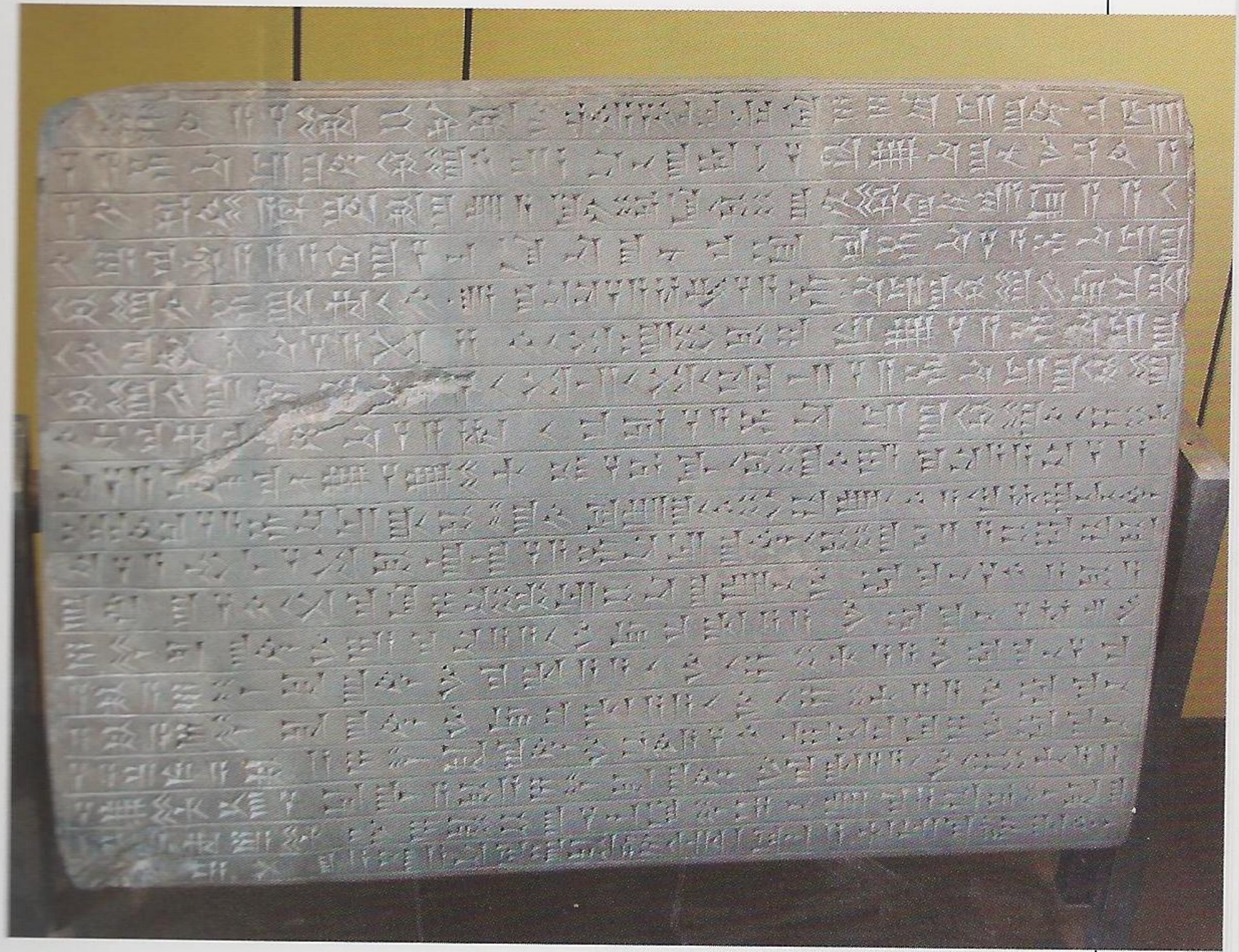
A brick from the city of Ur in southern Babylonia, with an inscription from King Coresh stating, "Cyrus king of the world... The great gods delivered all the lands into my hand." This is very similar to the language Coresh uses in the Book of *Ezra* when issuing the decree permitting the Jews to return to Eretz Yisrael. (Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum)



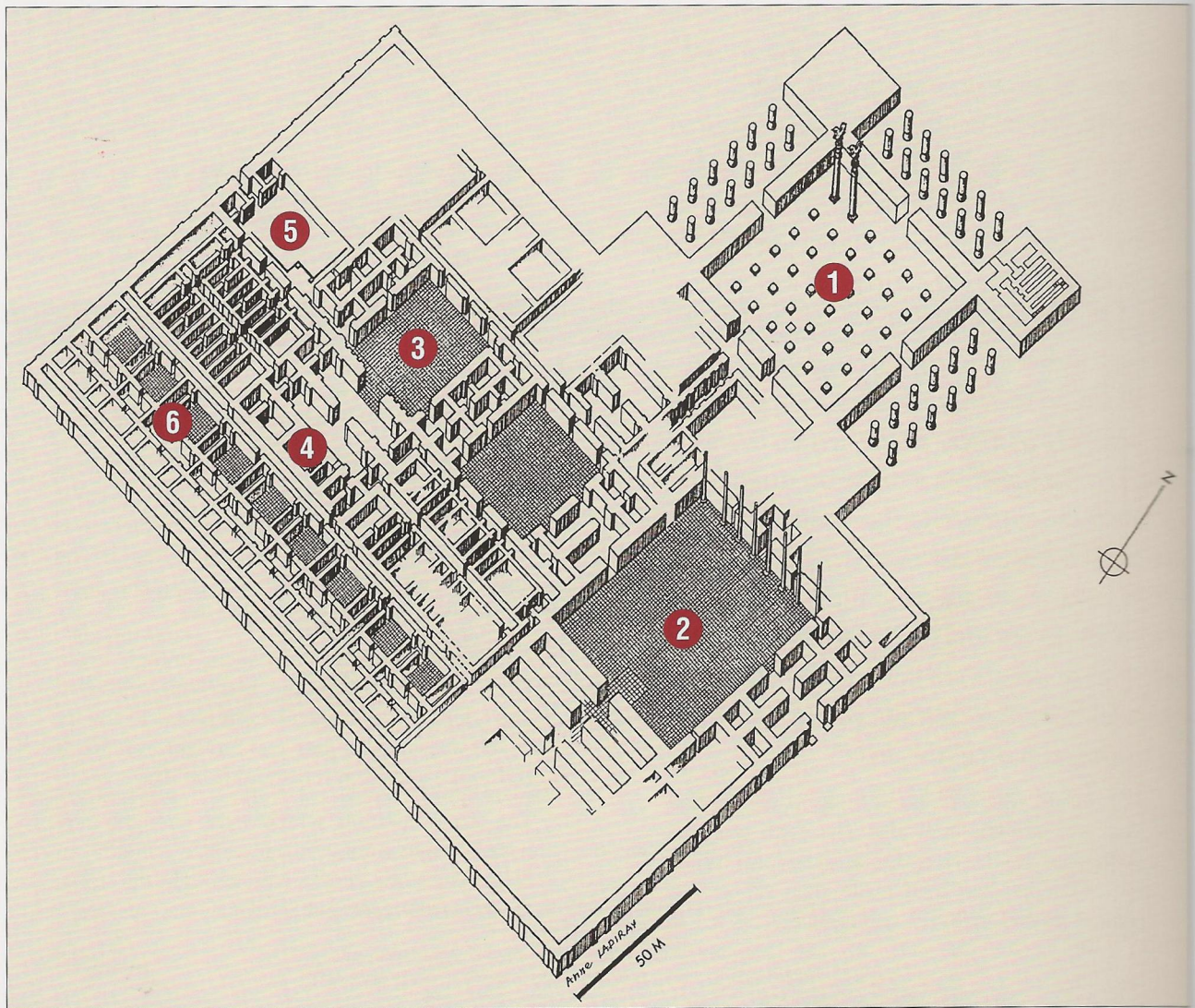
A map of the Persian Empire which extended from India to Africa



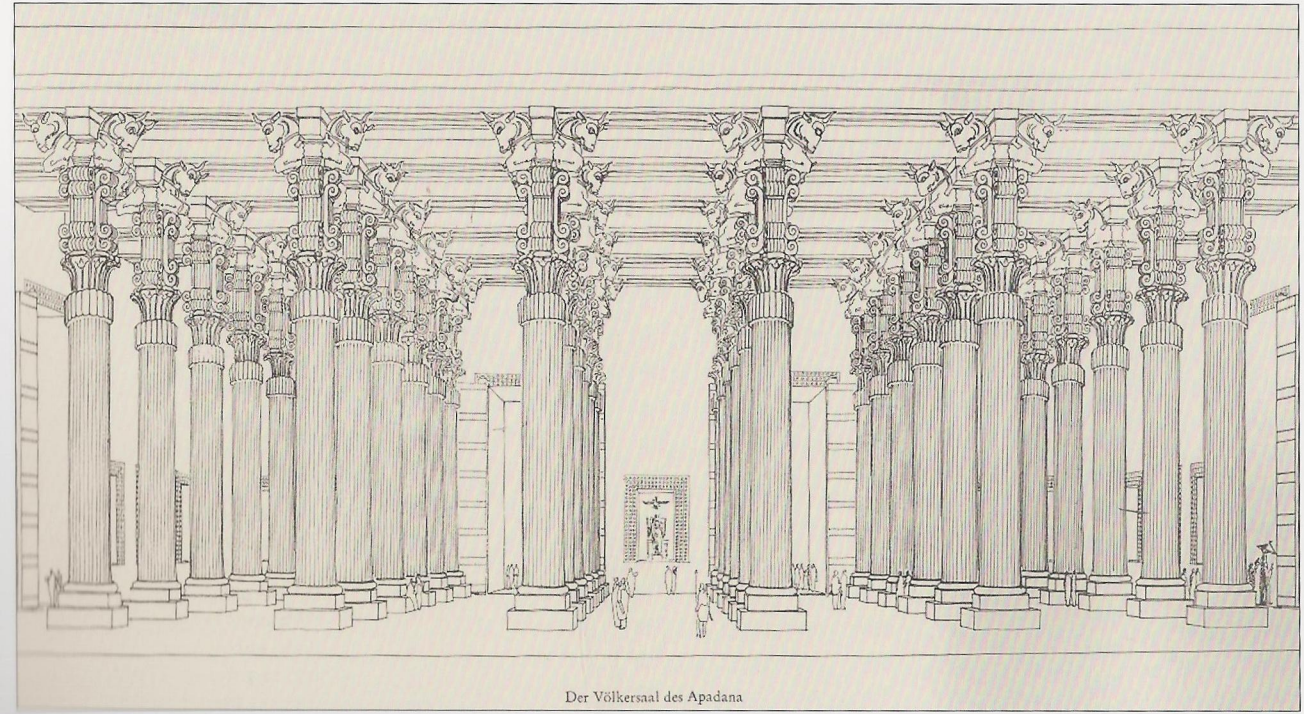
Aerial view of ancient Shushan. The impressive remains of Achashverosh's palace are clearly visible. The small castle in the foreground was built by the French archaeological mission to Shushan while excavating there over a century ago.



The foundation tablet of the palace at Shushan



Isometric view of the Shushan palace (after Perrot and Ladiray 1996): 1. *Apadna* 2. Outer Courtyard 3. Inner Courtyard 4. Throne Room 5. Women's Courtyard 6. Women's Quarters (?)

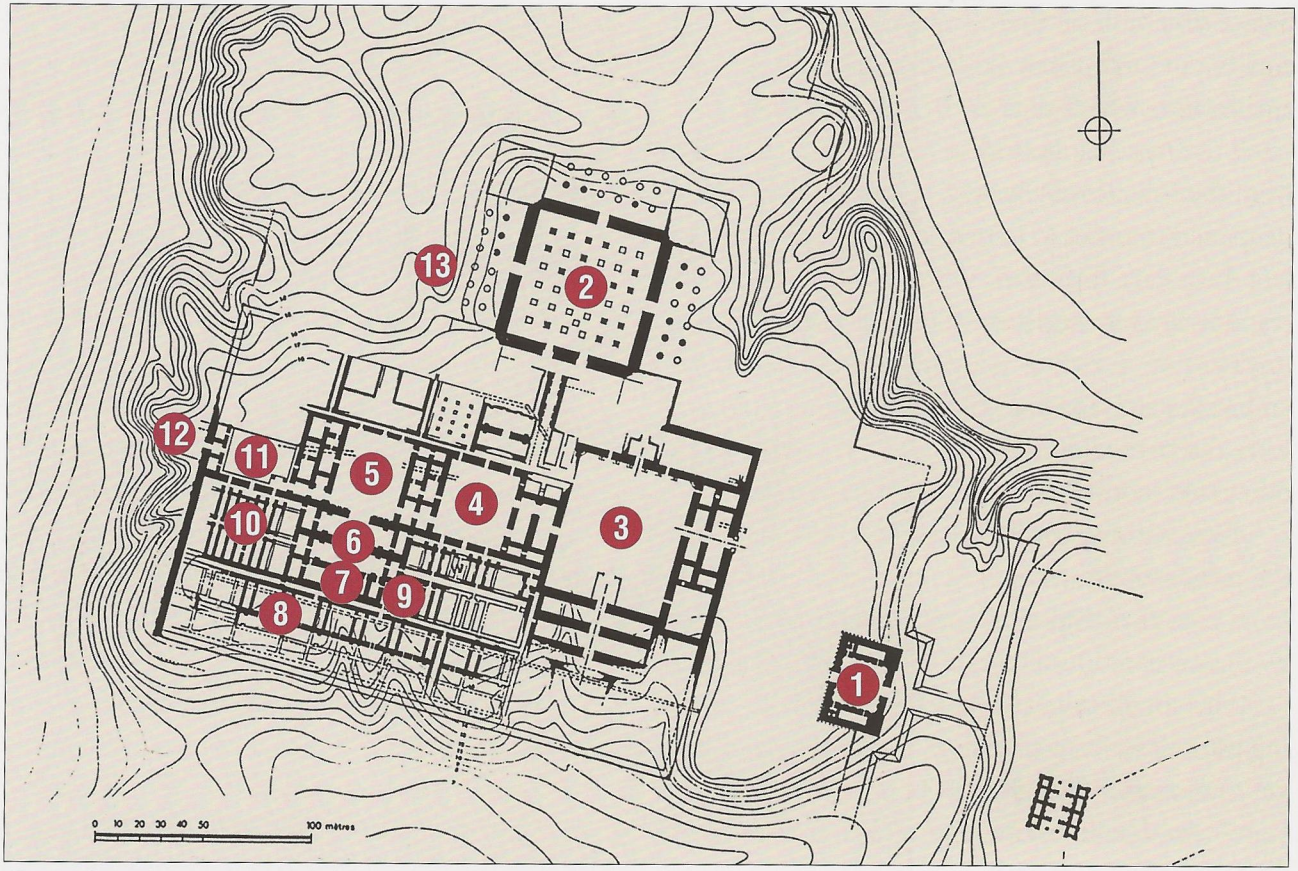


Reconstruction of the *apadna* at Persepolis, which was almost identical to the *apadna* at Shushan (after Krefter 1971, courtesy of Gebruder Mann Verlag)

A massive capital from the *apadna* at Shushan
(Louvre Museum, Paris)

Silver bowl with a royal inscription from Artaxerxes. The inscription reads: "Artaxerxes, the great king, king of kings, king of countries, son of Xerxes the king, of Xerxes [who was] the son of Darius the king, the Achaemenian, in whose house this silver drinking cup was made." (Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum)

[illegible] collection of Achaemenid luxury tableware (photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the [illegible])



Plan of the palace at Shushan (after Perrot and Ladiray 1996)

	Section of the Palace	Reference in Megillas Esther
1	King's Gate	"At that time, when Mordechai was sitting at the king's gate" (2:21)
2	*Apadna*	Site of the large banquet (1:2-4)
3	Outer Courtyard	"Outer palace courtyard" (6:4)
4	Central Courtyard	No reference in the Megillah
5	Inner Courtyard	"The inner courtyard" (4:11, 5:1)
6	King's Apartment	"Directly facing the king's chamber" (5:1)
7	Throne Room	"The king was sitting on his royal throne... facing the entrance of the [king's] chamber" (5:1)
8	Women's House	"To the women's residence" (2:3)
9	Treasury	"And I shall have ten thousand talents of silver weighed out by the mint to be brought to the king's treasuries" (3:9)
10	Storerooms	No reference in the Megillah
11	Courtyard of the Women's House	"The courtyard of the women's residence" (2:11)
12	Western Gate	"In front of the courtyard of the women's residence" (2:11)
13	Gardens	"In the courtyard, garden [and] bisan of the king" (1:5) "The king then... [went out] to the garden of the bisan" (7:7)