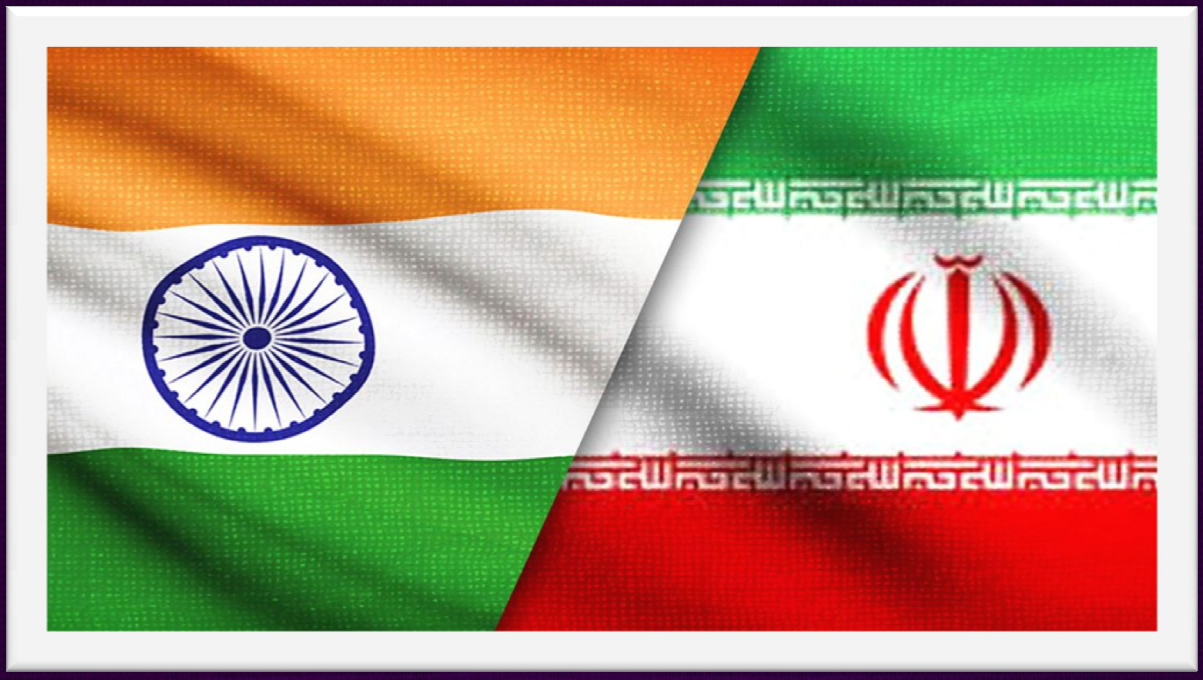
INDIA (BHARAT) - IRAN (PERSIA) AND ARYANS

PART - 3



Dr. Gaurav A. Vyas

This book contains the rich History of India (Bharat) and Iran (Persia) Empire. There was a time when India and Iran was one land.

This book is written by collecting information from various sources available on the internet.

ROOTSHUNT

15, Mangalyam Society, Near Ocean Park, Nehrunagar, Ahmedabad – 380 015, Gujarat, BHARAT.

M : 0091 – 98792 58523 / Web : www.rootshunt.com / E-mail : hunt2roots@yahoo.com

Contents at a glance :

PART - 1

1.	Who were Aryans	1
2.	Prehistory of Aryans	2
3.	Aryans - 1	10
4.	Aryans - 2	23
5.	History of the Ancient Aryans: Outlined in Zoroastrian scriptures	28
6.	Pre-Zoroastrian Aryan Religions	33
7.	Evolution of Aryan worship	45
8.	Aryan homeland and neighboring lands in Avesta	53
9.	Western views on Aryans	71
10.	Ancient Aryan trade	76
11.	History of India - The Subcontinent	93
12.	Varahamihir, a great Iranic astronomer	113
13.	Al-Biruni	117
14	Ancient Indian Sages who held advanced knowledge on science and technology	126
15.	Ancient India was the source of ancient Egyptian civilization	131
16.	List of Hindu Empires and Dynasties	133
17.	Brahmin kings	155
18.	Hindu Kings who ruled Syria and Turkey	158

PART - 2

19.	Latin America were of Indian racial stock	162
20.	King Dahir	167
21.	Raja Dahir VS Muhammad Bin Qasim	169
22.	Alexander's failed invasion of India	175
23.	Somanth 1000 Years ago	187
24.	How Sultan Mahmud, Allauddin Khilji, Aurangzeb Looted and Destroyed Somnath	191
25.	Mahmud of Ghazni	194
26.	Nader Shah	203
27.	Iraq's 3,400 year old palace	216
28.	Vassal and tributary states of the Ottoman Empire	218

29. History of Iran - 1 219
30. History of Iran - 2 222
31. Iran - 1 224
32. Iran - 2 247
33. Parsi communities early history 266
34. Naqsh-e Rostam 293
35. Parsis in India 302

PART - 3

36. Hormozgan's history and Zoroastrian connections 321
37. Atharvan Magi modern priests 335
38. Early Chahar-Taqi (four directions) fire Temples 339
39. Parsis - the Zoroastrians of India 355
40. Pishdadian Dynasty 363
41. List of monarchs of Persia 370
42. Samanid Empire 443
43. Sasanian Empire 456
44. Achaemenid Empire 512
45. Where did the Scythians come from? 568

PART - 4

46. Scythian 570
47. Aryan and Scythian origins of Serbs and Croats 588
48. Scythians Dragon Lords, Dragon Fossils 597

PART - 5

49. Indo - Scythians 654
50. Saka 687
51. Saka, Origins, Scythia, Dahi, Parthava (Parthia), Seistan and Rustam 706
52. Airyan Vaej's features 740
53. Zarinaia 758
54. Karees qanat ancient water distribution channel 759
55. Tashkurgan, Khotan, Yarkand, Tochari, Phryni & Seres 771
56. Paisely, Botteh, Aryan Silk and Trade 783
57. Sogdian trade 797

58. Sugd Turan 803

PART - 6

59. Hand-woven silk and wool fabric Yazd and Kerman Aryan trade 815
60. Habbari Dynasty 828
61. Elam and the Elamities 829
62. Kurdish Tribes 832
63. Aryan, Kurdistan 837
64. Kurds 837
65. Iran (Rojhelat or Eastern Kurdistan) 843
66. The fears of Iran and its forgotten Kurds 845
67. Yazd and Aryan 851
68. Yazd pilgrimage sites 861
69. Yazd Zoroastrian schools 866
70. Tajikistan and Aryans 876
71. Tajikastan's year of Aryan Civilization and the competition of ideologies ... 878
72. Pamirs Badakhshan 880
73. Khorasan Province 893
74. Aryan, Razavi Khorasan 894
75. Greater Khorasan 895
76. Gilan 902
77. Academy of Gondishapur 912
78. Qashqai people 915
79. Susa 919
80. Daniel Biblical figure 934
81. Asayer Tribes 941

PART - 7

82. Nomadic pastoralism 965
83. Ethnic groups in Iran 970
84. Iranian Archer – Soldier profile 972
85. Amazons in the Iranian world 974
86. Clothing in Persia from the Arab conquest to the Mongol invasion 979
87. Cremation in Tepe Sialk 994
88. Nomad Burials 995

89. Bolan Pass 999
90. Battle of Khyber Pass 1000
91. Attock 1003
92. Escape from Iran 1005
93. Possible migration route 1018
94. History of Pre-Islamic dress Iran 1025
95. Kashmir Exodus 1030

36. Hormozgan's history and Zoroastrian connections :

Hormuz In Zoroastrian History :

Located in the north of the narrow Straits of Hormuz, known locally as the Tanga-e Hormuz, Old Hormuz City and the Island of Hormuz, home to New Hormuz City, were located in what is today the southern Iranian province of Hormozgan. [Hormuz is also spelt Hormoz.] The old port-city stood strategically at the entrance to the Persian Gulf to its west and at the gateway to the Arabian Sea to its east. More so that any other port city in the world, the sea and land trade routes that radiated from Hormuz spread like tentacles across and Asia, Africa and Europe. Hormuz stood at the cross roads of history as well. Right up to the medieval ages, Hormuz was a destination port for world travellers such as Italian Marco Polo, Moroccan Ibn Battuta and Zheng He from China.

In our page on Aryan Trade and as we will read in these pages, Iranians had over the ages had developed considerable expertise in international trade and travel. Hormozgan was a junction point of land and sea trade routes. In these pages we will become explorers ourselves. We will seek to find out more about Hormuz, the history of the region, its role in Aryan trade, and its connections to Zoroastrian heritage.

During the Arab invasion of Iran in the 7th century CE, a number of Iranians fled before the advancing Arab armies to Hormuz, a southern Iranian city-port) where they mounted a last stand. When defeat was inevitable, those who could flee dispersed by land and sea. As chronicled in *Futuh-ul-Buldan* (an Arabic book by Ahmad Ibn Yahya Ibn Jabir Al Biladuri, a ninth century CE writer), some fled some by land to Sistan and others by ship to the Markan coast of Baluchistan. (Also see Flight from Iran.)

According to the Qissa-e Sanjan, a Parsi legend, Hormuz was last Iranian home of a group of Zoroastrians before they embarked on a harrowing sea voyage to India around the 8th century CE.

1747 stylized map of Hormuz Island and New Hormuz City in Johann Caspar Arkstee and Henricus Merkus'

***Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und Lande, oder Sammlung aller Reisebeschreibungen*, Leipzig. Image credit: Historic Cities**

If the city of Hormuz was the last home in Iran from a group of fleeing Zoroastrians, the Island of Hormuz was Maneckji Limji Hataria's first stop on his rescue mission to Iran.

If the city of Hormuz was the last home in Iran from a group of fleeing Zoroastrians, the Island of Hormuz was Maneckji Limji Hataria's first stop on his rescue mission to Iran.

Maneckji Limji Hataria (1813-1890 CE), was the representative of the Society for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Zoroastrians in Persia, a Bombay-based charitable society set up by the Parsees of India to provide assistance for their co-religionists who continued to live in Iran. Hataria recounts in his report, *A Parsi Mission to Iran* (1865), that he set sail for Iran from the shores of India on March 31, 1854. On the 'Isle of Ormaz' (the English translation of his Persian original), he found an observatory constructed by ancient Iranian, which had a device to study the movements of nine planets.

We can find no mention of the observatory today. In Arkstee and Henricus Merkus' 1747 map of the Island of Hormuz, some of the structures to the right and bottom on the map of Hormuz Island are not part of modern maps. What we do find in surviving historical literature are reports is that Hormuz suffered much devastation at the hands of a succession of invaders and raiders. Regrettably, locals had no regard for whatever ruins survived the destruction for we

read that stones from the structures and ruins on Hormuz Island were used for constructing buildings in Bandar Abbas. We also read that ancient sites near today's mainland city Minab have been ploughed over.

While there is much to lament in what is irretrievably lost, there is also much to celebrate in the heritage that survives and awaits further discovery. Part of that discovery lies in the records of the fascinating role Hormuz played in international Aryan trade. Hormuz's fame had reached the far reaches of the European, African and Asian continents. Legends of Hormuz's trade, great wealth and exotic bazaars had reached the ears of Marco Polo (1254-1324) in Italy, Ibn Battuta (1304-c.1368). in Morocco and Zheng He (1371-1435) in China. For they all came to Hormuz and they have all left us with records of their visits. We recount some of their words in these pages. While meagre, the visible signs of the region's heritage that can be seen by the keen observer today. That heritage, a Zoroastrian heritage, is also embedded in the names of Hormozgan's cities and we shall start our exploration with an examination of these names.

Zoroastrian Heritage Embedded in the names of Hormozgan and its Cities :

Map of Lower Persian Gulf & Hormozgan Province with Hormuz Island circled in red. Base map courtesy Microsoft Encarta. All modifications © K. E. Eduljee 2010

The Name Hormuz :

Today, Hormuz (Hormuz) survives as the name of a historic island in the Iranian province of Hormozgan.

Every Zoroastrian knows that Hormuz or Hormozd is also a Middle Persian word or term for God in Zoroastrianism. Hormozd itself is the a derivative of the original Avestan / Old Iranian term Ahura Mazda via an intermediate derivative, Ahurmazd (transition between Old and

Middle Persian). This transition happened over a passage of hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

The name Hormuz, Hormozd or Hormuzd (sometimes shortened from Homozdyar or Hormuzdiar meaning a friend of God) is not uncommon amongst Zoroastrians.

That the name Hormuz has survived as the name of a historic Iranian island is itself a miracle and perhaps Zoroastrians should be grateful to those who try and seek other non-Zoroastrian explanations for the name, for in so doing, the Zoroastrian origins of the name is obfuscated in a long list of imagined possibilities thereby giving the fanatics - who would like to destroy and erase everything Zoroastrian - an excuse to let the name stand.

The European version of the name Harmozeia was used by Arrian as a name for the region some 2000 years ago, and it is likely that the name Hormuz, or a related name, predated Arrian's writing. Hormuz as a name for the region is therefore a very old name indeed.

[Name derivatives: Hormuzd > Hormuz. Hormuzdiar > Hormuzdia > Hormuzia. Hormuz or Hormuzia > Harmozeia]

The Name Hormozgan :

Hormozgan is today a southern province of Iran. The name shares the ending -gan with names like the festival Mehergan. This author takes the suffix -gan to mean dedicated to, honouring or celebrating. The implications of the name Hormozgan are therefore many. In being 'dedicated to God' or 'honouring God' or 'dedicated to doing God's work', the implication is that the region is divinely blessed - what in English may be described as God's country. Though such a flattering description may not have applied to the whole region of Hormozgan, nevertheless, at one point in history -during the Zoroastrian era - the description did apply to Old Hormuz city and the surrounding region, known to history as the Paradise of Persia. We will further discuss the basis of this reputation below.

The Name Mughistan :

Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta (1304-c.1368) wrote in his travelogue, "I travelled next to the country of Hormuz. Hormuz is a town on the coast, also called Mughistan." Ibn Battuta's Mughistan (Moghistan) was an alternative name for the country of Hormuz, today's Hormozgan. It is a name that continued to be used on European maps in the 18th and 19th century (see maps below). Mughistan / Moghistan by definition means the land of the Mugh / Mogh. Mugh (derived from magha), means a Zoroastrian priest - known to the West as a magus (Old Persian magush). The plural is mughan as in pir-e mughan / moghan, the hoary and wise magi. However, the Muslims used the name Magian for all Zoroastrians - not just Zoroastrian priests.

In the allegory of classical Persian poetry of Hafez and Rumi, the mugh were also associated with wine-selling, though the deeper meaning of that allegory association implied a free-person and free-thinker in juxta-position to those prohibited from selling or drinking wine. Given that Hormozgan was once the home of a large Zoroastrian community, it is not

surprising that Hormozgan was called Mughistan - the land of the Zoroastrians, freedom and liberty.

1724 Map of Mughistan (Mogostan) by Lisle Guillaume. Note 'Hauz Hormuz' near the centre of the image

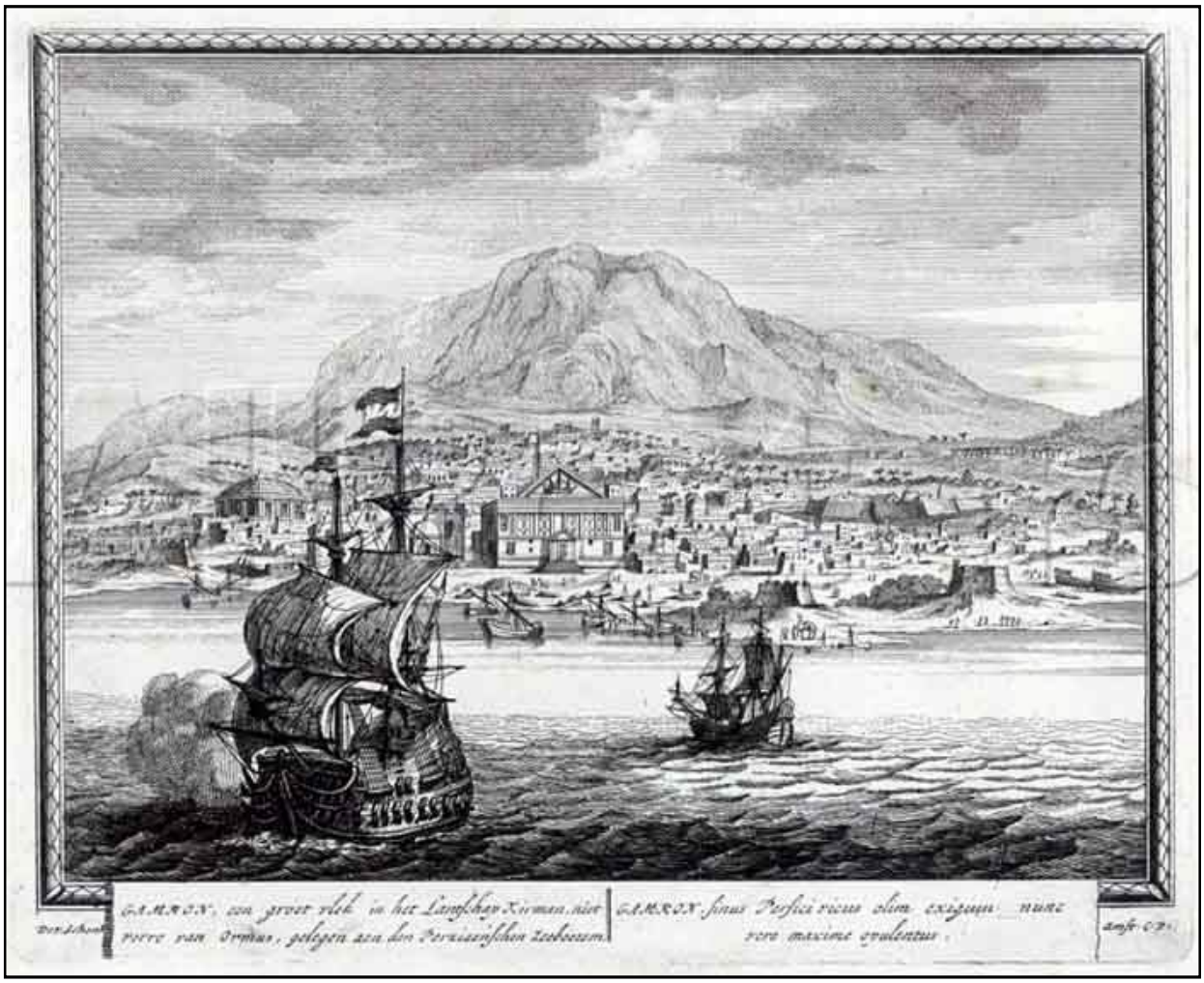
1865 Map of Mughistan (Mogistan) by Stein. Compare extent with Hormozgan prov.

The Name Gabroon / Gabrun - City of the Free :

Today's Bandar Abbas, the capital city of Hormozgan Province, was previously known as Gabroon. Various attempts have been made to explain the name Gabrun and its derivatives including it being derived from 'gomruk' meaning customs (as in customs duties). Below, this author offers an explanation for the name Gabroon that he has not heard this elsewhere.

Bandar Abbas, meaning Port Abbas, is a relatively new name for the port-city being the name given to it after Shah Abbas (with help from the English) took back control of the port from the Portuguese in 1614 CE. The Portuguese had seized control of the port as well as Hormuz Island a hundred years earlier. Prior to the port-city being called Bandar Abbas, foreigners understood the name to be Gomberoon [John Fryer (1672-1681)], Gombroon [Jean Baptiste Tavernier (1631-1668)], Gombrun [Sir Thomas Herbert (1628)], Goobrun (not-quoted), Gameron [John Struys (1647-1672)], Gameroon [Wikipedia, not-quoted], Gamron (see etching to the right), and Gamrun (Dumper, Stanley not-quoted) amongst other versions.

This author proposes these European versions were a corruption of the local name *Gabroon* or *Gabrun*.



Etching of port Gabrun, called Gamron by the artist (16th century?)

Given that the region was known as Mughistan - meaning land of the Zoroastrians - and that Gabr or Gabrun was the term that replaced Mugh, this author further proposes that the principal city of Mughistan came to be called Gabroon via the following process:

Muslims came to use Gabr as a derogatory word by for Zoroastrians. Gabruni (cf. 'Iruni' used for 'Irani' in Zoroastrian colloquialism) means of, or belonging to, the Gabr. For instance, Gabruni evolved into a derogatory name given by Muslims to the the language of the Gabrun, the old language of the Zoroastrians, namely, the Dari spoken by Yazdi and Kermani Zoroastrians. Despite the use of the word in a derogatory sense by Muslims, the origins of the word Gabr may stem from the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) term for a man, a free man, gabra [cf. A. V. William Jackson in Zoroastrian Studies (1928), and Encyclopaedia Iranica]. The meaning free-man coincides with Hafez and Rumi's allegorical use of the term Mugh to mean a free-man and a free-thinker. Jackson suggests a link between gabr and the Pahlavi texts' use of the terms *Mog-gabra* and *Moagoi'gabra*, which in Pazand became *Mago-i mart*, meaning Magian man. Despite the negative manner in which Muslims appropriated the word, Zoroastrians can take back ownership and accept the label with honour for it distinguishes free-thinking Zoroastrians from those who were not free to think for themselves - slaves to a crushing ideology.

In closing, we note that Muslim and non-Muslim writers alike have tip-toed all around the root meaning of the names Hormozgan, Mughistan and Gabrun, either to insult, not to insult, or to simply bury the true roots by using versions of the name by piling on other explanations. But even the negative connotations cannot obliterate the deep rooted heritage Hormozgan shares with Zoroastrians and Zoroastrianism - and we suspect there are many who are secretly happy to let that old and authentic Iranian connection survive.

Hormozgan as Paradise :

Henry Yule in his English translation of Marco Polo's (1254-1324) travels, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo* (London, 1875), quotes a Lieutenant Kempthorne as saying: "It (old Hormuz city and its environs) is termed by the natives the Paradise of Persia. It is certainly most beautifully fertile, and abounds in orange-groves, and orchards containing apples, pears, peaches, and apricots; with vineyards producing a delicious grape, from which was at one time made a wine called amber-rosolli... ." (Vol./Bk. 1, Chap. 19, pgs. 117-118.) Yule quotes one theory that amber-rosolli may have derived from ambar-e rasul, meaning prophet's bouquet, but that such a label would be too bold a name even for Persia. Yule believes that Sir H. Rawlinson's suggestion that the name is derived from ambar-e asali, meaning 'honey bouquet' is more plausible.

Yule also quotes a Colonel Pelly as writing, "The district of Minao is still for those regions singularly fertile. Pomegranates, oranges, pistachio nuts, and various other fruits grow in profusion. The source of its fertility is of course the river, and you can walk for miles among lanes and cultivated ground, partially sheltered from the sun."

Add to this description general prosperity brought on by trade, the attendant comfort and luxury, the bustling bazaars and rare spices as well as Hormuz being a place where one could meet people from all over the known world - people with their fascinating tales and exotic wares - and we can very well imagine why Hormuz may have been called God's country. The

paradise-like splendour and high living standards of Hormuz Island's city are universally described by old-time travellers, and we recount their observations at different points in our narrative.

As with our recounting of Zoroastrian heritage elsewhere in the traditional Aryan lands, we are compelled to once again report with sadness, that while Hormozgan still has its own claim to beauty, it can no longer lay claim to these most superlative of descriptions that described it in the past: *God's country, the Paradise of Persia*. We will leave it to the reader to surmise the reasons why.

Hormozgan's Early History :

In present-day Hormozgan, there is a town called Minab located some 80 km east of Bandar Abbas and some 25 km inland. The soil of its environs hold rich history in its womb. The city of Old Hormuz was located close to Minab.

Surveys by Stein* have identified approximately 27 archaeological sites in the area extending from Minab to about 40 km northward and 30 km westward (Prickett** p. 1270) and the area surveyed may be considered as the Hormuz hinterland. The findings at these sites are noted in our next page section on Old Hormuz and Minab.

[M. A. Stein, *Archaeological Reconnaissances in North-Western India and South-Eastern Iran,* London, 1937. **Williamson-Prickett (M. E. Prickett, Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, Cambridge, 1986. As cited by D. T. Potts at Encyclopaedia Iranica.]

Stone Age c 150,000 BCE :

According to a 2006 report at CIAS and elsewhere, Siamak Sarlak, archaeologist and head of an Iranian excavation team in Minab and Roodan stated that "84 historical relics have been unearthed during the excavations in Minab port so far, some of which date back to the ancient Stone Age (some 150,000 years ago)." The article contains no further supporting information.

c 5000 - 4000 BCE :

K-9, the earliest of the 27 Old Hormuz heartland sites noted above has yielded shards comparable to *Lapui-ware* discovered at Tal-e Bakun in Pars Province's Marv Dasht and dated to the early fourth-millennium BCE (Prickett** p. 1270). Most of the Minab prehistoric sites have been dated on the basis of parallels to Tepe Yahya in east-central Kerman province.

c 3000 - 2000 BCE :

Painted black-on-orange wares characteristic of period IVC at Tepe Yahya (c 3100-2900 BCE) was found at one prehistoric site, K 14.

c 1500 - 800 BCE :

Stone tablet with Elamite inscription
found near Bandar Abbas.
Photo credit: various

A number of prehistoric sites such as K 84, 96, 98, 100, 104-6, 109, 110B, 112, 124-26, 130G, and 137, have been yielded artefacts and layers dated to the Iron Age (1300 to 900 BCE) and Parthian-period (see below).

c 1500 BCE Tablet in Elamite Discovered In Hormozgan :

An indication of the wide contact the Hormozgan region had with other regions early in its history is the recent discovery of a 6 x 7 cm black stone tablet with nine lines of Elamite cuneiform inscription in the vicinity of Sarkhoon (Khun Sorkh?) village near Bandar Abbas. The tablet is thought to date back to 1500 BCE. Since the tablet is a small fragment of a larger inscription, we do not know what the tablet states or where it was from (for instance Hormozi traders might have adopted the widely used Elamite language for trade). Elam survives today as the Iranian province of Ilam with its centre well over a thousand kilometers to the northwest of Hormozgan. Its eastern lands (today's Pars province) became part of Persia sometime around the 7th century BCE and its language became one of the official languages of the Persian empire. Elam and its city state of Susa were destinations along the Aryan trade roads that extended from Central Asia to Babylon and Sumer.

700 BCE - 300 CE :

Williamson and Prickett, cited above, have also recorded the presence of red-polished ware thought to originate in the Indian sub-continent in two sites near Minab (Whitehouse and Williamson, Fig. 7). While these artefacts are often said to date from the first three centuries CE, they have in fact been used from 1st century BCE to the 5th century CE (Orton, p. 46). Given that Darius and Alexander both launched naval expeditions from the Indus River towards the Hormuz region in the 6th and 4th centuries BCE, the archaeological evidence corroborates

the evidence in literature of very early trade between the regions. Artefacts at the sites also date to the Parthian-period (250 BCE-230 CE).

For much of this period, the kingdom of Hormuz (Harmozeia) was often a vassal state of Kerman (Carmania) which was in turn a vassal state of Persia. Together, Hormuz and other Aryan kingdoms were part of Greater Iran.

Darius the Great's Maritime Expeditions (6-5th cent. BCE) :

We do not known when Hormozgan region or Hormuz Island first became a maritime trading centre as part of the Aryan trade routes. What we do know from Herodotus (c 485 - 420 BCE) Histories 4.44 is that Achaemenian Persian King Darius the Great (522-486 BCE) sought to establish maritime links with several coastal states across the known world, and to this end, Darius launched a naval expedition under the charge of Scylax, a Greek, who journeyed to Egypt, probably as far as Libya. Herodotus also informs that that Darius' maritime expeditions "made use of the sea in those parts" of the Indus river, and from there all Asia, except East Asia which was "found to be similarly circumstanced with Libya." If Darius "made use of the sea" from India to Libya, trade was probably a significant component of the 'use', thereby extending the potential reach of the Aryan trade routes from the borders of China to Libya. It is also within the realm of possibilities that one branch of the maritime trade routes passed through the straits of Hormuz which would be a natural junction point with the Aryan land trade routes.

Alexander's Maritime Expedition (4th cent. BCE) Recorded by Arrian :

Arrian, or more completely Lucius Flavius Arrianus (c 86 - 160 CE), a Roman of Greek ethnicity, wrote the *Anabasis of Alexander*, an often quoted account of Alexander of Macedonia. As well, Arrian authored *Indica* a description of Nearchus' voyage from India following Alexander's conquest of Persia and Central Asia up to the Indus river - the traditional boundary of the Persian empire. Alexander appointed Nearchus (c 325-326 BCE), an Admiral of a fleet charged with conducting a reconnaissance mission to the mouth of the Indus river and from there to the mouth of river Euphrates at the head of the Persian Gulf. Nearchus recorded his voyage in detail and his account (the original is lost) was used by Arrian in writing *Indica*. Nearchus had a fleet of thirty-three galleys, some with two decks, additional transport ships, and about 2000 men. Nearchus and his fleet sailed down the Indus in about four months, escorted on either bank of the river by Alexander's armies, and after spending seven months in exploring the Delta, he set sail for the Persian Gulf. It is in *Indica* that we find the first Western mention of Hormuz called Harmozeia by Arrian. Arrian's account of Nearchus's voyage to Hormuz is as follows:

Pasni on the Baluchistan coast
Image credit: Sikander Hayat

Wildlife on the Baluchistan coast near Pasni
Image credit: Sikander Hayat

After a harrowing voyage along the coast of Baluchistan (Gedrosia), often reaching points of near starvation despite plundering towns along the way, Nearchus landed at the mouth of the river Anamis (Minab) on the shores of Hormozgan (Harmozeia), which was then a sub-region, likely a vassal kingdom, of Kerman (Carmania). Arrian states in Indica (33; JRGS V. 274) that Nearchus found the country of Harmozeia '*a kindly one, and very fruitful in every way*' except

that there were no olives. The weary mariners landed and enjoyed this pleasant rest from their toils. Nearchus then marched inland for five days to meet up with Alexander after the latter's land crossing of the Baluchistan (Gedrosian) desert. Nearchus returned to Hormuz and continued his mission, sailing as far as the river Euphrates which empties into the upper reaches of the Persian Gulf. From there he went overland to rejoin Alexander who had by this time (early 324 BCE) arrived overland at Susa, the legendary winter capital of Darius the Great.

Alexander's conquests were for the main part the lands that had been part of the Persian empire under Darius the Great. Alexander would have had access to the various accounts about Darius, the extent of Darius' empire as well as Darius' many endeavours some 150 years earlier. Alexander's maritime expedition commanded by Nearchus which started from the upper reaches of the Indus, emulates Darius' maritime expedition that he placed under the Greek Scylax. That Nearchus headed towards Hormuz as an interim destination to link up with Alexander via land gives us added reason to believe that Hormuz was already a known and established junction point of land and sea routes (making Hormuz admirably suited as a trading centre). We may further surmize that for Hormuz to have been functioning as a port during Nearchus' visit, it must have existed at least during the latter Achaemenian period (550-320 BCE) if not earlier.

Post Arab Invasion Historical Milestones :

Hormuz Resistance to the Arabs :

We find Old Hormoz mentioned in connection with resistance to the Arab invasion in an Arabic book *Futuh-ul-Buldan* by Ahmad Ibn Yahya Ibn Jabir Al Biladuri, a ninth century CE writer who died c 892.

Al Biladuri states, "He (Mujasa bin Masood) conquered Jeraft (Jiroft, Kerman) and having proceeded to Kerman (city), subjugated the city and made for Kafs (Hormozgan) where a number of Persians, who had emigrated, opposed him by at Hormuz (the port of Kerman). So he fought with and gained victory over them and many people of Kerman fled away by sea. Some of them joined the Persians at Makran and some went to Sagistan (Sistan)." (cf. Translation from the Arabic by Rustam Mehrdaban Aga as quoted in an article *The Kissah-e-Sanjan by Dr. Jivanji Modi* in the *Journal of the Iranian Association* Vol VII, No. 3. June 1918.)

Mongol-Turkic (Tartar) Chagatai Khanate Raids :

While the Mongols never occupied Hormoz, Marco Polo starts his section on Persia (Yule, Chapter 13) by noting, "Persia is a great country, which was in old times very illustrious and powerful; but now the Tartars (Mongols and their Turkic allies) have wasted and destroyed it."

In the mid 1200s the Mongol armies of Genghis Khan (c 1162-1227) aided by his Turkic allies (not to be confused with Ottoman Turks) had overrun most of Central Asia and North-Eastern Iran. Neighbouring territories they did not subsequently rule were plundered and often destroyed indiscriminately as a way of instilling fear in others. Hormozgan, or Mughistan as it was then known, was one of those regions that the Tartars frequently raided. Before his death Ghengis Khan, divided his empire between his four sons Ogedei, Chagatai, Tolui, and Jochi.

Central Asia and northern Iran was given to Chagatai Khan (c 1185-1241), Genghis Khan's second son. While the Chagatai Khanate existed from up to 1687, not long after after Chagatai's death in 1242, namely by 1270, his khanate became one of the weakest of the Mongol states, and its rulers were mere figureheads for more ambitious rulers, such as Timur / Tamerlane, Kaidu (Qaidu), and Kaidu's son Chapar. Kaidu was a great-grandson of Genghis Khan. Kublai Khan was his uncle.

If the Tartar raids in the first half 1300s were for booty, according to Ali of Yazd, the Tartar Timur Leng (or Tamerlane 1336 - 1405 CE) of Samarkand ordered an expedition against the coastal towns of near Old Hormoz (latter half of 1300s?). Seven castles in its neighbourhood were all taken and burnt: Kalah Mina - the Castle of the Creek at Old Hormoz, Tang Zandan, Kushkak, Hisar-Shamil, Kalah Manujan, Tarzak and Taziyan.

Migration from Old Hormuz to New Ormaz / Hormoz City & Island :

Peter Rowland in *Essays on Hormoz* (2006) reports that the wealth of the mainland Hormoz city attracted raids so often, that the merchants moved their operations (and presumably especially their warehouses) to the relative safety of Hormuz Island.

In 1296, Mir Bahdin Ayaz Seyfin (Amir Baha-al-Din Ayaz) took over the government of Hormuz after the murder of its previous ruler Nosrat and in doing so became the fifteenth king of Hormuz. According to A. W. Stiffe* (quoting an account written by Turan Shah**, king of the island of Hormuz in 1347-78), Turks (probably Tartars) "broke into the kingdom of Kerman and from there to that of Ormuz. The wealth they found tempted them to come so often that the, no longer able to bear the oppression, left the mainland and went to the island of Broct, by the Portuguese called Quixome (now called Jeziret at Tawilah, or after the town on it, Kesm)."

[Article *The Island of Hormuz (Ormuz)* in Geographical Magazine, London, (Apr. 1874, vol. 1) pp. 12-17]

[The Hormuzian prince Turanshah, a very interesting name of an Old Iranian historical perspective, wrote a Shahnameh, a 'Book of Kings' not to be confused with Ferdowsi's epic of the same name. It was written some time after 1350 and was probably destroyed by the British and the Safavids during the war of 1622. But some parts of this chronicle were translated into Portuguese by Pedro Teixeira and the Portuguese version has become the starting point for many later studies.

Stiffe writes, "After some days Ayaz went about that part of the Gulf seeking some convenient island where he might settle with his people. He came to the then desert island of Gerun (Organa of Nearchus), and resolved to beg this island of the king of Keys (Kais, Qais), to whom it belonged, as did all the others in the gulf of Persia**. The island of Kais, at that time a kingdom, has still the ruins of a considerable city on its north side... . Having obtained of Neyn, king of Keys, the island of Gerun, Ayaz and his people went to live there and in remembrance of their native country, they gave it the name Homruz. Ayaz was the fifteenth king of Old Hormuz and the first king of New Hormuz.

[According to authors Berthold Spuler [in *Die Mongolen in Iran, Leiden* (19850, at pages 118, 122-27], and Arnold Wilson [in *The Persian Gulf* (1959) at pages 102-4], because of continued

Chagatai Khanate incursions against Southeast Persia, Ayaz with help from the rulers of neighbouring Fars, moved the entire population and possessions of Old Hormoz to the small island of Jarun, which he bought from the Fars rulers.]

Henry Yule informs us that Friar Odoric, around the year 1321 found Hormuz "on an island some 5 miles distant from the main." We conclude from this that the migration to New Hormoz had already taken place by 1321.

Portuguese Attack On Hormoz (Island?) :

At the end of September 1501, a Portuguese fleet under Alfonso de Albuquerque (q.v.) attacked Hormuz, defeated the local fleet, and killed many people. He made the town of Jarun a Portuguese tributary and imposed on its people an annual payment of 15,000 ašrafis (q.v.). He also started the building of a fort, but trouble with four captains in his fleet forced him to leave the island in February 1508 before the fort was completed. He returned in March 1515 and established Portuguese rule, which lasted for over a hundred years.

Ruy Freyre, Portuguese Commander 1624 citing the complete destruction of the fortress at Hormoz with not one stone left standing:

"This fortress was built on the summit of a hill out of range of our artillery, and they did not wish to submit since there was a garrison of 400 Persian soldiers within; on the contrary, they fired some volleys of musketry into our Armada which caused us the loss of 8 Portuguese killed, besides many others wounded.

"It seemed to the General that this war was becoming unduly prolonged, so he ordered 300 well-armed Portuguese under their ordinary Captains, together with a force of 400 Lascarians under the command of Manoel Cabaco, to be disembarked in three separate places, with orders to put to the sword all whom they should find within the fortress.

"These men speedily effected their several landings, and stepped ashore amidst a storm of shot that was fired from the fortress with the intention of hindering the disembarkation. Having landed, they climbed up the hillside to the fortress, which they carried by assault in the first rush, cleaving a way with their hand-grenades. They put to the sword all those they found therein, without mercy to age or sex, and then they burnt the City and razed the fortress, not leaving anything with life in that site nor one stone upon another. All this was done with the loss of only 6 Portuguese and 12 Lascarians slain, and a few more wounded.

"After this bellicose fury was finished, the General sailed along the coast, and doubling Cape Mossandam he arrived at Camufa, where he was well received by the inhabitants of the City, since all its townsmen had formerly served as sailors in our Armadas of rowing-vessels at Ormuz, and they were a people who had never been unfaithful to us."

In 1617 de Silva y Figueroa estimated the number of households in Hormoz at between 2,500 and 3,000, and of these, 200 were Portuguese.

Source :

http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/hormozgan/index.htm

37. Atharvan Magi modern priests :

The Role of Early Priests :

The Athravan and Magi :

The page on Places of Worship discusses the development of community fire houses, the atash gah, and the developing role of the fire keepers, the athravan (later atharvan), as respected members of the community. In the west of ancient Iran, the role of the athravan was assumed by the magoi or magi [Avestan maga and moghu. Old Persian Magush. Latin singular magus and plural magi].

Priests from Yazd, Iran. 1800s

Strabo called the magi pyraethi or fire-keepers. He goes on to say "... they make incantations for about an hour, holding before the fire their bundle of rods (baresman) and wearing round their heads high turbans of felt, which reach down their cheeks far enough to cover their lips. "

Herodotus notes that the magi were one of six Median groups - a tribe that specialized in hereditary priestly duties and who assumed the duties of the athravan.

Since households came to the fire-houses or atash-gahs to light their home fires, the athravan or magi must have come to know the community members, as well as their successes and

problems. The role of the athravan and magi developed into that of physicians and problem solvers.

Zarathushtra is sometimes referred to as an athravan in Zoroastrian religious texts. In any event, Zarathushtra used fire as the central symbol of his teachings, and the athravan and magi became Zoroastrian priests. In doing so they became bearers and keepers of the Zoroastrian spiritual flame as well. They immersed themselves in the quest for wisdom grounded in goodness.

Indeed, the magi were renowned for their wisdom beyond the borders of Iran. They were unsurpassed in their knowledge of philosophy, history, geography, plants, medicine and the heavens. The efficacy of their beliefs and faith was demonstrated in their actions. Their high moral standing, their wisdom, their ability to heal the sick and their years of learning made them legendary throughout the Middle East.

The fire-houses became places to resolve disputes. The athravan and magi, became keepers of common law, a role that is still reflected in the title of senior most priests today, namely, Dastur, or keeper and giver of the law. While the King and the King's court dispensed royal law, the other forms of law, law that concerned the daily lives of citizens - the common law and common disputes - came under the purview of the Dastur. This was a natural progression for individuals versed in ethical principles of Zoroastrianism, Asha, and the application of the principles in daily life. Some of the atash gah became known as the dadgah, or courts, and their fires were known as Atash Dadgah, the court fires. Today, the Atash Dadgah is a grade of fire described further in the page on Places of Worship.

Dadgah - Courts :

Common Law Conflict Resolution :

The keepers and maintainers of the community fires, the atharvans and magi would have come to know the community and its members very well. As they assumed their roles as priests of the Zoroastrian faith, they would also have been well-versed in the faith's moral and ethical code. The elder, more senior priests, would have gained positions of respect and authority in the community, and their assistance would have been sought in resolving conflict within the community.

Atash Dadgah :

This author therefore proposes that some atash gahs evolved into common law courts (dadgahs in Persian), and that the fires they maintained came to be called the Atash Dadgah or court fire. If the fires these dadgahs maintained were lit only when the court was in session, Atash Dadgah would have come to mean a temporary fire, but a ritual fire that nevertheless continued to maintain symbolic importance as a symbol of Asha, the law of God, honesty, truth, justice, righteousness and wisdom. Today, Atash Dadgah continues to be the name used for temporary ritual fires, though Zoroastrians have lost the significance of the name, and refer to the Atash Dadgah incorrectly as a home fire.

The community level place of worship that uses the Atash Dadgah is today called a Dar-e Mehr or Darbe Mehr. Dar means the door and Mehr (the modern form of Mithra) means kindness, justice and compassion. Mithra is also regarded as the personification of these values and in this context, the guardian angel of the values.

Priest as Judge - Dastur :

Further, the attendant fire keepers became common law community judges, or dasturs. The word dastur is the title given to the head priest of Zoroastrian temples and comes from the Pahlavi word dastabar meaning the upholder and promulgator of the law - the authority who resolved disputes between members of the community based on the moral principles of Asha in which the priests would have been trained.

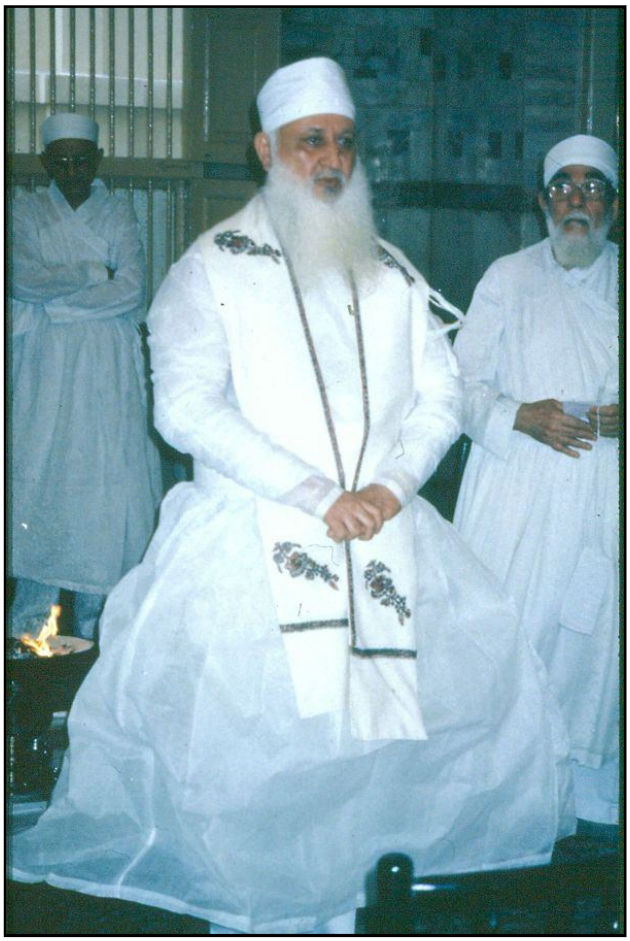
Common Law vs. Royal Law :

The common law administered by the dasturs would have been different from the royal law (promulgated by statute or edit) administered by the royal court and the king's designates (on occasion even the king). These royal courts called the darbar (or durbar), would when in session, also have been courts of appeal or courts of last resort. In Persian, dar means door and bar means admission or audience. Some feel the name of the Persian language in Afghanistan, Dari, comes from darbar, the court language of the Persian Sassanid dynasty (226 - 651 CE).

This author sees the possibility that the name Darbe Mehr may have evolved from Darbar-e Mehr, the Court of Mehr / Mithra or the Court of Justice, home to the Atash Dadgah, the Court Fire, and where a resident or visiting dastur would have resolved common law disputes based on the moral code derived from the principles and values of Asha and Mithra. In such an event, the Darbe Mehr would have served the dual function of a place of justice and worship.

Modern Priests :

There are three principle levels of Zoroastrian priests, Ervad (in India) or Herbad (in Iran), Mobed and Dastur.



Dastur Dr. Firoze Kotwal

Ervad or Herbad :

Ervad (in India) or Herbad (in Iran) is the title given to those priests who have completed the first level of training as a Navar. Ervads act as assistants to Mobeds and Dasturs and can perform the ceremonies of the outer circle - the Dron, Afringan (part of the jashan / jashne ceremony), navjote, wedding and other outer ceremonies performed outside the sanctum of the fire temple called the pavi.

Mobed :

Mobed is the title given to a priest who has completed training as a Martab. Mobeds are called the upholders of religion and are trained to perform liturgies of the inner circle - the Yasna, Visperad, and Vendidad ceremonies that are only preformed within the pavi areas (the inner sanctums) of a temple. Both, Navars and Mobeds are subordinate to Dasturs.

Dastur :

Dastur (from the Pahlavi Dastabar) as a title means the upholder and promulgator of the law - the authority (see Priest as Judge - Dastur above). Dasturs are high priests and in addition to being learned in the entire Avesta and proficient in conducting all the ceremonies, Dasturs are leaders, administrators, spiritual guides and teachers.

There is no initiation ceremony to become a Dastur as there is with the Navar and Martab - only a public jashan / jashne ceremony.

Source :

https://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/priests/index.htm

38. Early Chahar-Taqi (four directions) fire Temples :

Era of No Temples :

In our page on Zoroastrian Worship and the section on Early Zoroastrian Worship, we note that from the accounts of Herodotus (c. 430 BCE), and from the earliest archaeological sites discovered so far, that up to the 5th century BCE, Zoroastrians "had no temples nor altars, and consider(ed) the use of them a sign of folly."

Further, Zoroastrian scriptures do not prescribe worshipping in a temple and make no mention of Zoroastrian places of worship. Traditionally, Zoroastrians worship individually at home, or in the open, facing a source of light. When they wished to worship as a community, they did so in open air gathering areas around a podium where a fire was lit. The gathering areas were on hillsides and hilltops.

Advent of Fire Houses and Temples :

About 400 to 500 years after Herodotus' observations, by the turn of the millennium, Strabo in the first century CE, noted that the magi of Cappadocia (now in Turkey), "have Pyraetheia (fire-houses), noteworthy enclosures; and in the midst of these there is an 'altar' on which there is a large quantity of ashes where the magi keep the fire ever burning." The altar that Strabo refers to is not an altar in the usual sense. He describes it as a fire holder.

While the magi during Strabo's time (around the start of the first millennium) had started to use the fire-houses for their worship rituals, there is no indication that the community at that time time joined the Magi in rituals at the fire-houses (atash-gah). The community continued to conduct their worship events in the open. Nevertheless, the fire-houses did eventually become fire temples used by the community. In subsequent years, enclosed fire temples became standard. Today, there are no designated or formal open places of worship.

Development of the Fire House Concept :

In ancient times, frequently lighting a new fire would have been difficult. In addition, maintaining a continuous fire in homes would have denuded a fragile environment of trees. Zoroastrian communities therefore developed community fire houses that housed an ever burning flame tended at all hours by fire keepers. Every evening, the fire keeper would carefully cover the fire with its ashes so that it would continue smouldering throughout the night while saving fuel, ready to resume when the ashes were removed in the morning. When needed, householders would come and light their house fires from the central community fire.

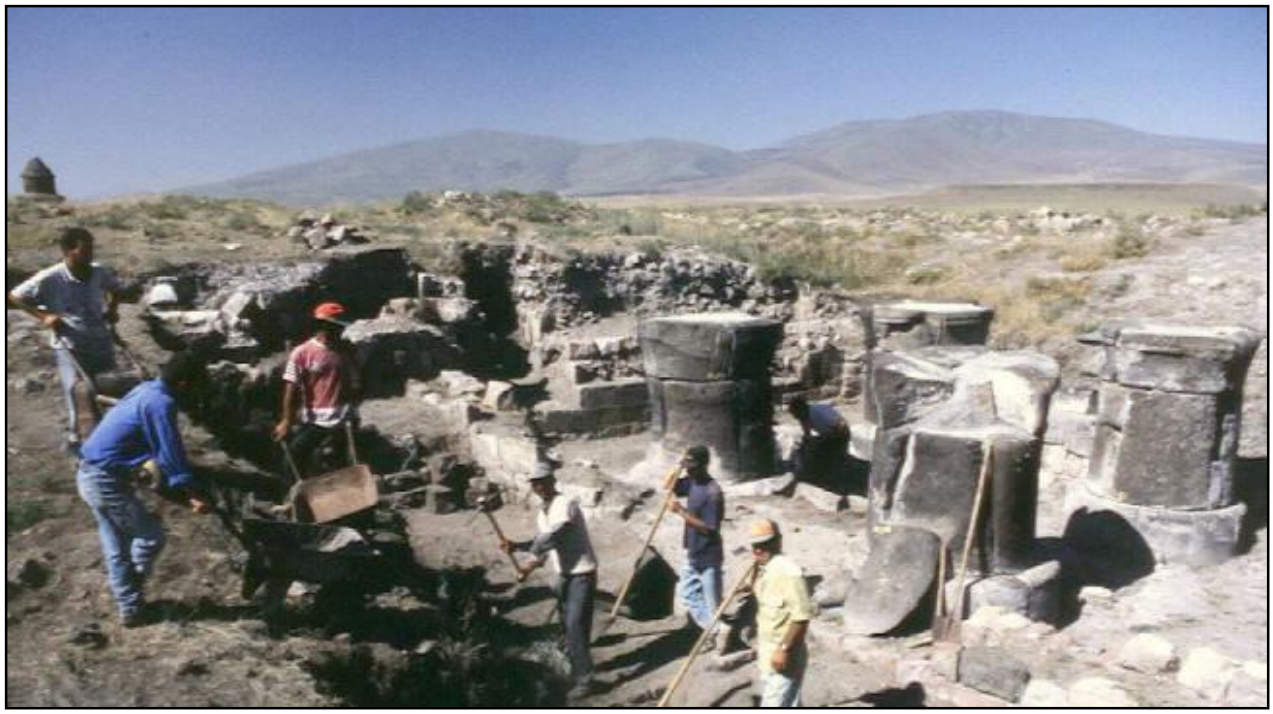
The fire-houses were central to, and a vital part of each community. Fire-keeping was a profession supported by the community.

The fire houses later came to be known in Persian as atash gahs and the fire keepers were called atharvans, a task that became part of the magi's profession.

Chahar-Taqi Fire Temple Design :

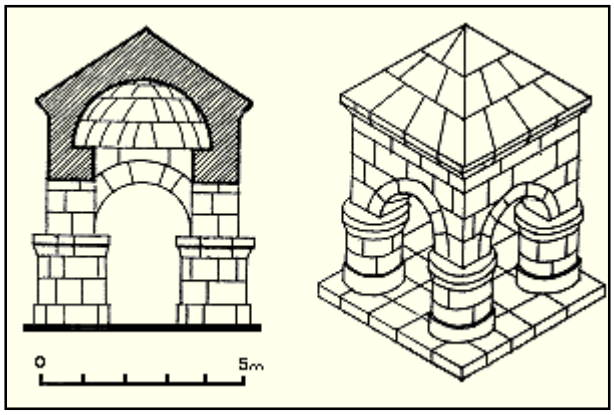
Together with the Parthian era fire-temple / fire-house (atash-gah) shown below, the Ani fire-house is an early example of the fire temple design that came to be known in Iran as chahar-taqi meaning four directions. The walls and openings faced the four cardinal directions. The alignment of the walls or pillars of the fire-houses with the solar-based cardinal points has led some to believe that the fore-houses/temples served an additional function - that of using the position of the sun at sunrise, noon-meridian and sunset to determine seasons and significant days of the year. Zoroastrians mark these days with festivals, jashnes or jashans, and they were particular important for farmers in determining sowing times and for live-stock owners as well. The chahar-taqi design continued to be used for fire temples during the Sassanian era, that is up to 650 CE.

Ani, Armenia, Turkey :



Fire House, Ani, Turkish Armenia, 1st - 4th century CE. Image Credit: Virtual Ani

Map of Turkey showing the location of Ani



Reconstruction image of the Ani Fire House
Image Credit: Virtual Ani

Ruins of a fire house (atash-gah) or fire temple (above and right) have been discovered in Ani, Turkish Armenia, the area referred to by Strabo, and dating to the era in which he lived. The region of which Ani is in close proximity to the environs around Lake Urmia and Lake Van in an area that would have been part of the northern reaches of the Media.

The structure has massive pillars and no walls. At a later period the structure was converted into a Christian chapel by the insertion of curved walls between its four columns.

The structure which is the oldest building in the Ani site, fits Strabo's description of a Pyraetheia, a fire-house.

The shape of the roof in the reconstruction image of the Ani fire house above is speculative since among the ruins, there is no evidence of the roof. It could even have been a dome (see standing chahar-taqi designs from the same era below). The massiveness of the columns

suggests a stone roof, and stones similar to the rest of the structure (not not used elsewhere in Ani) have been found in part of the citadel wall built during the seventh century CE. Archaeologists surmise that the citadel stones were taken from the fire house.

Chahar-Taqi Fire Temples in Iran :

The chahar-taqi plan of the Ani fire house is similar to other early Parthian (247 BCE-224 CE) Sassanian (226-651 CE) fire temples found in Iranian. These structures are simple, open, yet substantial (noteworthy in Strabo's words). They are usually situated within a walled area.

The earliest example of a chahar-taqi temple in present-day Iran that we have been able to locate is a photograph taken by Ali Majdar at Flickr. Ali Majdar states that the temple dates to the Parthian era 247 BCE-224 CE, and further that its name, Bazeh Khur indicates that the temple also served as a solar observatory in order to fix dates. Bazeh means mountain edge and Khur means Sun. This temple is in reasonable condition and is located in the eastern province of Khorasan while many of the other examples we have found are in western Iran.

Note the use of domes. While some may think that the use of domes is an Arab-Islamic design, the use of domes in Iranian-Zoroastrian structures predates the former.

Bazeh Khur Fire Temple, Khorasan
One of the oldest Chahar-Taqi temples dating to the Parthian era 247 BCE-224 CE.

80 km s of Mashhad & at Robat Sefid Village's edge. Image credit: Ali Majdar at Flickr

Another image of the Bazeh Khur fire temple. Image credit: www.itto.org

Drawing of Rokn Abad
Sassanian temple
before its destruction

Rokn Abad Fire Temple ruins near Bido stream at Akbar-Abad 10 km near Shiraz. Islamic Govt. of Iran's Ministry of Highways ordered it destroyed even though it was 30m away from the highway

Sassanian Chahar-Taqi at Niasar
near Kashan, Esfahan (Isfahan)
Image Credit: Photographer unknown

Sassanian Chahar-Taqi at Niasar
near Kashan, Esfahan (Isfahan)
Image Credit: World Housing Encyclopedia

Sassanian era Fire Temple Ruins, Esfahan (Isfahan)
Image Credit: Abbas Soltani at Iranian Archives

Sassanian era Fire Temple Darrehshahr, Ilam
Image Credit: Fouman, Iranian Historical Gallery

The ruins of a Chahar-Taqi temple in Iran's Ilam Province at Siah-Kal near Zarneh
Image credit: Siah-Kal: A Newly Discovered Chahar Taq in Zarneh of the Ilam Province by Mehrnoush Soroush

Surakhani, Azerbaijan Chahar Taqi Temple :

About 550 km (330 miles) directly west of Ani, on the coast of the Caspian Sea in Azerbaijan's Abseron peninsula, there is an enigmatic seventeenth century CE atash-gah, in the village of Surakhani located fifteen km. west of the capital Baku. UNESCO has designated the complex as a world heritage site. The temple ceased to be used in 1883 CE.

This atash-gah follows the chahar-taqi plan.

There are reports of ruins of a 9th century CE fire temple in the Caucasus mountains at Khynalyg (also spelt Khinalyg, Khinalugh, Xinaliq) village near Quba (Guba, Kuba), some 165 km northwest of Baku, as well as one in the neighbouring country of Georgia's capital, Tblisi.

[Surakhani is also spelt Surakhany or Suraxani]

Map of Caucasus region (Azerbaijan, Armenia and E. Turkey) showing the location of Ani, Quba and Surakhani

Atash-gah in Surakhani, Baku, Azerbaijan
The surrounding walls form a pentagon.

Atash-gah in Surakhani, Baku, Azerbaijan
Natural gas fires can be seen burning in the top corners.
The gas rises through ducts constructed in the four corners of the structure.
Image Credit: Various. Advantour & Ecotourism

The name Azerbaijan derives from the Middle and Old Persian Adar-badhagan and Atur-patakan, meaning protected by fire. Surakhani derives from the Persian words Surakh meaning hole or Surkh / Sorkh meaning red, and khani meaning room, source or fountain. The region is known for its continuously burning natural gas fires which to the ancients must have seemed like the miraculous phenomenon of an ever-burning fire - a symbol of special importance in Zoroastrianism. In ancient texts, Azerbaijan was known as the land of fire and burning hillsides.

Reference to "the eternal fires of Baku" appears in 5 CE in a volume entitled Stories by the Byzantine author Prisk of Pania. He quotes Romul, the Ambassador to Rome, who mentioned that when the Hun leaders came to Rome to sign a peace treaty, they had traveled via the Caucasus along the Caspian Sea where they had seen "a flame that appears from a rock underwater".

Inscriptions :

Atash-gah Surakhani, Baku, Azerbaijan
plaque in Devnagri script
Image Credit: Rita Willaert at Flickr

Bilingual inscription in Devnagri and Farsi scripts
Image Credit: Wikipedia. From A. V. Williams Jackson's
From Constantinople to the Home of Omar Khayyam

There are twenty inscriptions embedded in the the stone walls of the complex. Eighteen are in the Nagari Devnagri script, one is in Punjabi using the Gurumukhi script and one is a bilingual inscription in Sanskrit and Persian. The Devnagri portion of the bilingual inscription is dedicated to Lord Ganesh and Jvala-ji. It is dated Samvat 1802 (1745-46 CE). In Sanskrit, ज्वलति (ज्वल्) / valati (jval) is one of the many words meaning 'burn' or 'burning' even 'light' ['fire' is 'अग्नि' / 'agni'].

The transliteration of Persian/Farsi inscription - a four-line (quatrain) verse is :

Atashi saf kesheedhe hamchun dak

Jeeye bovani reside ta baudak

Sal-e no nozl mobarak baad goft

Khaneh shod ru sombole sane-ye 1158

The translation is :

The blaze (of fire) has drawn (came directly) like a dak(?)

From Bovani* until it reached Baudak (Baku?)

Blessings, he said, on the New Year

It was housed on Sanomad (in the) year 1158 (1745 CE).

There are several places/towns named Bovan in Iran - in the provinces of Azarbaijan, Kermanshah, Isfahan and Pars. The line in the inscriptions appears to state that a fire was brought directly from Bovan to Baudak.

Baku is said to be a shortened form of the older name Baudak. Baudak is in turn a shortened form of Bad-Kubeh meaning 'wind-pounded' otherwise 'windy city'.

Sanomad may be a corruption of Sombole, the month when the Sun is in the house of Virgo, the sixth month (August-September), in which month Nowruz - New Year' day - fell according to Zoroastrian Kadmi (Qadimi) calendar.

This verse seems to indicate that a fire from Bovan was brought to the Surakhani temple and housed there, perhaps in the alcove above which the inscription is found. It is quite possible that if the natural gas fire at Surakhani could not be consecrated in its making according to orthodox practice, another duly consecrated fire brought from Bovani, could have served that purpose.

The Punjabi language inscription is a quotation from the Adi Granth.

The other inscriptions include an invocation to Lord Shiv. Taken as a set, the dates on the inscriptions range from Samvat 1725 to Samvat 1873, corresponding to the period from 1668 CE to 1816 CE. The present structure is relatively modern and the 17th century is a possible date for its construction. One report states that local records exist that the structure was built by the Baku Hindu trading community around the time of the annexation of Baku by the Russian Empire following the Russo-Persian War (1722-1723 CE).

Surakhani - Hindu or Zoroastrian Temple? :

Jonas Hanway commenting in his, *An Historical Account of the British Trade Over the Caspian Sea*, 1753 CE states "The Persians have very little maritime strength... their ship carpenters on the Caspian were mostly Indians... there is a little temple, in which the Indians now worship: near the altar about 3 feet high is a large hollow cane, from the end of which iffues a blue flame... . These Indians affirm, that this flame has continued ever since the flood, and they believe it will last to the end of the world. ...Here are generally forty or fifty of these poor devotees, who come on a pilgrimage from their own country."

The Baku Hindu trading community is thought to have originated primarily from Multan located in the Punjab region of the Indus valley (in today's Pakistan) and who plied their trade along the Grand Trunk Road, part of the old Aryan trade roads.

The single inscription mentioning Jvalaji/Jwalaji may refer to the equally rare uses of the term in Indian places of worship. In the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, there is a Jvalaji/Jwalaji temple constructed over a natural gas fire as is the Surakhani temple. The place is called Jalamukhi/Jwalamukhi. 'Jwala' means 'burning' or 'blaze of fire' and 'Mukhi' means 'mouth'. There the fire is considered an incarnation of the goddess Durga.

The Surakhani complex as it stands was clearly used as a Hindu temple. However, The complex is quite unlike other Hindu temples. Instead, the pentagonal perimeter structure consists of cubicles much like a caravan-serai and in the centre of the enclosed courtyard is a chahar-taqi building whose design is entirely consistent with the chahar-taqi Zoroastrian atash-gahs of Ani as well as those of ancient and medieval Persia. There is a strong possibility that prior to its use as a Hindu temple, a predecessor structure existed that was a Zoroastrian fire temple. With the decline of the Zoroastrian community and an abandoned structure would have been a candidate for occupation and use by the growing Hindu trading community. The present structure could have been modelled on a previous Zoroastrian structure. Alternatively, the present structure could have been built over the ruins of a Zoroastrian atash-gah or it could be a renovation of a previous Zoroastrian atash-gah. Even today, local tradition holds that the structure was a Zoroastrian atash-gah.

Professor A. V. Williams Jackson (1911 CE) while commenting on the observations of Jonas Hanway (1753 CE), left open the possibility that Zoroastrians may have worshipped alongside the larger Hindu community at the shrine. The Sikh community must also have worshipped alongside the Hindu community.

In the 1800s, the population of Hindus and Sikhs in Azerbaijan declined. Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi (1854-1933) in his book *My Travels Outside Bombay Iran, Azerbaijan, Baku* (1926) (translated from Guajarati by Soli Dastur) notes: "the original trade routes and customs changed and the visits of the Hindu traders diminished. And from the original group of the Brahmins, some passed away and a few that were left went back to their original home land." By the time of Modi's visit in 1925, the Surakhani atash gah had been abandoned.

According to authors from the 1800s, between the time when the atash gah was abandoned by the Hindus in the and Modi's visit in 1925, that is, in the 1800s, the Surakhani atash gah was briefly under the care of Zoroastrians.

James Bryce, in *Transcaucasia and Ararat: Being Notes of a Vacation Tour in the Autumn Of 1876*, noted, "...after they (the Zoroastrians) were extirpated from Persia by the Mohammedans, who hate them bitterly, some few occasionally slunk here (Azerbaijan) on pilgrimage" and that "under the more tolerant sway of the Czar (Azerbaijan was then part of the Russian empire), a solitary priest of fire is maintained by the Parsee community of Bombay, who inhabits a small temple built over one of the springs." (We do know that in the 1800s, the Parsees of Bombay lent their assistance to the Zoroastrians of Iran and sought to ameliorate the suffering of their co-religionists in their ancestral lands.)

A few years earlier, in 1858, French novelist Alexander Dumas (1802 - 1870 CE) had visited the atash gah and noted: "...the whole world is aware of the Atash gah in Baku. My compatriots who want to see the fire-worshippers must be quick because already there are so few left in the temple, just one old man and two younger ones about 30-35 years old."

In 1905, J. Henry in his book, *Baku* , states: "When 25 years ago (1880), the priestly attendant - a Parsee from India and the last of the long list of Fire-worshippers reaching 2500 years died at Surakhani."

From these accounts, we gather that the Surakhani atash gah was indeed a Zoroastrian place of worship, and that for a hundred and seventy years - from approximately 1660 CE to 1830 CE - it served as a Hindu temple as well.

Seven Fires :

Central fire at the atash-gah in Surakhani, Baku, Azerbaijan

For a Zoroastrian, the presence of seven fires is auspicious and the presence of seven natural ever-burning fires would have been particularly auspicious. In the past, seven natural fires burned near the present temple site. The original presence of seven fires at the Surakhani atash-gah / fire temple site adds to the likelihood of there having been a Zoroastrian worship site or fire temple (in the environs) used by the local population prior to the use of the present structure by Indian traders.

According to historical sources quoted by Alakbarov, Farid (2003), before the construction of the Indian Temple in Surakhani at the end of the 17th century CE, the local people also worshipped at this site because of the "seven holes with burning flame".

Engelbert Kaempher, a British traveler, who visited the Surakhani atash-gah in 1683 writes: "Previously, at about 500 paces distance from the temple, there could be seen seven holes situated in a single line. In early times, flames used to erupt from these holes. Then, the fire disappeared and burst forth at another locale where later the Atash-gah was built".

From these accounts, it appears that an original worship site where "local people worshipped" (and not Hindu traders) existed some 500 paces (say 400 metres) from the present site and that the fires disappeared causing that site to be abandoned. A fire then appeared at the present site where an atash gah was built. If the practice of Zoroastrianism in the region declined after the Arab invasion, the original site as a Zoroastrian place of worship would have ceased. Then in the 17th century CE traders from India adapted or constructed the present structure.

Source :

https://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/temples/index.htm

39. Parsis - the Zoroastrians of India :

Parsis - The Zoroastrians of India

by

Sooni Taraporevala

The following text is an extract from the book

'Zoroastrians of India: Parsis: A Photographic Journey'

by Sooni Taraporevala.

c 2000 Sooni Taraporevala.

Reproduced with permission of Good Books, Mumbai, India.

By the year 2020, India will have achieved the dubious distinction of being the most populated country on earth with 1200 million people. At that point, Parsis who will number 23,000 or 0.0002 per cent of the population, will cease to be termed a community and will be labelled a 'tribe', as is any ethnic group below the 30,000 count. Demographically, we are a dying community - our deaths outweigh our births.

Parsis are a people who uprooted themselves and moved to a different world to save their religion. We migrated to India one thousand years ago. The Parsi experience is about dilemmas that most minority communities face; questions about religion and race, survival and extinction, assimilation and identity, tradition and the modern world. There are only 100,000 Parsis in the world today, mostly in India, particularly in Bombay. Demographically, we are a dying community-our deaths outweigh our births. Parsis like to quote a remark that Mahatma Gandhi once reportedly made, "In numbers Parsis are beneath contempt, but in contribution, beyond compare." Out of an Indian population of more than one billion, Parsis number a mere 76,000.

Demographic trends project that by the year 2020, India will have achieved the dubious distinction of being the most populated country on earth with 1200 million people. At that point, Parsis who will number 23,000 or 0.0002 per cent of the population, will cease to be termed a community and will be labelled a 'tribe', as is any ethnic group below the 30,000 count.

Source :

http://www.the-south-asian.com/April2001/Parsis-the%20Zoroastrians%20of%20India.htm

The story of the Ancestors :

"When Cyrus conquered Babylon he issued a decree outlining his aims and policies, later hailed as the first Charter of Human Rights. Unlike other conquerors who forced the vanquished to

adapt to a common culture, Cyrus and Darius were liberal and tolerant rulers. Their subjects were granted autonomy to worship their own Gods, speak their own language and retain their own culture."

Our ancestors founded the mighty Persian Empire centuries before the Christian era. Cyrus the Great ruled over an Empire so vast it touched the waters of the Mediterranean, the Aegean, the Black, the Caspian, the Indian, the Persian and the Red Seas; had six of the grandest rivers in the world flowing through it - the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Indus, the Jaxartes, the Oxus and the Nile.

Cyrus had risen from a minor chieftain to being the founder of such a vast empire, it was here that east and west met for the first time; he compelled Greece to acknowledge his power, conquered the mighty kingdom of Babylon, freed and allowed the Jews to build their temples and establish themselves in Jerusalem. In his book, The Upbringing of Cyrus, the Greek writer Xenophon says about him:

"He ruled over these nations, though they did not speak the same tongue as he, nor one nation the same as another's: yet he was able to stretch the dread of him so far that all feared to withstand him; and he could rouse so eager a wish to please him that they all desired to be governed by his will."

Darius, his successor, set about consolidating and organising what Cyrus had so casually conquered. His empire encompassed Asia Minor, parts of Greece, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, northern Arabia, Mesopotamia, Persia, Afghanistan, Turkestan, Uzbekistan, the Tadzhik and part of the Kirgiz Soviet Republics, western Pakistan, the rich Indus Valley and Thrace. It had the first international bureaucracy, the first international army and there was nothing to beat the pomp, pageantry and wealth of the Persian court.

To maintain contact between the different centres of the Empire, Darius created a network of roads, which survived a long time after the Empire fell. It is still possible to trace the Royal Road, 1677 miles long, divided into more than one hundred post-stations. An efficient courier service and chains of fire signals kept the court in touch with every corner of the empire and foreshadowed by thousands of years, DHL and FedEx.

As Empires go, the Achaemenian Empire (559 BC - 330 BC) originally a small highland tribal kingdom obscurely situated in the foot-hills of south-west Iran, was unique on two counts. The Achaemenians carved out a colossal empire in the space of one generation. Unlike other conquerors who forced the vanquished to adapt to a common culture, Cyrus and Darius were liberal and tolerant rulers. Their subjects were granted autonomy to worship their own Gods, speak their own language and retain their own culture. When Cyrus conquered Babylon he issued a decree outlining his aims and policies, later hailed as the first Charter of Human Rights. The original cylinder in cuneiform script is housed in the British Museum. A copy can also be seen at the United Nations building in New York.

Though the Achaemenians patronised the temples of their subjects as a mark of respect and diplomacy, their religion was different from the fertility cults that existed in those days. They were believers in the Good Religion as taught by the prophet Zarathustra.
Extracted from the book.

Source :

http://www.the-south-asian.com/April2001/Parsis%20-%20story%20of%20ancestors.htm

Arrival in India and the beginnings of a new life :

According to Parsi lore they spent nineteen years on the island of Diu, after which they set sail again and landed in Sanjan also on the west coast of India, either in the year 936 AD or in 716 AD [many an intense battle has been fought amongst Parsis over which date is more accurate.]

Permission to settle was granted by Jadhav Rana, The Hindu ruler. These newly arrived strangers were called Parsis - to denote the region from where they had come - Pars, (Persia), once the birthplace of mighty empires, now the distant dream of a band of refugees.

Hindu India was kind to the refugees from Pars. They suffered no persecution, no fear. They were allowed to prosper and grow. They built the first fire temple in AD 721, installed with due ceremony the holy fire which they called the Iranshah, the King of Iran; lived largely peaceful, obscure existences in various villages and towns of Gujarat as farmers, weavers and carpenters.

For about three hundred years after landing at Sanjan, Parsis are said to have lived in peace and without molestation. By that time their numbers had greatly increased. Many moved from Sanjan to other parts of India with their families: to Cambay, Navsari, Anklesvar, Variav, Vankaner and Surat in the north, and to Thane and Chaul in the south. Pockets of Parsis were also found in Upper India, mentioned by early travellers: in Sind, Dehra-Dun and Punjab.

Whenever they left Sanjan to settle elsewhere, they carried a part of the Iranshah with them- the first fire they had consecrated on Indian soil. But not all climes were as hospitable as Sanjan. In Sind, Ibrahim the Ghaznavid perceived the Parsis as a colony of fire-worshippers and attacked them. In Thana, which was ruled by the Portuguese, they were seen as idolaters and put upon by missionaries to convert to Christianity.

However, Islam did follow them even to India. In 1465 Sanjan was sacked and destroyed by the Muslim Sultanate. Parsis fought valiantly, side by side with their Hindu benefactors. Many lost their lives, but the priests managed to rescue the sacred fire and carried it safely to a cave on a hill, where, protected by jungle and sea, they guarded it for the next twelve years.
Though they didn't completely lose touch with the Persian language, Gujarati (their version of it), started to become their mother tongue. They adopted many Hindu customs. Parsi women dressed like their Indian counterparts. They even wore nose rings.

Many settled down in the port town of Surat, in Gujarat, where in the fifteenth century, Europeans (the Portuguese, the British and the Dutch) had been given permission by the Mughals to establish trading factories. Unhampered by caste prejudices, Surat provided an ideal opportunity for Parsis to engage in occupations that they had never attempted before. Farmers became traders and chief native agents, carpenters became shipbuilders. An adventurous few left Surat and moved south to Bombay, then only a set of islands, in the

wilderness. Here, they acted as brokers between the Indians and the Portuguese. They were in Bombay when it was ceded by Portugal to England in 1665 and three years later when the Crown handed over the island to the East India Company, Parsis were already a presence.

"They are an industrious people," wrote Governor Aungier in a letter to England, "and ingenious in trade, therein they totally employe themselves. There are at present but few of them, but we expect a greater number having gratified them in their desire to build a bureing place for their dead on the Island."

The East India Company had grand plans for Bombay. They had visions of making this settlement a vibrant trading and commercial centre. In order to do so they needed to attract Indian traders, merchants and craftsmen to settle in and develop this frontier land. The terms they offered to native communities were generous and to an immigrant community like the Parsis must have seemed almost heaven-sent. All persons born in Bombay would become natural subjects of England. All communities migrating to Bombay were guaranteed religious freedom and were permitted to build their houses within the fort walls, alongside the British, where they would be protected from any hostile attacks. Though the Parsis were quicker to recognise and seize this unique historical opportunity and came to Bombay earlier than most and in larger numbers, they weren't the only ones. There were Muslim weavers from Ahmedabad, Bohras, Beni-Israeli Jews, Jains, Armenians. And though the residential area was divided into the white and native parts, in the real life of the city, in the counting houses, markets, docks, everybody jostled together in a cooperative venture.

Source :

http://www.the-south-asian.com/April2001/Parsis-Arrival%20in%20India.htm

What is Zoroastrianism? :

Zoroastrianism is a faith – a simple religion – one of the oldest monotheistic world religions - founded on the teachings of the Prophet Zarathustra, who lived sometime between 1700 and 1500 BC in Persia. Zarathustra preached three virtues - Humata, Hukhta, Huvarashta, [Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds] and held Good Deeds the highest in the order.

The sacred text of the Zoroastrians is called the Avesta-E-Zend or Zend-E-Avesta (Avesta in short). It comprises of Gathas, songs or hymns composed by the Prophet Zarathustra.

Zoroastrianism is a non-proselytising religion and has no iconoclastic tradition. Only the symbol of Faravahar, also known as Farohar, signifies the final goal of a true Zarthosti - to live in a manner befitting the progress of the soul towards enlightenment - Ahura Mazda, or the "Wise Lord".

Source :

http://www.the-south-asian.com/April2001/What%20is%20Zoroastrianism.htm

Who was Zarathustra? :

Nearly every Parsi home has an image, always the same one, of gentle Zarathustra with long hair and a flowing beard, as imagined by a 19th century Parsi artist. Zarathustra belongs to such remote antiquity that we don't even know for certain exactly when He was born and where, much less what he looked like. But what has miraculously survived is the religion that he was inspired to reveal.

His date of birth is said to have been between 1700 and 1500 BC and it is generally believed that he was born in Eastern Iran, in what is now the Russian Steppes. Like Buddha after him, Zarathustra wanted to know the mystery of life. Why was there death and suffering in the world? What was the origin of evil? He became filled with a deep longing for justice, for a moral law that would allow mankind to lead a good life in peace. Tradition didn't provide any answers. Tradition demands its instructions to be taken on trust. He turned his back on the world and retreated to a cave on a mountain, where he meditated for ten years. Communing with nature and his inner self he finally received enlightenment from Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord. He left his life of seclusion and descended from the mountain. He was thirty years old and brought with him a new hope, a new way of life, which still has relevance to us four thousand years later.

A life of active good towards others; people, animals, nature, is at the heart of what He taught; giving us a simple creed to follow -Humata, Hukhta, Huvarashta, Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds. "Happiness unto him who gives happiness unto others," said Zarathustra at the grey dawn of history.

The religion he revealed was based on the moral choices humans make here on earth. Every individual has the twin spirits of good and evil in their minds, that form their dual nature. When we exercise our Better Mind, we create life and draw Ahura Mazda and His Divine Powers towards ourselves. When we choose to use our Evil Mind, we enter a state of spiritual death. Confusion descends upon us and we rush towards wrath and bloodlust, by whose actions human existence is poisoned. Our duty in life is to play our part in this great cosmic battle between Good and Evil. Our individual lives are the battlefield. Every decision we make, every choice of thought, word and deed, adds up.

It is perhaps difficult to appreciate the originality and courage of Zarathustra's thought today. So many prophets have come after him with similar proclamations. But if we place ourselves into the antiquity in which he lived, Zarathustra's religion was radically different to anything mankind had ever dreamt of thus far. Instead of a religion based on fear, Zarathustra's religion put a free, thinking, rational mind on centrestage. "Zoroastrianism," writes the scholar, R. C. Zaehner, "is the religion of free will par excellence."

According to Zarathustra, salvation for the individual depends on the sum of his/her thoughts, words and deeds and there can be no intervention by any divine being to alter this. No costly material sacrifices or rituals will change the way the individual is judged. Making our own choices, we alone have to bear the responsibility for our own souls.

Later religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, all borrowed freely from His teachings. But while they grew to attract millions of believers, the oldest prophet of them all retreated into

obscurity, remembered only by scholars of religion and we - his followers.It is believed that the years he spent preaching amongst his own people were almost fruitless, bringing him only one convert, his cousin. So he departed and went to another tribe, where being a stranger, he was granted an audience with King Vishtaspa who became an ardent follower. And from there the religion spread.

What we know about Zarathustra comes primarily from the Gathas, seventeen great hymns which he composed. These are not works of instruction, but inspired, passionate, poetic utterances, many of them addressed directly to God in a language that became extinct thousands of years ago.

Tradition credits Zarathustra with having composed profusely. Pliny states that the great philosopher Hermippus, who lived in 3BC had studied 2,000,000 verses composed by Him. Arab historians state that Zoroastrian texts were copied on 12,000 cowhides. Parsi tradition speaks of 21 nasks or volumes containing 345,700 words. Out of this, what has survived is a fraction of what was originally there, a mere 83,000 words.

These 83,000 words make up our prayers, collectively called the Avesta. Though most of us have no idea what we are praying, yet we have prayed these same prayers in an unbroken continuum from 1500BC. Scholars, linguists, priests have translated the Gathas, but the devout have no need for translations; the words of the prayers are like old friends-rhythms that have been there since childhood, intimate companions.

Source :

http://www.the-south-asian.com/April2001/Who%20was%20Zarathustra.htm

Rituals :

The navjote, or initiation into the religion, takes place before puberty between the ages of seven and nine for both boys and girls. It is the first time that the child wears the "armour of the religion": the sudrah (shirt), kusti, which should then be worn every day for the rest of his/her life. Zoroastrianism believes that children cannot tell the difference between right and wrong, and therefore cannot sin. Once children freely choose to be initiated, they become adults responsible for their own thoughts, words, deeds, which will determine the fate of their souls on judgment day.

The sudrah (shirt), to be worn next to the skin, is made of white cotton, usually thin muslin, (white being a symbol of stainlessness and purity) to remind the wearer that his/her deeds must be as pure and spotless as the sacred shirt they are wearing. The sudrah is made up of two pieces of cloth sewn together on the sides; the two parts, the back and the front symbolic of the past and future, both related to each other through the present. In the front, over the chest is a small pocket (girehban). Called the pocket of righteousness, it is the symbolic collection place for the wearer's good words, good thoughts, good deeds.

The kusti, the sacred cord, made of seventy-two threads of lambswool, is entwined thrice around the waist, again symbolically reminding the wearer of the holy triad of good words, thoughts and deeds. The untying and retying of the kusti, accompanied by the kusti prayers, is

always done facing the direction of a source of light: the sun, the moon or a lamp. Along with the sudrah, the kusti is the 'badge' of all believers, male or female, rich or poor, priest or layman.

Customs and manners :

Parsis ritually do not leave the head uncovered and do not smoke. But there are no caste divisions, no religious restrictions about food. Their worship of fire is the highest and purest symbol of the Divinity. The Parsis have remained faithful to their Zoroastrian faith and are proud of their racial purity. Marriage with outsiders is rare.

c 2000 Sooni Taraporevala

The Parsis worship in fire temples. Fire is of very special significance to the Zoroastrians. It gives light, warmth and energy to the other six creations, and so creates life. The Atash Behram or the Holy Fire is the most important and the most sacred fire. The Prophet saw fire to be the physical representation of Asha (Order/Truth/ Righteousness), and as a source of light, warmth and life for his people. All the religious rituals (the performance of which is an important Zoroastrian duty), are solemnized in the presence of fire, the life-energy.

The oldest Atashgah in India at Udwada

There are eight Atash Behrams, or Victorious Fires in India. Four in Mumbai (formerly known as Bombay) in the State of Maharashtra - four in the State of Gujarat, two in Surat, and the remaining in Udwada and Navsari. The Iranshah Atash Behram at Udwada is the oldest [720 AD] – the original fire brought by the fleeing Parsis from Iran and consecrated shortly after their arrival at Sanjan, India. The village of Udwada is hence considered as a centre of pilgrimage by the Parsis and is visited by thousands every year.

They do not cremate or bury the dead and instead leave their dead in Dakhma or the 'Towers of Silence' where they are devoured by vultures. This is done to ensure purity of the elements.

Living a Zoroastrian Life :

Zarathushtra taught that since this world created by Ahura Mazda is essentially good, man should live well and enjoy its bountiful gifts though always in moderation, as the states of excess and deficiency in Zoroastrianism, are deemed to be the workings of the Hostile Spirit. Man, in Zoroastrianism, is encouraged to lead a good and prosperous life and hence monasticism, celibacy, fasting and the mortification of the body are anathema to the faith; such practices are seen to weaken man and thereby lessen his power to fight evil. The prophet saw pessimism and despair as sins, in fact as yielding to evil. In his teachings, man is encouraged to lead an active, industrious, honest and above all, a happy and charitable life.

The After-Life Doctrine :

Upon physical death (which is seen as the temporary triumph of evil), the soul will be judged at the Bridge of the Separator, where the soul, it is believed, will receive its reward or punishment, depending upon the life which it has led in this world, based upon the balance of its thoughts, words and deeds. If found righteous, the soul will ascend to the abode of joy and light, whilst if wicked, it will descend into the depths of darkness and gloom. The latter state, however, is a temporary one, as there is no eternal damnation in Zoroastrianism.

There is a promise, then, of a series of saviours the Saoshyants, who will appear in the world and complete the triumph of good over evil. Evil will be rendered ineffective and Ahura Mazda, the Infinite One, will finally become truly Omnipotent in Endless Light. There will then take place, a general Last Judgement of all the souls awaiting redemption, followed by the Resurrection of the physical body, which will once again meet its spiritual counterpart, the soul. Time, as we know it, will cease to exist and the seven creations of Ahura Mazda will

be gathered together in eternal blessedness in the Kingdom of Mazda, where everything, it is believed, will remain in a perfect state of joy and undyingness.

Source :

http://www.the-south-asian.com/April2001/Parsis-Ritual,Customs%20&%20Manners.htm

40. Pishdadian Dynasty :

Legend of Feridoon :

Start of the Second Epic Cycle :

We concluded our page on Aryan Prehistory with the legend of Jamshid, a legend that marked the end of part I of the Pishdadian dynasty as well as the first epic cycle in Aryan history. That phase of Aryan history came to an end with the overthrow of King Jamshid, or shall we say, the overthrow of line of Jamshidi kings by the evil foreign ruler Zahak (or Zahhak) called Azi Dahaka in the Avesta.

The history of Airyana Vaeja entered a second epic cycle when the Aryans were liberated from foreign rule by Thraetaona (also Thrita elsewhere in the Avesta and Feridoon in modern Persian), a descendant of the House of Jamshid and therefore a Pishdadian.

As with Jamshid, Thraetaona is mentioned in the Atharv Veda where he is called Trita. Elsewhere is he called Taritana. In both the Avestan and Vedic traditions, he is closely associated with healing and haoma.

First Aryan / Airanian Empire During the Reign of Feridoon (Av. Thraetaona / Thrita) :

Airyana Vaeja Becomes Airan :

During the Jamshidi era, Airyana Vaeja had grown considerably in size and included the passes to Hapta Hindu - the area that contained the seven northern Indus tributaries - and perhaps even some of the upper reaches. The expansion could have required a ruling system that included vassal states, making a Jamshidi king, a king of kings. If we are correct in this conclusion, then the Jamshidi governance structure was a forerunner of the first Aryan empire established during King Feridoon's reign - an empire that spread to include kingdoms from present day Turkey in the west to the northern Indus valley in the southeast.

It could be that home country of the foreign ruler Zahak was one of the countries west of Airyana Vaeja, a country that became part of the Aryan empire with Zahak's overthrow along with other states that Zahak had conquered. (There are the ruins of a structure called Zahak Citadel in East Azerbaijan, Iran which is said to have been inhabited from the second millennia BCE. In some literature, Zahak is also associated with Babylon and Assyria) We will call Feridoon's first Aryan empire the empire of Airan. The creation of this empire was also accompanied by a shift of the central Aryan kingdom westward towards Bakhdhi / Balkh.

Internecine Warfare - The Tragic Period :

Feridoon decided to divide his sprawling empire the amongst his three sons. To his eldest son Tur, he gave the eastern lands with its capital in Turan - a nation that got its name from Tur. To his son Iraj, Feridoon gave Airan and Hind (the Indus lands. Previously, King Jamshid had expanded Airyana Vaeja southward into the upper Indus). To his son Salm, Feridoon gave the western kingdoms that stretched from Iran to present-day Eastern Turkey. The extent of the Airan empire during the Feridoon era was consistent with the Vendidad's list of sixteen nations.

Since the lands of Airan and Hind were the gems of the empire and the seat of its power, Tur felt that as the eldest son he had been slighted. No sooner had Feridoon divided his kingdom, that the jealous and ambitious Tur persuaded Salm to join him in a plot to murder Iraj. Iraj was killed but not before his wife was pregnant with their son Manuchehr who would later avenge the murder of his father.

This tragic period of Feridoon's rule would end with the rise of Manuchehr who would kill the murderous brothers Salm and Tur and sever their heads to be laid beside that of their brother Iraj.

The last of the Pishdadian kings was Garshasp who ruled for nine years and died just before an impending invasion of Airan by the Turanian Afrasiab.

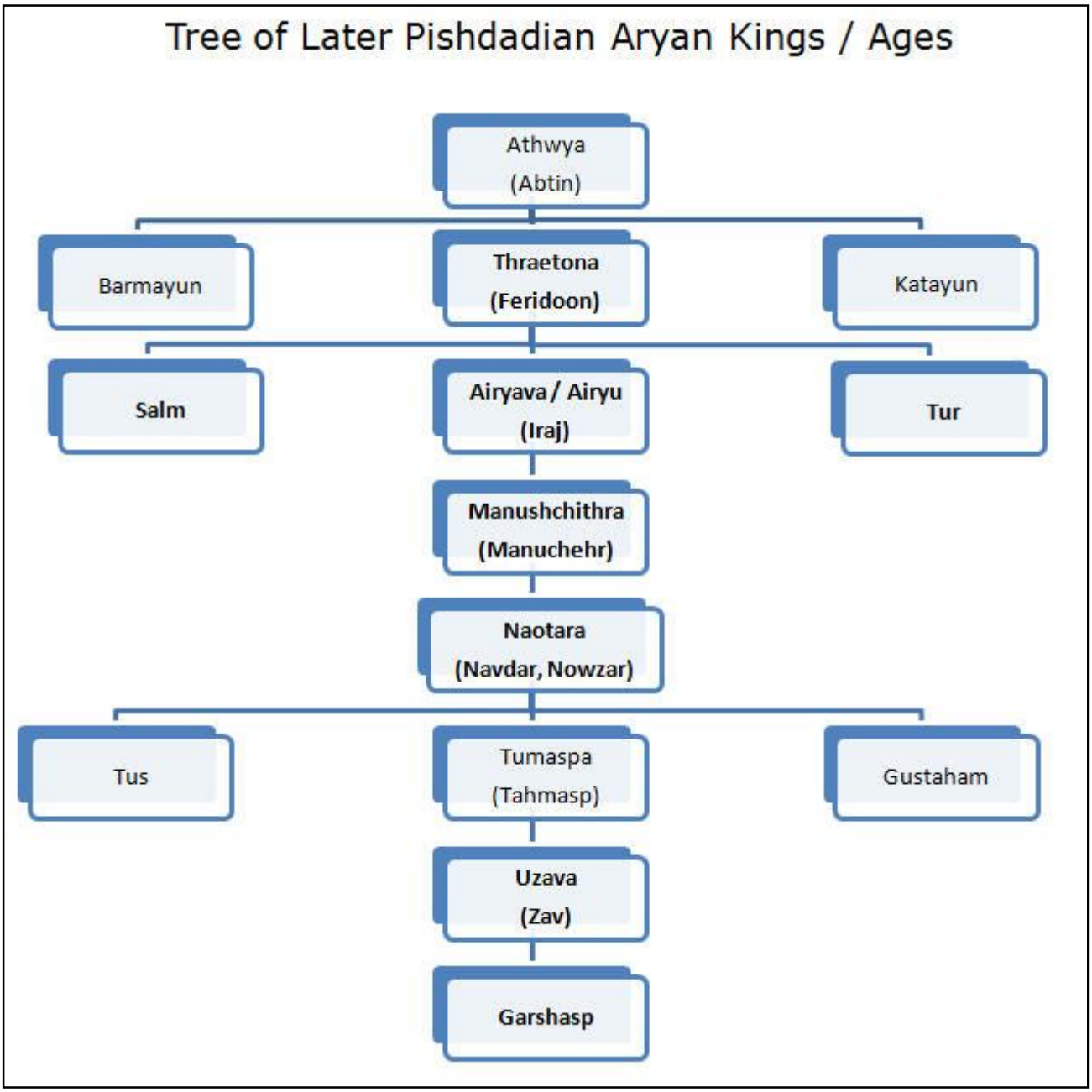
Feridoon - First Healer /Physician :

According to the book of Vendidad (20.2) in the Zoroastrian scriptures, the Avesta, King Feridoon (Av. Thraetaona / Thrita) was the first holistic physician. Or perhaps, it was under his reign that holistic healing was established.

The Vendidad (7.44) and the book of the Ardibehest Yasht (3.6) tell us that holistic healing came under the broader banner of restorative healing. Restorative healing consisted of healing with goodness and care, justice, surgery, herbs and the manthra. Holistic healing consisted of the last three: surgery, herbs and the manthra. Surgery and herbal cures and most efficacious only when accompanied by the recitation of the manthra, for the cures sought to heal spirit, mind and body.

In the practice of surgery, Feridoon developed a surgical knife 'of which the point and the base were set in gold.' Of the healing plants, many hundreds and thousands (that grew around the mythical Gaokerena tree) were identified. Cures were found for several ailments, diseases and untimely death which are named but which we cannot, save two, identify today (Vendidad 20. 7,9): sarana (headache), sarastya (fever), azana, azahva, kurugha, azivaka, duruka, astairya, ishire, aghuire, aghra, ughra; pain, the evil eye, rotting, and infection.

Vendidad 7.36-40 establishes a code for the competence of surgeons. An apprentice surgeon must perform three successful surgeries before being accepted as a practicing surgeon. If three patients die at the hands of a surgeon, the surgeon can no longer practice surgery and should the person so disbarred violate the prohibition, the charge and penalty are those for wilful murder.



Legends of Zal, Rustam & Sohrab :

The change in dynasty, or as we have taken to saying, the change in eras - from the Pishdadian to the Kayanian saw the introduction of the legends of the heroes of Airan, heroes who had many an opportunity to sit on the supreme throne of the empire of Airan, but whose code of honour prevented usurping the throne of the Aryans. The legends of the heroes are recounted in our pages on Ferdowsi's Shahnameh.

Kayanian Dynasty :

The founder of the Kayanian dynasty was Kavi Kavata (later, Kaikobad), a reclusive holy man, who had to be persuaded to sit on the vacant Aryan throne.

The Kayanian dynasty is particularly noteworthy in Zoroastrian history since it was during the reign of a Kayanian king, King Vishtasp (later called Gushtasp) that Zarathushtra preached. King Vishtasp was also Zarathushtra's first patron king.

The list of Kayanian kings mentioned in the Avesta (Zamyad Yasht 19.71, and Farvardin Yasht 13.132) contains some names not mentioned in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. The names include: Kavi Aipivohu, Kavi Usadha, Kavi Arshan, Kavi Pisina, Kavi Byarshan, and Kavi Syavarshan.

Legend of Esfandiar :

Decades before Vishtasp's ascension to the throne of Airan (as we shall call the Iran of those days), Airan had lost its sovereignty and had become a vassal state of the kingdom of Turan. As a consequence, Airan continued to send an annual tribute to the Khyonian King Arjasp whose kingdom included Turan, Chin and Ma-Chin (the Turkmenistan and China of those days). In the early years of his reign, Vishtasp decided to assert Airan's autonomy and he sent a dispatch to King Arjasp saying that Airan would no longer pay a tribute. In response, King Arjasp sent a delegation to convince King Vishtasp about the error of his ways. Arjasp threatened Vishtasp that if he did not pay tribute, Arjasp would enter Airan with fire and sword to destroy Vishtasp's authority and put Vishtasp to death. King Vishtasp refused to be coerced and the delegation returned with his defiant reply.

Arjasp lost no time in gathering a large army to invade Airan. Once he had gathered an immense horde, they marched towards Airan. Devastation marked their route and villages they passed were plundered and put to the torch. The dust they raised in their march obscured the sun and the moon until at last they entered the battlefield where the army of Airan awaited them.

The army of Airan commanded by Zarir, King Vishtasp's valiant brother, arrayed itself against the invaders. The two kings gave their generals their battle standards and a furious battle ensued and raged on for two weeks. Zarir had a superior battle plan and fought so courageously at the head of his troops that slowly the tide of battle began to turn against the armies of Arjasp. Arjasp's soldiers became so fearful of Zarir when he came into their midst, that Arjasp put a handsome bounty on Zarir's head. Arjasp promised a treasury of gold, command of the army and marriage into the royal family to the soldier who would slay Zarir. The enticement produced the intended result. Bidirafsh, one of Arjasp's soldiers, motivated by the promise of instant wealth, power and royalty, with remorseless fury, killed the now exhausted Zarir with a double-headed spear. The Airanian soldiers were demoralized at the death of their general and the Arjasp's army began to push back the Airanians.

On hearing the news about the death of his brother, the disconsolate King Vishtasp delegated command of the army to his son Esfandiar (also spelt Isfandiar), a man of strong character. Esfandiar rallied the distraught and dispirited Airanian army, rode into the thick of battle, and sought out Bidirafsh who had adorned Zarir's armour. Locked in mortal combat, Esfandiar drove a spear through Bidirafsh's heart. Esfandiar then led his army to a hard fought victory over the much larger enemy force and made Arjasp his next target. Facing imminent capture, Arjasp fled for his life and escaped from the battlefield.

Amongst the many dead lying on the battlefield, Vishtasp found the body of his brother. The King embraced his brother's corpse and spoke to him in grief. He wiped the fallen hero's bloody and soiled face with hand and placed the body on a golden bier. On the spot where he found

the slain Zarir, Vishtasp had a lofty memorial constructed, and within this monument, an flame burned day and night as a testament to Zarir's undying spirit.

With his victory over Arjasp, Vishtasp had succeeded in taking a first, though risky and costly step, in removing Airan from the yoke of feudal domination. Leaving the battlefield, the victorious Airanian army returned to the jubilant capital of Balkh, and the people of Airan celebrated their victory for many days. In recognition of Esfandiar's fearless leadership, Vishtasp designated Esfandiar as prince regent. Even as he did so, King Vishtasp was leery of Esfandiar's sudden rise to fame. In an effort to keep Esfandiar away from the capital and court, the King dispatched Esfandiar to lead additional campaigns against neighbouring states that had traditionally competed with Airan for power and commerce. Esfandiar accepted this commission and in a relatively short space of time expanded the control and boundaries of Airan to the extent it had been under the rule of Feridoon, that is from Asia Minor in the west, to Sind and Hind (Pakistan and India of old) in the east.

Esfandiar's fame grew and was he widely admired as a hero and icon. The popularity and respect afforded Esfandiar by the people soon eclipsed that given to his father. It was a setting ripe for rumours, and rumours about the ambitions of the gallant and upright prince regent began to grow and spread. Gurzam, a wily courtier who secretly harboured a bitter enmity towards Esfandiar, took advantage of this situation. As a general and advisor, Gurzam had Vishtasp's confidence and ear. Gurzam informed the King that he had received disturbing intelligence from his sources in the regions and needed to speak to him alone and in confidence. He told the King that even at the risk of incurring the King's wrath; he felt duty bound to share some disturbing information with him. Esfandiar, his sources had reported, was preparing to march on the capital Balkh at the head of his immense army in order to depose and imprison the King.

The King, motivated perhaps by jealousy and insecurity, believed Gurzam. He was filled with rage. He directed his anger not towards the malicious Gurzam but towards his son – a son who had served King and nation loyally and faithfully. With the motivation provided by these intensely negative and dark feelings, he sent his Prime Minister Jamasp to summon his son to appear before him. When the Prime Minister conveyed the King's summons to Esfandiar, a sense of foreboding came over the prince regent. Nevertheless, Esfandiar dutifully went to the capital and appeared before his father. There before the assembled court, despite the caution counselled by his Prime Minister, the King accused Esfandiar of treason. In quick order, Vishtasp had Esfandiar indicted, found guilty, chained and imprisoned in a tower prison.

The ensuing days were filled with turmoil and anxiety. To escape the many demands on him, Vishtasp left his court and went to visit his neighbour King Rustam of Sistan. There he spent two years indulging in hunting and feasting while neglecting his responsibilities as king. With its king absent and its army leaderless, demoralized and in disarray, the kingdom of Airan was vulnerable to attack, and King Arjasp seized the opportunity. Arjasp sent his son Kahram at the head of a large army to attack Airan once again, seek retribution for their earlier defeat, and make Airan a vassal state of Turan once more. Kahram routed the much smaller, hastily assembled and ill-equipped army of Airan and succeeded in capturing its capital Balkh.

Vishtasp's wife who was in the capital when Kahram captured the city, disguised as a Turanian and escaped on horseback. She rode as hard as the horse could gallop, covered a distance that

would take two days in one, changed horses along the way, and did not sleep until she reached Sistan and informed her husband of the fall of Balkh. After giving him this devastating news, she severely admonished Vishtasp for his abdication of responsibilities and negligence. Vishtasp was overcome with anguish and shame. He gathered his wits about him, put together a reserve force and rushed back to expel the invaders but was defeated in a battle with the enemy.

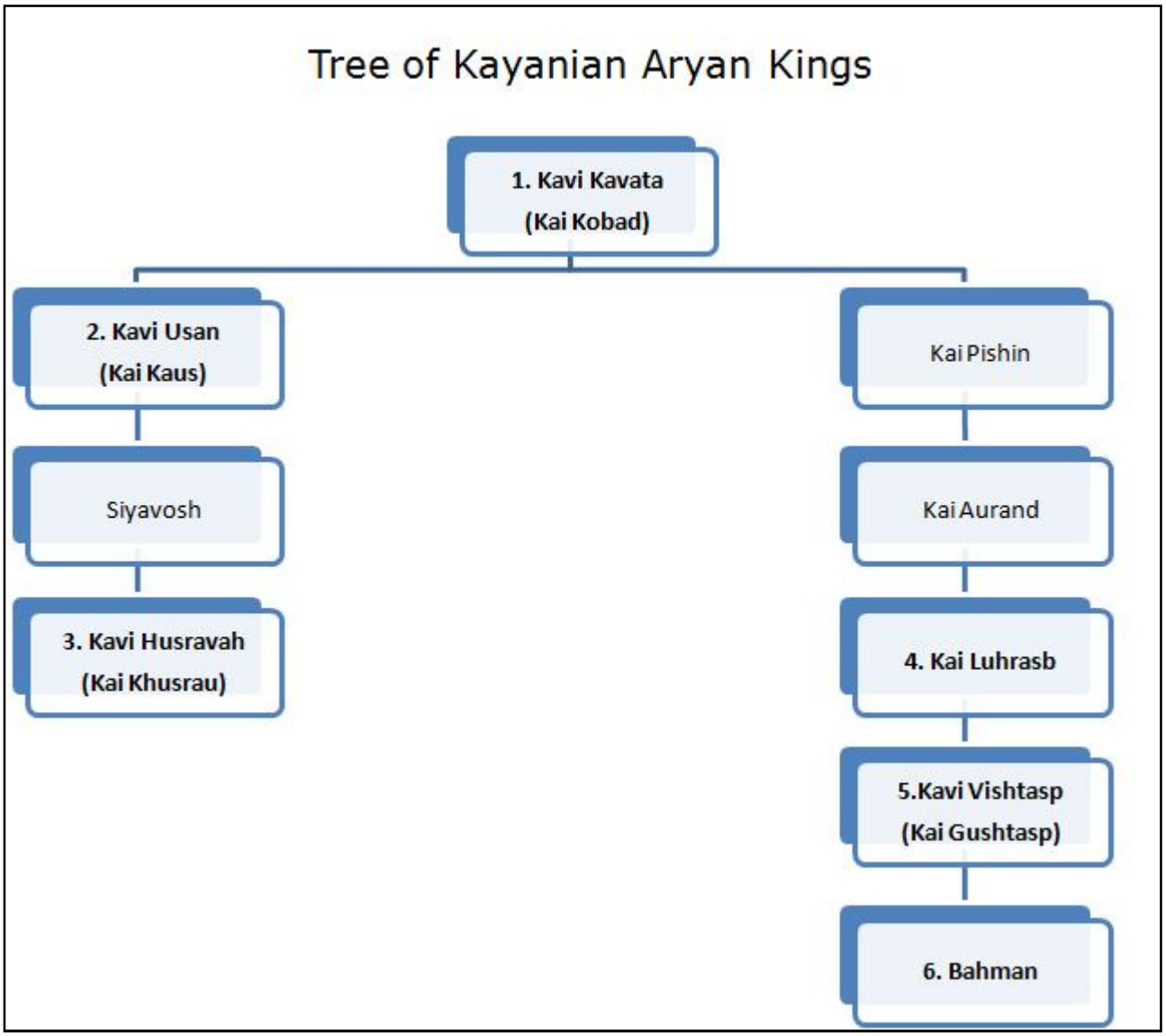
Jamasp advised the King that only Esfandiar had the ability to defend and liberate the kingdom, and that it was time to free Esfandiar from his unjust imprisonment. King Vishtasp, who had earlier ignored Jamasp's advice regarding the indictment of Esfandiar, agreed and dispatched Jamasp to Esfandiar's mountain prison. This time the Prime Minister's task was to ask Esfandiar to forgive his father, resume command of the army and liberate the territory captured by Kahram. Esfandiar was not so easily moved. It was only after listening to the imploring entreaties of Jamasp – who Esfandiar trusted completely – that Esfandiar finally agreed to accompany Jamasp and be reconciled with his father.

From the far reaches of the fractured empire, soldiers answered Esfandiar's call to reassemble the army. After they were equipped and retrained, he led them to a hard fought and resounding victory over the occupying army of Turan, Chin and their confederates. Esfandiar fought so fearlessly and tirelessly at the head of his troops that at the end of the battle, the multitude of arrows sticking in Esfandiar's armour made it look like a field of reeds. Esfandiar had routed the invaders once more and his army chased the remnants of the invading army until they were far beyond the borders of Airan. Airan was once again free from Turanian domination.

Close of the Kayanian Dynasty :

End of the First Phase of Zoroastrian-Aryan History :

The Kayanian dynasty ends in the Avesta with Zarathushtra's patron king, King Vishtasp. In the Shahnameh, the dynasty fades out with Vishtasp's grandson Bahram.



The Missing Years :

Gap in Aryan History Until the Start of Median / Persian History :

The end of the Kayanian dynasty appears to coincide with the closing of the Avestan canon. Some disruption appears to have put an end to ancient Aryan history, especially Zoroastrian history in Central Asia. After a significant gap in time the missing years of Zoroastrian history - the next we hear of the Zoroastrian Aryans is not through legend or scripture, but with the emergence of the Medes and Persians a thousand kilometres to the west. In our pages on Aryan Religions we examine the possible reasons for the gap in Zoroastrian Aryan history - the war of religions - where the Zoroastrians (and perhaps even the Aryans) may have lost their claim to power in Central Asia. They could very well have continued to live and be part of the Central Asian kingdoms, but without a Zoroastrian king on the throne, until that is, the rise of the Medes and the Persians.

After the hiatus, the Medes and the Persians reasserted the tradition of Zoroastrian-Aryan kingship, and once they had consolidated their power, they brought back into their domain, the traditional Zoroastrian-Aryan eastern (Central Asian) lands as well. The one change was that the seat of power of the federation of Aryan kingdoms had now shifted westward.

This section brings our examination of Aryan prehistory - the first, Eastern, phase of Aryan history - to a close.

Source :

http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/legendary/index.htm#faridoon

41. List of monarchs of Persia :

This article lists the monarchs of Persia (Iran) from the establishment of the Median Empire by Medes around 705 BC until the deposition of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1979.

Earlier monarchs in the area of modern-day Iran are listed in :

- List of rulers of the pre-Achaemenid kingdoms of Iran

Minor dynasties and vassal monarchs can be found in :

- List of rulers of Parthian sub-kingdoms
- Islamic dynasties of Iran

Contents :

1. Median Empire (678–549 BC)

2. Achaemenid Kingdom (~705–559 BC)

3. Achaemenid Empire (559–334/327 BC)

4. Macedonian Empire (336–306 BC)

5. Seleucid Empire (311–129 BC)

6. Fratarakas

7. Kings of Persis

8. Parthian Empire (247 BC – CE 228)

9. Sasanian Empire (224–651)

10. Dabuyid Kingdom (642–760)

11. Rashidun Caliphate (642–661)

12. Umayyad Caliphate (661–750)

13. Abbasid Caliphate (750–946)

14. Samanid Empire (819–999)

15. Saffarid Kingdom (861–1003)

16. Ghurid Kingdom (879–1215)

17. Buyid Kingdom (934–1062)

18. Ziyarid Kingdom (928–1043)

19. Seljuk Empire (1029–1194)

20. Khwarazmian Empire (1153–1220)

21. Mongol Empire (1220–1256)

22. Ilkhanate and successor kingdoms (1256–1501)

    22.1 Ilkhanate (1256–1357)

    22.2 Sarbadars (1332–1386)

    22.3 Chupanids (1335–1357)

22.4 Jalayirids (1335–1432)

22.5 Injuids (1335–1357)

22.6 Muzaffarids (1314–1393)

22.7 Kara Koyunlu (1375–1468)

22.8 Aq Koyunlu (1378–1497)

23. Timurid Empire (1370–1507)

24. Safavid Empire (1501–1736)

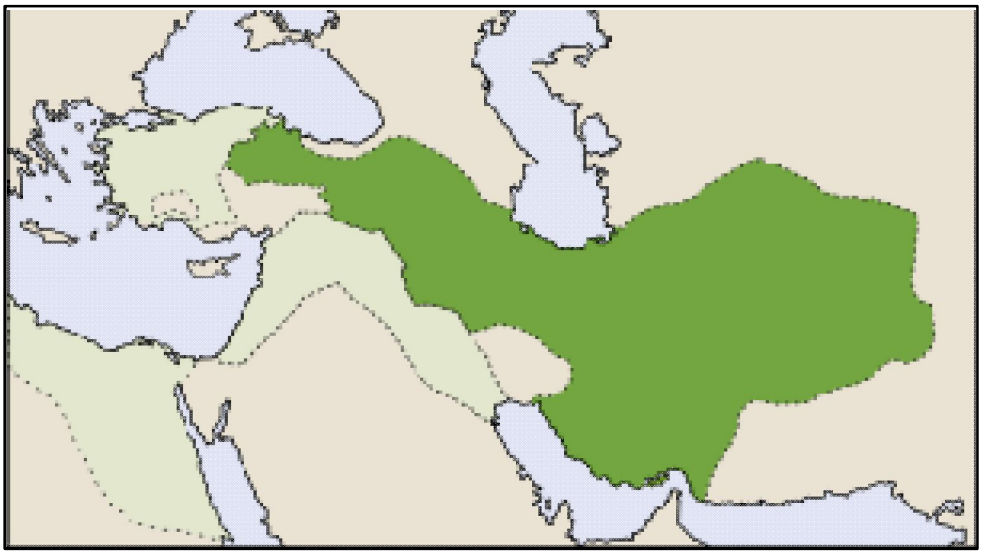
25. Afsharid Empire (1736–1796)

26. Zand Kingdom (1751–1794)

27. Qajar Empire (1794–1925)

28. Pahlavi Empire (1925–1979)

Median Empire (678–549 BC) :



The Median Empire at its greatest extent

Name	Family relations	Reign	Notes
Median Kingdom (678 BC–549 BC)			
Deioces		700–647 BC	First known ruler of Media
Phraortes	Son of Deioces	647–625 BC	
Scythian rule (624–597 BC)			
Cyaxares	Son of Phraortes	624–585 BC	The dynasty of the Median kings was known as Cyaxarid dynasty, named after him or a pre-Deicoes king.
Astyages	Son of Cyaxares	585–549 BC	Last king of the Medes

Achaemenid Kingdom (~705–559 BC) :

Name	Family relations	Reign	Notes
Achaemenid dynasty (~705–559 BC)			
Achaemenes		705 BC	First ruler of the Achaemenid kingdom
Teispes	Son of Achaemenes	640 BC	
Cyrus I	Son of Teispes	580 BC	
Cambyses I	Son of Cyrus I and father of Cyrus II	550 BC	

Achaemenid Empire (559–334/327 BC) :

The Achaemenid Empire at its greatest extent

Titles	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Achaemenid dynasty (559–334/327 BC)							
The Great King, King of Kings, King of Anshan, King of Media, King of Babylon, King of Sumer and Akkad, King of the Four Corners of the World	Cyrus the Great	–	600 BC	Son of Cambyses I king of Anshan and Mandana daughter of Astyages	559–530 BC	530 BC	King of Anshan from 559 BC. Killed in battle with Massagetes
The Great King, King of Kings, Pharaoh of Egypt	Cambyses II	–	?	Son of Cyrus the Great	530–522 BC	521 BC	Died while en route to put down a rebellion. Pharaonic titulary: Horus:

							Smatawy, Nswbty: Mesutire
The Great King, King of Kings, Pharaoh of Egypt	Bardiya	Gaumata (?)	?	Son of Cyrus the Great (possibly an imposter claiming to be Bardiya)	522 BC	522 BC	Killed by Persian aristocrats
The Great King, King of Kings, Pharaoh of Egypt	Darius I	–	550 BC	Son of Hystaspes	522–486 BC	486 BC	Pharaonic titulary: Horus: *Menkhib* Nswbty: *Stutre*
The Great King, King of Kings, Pharaoh of Egypt	Xerxes I	–	519 BC	Son of Darius I	485–465 BC	465 BC	Most likely is the King Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther
The Great King, King of Kings, Pharaoh of Egypt	Artaxerxes I	Arses	?	Son of Xerxes I	465–424 BC	424 BC	Believed by some to be the King Ahaseurus of the Book of Esther
The Great King, King of Kings, Pharaoh of Egypt	Xerxes II	Artaxerxes	?	Son of Artaxerxes I	424 BC	424 BC	Only recognised in Persia itself, killed by Sogdianus
The Great King, King of Kings, Pharaoh of Egypt	?	Sogdianus	?	Son of Artaxerxes I	424–423 BC	423 BC	Only recognised in Persia and Elam, killed by Darius II
The Great King, King of Kings, Pharaoh of Egypt	Darius II	Ochus	?	Son of Artaxerxes I	424–404 BC	404 BC	

The Great King, King of Kings	Artaxerxes II	Arsaces	436	Son of Darius II	404–358 BC	358 BC	
The Great King, King of Kings, Pharaoh of Egypt	Artaxerxes III	Ochus	?	Son of Artaxerxes II	358–338 BC	338 BC	Killed
The Great King, King of Kings, Pharaoh of Egypt	Artaxerxes IV	Arses	?	Son of Artaxerxes III	338–336 BC	336 BC	Killed
The Great King, King of Kings, Pharaoh of Egypt	Darius III	Artashata	380	Son of Arsames son of Ostanes son of Darius II	336–330 BC	330 BC	Killed by Artaxerxes V
The Great King, King of Kings	Artaxerxes V	Bessus	?	Probably a descendant of Artaxerxes II	330–329 BC	329 BC	Killed by Alexander III

Note: Ancient Persia is generally agreed to have ended with the collapse of the Achaemenid dynasty as a result of the *Wars of Alexander the Great*.

Macedonian Empire (336–306 BC) :

The Macedonian Empire at its greatest extent

Title	Name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Argead dynasty (336–306 BC)						
King	Alexander the Great	356 BC	Son of Philip II of Macedonia	336–323 BC	13 June 323 BC	King of Macedonia from 336 BC as Alexander III
King	Philip III	c. 359 BC	Son of Philip II of Macedonia	June 323–317 BC	317 BC	Killed by Olympias
King	Alexander IV	Sept. 323 BC	Son of Alexander III	Sept. 323–309 BC	309 BC	King of Macedonia as Alexander IV until 309 BC. Killed by Cassander son of Antipater
Regent	Perdiccas	?		June 323–321 BC	321 BC	Regent for Alexander IV & Philip III, Prince of Orestis
Regent	Antipater	398 BC	Son of Iollas	321–319 BC	319 BC	Regent for Alexander IV & Philip III

Regent	Polyperchon	394 BC	Son of Simmias	319–316 BC	303 BC	Regent for Alexander IV & Philip III. Exercised no actual power in Persia.
Regent	Cassander	c. 350	Son of Antipater	316–309 BC	297 BC	Regent for and murderer of Alexander IV. Exercised no actual power in Persia.

Seleucid Empire (311–129 BC) **:**

The Seleucid Empire at its greatest extent

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Seleucid dynasty (311–129 BC)							
King	Seleucus I Nicator	–	c. 358 BC	Son of Antiochus son of Seleucus	311–281 BC	281 BC	Assumed title of "King" from 306 BC.
King	Antiochus I Soter	–	?	Son of Seleucus I	281–261 BC	261 BC	Co-ruler from 291

King	Antiochus II Theos	–	286 BC	Son of Antiochus I	261–246 BC	246 BC	
King	Seleucus II Callinicus	–	?	Son of Antiochus II	246–225 BC	225 BC	
King	Seleucus III Ceraunus	Alexander	c. 243 BC	Son of Seleucus II	225–223 BC	223 BC	
Great King	Antiochus III the Great	–	c. 241 BC	Son of Seleucus II	223–187 BC	187 BC	
King	Seleucus IV Philopator	–	?	Son of Antiochus III	187–175 BC	175 BC	
King	Antiochus IV Epiphanes	Mithridates	c. 215 BC	Son of Antiochus III	175–163 BC	163 BC	Killed in Elymais
King	Antiochus V Eupator	–	c. 172 BC	Son of Antiochus IV	163–161 BC	161 BC	
King	Demetrius I Soter	–	185 BC	Son of Seleucus IV	161–150 BC	150 BC	
King	Alexander Balas	–	?	Purported son of Antiochus IV	150–146 BC	146 BC	
King	Demetrius II Nicator	–	?	Son of Demetrius I	146–139 BC	139 BC	Defeated and captured by Parthians. He married Rhodogune daughter of Mithridates I
King	Antiochus VI Dionysus	–	148 BC	Son of Alexander III.	145–142 BC	138 BC	In competition with Demetrius II.
King	Antiochus VII Sidetes	–	?	Son of Demetrius I	139–129 BC	129 BC	Killed in battle with Phraates II

The Fratarakas appear to have been Governor of the Seleucid Empire.

Name		Date	Family Relations	Note
1	Bagadates/ Baydād (*bgdt*)	3rd century BC	Fratarakā dynasty - son of Baykard	Governor of the Seleucid Empire. Coin legend *bgdt prtrk' zy 'lhy'* ("Baydād, frataraka of the gods") in Aramaic.
2	Ardaxšīr I (*rtḫštry*)	mid-3nd century BC	Fratarakā dynasty	Governor of the Seleucid Empire
3	Vahbarz (*whwbrz* - called Oborzos in Polyenus 7.40)	mid-3nd century BC	Fratarakā dynasty	Governor of the Seleucid Empire
4	Vādfradād I (*wtprdt*)	3nd century BC	Fratarakā dynasty - son of Vahbarz	Governor of the Seleucid Empire
5	Vadfradad II	c. 140 BC	Fratarakā dynasty	Governor of the Seleucid Empire. Transition period. Eagle emblem on top of stylized kyrbasia. Aramaic coin legend *wtprdt [p]rtrk' zy 'ly'* ("Vādfradād, frataraka of the gods").
6	'Unknown king I' (Syknlt?)	2nd half of 2nd century BC	?	Transition period. No inscription on coinage.

Kings of Persis **:**

Name		Date	Family Relations	Note
7	Darev I	2nd century BC (end)	?	Darev I and his successors were sub-kings of the Parthian Empire. Crescent emblem on top of stylized kyrbasia. Aramaic coin legend *d'ryw mlk* ("King Darius").
8	Vadfradad III	1st century BC (1st half)	?	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire. Coin legend *wtprdt mlk* (□□□□□□ □□□, "King Vadfradad") in Aramaic

				script.
9	Darev II	1st century BC	son of Vadfradad III	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire. Aramaic coin legend *d'ryw mlk brh wtprdt mlk'* ("King Darius, son of King Vadfradad").
10	Ardashir II	1st century BC (2nd half)	son of Darev II	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire. Killed by his brother Vahshir I
11	Vahšīr/ Vahshir I (Oxathres)	1st century BC (2nd half)	son of Darev II	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
12	Pakor I	1st century CE (1st half)	son of Vahshir I	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
13	Pakor II	1st century CE (1st half)	?	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
14	Nambed	1st century CE (mid)	son of Ardashir II	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
15	Napad	1st century CE (2nd half)	son of Nambed	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
16	'Unknown king II'	1st century CE (end)	?	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
17	Vadfradad IV	2nd century CE (1st half)	?	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
18	Manchihr I	2nd century CE (1st half)	?	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
19	Ardashir III	2nd century CE (1st half)	son of Manchihr I	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
20	Manchihr II	2nd century CE (mid)	son of Ardashir III	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
21	Uncertain King III/ tentatively Pakor III	2nd century CE (2nd half)	?	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire

22	Manchihr III	2nd century CE (2nd half)	son of Manchihr II	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
23	Ardashir IV	2nd century CE (end)	son of Manchihr III	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
24	Vahshir II (Oxathres)	c. 206-210 CE	?	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire. The last of Bazarangids.
25	Shapur	3rd century CE (beg.)	Brother of the first Sasanian, Ardashir I	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire
26	Ardashir V (Sasanian Dynasty Ardashir I)	3rd century CE (beg.)	First Sasanian ruler, under the name of Ardashir I	Sub-king of the Parthian Empire

Parthian Empire (247 BC – CE 228) :

The Parthian Empire at its greatest extent

The Seleucid dynasty gradually lost control of Persia. In 253, the Arsacid dynasty established itself in Parthia. The Parthians gradually expanded their control, until by the mid-2nd century BC, the Seleucids had completely lost control of Persia. Control of eastern territories was permanently lost by Antiochus VII in 129 BC.

For more comprehensive lists of kings, queens, sub-kings and sub-queens of this Era see:

- List of rulers of Parthian sub-kingdoms

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Arsacid dynasty (247 BC – 228 AD)							
King, Karen, Autocrator	Arsaces I	Tiridates I *or* Arsaces	?	A descendant of Arsaces son of Phriapatius who was probably son of Artaxerxes II	247–211 BC	211 BC	
?	Arsaces II	Artabanus I *or* Arsaces	?	Son of Arsaces I	211–185 BC	185 BC	
?	Arsaces III	Phriapatius	?	Grandson of Tiridates I	185–170 BC	170 BC	
?	Arsaces IV	Phraates I	?	Son of Phriapatius	170–167 BC	167 BC	
The Great King, Theos, Theopator, Philhellene	Arsaces V	Mithridates I	?	Son of Phriapatius	167 –132 BC	132 BC	
The Great King, Philopator, Theopator, Nikephoros	Arsaces VI	Phraates II	?	Son of Mithridates I	132–127 BC	127 BC	Killed in battle with Scythians
King	Arsaces VII	Artabanus II	?	Son of Phriapatius	127–126 BC	126 BC	Killed in battle with Tocharians
The Great King, Theopator, Philadelphos, Philhellene, Epiphanes	Arsaces VIII	Vologases(?)	?	Son of Phriapatius	126–122 BC	122 BC	He was the first Arsacid king of Media, Arran and

							Iberia
The Great King, King of kings, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces IX	Artabanus(?)	?	Son of Artabanus II	122–121 BC	121 BC	Killed in battle with Medians
The Great King, The Great King of Kings, Epiphanes, Soter	Arsaces X	Mithridates II	?	Son of Artabanus II	121–91 BC	91 BC	
The Great King, Epiphanes, Philhellene, Euergetes, Autocrator	Arsaces XI	Gotarzes I	?	Son of Mithridates II	91–87 BC	87 BC	
The Great King, Theopator, Nicator	Arsaces XII	Artabanus(?)	?	Probably son of Arsaces VIII Vologases(?)	91–77? BC	77? BC	
The Great King, The Great King of Kings, Dikaios, Euergetes, Philhellene, Autocrator, Philopator, Epiphanes	Arsaces XIII	Mithridates	?	Probably son of Mithridates II	88–67 BC	67 BC	
The Great King, Euergetes, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XIV	Orodes I	?	Probably son of Mithridates II	80–75 BC	75 BC	
The Great King, Theopator, Euergetes,	Arsaces XV	Sanatruces	157 BC	Probably son of Arsaces VIII Vologases(?)	77–70 BC	70 BC	

Epiphanes, Philhellene							
The Great King, Theopator, Euergetes, Epiphanes, Philhellene, Eusebes	Arsaces XVI	Arsaces(?) or Vardanes(?) or Vonones(?)	?	?	77–66 BC	66 BC	The most obscure major monarch of the first millennium BC. Nothing about him is currently known.
The Great King, Theos, Euergetes, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XVII	Phraates III	?	Son of Sanatruces	70–57 BC	57 BC	Killed by Orodes II
The Great King, Philopator, Euergetes, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XVIII	?	?	probably son of Arsaces XVI	66–63 BC	63 BC	The second most obscure monarch of the first millennium BC, nothing about him is known.
The Great King, The Great King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Theos, Eupator, Theopator, Philhellene	Arsaces XIX	Mithridates III	?	Son of Phraates III	65 –54 BC	54 BC	Killed by Orodes II

King of Kings, Philopator, Eupator, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene, Ktistes	Arsaces XX	Orodes II	?	Son of Phraates III	57–38 BC	38 BC	Killed by Phraates IV
King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XXI	Pacorus I	?	Son of Orodes II	50–38 BC	38 BC	Killed in battle with Romans
King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XXII	Phraates IV	?	Son of Orodes II	38–2 BC	2 BC	Killed by Musa
King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene, Autocrator, Philoromaeos	Arsaces XXIII	Tiridates II	?	Probably a descendant of Arsaces XIII Mithridates	30–25 BC	after 23 BC	Deposed and went to Rome
?	Arsaces XXIV	Mithridates	?	Probably a descendant of Arsaces XIII Mithridates	12–9 BC	?	
Queen of Queens, Thea, Urania	Musa	Musa	?	Queen of Phraates IV	2 BC – 4 CE	4? CE	
King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios,	Arsaces XXV	Phraates V	?	Son of Phraates IV & Musa	2 BC – 4 CE	4 CE	Deposed and went to Rome

Epiphanes, Philhellene							
King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XXVI	Orodes III	?	Probably a descendant of Arsaces XIII Mithridates	4–6	6	Killed by Parthian aristocrats
The Great King, King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene, Nikephorus	Arsaces XXVII	Vonones I	?	Son of Phraates IV	8–12	19	Deposed and went to Rome. Later, he was killed by Romans.
King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XXVIII	Artabanus III	?	Probably a descendant of Arsaces XIII Mithridates	10–40	40	
?	Arsaces XXIX	Tiridates III	?	Probably a descendant of Tiridates II	35–36	?	Deposed and went to Rome
?	Arsaces XXX	Cinnamus	?	Son of Artabanus III	37	?	Abdicated
King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XXXI	Gotarzes II	11	Son of Artabanus III	40–51	51	
King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XXXII	Vardanes I	?	Son of Artabanus III	40–46	46	Killed by Gotarzes II
King of	Arsaces	Vonones II	?	Probably son	c. 45–51	51	

Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	XXXIII			of Artabanus III			
?	Arsaces XXXIV	Mithridates	?	Son of Vonones I	49–50	?	Deposed and mutilated by Gotarzes II
King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene, The Lord	Arsaces XXXV	Vologases I	?	Son of Vonones II	51–77	77	
King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XXXVI	Vardanes II	?	Son of Vologases I	55–58	?	Deposed
King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XXXVII	Vologases II	?	Probably the eldest son of Vologases I	77–89/90	?	
King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XXXVIII	Pacorus II	?	Probably the younger son of Vologases I	77–115	115	
King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XXXIX	Artabanus IV	?	Probably son of Vologases I or Artabanus III	80–81	?	
King of Kings,	Arsaces XL	Osroes I	?	brother of Pacorus II	89/90–130	130	

Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene							
King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XLI	Vologases III	?	Probably son of Sanatruces I king of Armenia 89–109 who was brother of Osroes I	105–148	148	He was also king of Armenia as Vologases I
King of Kings, Euergetes, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XLII	Parthamaspates	?	Son of Osroes I	116–117	after 123	Deposed and went to Rome
King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XLIII	Mithridates IV	?	Probably son of Osroes I	c. 130 – c. 145	c. 145	
King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XLIV	?	?	?	c. 140 – c. 140	c. 140	
King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XLV	Vologases IV	?	Son of Mithridates IV	148–191	191	
King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XLVI	Vologases V	?	Son of Vologases IV	191–208	208	
King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes,	Arsaces XLVII	Osroes II	?	Probably son of Vologases IV	c. 190 – c. 195	?	

Philhellene							
King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XLVIII	Vologases VI	181	Son of Vologases V	208–228	228	Killed by Ardashir I
King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces XLIX	Artabanus V	?	Son of Vologases V	213–226	226	Killed by Ardashir I
King of Kings, Dikaios, Epiphanes, Philhellene	Arsaces L	Tiridates IV	?	Son of Vologases IV	217–222	?	He was also king of Armenia

Sasanian Empire (224–651) **:**

The Sasanian Empire at its greatest extent

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
House of Sasan							
Shahanshah	Ardashir I	–	180	Son of Papak, who was son of Sasan	28 April 224 – February 242	February 242	
Shahanshah	Shapur I	–	215	Son of Ardashir I	12 April 240 – May 270	May 270	
Shahanshah, Wuzurg Armananshah	Hormizd I	Hormozd-Ardashir	?	Son of Shapur I	May 270 – June 271	June 271	
Shahanshah, Gilanshah	Bahram I	–	?	Son of Shapur I	June 271 – September 274	September 274	
Shahanshah	Bahram II	–	?	Son of Bahram I	September 274 – 293	293	
Shahanshah, Sakanshah	Bahram III	–	?	Son of Bahram II	293	293	Deposed
Shahanshah, Wuzurg Armananshah	Narseh I	–	?	Son of Shapur I	293–302	302	
Shahanshah	Hormizd II	–	?	Son of Narseh I	302–309	309	Killed by Iranian aristocrats
Shahanshah	Adhur Narseh	–	?	Son of Hormizd II	309	309	Killed by Iranian aristocrats
Shahanshah, Dhū al-aktāf	Shapur II	–	309	Son of Hormizd II	309–379	379	
Shahanshah	Ardashir II	–	309/310	Son of Hormizd II	379–383	383	
Shahanshah	Shapur III	–	?	Son of	383 – December	Decembe	Killed by Iranian

				Shapur II	388	r 388	aristocrats
Shahanshah, Kirmanshah	Bahram IV	–	?	Son of Shapur II	December 388 – 399	399	
Shahanshah	Yazdegerd I	–	363	Son of Shapur III	399 – 21 January 420	21 January 420	Killed by Iranian aristocrats
Shahanshah	Bahram V	–	406	Son of Yazdegerd I	21 January 420 – 20 June 438	20 June 438	
Shahanshah	Yazdegerd II	–	?	Son of Bahram V	20 June 438 – 15 December 457	15 Decembe r 457	
Shahanshah	Hormizd III	–	399	Son of Yazdegerd II	457–459	459	Killed by Peroz I
Shahanshah	Peroz I	–	459	Son of Yazdegerd II	457 – January 484	January 484	Killed in battle with Hephthalite s
Shahanshah	Balash	–	?	Son of Yazdegerd II	February 484 – 488	488	
Shahanshah	Kavadh I	–	449	Son of Peroz I	488–496	13 Septemb er 531	Deposed
Shahanshah	Djamasp	–	?	Son of Peroz I	496–498	502	Deposed
Shahanshah	Kavadh I	–	449	Son of Peroz I	498 – 13 September 531	13 Septemb er 531	
Shahanshah, Anushiravan, The Just	Khosrau I	–	500	Son of Kavadh I	13 September 531 – 31 January 579	31 January 579	
Shahanshah	Hormizd	–	540	Son of	31 January 579 – 5	5 Septemb	Killed by

	IV			Khosrau I	September 590	er 590	Vistahm
Shahanshah, Aparviz	Khosrau II	–	570	Son of Hormizd IV	September 590 – September 590	February 28, 628	Deposed and went to Byzantine territory
House of Mihran							
Shahanshah, Chubineh	Bahram VI	Mehrbandak	?	Son of Bahram Gushnasp from House of Mihran	September – 590 January 591	591	Assassinated under the order of Khosrau II
House of Sasan							
Shahanshah, Aparviz	Khosrau II	–	570	Son of Hormizd IV	January 591 – 25 February 628	February 28, 628	Executed by Mihr Hormozd under the orders of Kavadh II
House of Ispahbudhan							
Shahanshah	Vistahm	–	?	Son of Shapur from the House of Ispahbudhan. He was the uncle of Khosrau II and husband of Gorduya, sister of Bahram VI	591 – 596 *or* 600	596 or 600	Killed by his wife Gorduya or by his general Pariowk
House of Sasan							
Shahanshah	Kavadh II	Shiruyah	?	Son of Khosrau II	25 February 628 – 15 September 628	15 September 628	Died from plague
Shahanshah	Ardashir III	–	621	Son of Kavadh II	15 September	27 April 629	Killed by Shahrbaraz

					628 – 27 April 629		
House of Mihran							
Shahanshah, Shahrvaraz	Shahrbaraz	–	?	Sasanian general from the House of Mihran	27 April 629 – 17 June 629	17 June 629	Killed by Farrokh Hormizd under the orders of Borandukht
House of Sasan							
Shahanshah	Khosrau III	–	?	Nephew of Khosrau II	630	630	Killed after a few days reign
Shahbanu	Borandukht	–	590	Daughter of Khosrau II	17 June 629 – 16 June 630 (First reign) 631 – 632 (Second reign)	632	Deposed by Iranian aristocrats and replaced by Shapur-i Shahrvaraz Restored to the Sasanian throne, and later strangled to death by Piruz Khosrow
Shahanshah	Shapur-i Shahrvaraz	–	?	Son of Shahrbaraz and an unknown sister of Khosrau II	630	?	Deposed by Iranian aristocrats and replaced by Azarmidokht
Shahanshah	Peroz II	Gushnasp-Bandeh	?	Son of Mihran-Goshnasp & Chaharbakht who was	630	630	Killed by Iranian aristocrats

				daughter of Yazdandad son of Khosrau I.			
Shahbanu	Azarmidokht	–	?	Daughter of Khosrau II	630–631	631	Killed by Iranian aristocrats
Shahanshah	Khosrau IV	Khurrazadh	?	Son of Khosrau II	631	631	Killed by Iranian aristocrats
House of Ispahbudhan							
Shahanshah	Farrokh Hormizd	–	?	Son of Sasanian general Vinduyih, the brother of Vistahm	630–631	631	Killed by Siyavakhsh under the orders of Azarmidokht
House of Sasan							
Shahanshah	Hormizd VI	–	?	Grandson of Khosrau II	630–631	631	Killed by Iranian aristocrats
Shahanshah	Yazdegerd III	–	624	Son of Shahryar the son of Khosrau II	16 June 632–651	651	Killed by a miller

Note: Classical Persia is generally agreed to have ended with the collapse of the Sasanian Empire as a result of the *Muslim conquest of Persia*.

Dabuyid Kingdom (642–760) :

Dabuyids (c. 720)

A Zoroastrian Persian dynasty that held power in the north for over a century before finally falling to the Abbasid Caliphate.

Title	Name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Dabuyid dynasty (642–760)						
Ispahbadh	Gil Gavbara	?	Son of Piruz	642–660	660	
Ispahbadh, Gil-Gilan, Padashwargarshah	Dabuya	?	Son of Gil Gavbara	660–676	676	
Ispahbadh, Gil-Gilan, Padashwargarshah	Farrukhan I the Great	?	Son of Dabuya	712–728	728	
Ispahbadh, Gil-Gilan, Padashwargarshah	Dadhburzmihr	?	Son of Farrukhan the Great	728–740/741	740/741	
Ispahbadh, Gil-Gilan, Padashwargarshah	Farrukhan II the Little	?	Son of Farrukhan the Great	740/741–747/48	747/48	Regent for Khurshid of Tabaristan
Ispahbadh, Gil-	Khurshid of	734	Son of	740/741–	761	Committed

Gilan, Padashwargarshah	Tabaristan		Dadhburzmihr	760		suicide

Rashidun Caliphate (642–661) :

The Rashidun Empire reached its greatest extent under Caliph Uthman, in 654

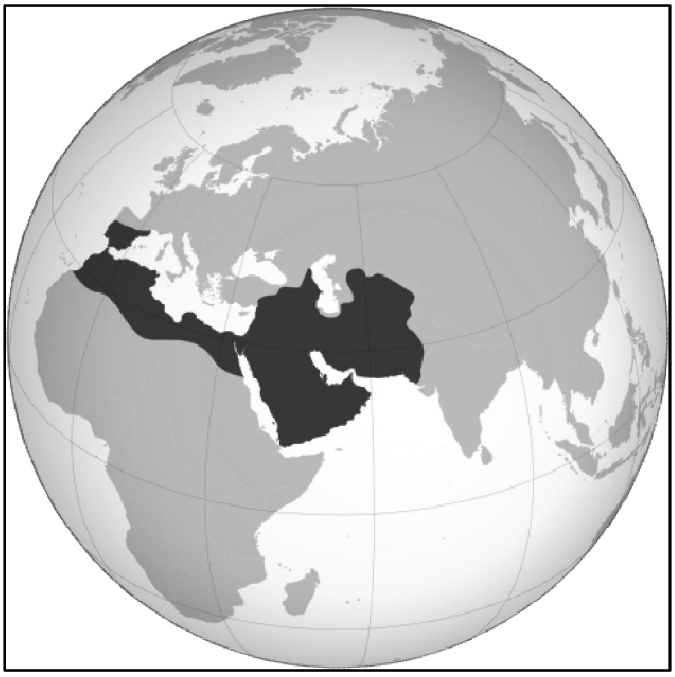
For more comprehensive lists of kings and sub-kings of this Era see :

- Muslim dynasties of Iran

Title	Name	Kunya	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Al-Faruq, Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Umar ibn Al-Khattab	Abu Hafs	583	Son of Khattab ibn Nufayl.	642–644	644	Umar became Caliph in 634 and his forces conquered Persia in 642. Killed by Piruz Nahavandi
Zonnurain, Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Uthman ibn Affan	Abu Amr	579	Son of Affan, of the Umayyad clan.	644–656	656	Killed by Kharijites
Al-Mortaza, Caliph, Amir al-	Ali Ibn Abi Talib	Abul-Hasan	598	Son of Abu Talib, of the Hashemite	656–661	661	Killed by Kharijites

Mu'minin, Great Imam				clan. Son-in-law of Muhammad.			

Umayyad Caliphate (661–750) **:**



Umayyad Caliphate at its greatest extent (c. 750)

For more comprehensive lists of kings and sub-kings of this Era see :

- Muslim dynasties of Iran

Title	Name	Kunya	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Muawiyah I	Abu Abdullah	?	Son of Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, cousin of Uthman ibn Affan and distant cousin of Muhammad	661–680	680	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Yazid I	Abu Khalid	?	Son of Muawiyah I	680–683	683	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Muawiyah II	Abu Abd ur-Rahman	?	Son of Yazid I	683–684	?	Abdicated (?)

Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Marwan I	Abu Abd al-Malik	?	Son of Hakam cousin of Muawiyah I	684–685	685	Killed by his wife
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Abd al-Malik	Abu'l-Walid	?	Son of Marwan I	685–705	705	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Walid I	Abu'l-Abbas	?	Son of Abd al-Malik	705–715	715	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Sulayman	Abu Ayyub	?	Son of Abd al-Malik	715–717	717	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Umar II	Abu Hafṣ	?	Son of Abd al-Aziz son of Marwan I	717–720	720	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Yazid II	Abu Khalid	?	Son of Abd al-Malik	720–724	724	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Hisham	Abu'l-Walid	?	Son of Abd al-Malik	724–743	743	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Walid II	Abu'l-Abbas	?	Son of Yazid II	743–744	744	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Yazid III	Abu Khalid	?	Son of Al-Walid I and Shahfarand daughter of Peroz III	744–744	744	Killed
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Ibrahim	Abu Ishaq	?	Son of Al-Walid I	744–744	744	Killed
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Marwan II	Abu Abd al-Malik	?	Son of Muhammad son of Marwan I	744–750	750	Ruled from Harran in the Jazira. Killed by Saffah

Abbasid Caliphate (750–946) :

Abbasid Caliphate at its greatest extent (c. 850)

For more comprehensive lists of kings and sub-kings of this Era see :

- Muslim dynasties of Iran

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	As-Saffah	Abu'l-Abbas Abdullah	721	Son of Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Abdallah who was Muhammad's paternal uncle	750–754	754	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Mansur	Abu Ja'far Abdullah	714	Brother of As-Saffah	754–775	775	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Mahdi	Abu Abdullah Muhammad	744/745	Son of Al-Mansur	775–785	785	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Hadi	Abu Mohammad Musa	764	Son of Al-Mahdi	785–786	786	

Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Ar-Rashid	Abu Ja'far Harun	763/766	Son of Al-Mahdi	786–809	809	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Amin	Abu Abdullah Muhammad	787	Son of Harun al-Rashid	809–813	813	Killed by Al-Ma'mun
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Ma'mun	Abu'l-Abbas Abdullah	786	Son of Harun al-Rashid	813–833	833	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Mu'tasim	Abu Ishaq Muhammad	795	Son of Harun al-Rashid	833–842	842	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Wathiq	Abu Ja'far Harun	816	Son of Al-Mu'tasim	842–847	847	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Mutawakkil	Abu'l-Fazl Ja'far	821	Son of Al-Mu'tasim	847–861	861	Killed by Al-Muntasir
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Muntasir	Abu Ja'far Muhammad	837	Son of Al-Mutawakkil	861–862	862	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Musta'in	Abu'l-Abbas Ahmad	836	Son of Muhammad son of Al-Mu'tasim	862–866	866	Deposed and later killed
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Mu'tazz	Abu Abdullah Zubayr	847	Son of Al-Mutawakkil	866–869	869	Deposed and later killed
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Muhtadi	Abu Ishaq Muhammad	?	Son of Al-Wathiq	869–870	870	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Mu'tamid	Abu'l-Abbas Ahmad	844	Son of Al-Mutawakkil	870–892	892	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Mu'tadid	Abu'l-Abbas Ahmad	854/861	Son of Talha al-Muwaffaq son of Al-	892–902	902	

				Mutawakkil			
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Muktafi	Abu Mohammad Ali	877/878	Son of Al-Mu'tadid	902–908	908	
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Muqtadir	Abul-Fazl Ja'far	895	Son of Al-Mu'tadid	908–929 *and* 929–932	929	Briefly deposed.
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Qahir	Abu Mansur Muhammad	899	Son of Al-Mu'tadid	929 *and* 932–934	929	Forced to resign the throne in the face of public protest, later deposed and blinded.
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Abu'l-Abbas Ar-Radi	Muhammad	907	Son of Al-Muqtadir	934–940	940	*De facto* power in the hands of Ibn Ra'iq 936-938
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Muttaqi	Abu Ishaq Ibrahim	908	Son of Al-Muqtadir	940–944	944	*De facto* power in the hands of Bajkam 940-941, Ibn Ra'iq 941-942, Nasir al-Dawla 942-943 & Tuzun 943-944, who deposed and blinded him.
Caliph, Amir al-Mu'minin	Al-Mustakfi	Abu'l-Qasim Abdullah	905	Son of Al-Muktafi	944–946	946	*De facto* power in the hands of Tuzun

							944-945 & Abu Jafar 945-946. Deposed and blinded by Mu'izz al-Dawla

Samanid Empire (819–999) :

Samanid Empire at its greatest extent

For more comprehensive lists of kings and sub-kings of this Era see :

- Muslim dynasties of Iran

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Reign	Death
Samanid dynasty (819–999)					
	Ahmad I	?	?	819–864/865	864/5
	Nasr I	?	?	864/865–892	892
Adel	Isma'il I	?	?	892–907	907
Shaheed	Ahmad II	?	?	907–914	914
Saeed	Nasr II	?	?	914–942	943

Hamid	Nuh I	?	?	942–954	954
Rashid	'Abd al-Malik I	?	?	954–961	961
Mo'ayyed	Mansur I	?	?	961–976	976
Radhi	Nuh II	?	?	976–996	997
Abol Hareth	Mansur II	?	?	996–999	999
Abol Favares	'Abd al-Malik II	?	?	999	999
Montaser	Isma'il II	?	?	1000–1005	1005

Saffarid Kingdom (861–1003) :

Saffarid Empire at its greatest extent

For more comprehensive lists of kings and sub-kings of this Era see :

- Muslim dynasties of Iran

Title	Name	Kunya	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Note
Saffarid dynasty (861–1003)							
Emir	Ya'qub as-Saffar	–	840	Son of al-Layth	861–879	879	Died of sickness
Emir	Amr	–	?	Son of al-Layth	879–901	902	Captured by the Samanids, later executed on 20 April 902 in Baghdad
Emir	Tahir	Abu'l-Hasan	?	Son of Muhammad, son of Amr	901–908	?	Imprisoned in Baghdad
Emir	Al-Layth	–	?	Son of Ali, son of al-Layth	909–910	928	Dies of natural causes as a prisoner in Baghdad in 928
Emir	Muhammad	–	?	Son of Ali, son of al-Layth	910–911	?	Imprisoned in Baghdad
Emir	Amr	Abu Hafs	902	Son of Ya'qub	912–913	?	Overthrown by the Samanids
Emir	Ahmad	Abu Ja'far	June 21, 906	Son of Muhammad, son of Amr	923–963	March 31, 963	Killed by Abu'l-'Abbas and a Turkic Ghilman
Emir	Khalaf	Abu Ahmad	November 937	Son of Ahmad ibn Muhammad	963–1003	March 1009	Overthrown by the Ghaznavids in 1003, died in exile in 1009

Ghurid Kingdom (879–1215) :

Map of the Ghurid dynasty at its greatest extent by the year 1202

For more comprehensive lists of kings and sub-kings of this Era see:

- Muslim dynasties of Iran

Title	Name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Note
Ghurid dynasty (879–1215)						
Malik	Amir Suri	?	Father of Muhammad ibn Suri	?–?	?	was the first Malik of the Ghurid dynasty
Malik	Muhammad ibn Suri	?	Son of Amir Suri	?–1011	1011	Poisoned himself
Malik	Abu Ali ibn Muhammad	?	Son of Muhammad ibn Suri	1011–1035	1035	Overthrown and killed by his nephew Abbas ibn Shith
Malik	Abbas ibn Shith	?		1035–1060	1060	Deposed and killed by the Ghaznavids, replaced by his son Muhammad ibn Abbas

Malik	Muhammad ibn Abbas	?	Son of Abbas ibn Shith	1060–1080	1080	
Malik	Qutb al-din Hasan	?	Son of Muhammad ibn Abbas	1080–1100	1100	
Malik	Izz al-Din Husayn	?	Son of Qutb al-din Hasan	1100–1146	1146	
Malik	Sayf al-Din Suri	?	Son of Izz al-Din Husayn	1146–1149	1149	
Malik	Baha al-Din Sam I	?	Son of Izz al-Din Husayn	1149	1149	
Malik	Ala al-Din Husayn	?	Son of Izz al-Din Husayn	1149–1161	1161	
Malik	Sayf al-Din Muhammad	?	Son of Ala al-Din Husayn	1161–1163	1163	
Sultan	Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad	1139	Son of Baha al-Din Sam I	1163–1202	1202	
Sultan	Mu'izz al-Din	1149	Son of Baha al-Din Sam I	1173–1206	1206	
Sultan	Ghiyath al-Din Mahmud	?	Son of Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad	1206–1212	1212	
Sultan	Baha al-Din Sam III	?	Son of Ghiyath al-Din Mahmud	1212–1213	1213	
Sultan	Ala al-Din Atsiz	1159	Son of Ala al-Din Husayn	1213–1214	1214	
Sultan	Ala al-Din Ali	?	Son of Shuja al-Din Muhammad	1214–1215	1215	

Buyid Kingdom (934–1062) :

Buyid Dynasty at its greatest extent

The Buyid Kingdom was divided into a number of separate emirates, of which the most important were Fars, Ray, and Iraq. Generally, one of the emirs held a sort of primus inter pares supremacy over the rest, which would be marked by titles like Amir al-umara and Shahanshah.

For more comprehensive lists of kings and sub-kings of this Era see:

- Muslim dynasties of Iran

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Note
Buyids of Fars (933–1062)							
Emir, Amir al-umara	Imad al-Dawla	Abu'l-Hasan Ali	891	Son of Buya	934–949	949	Also Senior Buyid Emir (934-949)
Emir, Shahanshah	Adud al-Dawla	Fanna Khusraw	936	Son of Rukn al-Dawla and nephew of Imad al-Dawla	949–983	983	Senior Buyid Emir (976-983) and Emir of Iraq (978-983)
Emir, Amir al-umara	Sharaf al-Dawla	Abu'l-Fawaris Shirdil	962	Son of Adud al-Dawla	983–989	989	Also Senior Buyid Emir and Emir of Iraq (987-989)

Emir, King	Samsam al-Dawla	Abu Kalijar Marzuban	964	son of Adud al-Dawla	989–998	998	Also Emir of Iraq and self-proclaimed Senior Buyid Emir (983-986)
Emir, King, Shahanshah	Baha' al-Dawla	Abu Nasr Firuz	971	Son of Adud al-Dawla	998–1012	1012	Also Emir of Iraq (988-1012) and Senior Buyid Emir (997-1012)
Emir	Sultan al-Dawla	Abu Shuja	992	Son of Baha' al-Dawla	1012–1024	1024	Also Emir of Iraq and Senior Buyid Emir (1012-1021)
Emir, Shahanshah	Abu Kalijar	Marzuban	1011	Son of Sultan al-Dawla	1024–1048	1048	Also Emir of Kerman (1028-1048), Senior Buyid Emir (1037-1048) and Emir of Iraq (1044-1048)
Emir	Abu Mansur Fulad Sutun		?	Son of Abu Kalijar	1048–1054	1062	Lost Fars to Abu Sa'd Khusrau Shah
Emir	Abu Sa'd Khusrau Shah		?	Son of Abu Kalijar	1051–1054	?	Lost Fars to Abu Mansur Fulad Sutun
Emir	Abu Mansur Fulad Sutun		?	Son of Abu Kalijar	1054–1062	1062	Killed by the Shabankara tribal chief Fadluya
Buyids of Rey, Isfahan, and Hamadan (935–1038)							
Emir, Amir al-umara	Rukn al-Dawla	Abu Ali Hasan	898	Son of Buya	935–976	976	Also Senior Buyid Emir (949-976)
Emir	Fakhr al-Dawla	Abu'l-Hasan Ali	952	Son of Rukn al-Dawla	976–980 *and* 983–997	980	Also Emir of Hamadan & Tabaristan (984-997) and Senior Buyid Emir (991-997)
Emir	Mu'ayyad	Abu	941	Son of Rukn	976–983	983	Also Emir of

	al-Dawla	Mansur		al-Dawla			Hamadan (976–983), Jibal (977–983), Tabaristan (980–983), and Gorgan (981–983)
Emir	Majd al-Dawla	Abu Taleb Rostam	993	Son of Fakhr al-Dawla	997–1029	1029	Only in Rey, briefly self-proclaimed Senior Buyid Emir
Emir	Shams al-Dawla	Abu Taher	?	Son of Fakhr al-Dawla	997–1021	1021	Only in Isfahan and Hamaedan, briefly self-proclaimed Senior Buyid Emir
Emir	Sama' al-Dawla	Abu'l-Hasan Ali	?	Son of Shams al-Dawla	1021–1023	1023	Only in Hamadan, Deposed by Kakuyids
Buyids of Iraq and Khuzistan (945–1055)							
Emir, Amir al-umara	Mu'izz al-Dawla	Abu'l-Husayn Ahmad	915	Son of Buya	945–966	966	
Emir, Amir al-umara	Izz al-Dawla	Abu Mansur Bakhtiyar	943	Son of Mu'izz al-Dawla	966–979	979	Self-proclaimed Senior Buyid Emir (976-978)
Emir, Shahanshah	Adud al-Dawla	Fanna Khusraw	937	Son of Rukn al-Dawla	977–983	983	Also Emir of Fars (949-983) and Senior Buyid Emir (976-983)
Emir, King	Samsam al-Dawla	Abu Kalijar Marzban	964	Son of Adud al-Dawla	983–987	998	Also self-proclaimed Senior Buyid Emir (983-986) and Emir of Fars & Kerman (989-998)
Emir, Amir al-umara	Sharaf al-Dawla	Abu'l-Fawaris Shirdil	962	Son of Adud al-Dawla	987–989	989	Also Emir of Fars (983-989) and Senior Buyid Emir (987-989)
Emir	Baha' al-	Abu Nasr	970	Son of Adud	989–	1012	Also Senior Buyid

	Dawla	Firuz		al-Dawla	1012		Emir (997-1012) and Emir of Fars (999-1012)
Emir	Sultan al-Dawla	Abu Shuja	992	Son of Baha' al-Dawla	1012–1021	1024	Also Senior Buyid Emir (1012-1021) and Emir of Fars (1012-1024)
Emir, Shahanshah, King	Musharrif al-Dawla	Abu 'Ali	1002	Son of Baha' al-Dawla	1021–1025	1025	Closest thing to Senior Buyid Emir (1024-1025)
Emir	Jalal al-Dawla	Abu Tahir Jalal al-Dawla	994	Son of Baha' al-Dawla	1027–1043	1043	
Emir, Shahanshah	Abu Kalijar	Marzuban	1011	Son of Sultan al-Dawla	1043–1048	1048	Also Emir of Fars (1024-1048), Emir of Kerman (1028-1048) and Senior Buyid Emir (1037-1048)
Emir	Al-Malik al-Rahim	Abu Nasr Khusrau Firuz	?	Son of Abu Kalijar	1048–1055	1058	Also Senior Buyid Emir (1051-1055). Deposed by Tughril of the Seljuqs

Ziyarid Kingdom (928–1043) :

Title	Regnal name	Personal Name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death
Abolhajjaj, Emir	Mardavij		?	son of Ziyar	928–934	934
Abutaher	Voshmgir		?	son of Ziyar	934–967	967
Zahir od-Dowleh	Bisotoon		?	son of Voshmgir	967–976	976
Shams ol-Ma'ali, Abolhasan	Qabus		?	son of Voshmgir	976–1012	1012

Falak ol-Ma'ali	Manuchehr		?	son of Qabus	1012–1031	1031
Sharaf ol-Ma'ali	Anushiravan		?	son of Manuchehr	1031–1043	1043
Onsor ol-Ma'ali	Keikavus		?	son of Eskandar son of Qabus	?	?
	Gilanshah		?	son of Keykavous	?	?

Seljuk Empire (1029–1194) :

A map showing the Great Seljuk Empire at its height, upon the death of Malik Shah I in 1092

For more comprehensive lists of kings and sub-kings of this Era see :

- Muslim dynasties of Iran

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Seljuqs (1029–1191)							
Beg, Sultan	Rukn ad-Dunya wa'd-Din	Toğrül I Abu Talib Mohammad	995	Son of Mikha'il son of Seljuq	1029–1063	1063	
Sultan	ʿAdud ad-Dawla	Alp Arslan Abu Shujaʿ Mohammad	1039	Son of Chaghri Beg Dawud brother of Toğrül I	1063–1072	1072	
Sultan	Jalal ad-Dawla wa'd-Din	Malik Shah I Abu'l-Fath Hasan	1055	Son of Alp Arslan	1072–1092	1092	Killed by Assassins
Sultan	Nasir ad-Dawla wa'd-Din	Abu'l-Qasim Mahmud I	1086	Son of Malik Shah I	1092–1094	1094	
Sultan	Rukn ad-Dunya wa'd-Din	Abu'l-Muzaffar Barkiyaruq	1080	Son of Malik Shah I	1094–1105	1105	
Sultan	Ghiyath ad-Dunya wa'd-Din	Abu Shuja Muhammad I Tapar	1082	Son of Malik Shah I	1105–1118	1118	
Sultan	Muglith ad-Dunya wa'd-Din	Mahmud II	1104	Son of Muhammad I	1118–1131	1131	Dominated by his uncle Sanjar and killed in a rebellion against him.
Sultan	Rukn ad-Dunya wa'd-Din	Abu Talib Toghrul II	1109	Son of Muhammad I	1132–1134	1134	Ruled only in Iraq, dominated by his uncle Ahmed Sanjar
Sultan	As-	Abu'l-Harith	1087	Son of Malik	1097–1157	1157	Ruled in

	Salatin Muʿizz ad-Dunyā wa'd-Dīn	Ahmed Sanjar		Shah I			Khorasan, dominating a series of nephews in Iraq.
Sultan	Ghiyath ad-Dawla wa'd-Din	Abu'l-Fath Mas'ud	1109	Son of Muhammad I	1134–1152	1152	Ruled over the western portion of the empire. Preoccupations in the east meant Sanjar was unable to dominate him.
Sultan	Mugith ad-Dunya wa'd-Din	Malik Shah II	1128	Son of Mahmud II	1152–1153 *and* 1160	1153	Deposed by Khass Bey Regained throne but then deposed by the people of Isfahan after 16 days.
Sultan	Ghiyath ad-Dunya wa'd-Din	Abu Shuja Muhammad II	1128	Son of Mahmud II	1153–1160	1160	Rule contested with his uncle Sulayman Shah (1153-1155)
Sultan	Mu'izz ad-Dunya wa'd-Din	Abu'l-Harith Sulayman Shah	1118	Son of Muhammad I	1153–1155 *and* 1160–1161	1162	Rule contested with his nephew Muhammad II Deposed by Inanj, Lord of Reyy and the court officials
Sultan	Rukn ad-Dunya wa'd-Din	Arslan	1134	Son of Toghrul II	1161–1176	1176	*De facto* power in the hands of Ildeniz (1160-1174) and his son Pahlavan (1174-1176)

Sultan	Rukn ad-Dunya wa'd-Din	Abu Talib Toghrul III	?	Son of Arslan	1176–1194	1194	*De facto* power in the hands of Pahlavan (1176-1186) and Qizil Arslan (1186-1188). Deposed by Qizil Arslan in 1191. Killed by Khwarazm Shah Tekish
Sultan		Sanjar II	?	Son of Sulayman Shah	1189–1191	1191	*De facto* power in the hands of Qizil Arslan (1189-1191). Deposed by Qizil Arslan in 1191.
Eldiguzids (1191)							
Sultan		Qizil Arslan	?	Son of Ildeniz	1191	1191	Held *de facto* power (1186-1188). Deposed Qizil Arslan in 1191, declared himself Sultan and died an hour before his coronation.

Khwarazmian Empire (1153–1220) :

Khwarazmian Empire at its greatest extent

An empire built from Khwarezm, covering part of Iran and neighbouring Central Asia.

For more comprehensive lists of kings and sub-kings of this Era see:

- Muslim dynasties of Iran

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family Relations	Reign	Death	Note
Khwarazmian dynasty (1153–1220)							
Sultan	Ala ad-Dunya wa ad-Din Abul-Muzaffar	Atsiz	1097/1105	son of Muhammad I of Khwarazm	1153–1156	1156	Ruling in Khwārazm from 1127
Sultan	Taj ad-Dunya wa ad-Din Abul-Fath	Il-Arslan	?	son of Atsiz	1156–1172	1172	
Sultan	Ala ad-Dunya wa ad-Din Abul-Muzaffar	Tekish	?	son of Il-Arslan	1172–1200	1200	With opposition from Sultan shah
Shah	Ala ad-Dunya	Muhammad	?	son of	1200–	1220	Eliminated by

	wa ad-Din Abul-Fath	Sanjar		Tekish	1220		the Mongols
Jalal od-Din, Sultan	Jalal ad-Dunya wa ad-Din Abul-Muzaffar	Mingburnu	?	son of Muhammad	1220–1231	1231	Reign largely guerilla warfare against the Mongol conquerors

Mongol Empire (1220–1256) :

Mongol Empire at its greatest extent

For more comprehensive lists of kings and sub-kings of this Era see :

- Muslim dynasties of Iran

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Khan	Genghis	Temujin	1162	Son of Yesugei Baghatur	1220–1227	1227	Ruling in Mongolia from 1206
Khan		Tolui	1192	Son of Genghis	25 August 1227 – 13 September 1229	13 September 1229	Regent

Khan		Ögedei	c. 1186	Son of Genghis	13 September 1229 – 11 December 1241	1232	
Khatun		Töregene	?	Wife of Ögedei	1242 – March 1246	?	Regent
Khan		Güyük	c. 1206	Son of Ögedei and Töregene	1246–1248	1248	
Khatun		Oghul Qaimish	?	Wife of Güyük	1248–1251	1251	Regent
Khan		Möngke	10 January 1209	Son of Tolui	1 July 1251 – 11 August 1259	11 August 1259	

Ilkhanate and successor kingdoms (1256–1501) :

Ilkhanate at its greatest extent

For more comprehensive lists of kings and sub-kings of this Era see:

Muslim dynasties of Iran

Ilkhanate (1256–1357) :

Title	Throne name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Khan, Ilkhan		Hulagu	c. 1217	Son of Tolui	1256 – 8 February 1265	8 February 1265	
Khan, Ilkhan		Abaqa	1234	Son of Hulagu	1265 – 1 April 1282	1 April 1282	
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan	Ahmad	Nicholas Tekuder	?	Son of Hulagu	1282–1284	1284	Killed by Arghun
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan		Arghun	c. 1258	Son of Abaqa	1284 – 7 March 1291	7 March 1291	
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan		Gaykhatu	?	Son of Abaqa	1291–1295	1295	Killed by general Taghachar
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan		Baydu	?	Son of Taraqai son of Hulagu	1295	1295	Executed by Ghazan
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan	Mahmud	Ghazan	5 November 1271	Son of Arghun	1295–1304	1304	
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan,	Muhammad Khodabandeh	Öljaitü	1280	Son of Arghun	1304 – 16 December 1316	16 December 1316	
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan	Abu Sa'id	Ala' ad-Din Bahadur	2 June 1305	Son of Öljaitü	1316 – 1 December 1335	1 December 1335	
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan	Arpa Ke'un	Mu'izz ad-Din Mahmud	?	Son of Suseh son of Munkqan son of Malik-	1335 – 10 April 1336	10 April 1336	Killed in battle by Ali Padshah

				Temur son of Ariq Böke son of Tolui			
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan	Nasir ad-Din	Musa	?	Son of Ali son of Baydu	12 April 1336 – 1337	1337	Puppet of Ali Padshah, fled after being defeated by the Jalayirid Hasan Buzurg
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan		Togha Temür	?	Son of Sudi son of Bababahath or son of Abokan son of Amakan son of Tur son of Jujiqisar son of Yesugei Baghatur	1335–1353	1353	In opposition to Jalayirid and Chupanid candidates, killed by the Sarbadar Yahya Karawi
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan,	Muzaffar ad-Din	Muhamma d	?	Son of Yul Qotloq son of Il Temur son of Ambarji son of Mengu Temur son of Hulagu	1336–1338	1338	Puppet of Hasan Buzurg, executed by the Chupanid Hasan Kucek
Khatun		Sati beg	c. 1300	Daughter of Öljaitü	1338–1339	After 1345	Puppet of Hasan Kucek, who deposed her.
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan,	Izz ad-Din	Jahan Temür	?	Son of Ala-Fireng son of Gaykhatu	1339–1340	?	Puppet of Hasan Buzurg, who

							deposed him for Togha Temür.
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan		Suleiman	?	Husband of Sati beg and son of Yusef Shah son of Soga son of Yeshmut son of Hulagu	May 1339–1345	?	Puppet of Hasan Kucek, fled to Diyarbakr in the disorder after his death.
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan		Anushirwan	?	?	1344–1356	?	Puppet of the Chupanid Malek Ashraf
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan		Luqman	?	Son of Togha Temür	1353–1388	?	Puppet of Timur
Khan, Ilkhan, Sultan		Ghazan II	?	?	1356–1357	?	Puppet of Malek Ashraf

Sarbadars (1332–1386) :

Sarbadars in 1345

Title	Name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Amir	Abd al-Razzaq ibn Fazlullah	?		1337–1338	1338	Revolted against Togha Temür, stabbed to death by his brother
Amir	Wajih ad-Din Masud ibn Fazlullah	?	brother of Abd al-Razzaq	1338–1344	1344	Captured by the Paduspanids and executed.
Amir	Muhammad Aytimur (1343–1346)	?	Unrelated to predecessors	1344–1346	1346	Overthrown and executed
Amir	Kulu Isfendiyar	?	Unrelated to predecessors	1346–c. 1347	c. 1347	
Amir	Shams al-Din ibn Fazl Allah	?	brother of Abd al-Razzaq	c. 1347	?	Forced to abdicate by successor
Amir	Khwaja Shams al-Din 'Ali	?	Unrelated to predecessors	1347–1351/1352	1351/1352	Assassinated by a disgruntled

						official
Amir	Yahya Karawi	?	Unrelated to predecessors	1351/1352–1355/1356	1355/1356	Eliminated Togha Temür, assassinated.
Amir	Zahir al-Din Karawi	?	Nephew of Yahya Karawi	1355/1356	1355/1356	Deposed by vizier
Amir	Haidar Qassab	?	Unrelated to predecessors	1355/1356	1356	Assassinated by a Turkish slave
Amir	Lutf Allah	?	Son of Wajih ad-Din Masud	1356–1357/1358 or 1361	1357/1358 or 1361	Deposed and executed by his vizier
Amir	Hasan al-Damghani	?	Unrelated to predecessors	1357/1358 or 1361–1361/1362	1361/1362	Overthrown by Dervish rebels
Amir	Khwaja 'Ali-yi Mu'ayyad ibn Masud	?	Unrelated to predecessors	1361/1362–1376/1377 *and* 1376/1377–1381	?	Restored, became vassal of Tamerlane in 1381
Amir	Rukn ad-Din	?	Unrelated to predecessors	1376/1377	?	Installed by Dervish rebels.

Chupanids (1335–1357) :

Chupanids at their greatest extent

Title	Name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Amir	Hassan Kuchak	c. 1319	Son of Timurtash son of Chupan	July 16, 1338 – December 15, 1343	December 15, 1343	Ruled on behalf of his Il-Khanate puppets Sati Beg and Suleiman Khan.
Amir	Yagi Basti	?	Son of Chupan	1343–1344	1344	Assassinated by his co-ruler Malek Ashraf.
Amir	Surgan	c. 1320	Son of Chupan and Sati Beg	1343–1345	1345	Driven out by his co-ruler Malek Ashraf.
Amir	Malek Ashraf	?	Brother of Hassan Kuchak	1343–1357	1357	Ruled on behalf of his Il-Khanate puppets Anushirwan. Hung by Jani Beg of the Golden

						Horde.
Amir	Temürtas	?	Son of Malek Ashraf	1360	1360	Short-lived puppet of the Golden Horde.

Jalayirids (1335–1432) :

Jalayirids at their greatest extent

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Ulus Beg	Taj-ud-Din	Hasan Buzurg	?	Son-in-law of Chupan	1336–1356	1356	Ruled through Ilkhanate puppets Muhammad Khan and Jahan Temür.
Bahadur Khan	Mu'izz-ud-dunya wa'd-Din	Shaikh Uvais	c. 1337–1374	Son of Hasan Buzurg	1356–1374	1374	
Shaikh		Hasan	?	Son of Shaikh Uvais	1374–1374	1374	Killed by the Amirs
Shaikh	Jalal-ud-	Husain I (1374–	?	Son of Shaikh	1374–	1382	Executed by his rebellious

	Din	1382)		Uvais	1382		brother Ahmed
Shaikh		Bayazid	?	Son of Shaikh Uvais	1382–1384	1384	In opposition to Husain and Ahmed
Sultan	Ghiyath ud-Din	Ahmad	?	Son of Shaikh Uvais	1383–1410	1410	In exile 1393-4, 1400-2, 1403-5. Killed in battle by Qara Yusuf
Sultan	Ala ud-Dunya	Shah Walad	?	Son of Ali, son of Uvais	1410–1411	1411	
Sultan		Mahmud	?	Son of Shah Walad	1411	1425	Under regency of Tandu Khatun
Sultan		Uvais	?	Son of Shah Walad	1415–1421	1421	
Sultan		Muhammad	?	Son of Shah Walad	1421	1421	
Sultan		Mahmud	?	Son of Shah Walad	1421–1425	1425	Second reign
		Hussain	?	Son of Ala-ud-Dawlah, son of Ahmed	1425–1432	1432	Defeated by Kara Koyunlu

Injuids (1335–1357) :

Injuids at their greatest extent

Title	Name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
	Sharaf ad-Din Mahmud Shah	?		1304–1335	1335	Highly autonomous master of the Ilkhanate royal estates (the *injü*), removed by Abu Sa'id, executed by Arpa Ke'un.
Amir	Ghiyath ad-Din Kai-Khusrau	?	Son of Mahmud Shah	1335–1338/9	1338/9	
Amir	Jalal ad-Din Mas'ud Shah	?	Son of Mahmud Shah	1338–1342	1342	In opposition to Kai-Khusrau. Jalayirid partisan. Assassinated by Chupanids.
Amir	Shams ad-Din Muhammad	?	Son of Mahmud Shah	1339/40	1339/40	In opposition to Mas'ud Shah. Murdered by his Chupanid

						supporter.
Amir	Shaikh Abu Ishaq	?	Son of Mahmud Shah	1343–1357	?	Defeated & executed by the Muzaffarids

Muzaffarids (1314–1393) :

Muzaffarids at its greatest extent

Title	Name	Birth	Reign	Death	Notes
Emir	Mubariz ad-Din Muhammad ibn al-Muzaffar	1301	1314–1358	1368	Founder of the Muzaffarid dynasty
Emir	Shah Shuja	?	1358–1384	1384	
Emir	Zain al-Abidin	?	1384–1387	1387	
Emir	Shah Yahya	?	1387–1391	1391	Only ruled in Shiraz
Emir	Shah Mansur	?	1391–1393	1393	

Kara Koyunlu (1375–1468) :

Kara Koyunlu at its greatest extent

Title	Regnal Name	Personal Name	Birth	Reign	Death	Family relations	Notes
Bey	Qara Muhammad	*Qara Muhammad* Turmush ibn Bairam Khwaja	?	1378–1388	1388	First Bey of Kara Koynulu	
Bey	Qara Yusuf	Abu Nasr Qara Yusuf Nuyan ibn Muhammad	?	1388–1420	1420		Reign ended by Timurid invasion
Bey	Qara Iskander	Qara Iskander ibn Yusuf	?	1420–1436	1436		Killed
Bey	Jahan Shah	Muzaffar al-Din Jahan Shah ibn Yusuf	1397	1438 – 11 November 1467	11 November 1467	Son of Qara Yusuf	Killed by Uzun Hasan of the Ak Koyunlu
Bey	Hasan Ali	Hasan Ali ibn Jahan Shah	?	11 November 1467 –	1468	Son of Jahan	Killed by Uzun Hasan of the

				1468		Shah	Ak Koyunlu

Aq Koyunlu (1378–1497) :

Ak Koyunlu at the year of Uzun Hasan's death, 1478

Title	Regnal Name	Personal Name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Bey	Qara Osman	Qara Yuluk (Nickname)	?		1378–1435	1435	For aiding Timur, he was given Diyarbakir in 1402
Bey	Ali	Nur al-Din Ali ibn Qara Yülük	?	Son of Qara Osman	1435–1438	1438	
Bey	Hamza		?		1403–1435	1444	
Bey	Jahangir	M'uizz al-Din Jahangir ibn Ali ibn Qara Yülük	?	Son of Qara Osman	1444–1453	1453	
Bey	Uzun Hassan	Uzun Hassan ibn Jahangir	?	Son of Jahangir	1453 – January 6, 1478	January 6, 1478	

Bey	Khalil	Khalil ibn Uzun Hasan	?	Son of Uzun Hasan	1478–1479	1479	
Bey	Yaqub	Yaqub ibn Uzun Hasan	?	Son of Uzun Hasan	1479–1490	1490	
Bey	Baysongur	Baysongur ibn Yaqub	?	Son of Yaqub	1490–1491	1491	
Bey	Rostam	Rostam ibn Maqsud	?	Son of Maqsud	1491–1497	1497	
Bey	Ahmad Govde	Ahmad Govde ibn Muhammad	?	Son of Muhammad	1497	1497	

Timurid Empire (1370–1507) :

Locator map of the Timurid Empire, c. 1400

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Timurid dynasty (1370–1507)							
Emir, Beg, Mirza, Gurkani	Timur	Tarmashirin Khan Barlas	9 April 1336	Son of Muhammad Taraghai	1370 – 18 February 1405	18 February 1405	
Emir	Pir Muhammad	Pir Muhammad bin Jahangir	c. 1374	Grandson of Timur	18 February 1405 – 22 February 1407	22 February 1407	
Emir, Sultan, Shah	Khalil Sultan	Khalil Sultan bin Miran Shah	c. 1384	Grandson of Timur	18 February 1405 – 13 May 1409	13 May 1409	
Mirza	Shah Rukh	Shah Rukh	30 August 1377	Son of Timur	18 February 1405 – 12 March 1447	12 March 1447	
Mirza, Sultan	Ulugh Beg	Mirza Muhammad Tāraghay	22 March 1394	Son of Shahrukh Mirza	12 March 1447 – 27 October 1449	27 October 1449	Deposed and murdered by his successor
Rulers in Transoxiana (1449–1469)							
Mirza, Sultan	Abdal-Latif	Padarkush	c. 1429	Son of Ulugh Beg	27 October 1449 – 9 May 1450	9 May 1450	Murdered by Amirs
Mirza	'Abdullah		c. 1410	Grandson of Shah Rukh	9 May 1450 – June 1451	June 1451	Deposed and executed by his successo

							r
Mirza	Abu Sa'id		1424	Nephew of Ulugh Beg and great-grandson of Timur	June 1451 – 17 February 1469	17 February 1469	Conquered Khurasan in 1459, realm disintegrates at his death.
Rulers in Khurasan (1449–1459, 1459–1507)							
Mirza	Abul-Qasim Babur		?	Grandson of Shah Rukh	1449 – 1457	1457	
Mirza	Shah Mahmud		c. 1446	Son of Babur	1457 – 1457	1460s	Expelled by successor
Mirza	Ibrahim		?	Nephew of Babur	1457 – March 1459	March 1459	Died at Battle of Sarakhs
Interregnum (1459–1469)							
Mirza, Sultan	Husayn Bayqarah		June/July 1438	Great-grandson of Timur	24 March 1469 – 4 May 1506	4 May 1506	
Mirza	Badi' al-Zaman		?	Son of Husayn	4 May 1506 – 1507	1517	Driven out by Uzbeks
Uzbeks (1507–1510)							
Khan	Shaybani Khan	Abul Fath Muhammad	c. 1451		1507 – 2 December 1510	2 December 1510	Died at the Battle of Marv

Note : Medieval Persia is generally agreed to have ended with rise of the Safavid Empire

Safavid Empire (1501–1736) :

The maximum extent of the Safavid Empire under Shah Abbas I

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Safavid dynasty (1501–1736)							
Shah, Sultan, Kagan-i Suleyman shan	Ismail I		1487	son of Sultan Heidar	7 November 1502 – 23 May 1524	23 May 1524	
Shah, Sahib-i-Qiran, Sultan bar Salatin, Kagan-i Suleyman shan	Tahmasp I		1514	son of Ismail I	23 May 1525 – 25 May 1576	25 May 1576	
Shah	Ismail II		1537	son of Tahmasp I	25 May 1576 – 24 November 1577	24 November 1577	Poisoned (?)
Shah, Khodabandeh, Ashraf, Soltan	Mohammad I		1532	son of Tahmasp I	25 May 1576 – 1 October 1587	1596	Deposed

Shahanshah, Sultan, Great	Abbas I the Great		1571	son of Mohammad I	1 October 1587 – 19 January 1629	19 January 1629	
Shah, Mirza	Safi	Sam Mirza	1611	son of Mohammd Baqer (Safi) Mirza son of Abbas I	19 January 1629 – 12 May 1642	12 May 1642	
Shah	Abbas II		1632	son of Safi	12 May 1642 – 26 October 1666	26 October 1666	
Shah, Hakem-ol Hokama	Suleiman I	Safi Mirza	1645	son of Abbas II	26 October 1666 – 29 July 1694	29 July 1694	
Shah, Sultan, Sadr-ol Hakem	Sultan Husayn		1668	son of Suleiman I	29 July 1694 – 11 September 1722	11 September 1722	Deposed & then killed by Ashraf Hotak
Afghan Rebellion							
Shah	Mahmud Hotak		1697?	son-in-law of Sultan Husayn son of Mirwais Khan Hotak	23 October 1722 – 22 April 1725	22 April 1725	Recognised as Shah of Persia after the Siege of Isfahan
Shah	Ashraf Hotak		?	cousin of Mahmud Hotak	22 April 1725 – 5 October	5 October 1729	Ruled in opposition to

					1729		Tahmasp II and lost control of Persia after the Battle of Damghan
Safavid Restoration							
Shah	Tahmasp II		1704	son of Sultan Husayn	11 September 1722 – 16 April 1732	1740	Ruled in opposition to Mahmud Hotak, later deposed & then killed by Nader
Shah	Abbas III		1730	son of Tahmasp II	16 April 1732 – 22 January 1736	1739	Under control of Nader. Deposed & then killed by Nader

Afsharid Empire (1736–1796) :

Afsharid dynasty at its greatest extent

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Family relations	Reign	Death	Notes
Afsharid dynasty (1736–1796)							
Shahanshah, Sultan, Hakem-ol Hokama, Hazrat-e Ashraf, Zel- ol Allah	Nader Shah	Nadhar Qoli Khan	1698	son of Imam Qoli Beig Afshar	22 January 1736 – 19 June 1747	19 June 1747	Before crowning his title was Tahmasp Qoli Khan. Killed
Shah	Adil Shah	Ali Qoli Beig	1719/20	son of Mohammad Ebrahim Khan brother of Nader	19 June 1747 – 29 July 1748	1749	Deposed, blinded & then killed by Ebrahim
Shah	Ebrahim Afshar	Mohammd Ali Beig	1724	son of Mohammad Ebrahim Khan brother of Nader	29 July 1748 – 3 September 1748	1749	Deposed & then killed by Shahrukh Afshar

Shah	Shahrukh Afshar		1734	son of Reza Qoli Mirza son of Nader. His mother was Fatemeh Soltan Beigom daughter of Sultan Husayn I Safavi	3 September 1748 – 1796	1796	Deposed & blinded by Suleiman II (1749), restored (1750)
Brief Safavid control (1749–1750)							
Shah	Suleiman II of Persia	Mir Sayyed Mohammad Marashi	?	Pretender to the Safavid throne	1749–1750	?	Removed and blinded
Afsharid restoration (1750–1796)							
Shah	Shahrukh Afshar		1734	son of Reza Qoli Mirza son of Nader. His mother was Fatemeh Soltan Beigom daughter of Sultan Husayn I Safavi	3 September 1748 – 1796	1796	Deposed & blinded by Suleiman II (1749), restored (1750)

Zand Kingdom (1751–1794) :

Map of the Zand dynasty at Lotf Ali Khan time

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Reign	Death	Family relations	Notes
Zand dynasty (1751–1794)							
Khan, Vakil e-Ra'aayaa	Karim Khan Zand	Mohammad Karim	1705	1751 – 6 March 1779	6 March 1779	son of Inaq Khan & Bay Agha	
Khan	Mohammad Ali Khan Zand		1760	6 March 1779 – 19 June 1779	19 June 1779	son of Karim	
Khan	Abol-Fath Khan Zand		1755	6 March 1779 – 22 August 1779	1787	son of Karim	
Khan	Zaki Khan Zand		?	6 March 1779 – 22 August 1779	22 August 1779	son of Budaq Khan & Bay Agha	
Khan	Sadeq Khan Zand	Mohammad Sadeq	?	22 August 1779 – 14 March 1781	1782	son of Inaq Khan & Bay Agha	

Khan	Ali-Morad Khan Zand		1720	14 March 1781 – 11 February 1785	11 February 1785	son of Allah Morad (Qeytas) Khan Zand Hazareh	
Khan	Jafar Khan		?	18 February 1785 – 23 January 1789	23 January 1789	son of Sadeq	
Khan	Sayed Morad Khan		?	23 January 1789 – 10 May 1789	10 May 1789	son of Khoda Morad Khan Zand Hazareh	
Khan	Lotf Ali Khan		1769	23 January 1789 – 20 March 1794	20 March 1794	son of Ja'far	Deposed, blinded & then killed by Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar

Qajar Empire (1794–1925) :

Map of the Qajar dynasty at Mohammad Khan time

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Reign	Death	Family relations	Note
Qajar dynasty (1794–1925)							
Khan, Shahanshah, Khaqan	Mohammad Khan Qajar	Agha Mohammad Khan	14 March 1742	20 March 1794 – 17 June 1797	17 June 1797	son of Mohammad Hassan Khan Qajar	Gelded prior to accession. Assassinated
Shahanshah, Khaqan, Soltane Saheb Qaran	Fath-Ali Shah Qajar	Baba Khan	5 September 1772	17 June 1797 – 23 October 1834	23 October 1834	son of Hosein Qoli Khan Jahansuz brother of Mohammad	
Shahanshah, Khaqan	Mohammad Shah Qajar	Mohammad Mirza	5 January 1808	23 October 1834 – 5 September 1848	5 September 1848	son of Abbas Mirza Nayeb os-Saltaneh son of Fath-Ali	
Shahanshah, Khaqan, Soltane Saheb Qaran, Qebleye alam	Naser al-Din Shah Qajar		16 July 1831	5 September 1848 – 1 May 1896	1 May 1896	son of Mohammad and Mahd-e Olia	Assassinated at Shah-Abdol-Azim by Mirza Reza Kermani
Shahanshah, Khaqan	Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar		23 March 1853	1 May 1896 – 3 January 1907	3 January 1907	son of Naser al-Din	
Shahanshah	Mohammad Ali Shah Qajar		21 June 1872	3 January 1907 – 16 July 1909	5 April 1925	son of Mozaffar ad-Din	Deposed
Shahanshah	Ahmad Shah Qajar		21 January 1898	16 July 1909 – 15 December 1925	21 February 1930	son of Mohammad Ali	Deposed

Pahlavi Empire (1925–1979) :

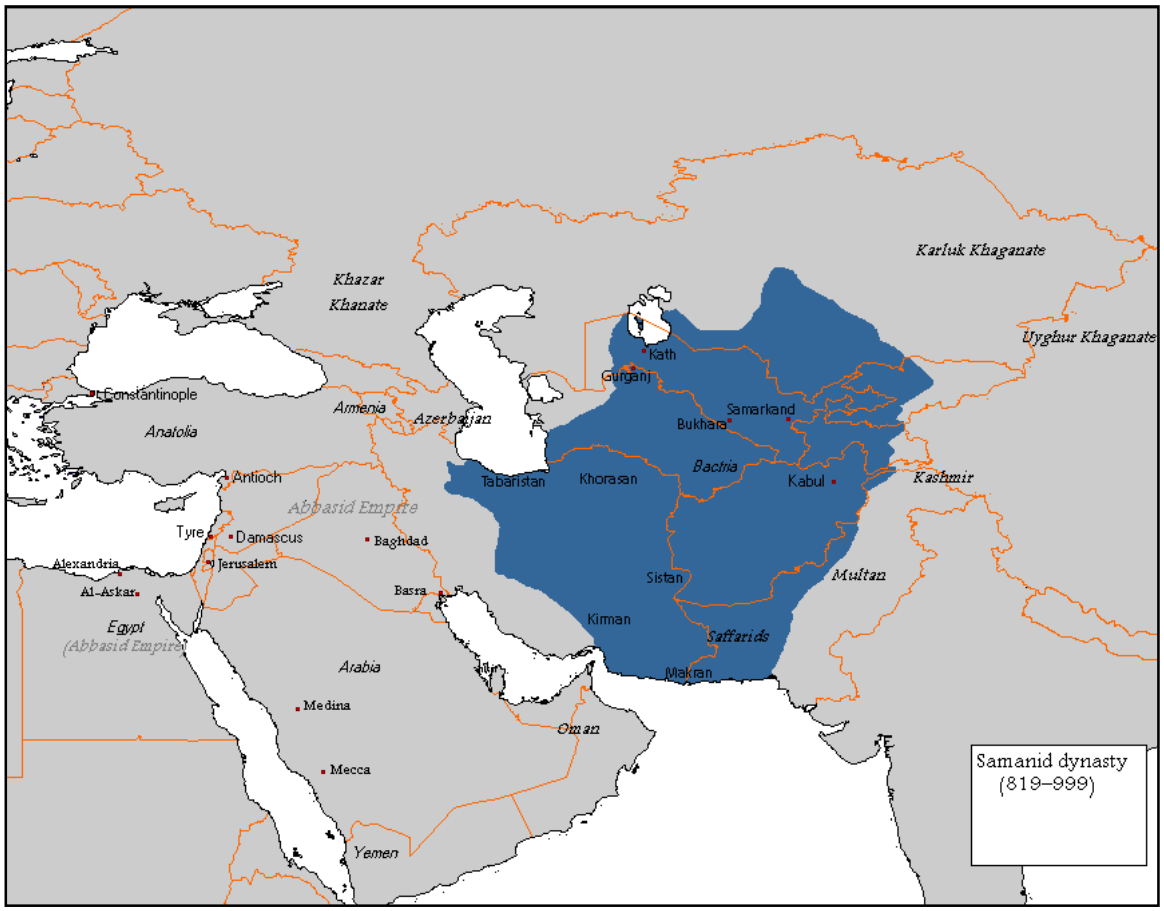
Map of the Pahlavi dynasty

Title	Regnal name	Personal name	Birth	Reign	Death	Family relations	Notes
Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979)							
Shahanshah	Reza Shah	Reza Khan (later Pahlavi)	15 March 1878	15 December 1925 – 16 September 1941	26 July 1944	son of Abbas Ali	Abdicated during the Anglo-Soviet invasion
Shahanshah Ariamehr	Mohammad Reza Shah	Mohammad Reza Pahlavi	26 October 1919	16 September 1941 – 11 February 1979	27 July 1980	son of Reza Shah	Deposed during the Iranian Revolution

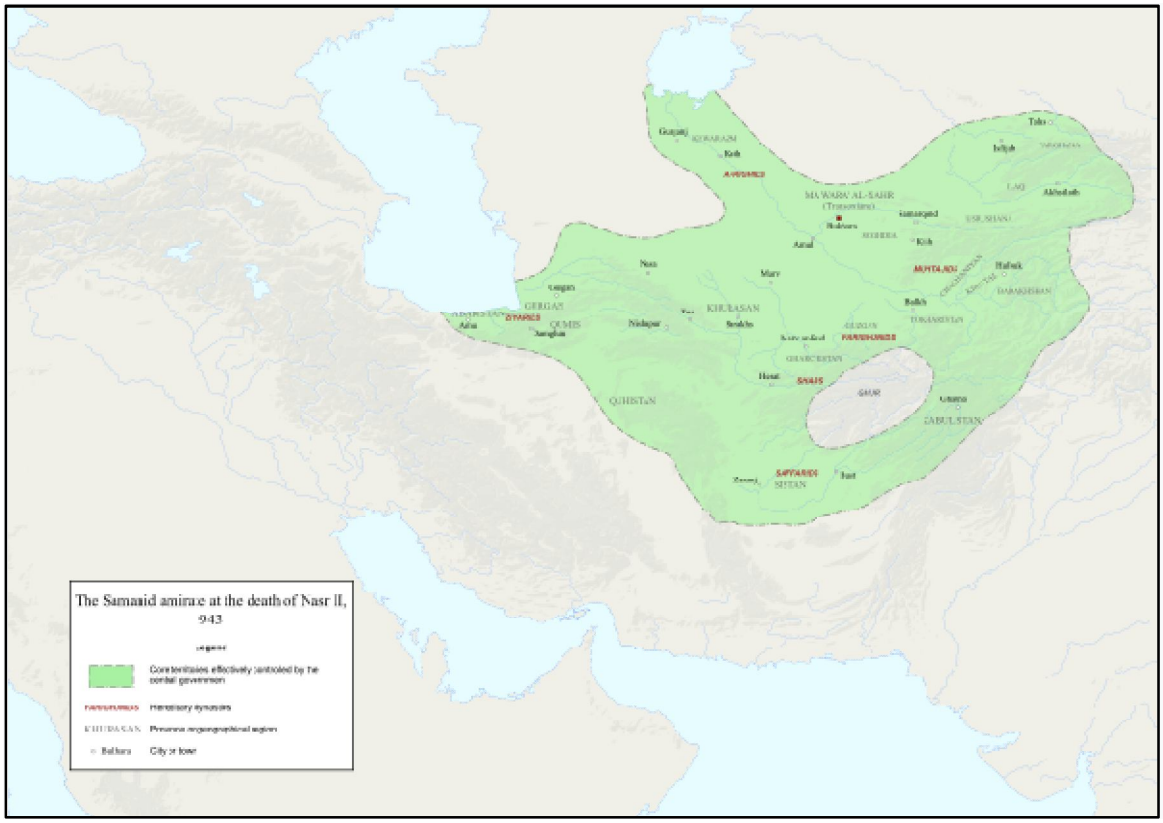
Source :

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_monarchs_of_Persia#Sasanian_Empire_(224%E2%80%93651)

42. Samanid Empire :



The Samanid Empire at its greatest extent under Isma'il ibn Ahmad



Samanid Empire انی‌سامان	
819–999	
Extent of the Samanid realm at the death of Nasr II in 943	
Status	Dependency of the Abbasid Caliphate (819–900) Autonomous state (900–999)
Capital	Samarkand (819–892) Bukhara (892–999)
Common languages	Persian (lingua franca, court, academia, literary), Arabic (theology)
Religion	Sunni Islam (minority Shia Islam, Nestorianism, Zoroastrianism)
Government	Amirate
Amir	
• 819–864/5	Ahmad ibn Asad
• 999	'Abd al-Malik II
Historical era	Middle Ages
• Established	819
• Disestablished	999
Area	
928 est.	2,850,000 km^2 (1,100,000 sq mi)

Preceded by	Succeeded by
Saffarid dynasty Abbasid Caliphate Alid dynasties of northern Iran Banijurids Bukhar Khudahs Principality of Ushrusana Principality of Farghana Sogdia	Ghaznavid dynasty Karakhanids Banu Ilyas Farighunids Muhtajids Buyid dynasty

The Samanid Empire (Persian: سامانیان, *Sāmāniyān*, also known as the Samanian Empire, Samanid dynasty, Samanid Emirate, or simply Samanids) was a Sunni Iranian empire from 819 to 999.

The empire was centered in Khorasan and Transoxiana during its existence; at its greatest extent, the empire encompassed all of today's Afghanistan, large parts of Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and parts of Kazakhstan and Pakistan.

The Samanid state was founded by four brothers; Nuh, Ahmad, Yahya, and Ilyas—each of them ruled their own territory under Abbasid suzerainty. In 892, Isma'il ibn Ahmad (892–907) united the Samanid state under one ruler, thus effectively putting an end to the feudal system used by the Samanids. It was also under him that the Samanids became independent of Abbasid authority.

The Samanid Empire is part of the Iranian Intermezzo, which saw the creation of a Persianate culture and identity that brought Iranian speech and traditions into the fold of the Islamic world. This would later lead to the formation of the Turko-Persian culture.

The Samanids promoted the arts, giving rise to the advancement of science and literature, and thus attracted scholars such as Rudaki, Ferdowsi, and Avicenna. While under Samanid control, Bukhara was a rival to Baghdad in its glory. Scholars note that the Samanids revived Persian language and culture more than the Buyids and the Saffarids, while continuing to patronize Arabic for sciences as well as the religious studies. They considered themselves to be descendants of the Sasanian Empire. In a famous edict, Samanid authorities declared that "here, in this region, the language is Persian, and the kings of this realm are Persian kings."

History :

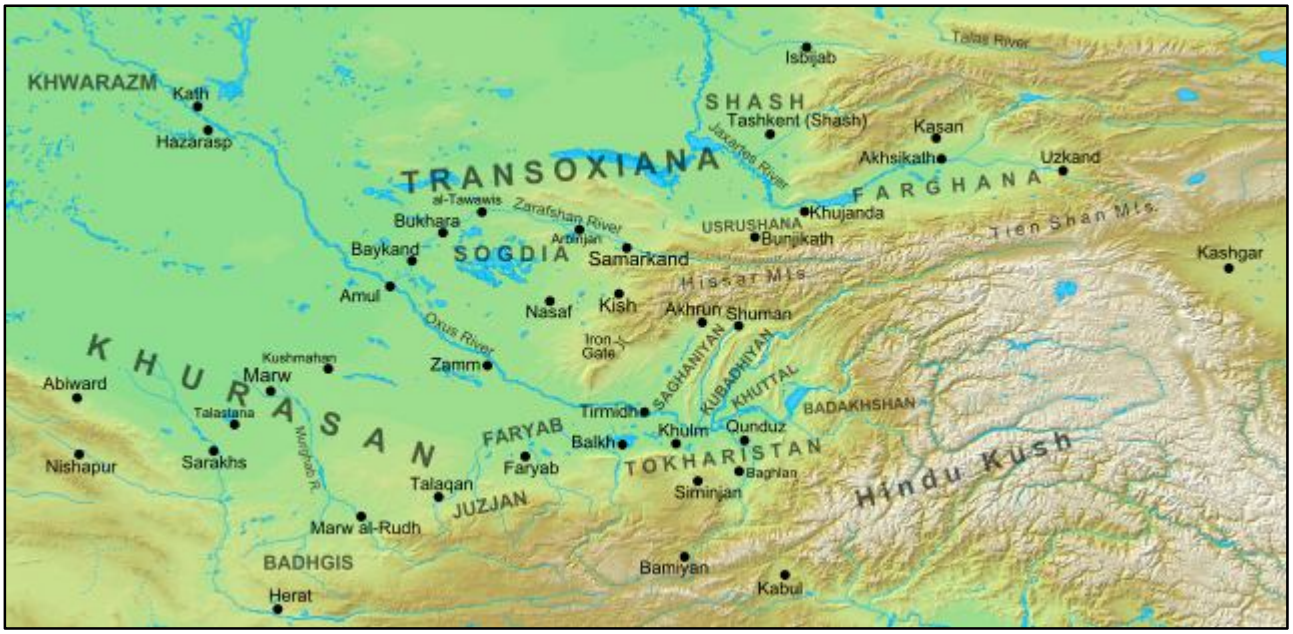
Origins :

The eponymous ancestor of the Samanid dynasty was Saman Khuda, a Persian noble who belonged to a *dehqan* family, which was a class of land-owning magnates. The original home of the Samanids is unclear, for some Arabic and Persian texts claim that the name was derived from a village near Samarkand, while others assert it was a village near Balkh or Tirmidh. The latter is more probable since the earliest appearance of the Samanid family appears to be in Khorasan rather than Transoxiana. In some sources the Samanids claimed to be descended from the noble Mihran family of Bahram Chobin, whereas one author claimed that they belonged to the Turkish Oghuz tribe, although this is most unlikely. Originally a Zoroastrian, Saman Khuda converted to Islam during the governorship of Asad ibn Abdallah al-Qasri in Khorasan, and named his oldest son as Asad in the governor's honour. In 819, the governor of Khorasan, Ghassan ibn Abbad, rewarded the four sons of Asad for their aid against the rebel Rafi ibn al-Layth; Nuh received Samarkand; Ahmad received Farghana; Yahya received Shash; and Ilyas received Herat. This marked the beginning of the Samanid dynasty.

The Samanid branch in Herat (819–857) :

Ilyas died in 856, and was succeeded by his son Ibrahim ibn Ilyas—the Tahirid governor of Khorasan, Muhammad ibn Tahir, thereafter appointed him as the commander of his army, and sent him on an expedition against the Saffarid ruler Ya'qub ibn al-Layth al-Saffar in Sistan. He was defeated at a battle near Pushang in 857, and fled to Nishapur, where he was captured by Ya'qub al-Saffar and sent to Sistan as a hostage. The Tahirids thereafter assumed direct control over Herat.

The Samanid branches in Transoxiana (819–892) :



Map of Khorasan and Transoxiana

In 839/40, Nuh seized Isfijab from the nomadic pagan Turks living in the steppe. He thereafter had a wall constructed around the city to protect it from their attacks. He died in 841/2—his two brothers Yahya and Ahmad, were then appointed as the joint rulers of the city by the Tahirid governor of Khorasan. After Yahya's death in 855, Ahmad took control over Châch, thus becoming the ruler of most of Transoxiana. He died in 864/5; his son Nasr I received Farghana and Samarkand, while his other son Ya'qub received Châch (areas around modern Tashkent/Chachkent). Meanwhile, the Tahirids authority had significantly weakened after suffering several defeats by the Saffarid ruler Ya'qub al-Saffar, thus losing their grip over the Samanids, who became more or less independent. Nasr I used this opportunity to strengthen his authority by sending his brother Isma'il to Bukhara, which was in an unstable condition after suffering from raids by the Afrighid dynasty of Khwarazm. When Isma'il reached the city, he was warmly received by its inhabitants, who saw him as one who could restore order. Although the Bukhar Khudahs continued to autonomously rule in Bukhara for a few more years.

After not so long, disagreement over where tax money should be distributed, started a conflict between the brothers. Isma'il was eventually victorious in the dynastic struggle, and took control of the Samanid state. However, Nasr had been the one who had been invested with Transoxiana, and the Abbasid caliphs continued to recognize him as the rightful ruler. Because

of this, Isma'il continued to recognize his brother as well, but Nasr was completely powerless, a situation that would continue until his death in August 892.
Final unification and height of power (892–907)**.**

Picture of the Samanid Mausoleum, the burial site of Isma'il ibn Ahmad

A few months later, Ya'qub al-Saffar also died and was succeeded by his brother Amr ibn al-Layth, who saw himself as the heir of the Tahirids, thus claiming Transoxiana, Khorasan and other parts of Iran for himself. He thereafter forced the Abbasid caliph to recognize him as the ruler of those territories, which they did. In the spring of 900, he clashed with Isma'il near Balkh, but was defeated and taken to captivity. Isma'il thereafter sent him Baghdad, where he was executed. Isma'il was thereafter recognized as the ruler of all of Khorasan and Transoxiana by the caliph. Furthermore, he also received the investiture over Tabaristan, Ray and Isfahan. It was also during this period that the Afrighid dynasty was forced into submission.

Before his major victory against the Saffarids, he had made various expeditions in Transoxiana; in 892, he put an end to the Principality of Ushrusana by seizing all of its lands. During the same period, he put an end to the Bukhar Khudas in Bukhara. In 893, he invaded the territories of the Karluk Turks, taking Talas and converting the Nestorian church there into a mosque.

In 900, Isma'il sent an army under Muhammad ibn Harun al-Sarakhsi against Muhammad ibn Zayd, the Zaydi ruler of Tabaristan and Gorgan. The invasion was successful; Muhammad ibn Zayd was killed and Tabaristan was conquered by the Samanids. However, Muhammad ibn Harun shortly revolted, making Isma'il himself invade the region the following year.

Muhammad ibn Harun thereafter fled to Daylam, while Isma'il reconquered Tabaristan and Gorgan. In 901, Amr Saffari was defeated at the battle of Balkh by the Samanids, which reduced the Saffarid dynasty to a minor tributary in Sistan. It was during this period that the Samanids were at their height of power, ruling as far as Qazvin in west and Peshawar in the east.

Isma'il is known in history as a competent general and a strong ruler; many stories about him are written in Arabic and Persian sources. Furthermore, because of his campaigns in the north, his empire was so safe from enemy incursions that the defences of Bukhara and Samarkand were unused. However, this later had consequences; at the end of the dynasty, the earlier strong, but now falling apart walls, were greatly missed by the Samanids, who were constantly under attack by the Karakhanids and other enemies.

Isma'il died in November 907, and was succeeded by his son Ahmad Samani (r. 907–914).
Intermediate period (907–961)**.**

Not long after his accession, Ahmad invaded Sistan; by 911, Sistan was under complete Samanid control, and Ahmad's cousin Abu Salih Mansur was appointed as its governor. Meanwhile, an Alid named Hasan al-Utrush was slowly re-establishing Zaydi over Tabaristan. In 913, Ahmad sent an army under Muhammad ibn Sa'luk to deal with him. Although the Samanid army was much larger, Hasan managed to emerge victorious. Ahmad, before he could plan another expedition to Tabaristan, was the following year murdered by some of his slaves in a tent near Bukhara. During his reign, Ahmad is also said to have replaced the language of the court from Persian to Arabic, which made him unpopular among his subjects, and forced him to change it back to Persian. After Ahmad's death, his eight-year-old son Nasr II (r. 914–943) succeeded him.

Coin of Nasr II, minted in Nishapur (933/4)

Due to Nasr's youth, his prime minister Abu 'Abd-Allah al-Jaihani took care over most of the state affairs. Jaihani was not only an experienced administrator, but also a prominent geographer and greatly educated man. Almost right after Nasr II had ascended the throne, several revolts erupted, the most dangerous one being under the uncle of his father, Ishaq ibn Ahmad, who seized Samarkand and began minting coins there, while his son Abu Salih Mansur seized Nishapur and several cities in Khorasan. Ishaq was eventually defeated and captured, while Abu Salih Mansur died of natural causes in 915. Some time later Nasr II once again had to deal with rebels; in 919, the governor of Khorasan, Husayn ibn Ali Marvarrudhi, rebelled against Samanid authority. Nasr responded by sending an army under Ahmad ibn Sahl to suppress the rebellion, which the latter managed to accomplish. After a few weeks, however, Ahmad shortly rebelled himself at Nishapur, made incursions into Gorgan, and then fortified himself in Merv to avoid a Samanid counter-attack. Nevertheless, the Samanid general Hamuya ibn Ali managed to lure Ahmad out of Merv, and defeated him in a battle

at Marw al-Rudh; he was captured and imprisoned in Bukhara, where he remained until his death in 920.

In the west, Nasr II clashed several times with Daylamite and Gilite rulers; In 921, the Zaydids under the Gilite ruler Lili ibn al-Nu'man invaded Khorasan, but were defeated by the Simjurid general Simjur al-Dawati. Later in 930, a Dailamite military leader, Makan ibn Kaki, seized Tabaristan and Gurgan, and even took possession of Nishapur in western Khorasan. He was, however, forced to withdraw back to Tabaristan one year later, due to the threat that Samanids posed. Makan then returned to Tabaristan, where he was defeated by the Ziyarid ruler Mardavij, who managed to conquer the region. In 935, Nasr II re-established Samanid control in Gurgan and made Mardavij's successor Vushmgir his vassal. However, in 939 he declared independence, but was defeated the following year at Iskhabad.

In 943 several Samanid army officers, angry at Nasr's support of Isma'ili missionaries, formed a conspiracy to murder him. Nasr's son Nuh I, however, learned of the conspiracy. He went to a banquet designed to organize the plot and had the head of their leader cut off. To appease the other officers, he promised to stop the Isma'ili missionaries from continuing their activities. He then convinced his father to abdicate, who died of tuberculosis after a few months.

Right when Nuh I ascended the throne, a revolt erupted in Khwarazm, which he managed to suppress. Later in 945, he had to deal with the Muhtajid ruler Abu 'Ali Chaghani, who refused to relinquish his post as governor of Khorasan to Ibrahim ibn Simjur. Abu 'Ali Chaghani then rebelled, and was joined by several prominent figures such as Abu Mansur Muhammad, whom he appointed as his commander-in-chief. In 947, he installed Nuh's uncle Ibrahim ibn Ahmad as *amir* in Bukhara. Abu 'Ali Chaghani then returned to his domains in Chaghaniyan. Ibrahim, however, was unpopular with the people of Bukhara, and Nuh soon retaliated by retaking the city and blinding Ibrahim and two brothers.

When the news of the re-capture of Bukhara arrived to Abu Ali Chaghani, he once again marched towards Bukhara, but was defeated by an army sent by Nuh and withdrew back to Chaghaniyan. After some time, he left the region and tried to obtain support from other Samanid vassals. Meanwhile, Nuh had Chaghaniyan ravaged and its capital sacked. Another battle shortly ensured between Abu 'Ali Chaghani and a Samanid army in Tukharistan, which resulted in a Samanid victory. Fortunately for Abu Ali Chaghani, he managed to secure the support of other Samanid vassals, such as the rulers of Khuttal, and the Kumiji mountain people, but in the end made peace with Nuh, who allowed him to keep Chaghaniyan in return for sending his son Abu'l Muzaffar Abdallah as hostage to Bukhara.

Iran in the mid-10th century

Alp Tigin, nominal vassal of the Samanids, conquered Ghazna in 962 from the Lawik dynasty. The fifth of these commanders was Sebüktigin, who governed Ḡazna for twenty years till 387/997 with the title (as it appears from his tomb inscription) of al-ḥājeb al-ajall (most noble commander). He would later be the founder of an independent dynasty based in Ghazna, following the decline of the Samanid Empire in the 990s.
Decline and fall (961–999)**.**

The power of the Samanids began to crumble in the latter half of the 10th century. In 962, one the ghulams, Alp Tigin, commander of the army in Khorasan, seized Ghazna and established himself there. His successors, however, including Sebük Tigin, continued to rule as Samanid "governors". With the weakened Samanids facing rising challenges from the Karakhanids for control of Transoxiana, Sebük later took control of all the provinces south of the Oxus and established the Ghaznavid Empire.

In 992, a Karakhanid, Harun Bughra Khan, grandson of the paramount tribal chief of the Karluk confederation Sultan Satuq Bughra Khan, captured Bukhara, the Samanid capital. Harun died shortly afterwards, however, and the Samanids returned to Bukhara. In 999, Nasr b. Ali, a nephew of Harun, returned and took possession of Bukhara, meeting little resistance. The Samanid domains were split up between the Ghaznavids, who gained Khorasan and Afghanistan, and the Karakhanids, who received Transoxiana; the Oxus River thus became the boundary between the two rival empires.

Isma'il Muntasir's attempt to resurrect the Samanid state (1000–1005).

Artwork of Isma'il Muntasir in a battle

Isma'il Muntasir was the youngest son of Nuh II—he was imprisoned by the Karakhanids after their conquest of Bukhara in 999. Some time later, Isma'il managed to escape to Khwarazm, where he gained support. Driving the Karakhanids out of Bukhara, he then moved on to and captured Samarkand. The approach of the Karakhanid army, however, forced Isma'il to give up all of his possessions, following which he travelled to Khorasan, where he captured Nishapur. Mahmud's army, however, made its way to the region, and Isma'il decided it necessary to flee again.

In 1003 Isma'il came back to Transoxiana, where he requested for and received assistance from the Oghuz Turks of the Zarafshan valley. They defeated the Karakhanids in several battles, even when Nasr Khan was involved. For various reasons, however, Isma'il came to feel that he could not rely on the Oghuz to restore him, so he went back to Khorasan. He tried to gain Mahmud's support for a campaign to restore the Samanid state, but failed. Some time afterwards, he returned to the Zarafshan valley, where he gained the support of the Oghuz and others. A Karakhanid army was defeated in May 1004, but subsequently the Oghuz deserted Isma'il during another battle, and his army fell apart.

Fleeing to Khorasan yet again, Isma'il attempted to reenter Transoxiana in the end of 1004. The Karakhanids stopped this and Isma'il was nearly killed. Following this, he sought the hospitality of an Arab tribe near Merv. Their chief, however, killed Isma'il in 1005. His death marked the defeat of the last attempt to restore the Samanid state. Descendants of the Samanid family continued to live in Transoxiana where they were well regarded, but their power was relatively broken.

Iranian intermezzo **:**

Along with several other states, the Samanid Empire was part of the Iranian Intermezzo, or "Persian renaissance". This period has been described as having a key importance in the formation of the Islamic civilization, both politically and culturally. In political terms, it saw an effective break up of the Abbasid power and the rise of several successor states such as the Samanids and Buyids while in cultural terms, it witnessed the rise of new Persian as an administrative and literary language.

Structure :

A Samanid coin minted in Bukhara bearing the name of Mansur I

The system of the Samanid state was modelled after the Abbasid system, which in turn was modelled after the Sasanian system. The ruler of the state was the *amir*, and the provinces were governed by appointed governors or local vassal rulers. The main responsibility of both governors and local rulers was to collect taxes and support the Samanid ruler with troops if needed. The most important province in the Samanid Empire was Khorasan, which was in the start given to a relative of the Samanid ruler or a local Iranian prince (such as the Muhtajids), while it was later given to one of his most trusted slaves. The governor of Khorasan was normally the *sipah-salar* (commander-in-chief).

Like in the Abbasid Caliphate, Turkic slaves could in the Samanid state rise to high offices, which would sometimes result the Turkic slaves usurp power, almost making the ruler their puppet.

Cultural and religious efforts :

The Samanids revived Persian culture by patronizing Rudaki, Bal'ami and Daqiqi. The Samanids determinedly propagated Sunni Islam, and repressed Ismaili Shiism but were more tolerant of Twelver Shiism. Islamic architecture and Islamo-Persian culture was spread deep into the heart of Central Asia by the Samanids. Following the first complete translation of the Qur'an into Persian, during the 9th century, populations under the Samanid empire began accepting Islam in significant numbers.

Through zealous missionary work as many as 30,000 tents of Turks came to profess Islam and later under the Ghaznavids more than 55,000 under the Hanafi school of thought. The mass

conversion of the Turks to Islam eventually led to a growing influence of the Ghaznavids, who would later rule the region.

Agriculture and trading were the economic basis of Samanid State. The Samanids were heavily involved in trading – even with Europe, as thousands of Samanid coins that have been found in the Baltic and Scandinavian countries testify.

Another lasting contribution of the Samanids to the history of Islamic art is the pottery known as Samanid Epigraphic Ware: plates, bowls, and pitchers fired in a white slip and decorated only with calligraphy, often elegantly and rhythmically written. The Arabic phrases used in this calligraphy are generally more or less generic well wishes, or Islamic admonitions to good table manners.

Literature :

The Sasanian king Khosrow II and his courtiers in a garden, *page from a manuscript of the Shahnameh, late 15th-early 16th century. Brooklyn Museum.*

In the 9th and 10th centuries, there was a large amount of growth in literature, mostly in poetry. It was during the Samanid period that Persian literature appeared in Transoxania and was formally recognized. The advancement of an Islamic New Persian literature thus started in Transoxiana and Khorasan instead of Fars, the homeland of the Persians. The best known poets of the Samanid period were Rudaki (d. 941), Daqiqi (d. 977) and Ferdowsi (d. 1020). Although Persian was the most favorable language, Arabic continued to enjoy a high status and was still popular among the members of the Samanid family.

For example, al-Tha'alibi wrote an Arabic anthology named Yatimat al-dahr ("The Unique Pearl"). The fourth section of the anthology included a detailed account of the poets that lived under the Samanids. It also states that the poets of Khwarazm mostly wrote in Arabic.

The acknowledged founder of Persian classical poetry, and a man of great perception, was Rudaki, who was born in the village of Panjrudak, which is today part of the Panjakent District in Tajikistan. Rudaki was already becoming popular during his early years, due to his poems, his voice, and his great skill in using the chang (an Iranian instrument similar to the harp). He was shortly invited to the Samanid court, where he stayed almost the rest of his life. Only less than 2,000 of his poetry lines have survived, but are enough to prove his great poetic skills—he perfected every basic verse forms of medieval Persian poetry; mathnawi, qasida, ghazal and ruba'i.

"Look at the cloud, how it cries like a grieving man

Thunder moans like a lover with a broken heart.

Now and then the sun peeks from behind the clouds

Like a prisoner hiding from the guard." – Rudaki

Another prominent poet was Shahid Balkhi, born in the village of Jakhudanak near Balkh. Not much is known about his life, but he is mentioned as being one of the best poets in the court of Nasr II, and one of the best scholars of the age. He was also a student of Rudaki, and had

close relations with him. He died in 936, a few years before Rudaki's death. His death saddened Rudaki, who afterwards wrote an emotional elegy about him.

Daqiqi, who was a native of Tus, began his career at the court of the Muhtajid ruler Abu'l Muzaffar ibn Muhammad in Chaghaniyan, and was later invited to the Samanid court. Under the Samanids, ancient Iranian legends and heroic traditions were taken in special interest, thus inspiring Daqiqi to write the Shahnameh ("The Book of Kings"), a long epic poem based on the history of the Iranians. However, by his death in 977, he had only managed to complete a small part of it, which was about the conflict between Gushtasp and Arjasp.

However, the most prominent poet of that age, was Ferdowsi—he was born in Tus in 940 to a *dehqan* family. It was during his youth that there was a period of growth under the Samanids. The rapid growth of interest in ancient Iranian history made him continue the work of Daqiqi, completing the Shahnameh in 994, only a few years before the fall of the Samanid Empire. He later completed a second version of the Shahnameh in 1010, which he presented to the Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud. However, his work was not as appreciated by the Ghaznavids as it was by the Samanids.

Population :

Under the Samanid Empire, the Zarafshan valley, Kashka Darya and Usrushana were populated by Sogdians; Tukharistan by the Bactrians; Khwarezm by the Khwarazmians; the Ferghana valley by the Ferghanans; southern Khorasan by Khorasanians; and the Pamir mountains and its surroundings by the Saka and other early Iranian peoples. All these groups were of Iranian ethnicity and spoke dialects of Middle Iranian and New Persian. In the words of Negmatov, "they were the basis for the emergence and gradual consolidation of what became an Eastern Persian-Tajik ethnic identity."

Language :

Ferghana, Samarkand, and Bukhara were starting to be linguistically Persianized in originally Khwarazmian and Sogdian areas during Samanid rule. The Persian language spread and led to the extinction of Eastern Iranian languages like Bactrian, Khwarezmian with only a tiny amount of Sogdian descended Yaghnobi speakers remaining among the now Persian-speaking Tajik population of Central Asia, due to the fact that the Arab-Islamic army which invaded Central Asia also included some Persians who later governed the region like the Samanids. Persian was rooted into Central Asia by the Samanids.

Intellectual life :

In the 9th and 10th centuries, intellectual life in Transoxania and Khorasan reached a high level. In the words of N.N. Negmatov, "It was inevitable that the local Samanid dynasty, seeking support among its literate classes, should cultivate and promote local cultural traditions, literacy and literature."

The main Samanid towns Bukhara, Samarkand, Balkh, Merv, Nishapur, Khujand, Bunjikath, Hulbuk, Termez and others, became the major cultural centres under the state. Scholars, poets, artists and other men of

education from many Muslim countries assembled in the Samanid capital of Bukhara, where a rich soil was created for the prosper of creative thought, thus making it one of the most distinguished cultural centres of the Eastern world. An outstanding library known as *Siwān al-hikma* ("Storehouse of Wisdom") was put together in Bukhara, known for its various types of books.

Arts :

Example of figural earthenware ceramics from Samanid period

Crafts :

Bowl with Arabic Inscription

Due to extensive excavations at Nishapur, Iran in the mid-twentieth century, Samanid pottery is well-represented in Islamic art collections around the world. These ceramics are largely made from earthenware and feature either calligraphic inscriptions of Arabic proverbs, or

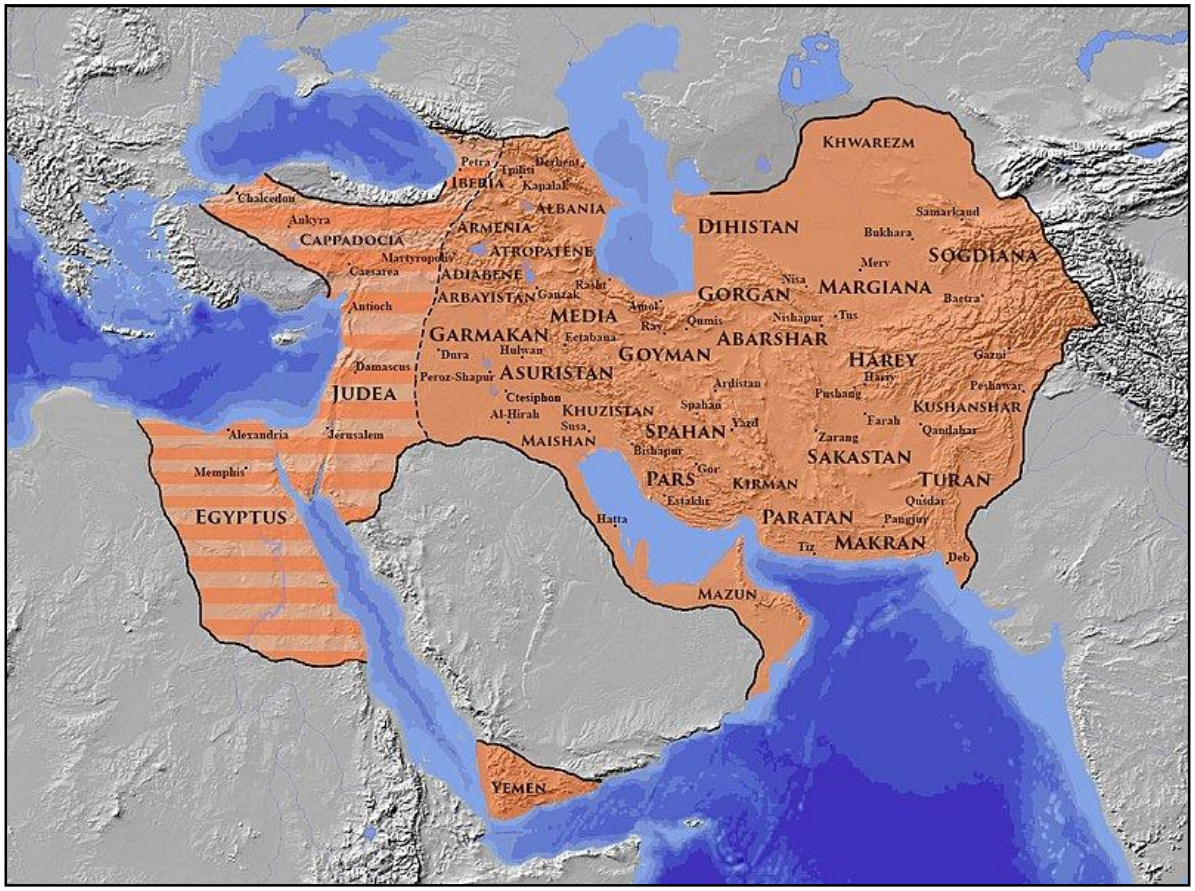
colorful figural decorations. The Arabic proverbs often speak to the values of "Adab" culture—hospitality, generosity, and modesty.

The Bowl with the Arabic Inscription is from Iran during Samanid period in the 10th century. It has a white slip with black slip decoration under a transparent glaze. There is calligraphic decoration all around the bowl. It is elongated at some points and compressed in other areas of the letter to the point where it almost looks abstract. Right in the center of the bowl is a black dot. If the bowl is looked at closely there are cracks and marks that have occurred over time. What would've been a white bowl is now stained yellow in some areas. The calligraphy looks well thought out and planned. Each letter is well spaced and the whole saying fits perfectly around the bowl and that could be because they used to practice it before hand on paper. The saying translates to "Planning before work protects you from regret; prosperity and peace"

Source :

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samanid_Empire

43. Sasanian Empire :



The Sasanian Empire at its greatest extent c. 620, under Khosrow II

The Sasanian Empire, (also recorded as the Sassanian, Sasanid and Sassanid) or the Neo-Persian Empire, officially known as the Empire of Iranians (Middle Persian: Ērānshahr), was the last kingdom of the Persian Empire before the rise of Islam. Named after the House of Sasan, it ruled from 224 to 651 AD. The Sasanian Empire succeeded the Parthian Empire and was recognised as one of the leading world powers alongside its neighbouring arch-rival, the Roman-Byzantine Empire for a period of more than 400 years.

The Sasanian Empire was founded by Ardashir I, after the fall of the Parthian Empire and the defeat of the last Arsacid king, Artabanus V. At its greatest extent, the Sasanian Empire encompassed all of today's Iran, Iraq, Eastern Arabia (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatif, Qatar, UAE),the Levant (Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan),the Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Azerbaijan, Dagestan), Egypt, large parts of Turkey, much of Central Asia (Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan), Yemen and Pakistan. According to a legend, the vexilloid of the Sasanian Empire was the Derafsh Kaviani.

The Sasanian Empire during Late Antiquity is considered to have been one of Iran's most important, and influential historical periods and constituted the last great Iranian empire before the Muslim conquest and the Islamization of Iran. In many ways, the Sasanian period witnessed the peak of ancient Iranian civilisation. The Sasanians' cultural influence extended far beyond the empire's territorial borders, reaching as far as Western Europe, Africa, China and India. It played a prominent role in the formation of both European and Asian medieval art. Much of what later became known as Islamic culture in art, architecture, music and other subject matter was transferred from the Sasanians throughout the Muslim world.

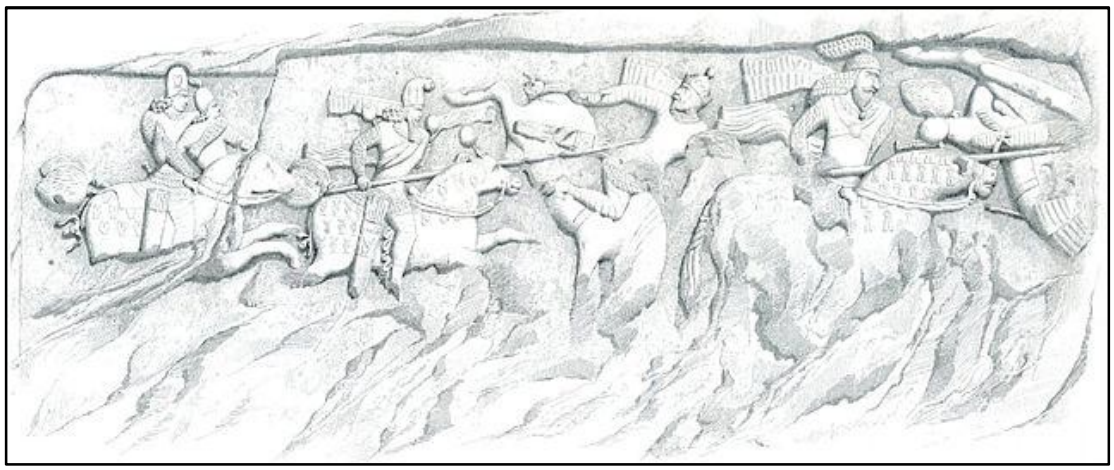
Origins and early history (205–310) :

Conflicting accounts shroud the details of the fall of the Parthian Empire and subsequent rise of the Sassanian Empire in mystery. The Sassanian Empire was established in Estakhr by Ardashir I.

Initial coinage of founder Ardashir I, as King of Persis Artaxerxes (Ardaxsir) V. Circa CE 205/6-223/4

Obv: Bearded facing head, wearing diadem and Parthian-style tiara, legend *"The divine Ardaxir, king"* in Pahlavi.

Rev: Bearded head of Papak, wearing diadem and Parthian-style tiara, legend *"son of the divinity Papak, king"* in Pahlavi.



1840 illustration of a Sasanian relief at Firuzabad, showing Ardashir I's victory over Artabanus IV and his forces.

Ghal'eh Dokhtar (or "The Maiden's Castle") in present-day Fars, Firuzabad, Iran, built by Ardashir in 209, before he was finally able to defeat the Parthian empire.

Taq Kasra is the most famous Persian monument from the Sasanian era

Papak was originally the ruler of a region called Khir. However, by the year 200 he had managed to overthrow Gochihr and appoint himself the new ruler of the Bazrangids. His mother, Rodhagh, was the daughter of the provincial governor of Pars. Papak and his eldest son Shapur managed to expand their power over all of Pars. The subsequent events are unclear, due to the elusive nature of the sources. It is certain, however, that following the

death of Papak, Ardashir, who at the time was the governor of Darabgerd, became involved in a power struggle of his own with his elder brother Shapur. Sources reveal that Shapur, leaving for a meeting with his brother, was killed when the roof of a building collapsed on him. By the year 208, over the protests of his other brothers who were put to death, Ardashir declared himself ruler of Pars.

Once Ardashir was appointed *shah* (King), he moved his capital further to the south of Pars and founded Ardashir-Khwarrah (formerly *Gur*, modern day Firuzabad). The city, well protected by high mountains and easily defensible due to the narrow passes that approached it, became the centre of Ardashir's efforts to gain more power. It was surrounded by a high, circular wall, probably copied from that of Darabgird. Ardashir's palace was on the north side of the city; remains of it are extant. After establishing his rule over Pars, Ardashir rapidly extended his territory, demanding fealty from the local princes of Fars, and gaining control over the neighbouring provinces of Kerman, Isfahan, Susiana and Mesene. This expansion quickly came to the attention of Artabanus V, the Parthian king, who initially ordered the governor of Khuzestan to wage war against Ardashir in 224, but Ardashir was victorious in the ensuing battles. In a second attempt to destroy Ardashir, Artabanus himself met Ardashir in battle at Hormozgan, where the former met his death. Following the death of the Parthian ruler, Ardashir went on to invade the western provinces of the now defunct Parthian Empire.

Rock-face relief at Naqsh-e Rustam of Persian emperor Shapur I (on horseback) capturing Roman emperor Valerian (standing) and Philip the Arab (kneeling), suing for peace, following the victory at Edessa.

At that time the Arsacid dynasty was divided between supporters of Artabanus V and Vologases VI, which probably allowed Ardashir to consolidate his authority in the south with little or no interference from the Parthians. Ardashir was aided by the geography of the province of Fars, which was separated from the rest of Iran. Crowned in 224 at Ctesiphon as the sole ruler of Persia, Ardashir took the title *shahanshah*, or "King of Kings" (the inscriptions mention Adhur-Anahid as his Banbishnan banbishn, "Queen of Queens", but her relationship with Ardashir has not been fully established), bringing the 400-year-old Parthian Empire to an end, and beginning four centuries of Sassanid rule.

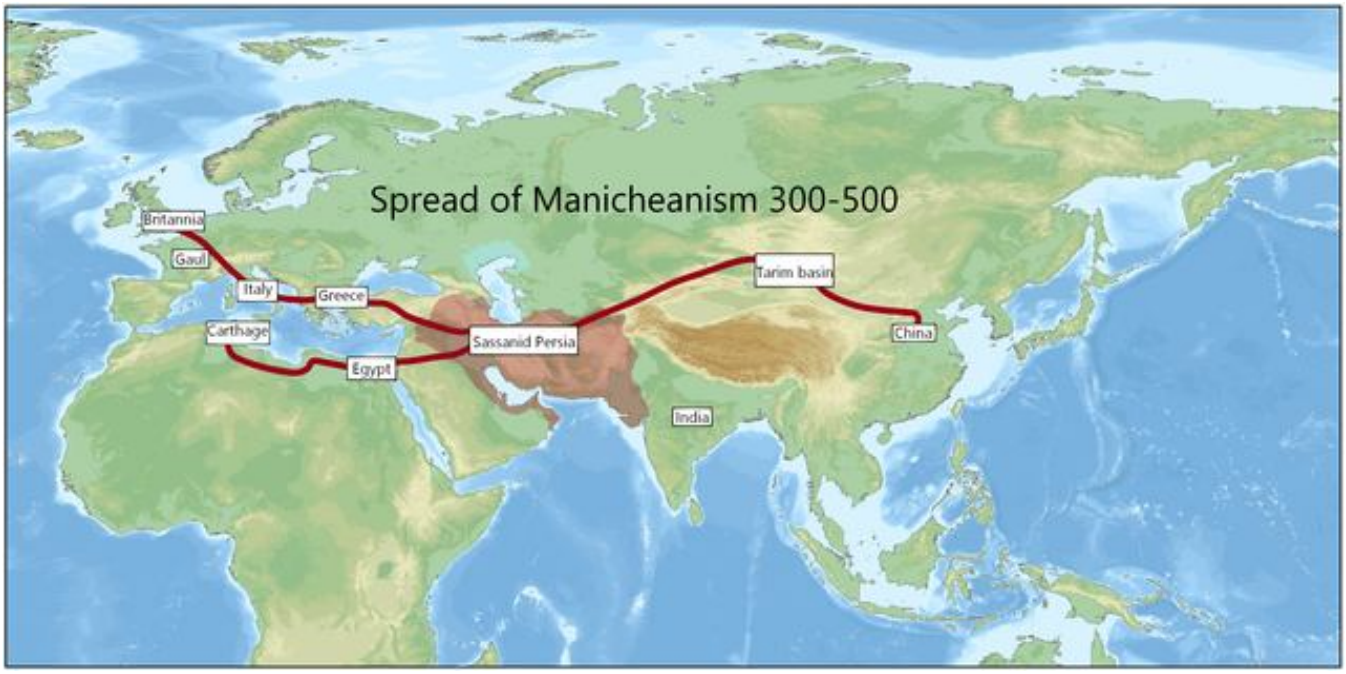
In the next few years, local rebellions occurred throughout the empire. Nonetheless, Ardashir I further expanded his new empire to the east and northwest, conquering the provinces of Sistan, Gorgan, Khorasan, Margiana (in modern Turkmenistan), Balkh and Chorasmia. He also added Bahrain and Mosul to Sassanid's possessions. Later Sassanid inscriptions also claim the submission of the Kings of Kushan, Turan and Mekran to Ardashir, although based on numismatic evidence it is more likely that these actually submitted to Ardashir's son, the future Shapur I. In the west, assaults against Hatra, Armenia and Adiabene met with less success. In 230, Ardashir raided deep into Roman territory, and a Roman counter-offensive two years later ended inconclusively, although the Roman emperor, Alexander Severus, celebrated a triumph in Rome.

The Humiliation of Valerian by Shapur (Hans Holbein the Younger, 1521, pen and black ink on a chalk sketch, Kunstmuseum Basel)

Ardashir I's son Shapur I continued the expansion of the empire, conquering Bactria and the western portion of the Kushan Empire, while leading several campaigns against Rome. Invading Roman Mesopotamia, Shapur I captured Carrhae and Nisibis, but in 243 the Roman general Timesitheus defeated the Persians at Rhesaina and regained the lost territories. The emperor Gordian III's (238–244) subsequent advance down the Euphrates was defeated at Meshike (244), leading to Gordian's murder by his own troops and enabling Shapur to conclude a highly advantageous peace treaty with the new emperor Philip the Arab, by which he secured the immediate payment of 500,000 *denarii* and further annual payments.

Shapur soon resumed the war, defeated the Romans at Barbalissos (253), and then probably took and plundered Antioch. Roman counter-attacks under the emperor Valerian ended in disaster when the Roman army was defeated and besieged at Edessa and Valerian was captured by Shapur, remaining his prisoner for the rest of his life. Shapur celebrated his victory by carving the impressive rock reliefs in Naqsh-e Rostam and Bishapur, as well as a monumental inscription in Persian and Greek in the vicinity of Persepolis. He exploited his

success by advancing into Anatolia (260), but withdrew in disarray after defeats at the hands of the Romans and their Palmyrene ally Odaenathus, suffering the capture of his harem and the loss of all the Roman territories he had occupied.



The spread of Manichaeism (300–500)

Shapur had intensive development plans. He ordered the construction of the first dam bridge in Iran and founded many cities, some settled in part by emigrants from the Roman territories, including Christians who could exercise their faith freely under Sassanid rule. Two cities, Bishapur and Nishapur, are named after him. He particularly favoured Manichaeism, protecting Mani (who dedicated one of his books, the Shabuhragan, to him) and sent many Manichaean missionaries abroad. He also befriended a Babylonian rabbi called Samuel.

This friendship was advantageous for the Jewish community and gave them a respite from the oppressive laws enacted against them. Later kings reversed Shapur's policy of religious tolerance. When Shapur's son Bahram I acceded to the throne, he was pressured by the Zoroastrian high-priest Kartir Bahram I to kill Mani and persecute his followers. Bahram II was also amenable to the wishes of the Zoroastrian priesthood. During his reign, the Sassanid capital Ctesiphon was sacked by the Romans under Emperor Carus, and most of Armenia, after half a century of Persian rule, was ceded to Diocletian.

Succeeding Bahram III (who ruled briefly in 293), Narseh embarked on another war with the Romans. After an early success against the Emperor Galerius near Callinicum on the Euphrates in 296, he was eventually decisively defeated by them. Galerius had been reinforced, probably in the spring of 298, by a new contingent collected from the empire's Danubian holdings. Narseh did not advance from Armenia and Mesopotamia, leaving Galerius to lead the offensive in 298 with an attack on northern Mesopotamia via Armenia. Narseh retreated to Armenia to fight Galerius's force, to the former's disadvantage: the rugged Armenian terrain was favourable to Roman infantry, but not to Sassanid cavalry. Local aid gave Galerius the advantage of surprise over the Persian forces, and, in two successive battles, Galerius secured victories over Narseh.

Rome and satellite kingdom of Armenia around 300, after Narseh's defeat

During the second encounter, Roman forces seized Narseh's camp, his treasury, his harem, and his wife. Galerius advanced into Media and Adiabene, winning successive victories, most prominently near Erzurum, and securing Nisibis (Nusaybin, Turkey) before 1 October 298. He then advanced down the Tigris, taking Ctesiphon. Narseh had previously sent an ambassador to Galerius to plead for the return of his wives and children. Peace negotiations began in the spring of 299, with both Diocletian and Galerius presiding.

The conditions of the peace were heavy: Persia would give up territory to Rome, making the Tigris the boundary between the two empires. Further terms specified that Armenia was returned to Roman domination, with the fort of Ziatha as its border; Caucasian Iberia would pay allegiance to Rome under a Roman appointee; Nisibis, now under Roman rule, would become the sole conduit for trade between Persia and Rome; and Rome would exercise control over the five satrapies between the Tigris and Armenia: Ingilene, Sophanene (Sophene), Arzanene (Aghdznik), Corduene, and Zabdicene (near modern Hakkâri, Turkey).

The Sassanids ceded five provinces west of the Tigris, and agreed not to interfere in the affairs of Armenia and Georgia. In the aftermath of this defeat, Narseh gave up the throne and died a year later, leaving the Sassanid throne to his son, Hormizd II. Unrest spread throughout the land, and while the new king suppressed revolts in Sakastan and Kushan, he was unable to control the nobles and was subsequently killed by Bedouins on a hunting trip in 309.

1. First Golden Era (309–379) :

Sassanian seal impression, with standing noble holding a flower, ca. 3rd–early 4th century AD.
Following Hormizd II's death, northern Arabs started to ravage and plunder the western cities of the empire, even attacking the province of Fars, the birthplace of the Sassanid kings. Meanwhile, Persian nobles killed Hormizd II's eldest son, blinded the second, and imprisoned the third (who later escaped into Roman territory). The throne was reserved for Shapur II, the unborn child of one of Hormizd II's wives who was crowned *in utero*: the crown was placed upon his mother's stomach. During his youth the empire was controlled by his mother and the nobles. Upon his coming of age, Shapur II assumed power and quickly proved to be an active and effective ruler.

He first led his small but disciplined army south against the Arabs, whom he defeated, securing the southern areas of the empire. He then began his first campaign against the Romans in the west, where Persian forces won a series of battles but were unable to make territorial gains due to the failure of repeated sieges of the key frontier city of Nisibis, and Roman success in retaking the cities of Singara and Amida after they had previously fallen to the Persians.

These campaigns were halted by nomadic raids along the eastern borders of the empire, which threatened Transoxiana, a strategically critical area for control of the Silk Road. Shapur therefore marched east toward Transoxiana to meet the eastern nomads, leaving his local commanders to mount nuisance raids on the Romans. He crushed the Central Asian tribes, and annexed the area as a new province.

In the east around 325, Shapur II regained the upper hand against the Kushano-Sasanian Kingdom and took control of large territories in areas now known as Afghanistan and Pakistan. Cultural expansion followed this victory, and Sassanid art penetrated Turkestan, reaching as far as China. Shapur, along with the nomad King Grumbates, started his second campaign

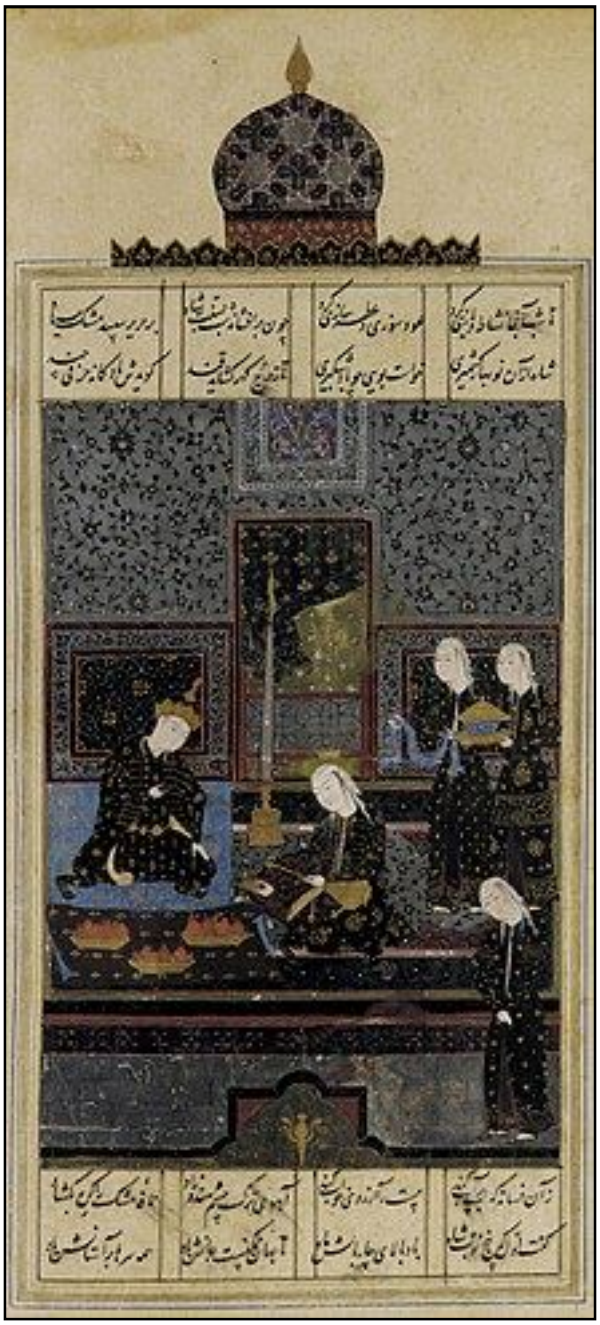
against the Romans in 359 and soon succeeded in retaking Singara and Amida. In response the Roman emperor Julian struck deep into Persian territory and defeated Shapur's forces at Ctesiphon. He failed to take the capital, however, and was killed while trying to retreat to Roman territory. His successor Jovian, trapped on the east bank of the Tigris, had to hand over all the provinces the Persians had ceded to Rome in 298, as well as Nisibis and Singara, to secure safe passage for his army out of Persia.

An early Alchon Huns coin based on a Sasanian design, with bust imitating Sasanian king Shapur II. Dated 400–440

From around 370, however, towards the end of the reign of Shapur II, the Sassanids lost the control of Bactria to invaders from the north: first the Kidarites, then the Hephthalites and finally the Alchon Huns, who would follow up with the invasion of India. These invaders initially issued coins based on Sasanian designs. Various coins minted in Bactria and based on Sasanian designs are extant, often with busts imitating Sassanian kings Shapur II (r. 309 to 379) and Shapur III (r. 383 to 388), adding the Alchon Tamgha and the name "Alchono" in Bactrian script on the obverse, and with attendants to a fire altar on the reverse.

Shapur II pursued a harsh religious policy. Under his reign, the collection of the Avesta, the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism, was completed, heresy and apostasy were punished, and Christians were persecuted. The latter was a reaction against the Christianization of the Roman Empire by Constantine the Great. Shapur II, like Shapur I, was amicable towards Jews, who lived in relative freedom and gained many advantages during his reign. At the time of his death, the Persian Empire was stronger than ever, with its enemies to the east pacified and Armenia under Persian control.

Intermediate Era (379–498) :



Bahram V is a great favourite in Persian literature and poetry. "Bahram and the Indian princess in the black pavilion." Depiction of a Khamsa (Quintet) by the great Persian poet Nizami, mid-16th-century Safavid era.

From Shapur II's death until Kavadh I's first coronation, there was a largely peaceful period with the Romans (by this time the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire) engaged in just two brief wars with the Sassanian Empire, the first in 421–422 and the second in 440. Throughout this era, Sassanid religious policy differed dramatically from king to king. Despite a series of weak leaders, the administrative system established during Shapur II's reign remained strong, and the empire continued to function effectively.

After Shapur II died in 379, the empire passed on to his half-brother Ardashir II (379–383; son of Hormizd II) and his son Shapur III (383–388), neither of whom demonstrated their

predecessor's skill in ruling. Ardashir, who was raised as the "half-brother" of the emperor, failed to fill his brother's shoes, and Shapur was too much of a melancholy character to achieve anything. Bahram IV (388–399), although not as inactive as his father, still failed to achieve anything important for the empire. During this time Armenia was divided by a treaty between the Roman and Sassanid empires. The Sassanids reestablished their rule over Greater Armenia, while the Byzantine Empire held a small portion of western Armenia.

Bahram IV's son Yazdegerd I (399–421) is often compared to Constantine I. Both were physically and diplomatically powerful, opportunistic, practiced religious tolerance and provided freedom for the rise of religious minorities. Yazdegerd stopped the persecution against the Christians and punished nobles and priests who persecuted them. His reign marked a relatively peaceful era with the Romans, and he even took the young Theodosius II (408–450) under his guardianship. Yazdegerd also married a Jewish princess, who bore him a son called Narsi.

Yazdegerd I's successor was his son Bahram V (421–438), one of the most well-known Sassanid kings and the hero of many myths. These myths persisted even after the destruction of the Sassanid empire by the Arabs. Bahram gained the crown after Yazdegerd's sudden death (or assassination), which occurred when the grandees opposed the king with the help of al-Mundhir, the Arabic dynast of al-Hirah. Bahram's mother was Shushandukht, the daughter of the Jewish Exilarch. In 427, he crushed an invasion in the east by the nomadic Hephthalites, extending his influence into Central Asia, where his portrait survived for centuries on the coinage of Bukhara (in modern Uzbekistan). Bahram deposed the vassal king of the Persian-held area of Armenia and made it a province of the empire.

Coin of Hormizd I Kushanshah, issued in Khorasan, and derived from Kushan designs

There are many stories that tell of Bahram V's valour, his beauty, and his victories over the Romans, Turkic peoples, Indians and Africans, as well as his exploits in hunting and his pursuits of love. He was better known as Bahram-e Gur, *Gur* meaning onager, on account of

his love for hunting and, in particular, hunting onagers. He symbolised a king at the height of a golden age, embodying royal prosperity. He had won his crown by competing with his brother and spent much time fighting foreign enemies, but mostly he kept himself amused by hunting, holding court parties and entertaining a famous band of ladies and courtiers. During his time, the best pieces of Sassanid literature were written, notable pieces of Sassanid music were composed, and sports such as polo became royal pastimes.

Bahram V's son Yazdegerd II (438–457) was in some ways a moderate ruler, but, in contrast to Yazdegerd I, he practised a harsh policy towards minority religions, particularly Christianity. However, at the Battle of Avarayr in 451, the Armenian subjects led by Vardan Mamikonian reaffirmed Armenia's right to profess Christianity freely. This was to be later confirmed by the Nvarsak Treaty (484).

At the beginning of his reign in 441, Yazdegerd II assembled an army of soldiers from various nations, including his Indian allies, and attacked the Byzantine Empire, but peace was soon restored after some small-scale fighting. He then gathered his forces in Nishapur in 443 and launched a prolonged campaign against the Kidarites. After a number of battles he crushed them and drove them out beyond the Oxus river in 450.

During his eastern campaign, Yazdegerd II grew suspicious of the Christians in the army and expelled them all from the governing body and army. He then persecuted the Christians in his land, and, to a much lesser extent, the Jews. In order to reestablish Zoroastrianism in Armenia, he crushed an uprising of Armenian Christians at the Battle of Vartanantz in 451. The Armenians, however, remained primarily Christian. In his later years, he was engaged yet again with the Kidarites right up until his death in 457. Hormizd III (457–459), the younger son of Yazdegerd II, then ascended to the throne. During his short rule, he continually fought with his elder brother Peroz I, who had the support of the nobility, and with the Hephthalites in Bactria. He was killed by his brother Peroz in 459.

A coin of Yazdegerd II

At the beginning of the 5th century, the Hephthalites (White Huns), along with other nomadic groups, attacked Persia. At first Bahram V and Yazdegerd II inflicted decisive defeats against them and drove them back eastward. The Huns returned at the end of the 5th century and defeated Peroz I (457–484) in 483. Following this victory, the Huns invaded and plundered

parts of eastern Persia continually for two years. They exacted heavy tribute for some years thereafter.

These attacks brought instability and chaos to the kingdom. Peroz tried again to drive out the Hephthalites, but on the way to Herat his army was trapped by the Huns in the desert. Peroz was killed and his army was wiped out. After this victory, the Hephthalites advanced forward to the city of Herat, throwing the empire into chaos. Eventually a noble Iranian named Karen from the old family of Sukhra restored some degree of order. He put Balash, one of Peroz I's brothers, on the throne. The Hunnic threat persisted until the reign of Khosrau I. Balash (484–488) was a mild and generous monarch, who made concessions to the Christians; however, he took no action against the empire's enemies, particularly the White Huns. After a reign of four years, he was blinded and deposed (attributed to magnates), and his nephew Kavadh I acceded to the throne.

Kavadh I (488–531) was an energetic and reformist ruler. He gave his support to the sect founded by Mazdak, son of Bamdad, who demanded that the rich should divide their wives and their wealth with the poor. By adopting the doctrine of the Mazdakites, his intention evidently was to break the influence of the magnates and the growing aristocracy. These reforms led to his being deposed and imprisoned in the "Castle of Oblivion" in Susa, and his younger brother Jamasp (Zamaspes) became king in 496. Kavadh, however, escaped in 498 and was given refuge by the White Hun king.

Jamasp (496–498) was installed on the Sassanid throne upon the deposition of Kavadh I by members of the nobility. He was a good and kind king; he reduced taxes in order to improve the condition of the peasants and the poor. He was also an adherent of the mainstream Zoroastrian religion, diversions from which had cost Kavadh I his throne and freedom. Jamasp's reign soon ended, however, when Kavadh I, at the head of a large army granted to him by the Hephthalite king, returned to the empire's capital. Jamasp stepped down from his position and returned the throne to his brother. No further mention of Jamasp is made after the restoration of Kavadh I, but it is widely believed that he was treated favourably at the court of his brother.

2. Second Golden Era (498–622) :

The second golden era began after the second reign of Kavadh I. With the support of the Hephtalites, Kavadh launched a campaign against the Romans. In 502, he took Theodosiopolis in Armenia, but lost it soon afterwards. In 503 he took Amida on the Tigris. In 504, an invasion of Armenia by the western Huns from the Caucasus led to an armistice, the return of Amida to Roman control and a peace treaty in 506. In 521/522 Kavadh lost control of Lazica, whose rulers switched their allegiance to the Romans; an attempt by the Iberians in 524/525 to do likewise triggered a war between Rome and Persia.

In 527, a Roman offensive against Nisibis was repulsed and Roman efforts to fortify positions near the frontier were thwarted. In 530, Kavadh sent an army under Perozes to attack the important Roman frontier city of Dara. The army was met by the Roman general Belisarius, and, though superior in numbers, was defeated at the Battle of Dara. In the same year, a second Persian army under Mihr-Mihroe was defeated at Satala by Roman forces under Sittas and Dorotheus, but in 531 a Persian army accompanied by a Lakhmid contingent

under Al-Mundhir III defeated Belisarius at the Battle of Callinicum, and in 532 an "eternal" peace was concluded. Although he could not free himself from the yoke of the Hephthalites, Kavadh succeeded in restoring order in the interior and fought with general success against the Eastern Romans, founded several cities, some of which were named after him, and began to regulate taxation and internal administration.

Plate depicting Khosrow I

After the reign of Kavadh I, his son Khosrau I, also known as Anushirvan ("with the immortal soul"; ruled 531–579), ascended to the throne. He is the most celebrated of the Sassanid rulers. Khosrau I is most famous for his reforms in the aging governing body of Sassanids. He introduced a rational system of taxation based upon a survey of landed possessions, which his father had begun, and he tried in every way to increase the welfare and the revenues of his empire. Previous great feudal lords fielded their own military equipment, followers, and retainers. Khosrau I developed a new force of dehqans, or "knights", paid and equipped by the central government and the bureaucracy, tying the army and bureaucracy more closely to the central government than to local lords.

Emperor Justinian I (527–565) paid Khosrau I 440,000 pieces of gold as a part of the "eternal peace" treaty of 532. In 540, Khosrau broke the treaty and invaded Syria, sacking Antioch and extorting large sums of money from a number of other cities. Further successes followed: in 541 Lazica defected to the Persian side, and in 542 a major Byzantine offensive in Armenia was defeated at Anglon. Also in 541, Khosrau I entered Lazica at the invitation of its king, captured the main Byzantine stronghold at Petra, and established another protectorate over the country, commencing the Lazic War. A five-year truce agreed to in 545 was interrupted in 547 when Lazica again switched sides and eventually expelled its Persian garrison with Byzantine help; the war resumed but remained confined to Lazica, which was retained by the Byzantines when peace was concluded in 562.

In 565, Justinian I died and was succeeded by Justin II (565–578), who resolved to stop subsidies to Arab chieftains to restrain them from raiding Byzantine territory in Syria. A year earlier, the Sassanid governor of Armenia, Chihor-Vishnasp of the Suren family, built a fire temple at Dvin near modern Yerevan, and he put to death an influential member of the Mamikonian family, touching off a revolt which led to the massacre of the Persian governor and his guard in 571, while rebellion also broke out in Iberia. Justin II took advantage of the Armenian revolt to stop his yearly payments to Khosrau I for the defense of the Caucasus passes.

The Armenians were welcomed as allies, and an army was sent into Sassanid territory which besieged Nisibis in 573. However, dissension among the Byzantine generals not only led to an abandonment of the siege, but they in turn were besieged in the city of Dara, which was taken by the Persians. Capitalizing on this success, the Persians then ravaged Syria, causing Justin II to agree to make annual payments in exchange for a five-year truce on the Mesopotamian front, although the war continued elsewhere. In 576 Khosrau I led his last campaign, an offensive into Anatolia which sacked Sebasteia and Melitene, but ended in disaster: defeated outside Melitene, the Persians suffered heavy losses as they fled across the Euphrates under Byzantine attack. Taking advantage of Persian disarray, the Byzantines raided deep into Khosrau's territory, even mounting amphibious attacks across the Caspian Sea. Khosrau sued for peace, but he decided to continue the war after a victory by his general Tamkhosrau in Armenia in 577, and fighting resumed in Mesopotamia. The Armenian revolt came to an end with a general amnesty, which brought Armenia back into the Sassanid Empire.

Around 570, "Ma 'd-Karib", half-brother of the King of Yemen, requested Khosrau I's intervention. Khosrau I sent a fleet and a small army under a commander called Vahriz to the area near present Aden, and they marched against the capital San'a'l, which was occupied. Saif, son of Mard-Karib, who had accompanied the expedition, became King sometime between 575 and 577. Thus, the Sassanids were able to establish a base in South Arabia to control the sea trade with the east. Later, the south Arabian kingdom renounced Sassanid overlordship, and another Persian expedition was sent in 598 that successfully annexed southern Arabia as a Sassanid province, which lasted until the time of troubles after Khosrau II.

Khosrau I's reign witnessed the rise of the dihqans (literally, village lords), the petty landholding nobility who were the backbone of later Sassanid provincial administration and the tax collection system. Khosrau I was a great builder, embellishing his capital and founding new towns with the construction of new buildings. He rebuilt the canals and restocked the farms destroyed in the wars. He built strong fortifications at the passes and placed subject tribes in carefully chosen towns on the frontiers to act as guardians against invaders. He was tolerant of all religions, though he decreed that Zoroastrianism should be the official state religion, and was not unduly disturbed when one of his sons became a Christian.

After Khosrau I, Hormizd IV (579–590) took the throne. The war with the Byzantines continued to rage intensely but inconclusively until the general Bahram Chobin, dismissed and humiliated by Hormizd, rose in revolt in 589. The following year, Hormizd was overthrown by a palace coup and his son Khosrau II (590–628) placed on the throne. However, this change of ruler failed to placate Bahram, who defeated Khosrau, forcing him to flee to Byzantine territory, and seized the throne for himself as Bahram VI. Khosrau asked the Byzantine

Emperor Maurice (582–602) for assistance against Bahram, offering to cede the western Caucasus to the Byzantines. To cement the alliance, Khosrau also married Maurice's daughter Miriam. Under the command of Khosrau and the Byzantine generals Narses and John Mystacon, the new combined Byzantine-Persian army raised a rebellion against Bahram, defeating him at the Battle of Blarathon in 591. When Khosrau was subsequently restored to power he kept his promise, handing over control of western Armenia and Caucasian Iberia.

A Hephthalite coin imitating the coinage of Khosrow II.
Obverse: Hephthalite signature in Sogdian to the left and Tamgha symbol to the right. Susa mint. 7th century

The new peace arrangement allowed the two empires to focus on military matters elsewhere: Khosrau focused on the Sassanid Empire's eastern frontier while Maurice restored Byzantine control of the Balkans. Circa 600, the Hephthalites had been raiding the Sassanid Empire as far as Spahan in central Iran. The Hephthalites issued numerous coins imitating the coinage of Khosrow II. In c. 606/607, Khosrow recalled Smbat IV Bagratuni from Persian Armenia and sent him to Iran to repel the Hephthalites. Smbat, with the aid of a Persian prince named Datoyean, repelled the Hephthalites from Persia, and plundered their domains in eastern Khorasan, where Smbat is said to have killed their king in single combat.

After Maurice was overthrown and killed by Phocas (602–610) in 602, however, Khosrau II used the murder of his benefactor as a pretext to begin a new invasion, which benefited from continuing civil war in the Byzantine Empire and met little effective resistance. Khosrau's generals systematically subdued the heavily fortified frontier cities of Byzantine Mesopotamia and Armenia, laying the foundations for unprecedented expansion. The Persians overran Syria and captured Antioch in 611.

In 613, outside Antioch, the Persian generals Shahrbaraz and Shahin decisively defeated a major counter-attack led in person by the Byzantine emperor Heraclius. Thereafter, the Persian advance continued unchecked. Jerusalem fell in 614, Alexandria in 619, and the rest of Egypt by 621. The Sassanid dream of restoring the Achaemenid boundaries was almost complete, while the Byzantine Empire was on the verge of collapse. This remarkable peak of expansion was paralleled by a blossoming of Persian art, music, and architecture.
Decline and fall (622–651)

While successful at its first stage (from 602 to 622), the campaign of Khosrau II had actually exhausted the Persian army and treasuries. In an effort to rebuild the national treasuries, Khosrau overtaxed the population. Thus, while his empire was on the verge of total defeat, Heraclius (610–641) drew on all his diminished and devastated empire's remaining resources, reorganised his armies, and mounted a remarkable, risky counter-offensive. Between 622 and 627, he campaigned against the Persians in Anatolia and the Caucasus, winning a string of victories against Persian forces under Shahrbaraz, Shahin, and Shahraplakan (whose competition to claim the glory of personally defeating the Byzantine emperor contributed to their failure), sacking the great Zoroastrian temple at Ganzak, and securing assistance from the Khazars and Western Turkic Khaganate.

The Siege of Constantinople in 626 by the combined Sassanid, Avar, and Slavic forces depicted on the murals of the Moldoviţa Monastery, Romania

In response, Khosrau, in coordination with Avar and Slavic forces, launched a siege on the Byzantine capital of Constantinople in 626. The Sassanids, led by Shahrbaraz, attacked the city on the eastern side of the Bosphorus, while his Avar and Slavic allies invaded from the western side. Attempts to ferry the Persian forces across the Bosphorus to aid their allies (the Slavic forces being by far the most capable in siege warfare) were blocked by the Byzantine fleet, and the siege ended in failure. In 627–628, Heraclius mounted a winter invasion of Mesopotamia, and, despite the departure of his Khazar allies, defeated a Persian army commanded by Rhahzadh in the Battle of Nineveh. He then marched down the Tigris, devastating the country and sacking Khosrau's palace at Dastagerd. He was prevented from attacking Ctesiphon by the destruction of the bridges on the Nahrawan Canal and conducted further raids before withdrawing up the Diyala into north-western Iran.

Queen Boran, daughter of Khosrau II, the first woman and one of the last rulers on the throne of the Sasanian Empire, she reigned from 17 June 629 to 16 June 630

In 628 AD, Khusrau II and eighteen of his sons were assassinated by one of his own sons Kavadh II, who became the successor. After only a few months, he was also killed and a period of civil war broke out. Kavad's son Ardashir, then took the throne at a very young age. Ardashir was murdered by General Sarwaraz. Sarwaraz was the first king to take the throne that was not from the royal family. He was then murdered. This vacancy on the throne was then filled by Husrav's first daughter, Boran (Borandukht). No other woman, in her own rights, had ascended the Sasanian throne before. Boran and her sister were considered to be the only two legitimate heirs left of the royal family. When Boran came to power the power of the central authority was very weak due to civil wars. It was Borans' goal to once again bring stability to the empire as her father once had. To accomplish this, Boran offered a peace treaty with the Byzantine Empire. This would revitalize the empire through the implementation of justice, reconstruction of the infrastructure, lowering of taxes, and the minting of coins.

The amazing thing is that most sources emphasize the positive qualities of this female king. There is nothing negative about her that is related to her sex. Boran's reign is said to have been marked by benevolence. She behaved kindly and justly to all of her subjects. She was also said to be very creative and energetic. Boran ordered the rebuilding of bridges made of boats in order to improve the catastrophic economic situation in the empire. Just after a year of being queen, Boran died in 631 AD. It is not known how Boran actually died. Many sources say she passed from natural causes, and Christian sources says that she was murdered by a general seeking to be king

Queen Azarmedukht :

After Boran's death, her sister Azarmedukht (Azarmigduxt) succeeded the throne for a short time. The only reason that she was able to become King of the Sasanian society was because she was of royal bloodline. Thus, Azarmedukht "possessed the main prerequisite for the sacral kingship and xwarrah to be" hers.

Source :

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Sasanian_Empire#cite_note-9

Second opinion on Queen Boran :

Queen Boran or rather Purandokt was the daughter of the Sasanian emperor Khosrau II. She was the first and one of only two women on the throne of the Sasanian Empire (the other was her sister and successor Azarmidokht). Various authors place her reign between one year and four months to two years. Thus her history and her stort reign were bloody and constant family fuel about the throne. The Persian history version of Game of Thrones.

Her name appears as Bōrān (or Burān) on her coinage. The Persian poet Ferdowsi refered her also as Porandokht in his epic poem, the Shahnameh. She was committed to revive the memory and prestige of her father, during whose reign the Sasanian Empire had grown to its largest territorial extent.

Since her father was said to have over 3,000 concubines, it is not known if her mother was one of these concubines or the king's favorite wife Shirin. Boran also had many other siblings and half-siblings named Mardanshah, Juvansher, Farrukhzad Khosrau V, Kavadh II, Shahriyar, and Azarmidokht. In 628, her father was deposed by the Sasanian nobles in favor of her brother Kavadh II, who executed the king along with 30 of their brothers out of fear of competition and rivalry (except Juvansher and Farrukhzad Khosrau V who managed to hide). Boran officially reproached Kavadh for his barbaric actions. Months later, Kavadh

died of a plague, and was succeeded by his 7 year old son Ardashir III, who himself one year later was killed by the Sasanian general Shahrbaraz, who usurped the Sasanian throne.

Forty days later, Shahrbaraz was murdered by the faction of the Ispahbudhan nobleman Farrukh Hormizd, which was known as the Pahlav faction. Boran was shortly proclaimed queen in Ctesiphon by Farrukh's faction. Boran was herself related to the Ispahbudhan family through her grandmother. She shortly appointed Farrukh Hormizd as the chief minister of the Empire. Boran then attempted to bring stability to the Sasanian Empire by the implementation of justice, reconstruction of the infrastructure, lowering of taxes, and minting coins. However, in year 630 she was deposed by Shapur-i Shahrvaraz, the son of Shahrbaraz and a sister of Khosrau II, was made king of Sasanian Empire. However, he was not recognized by the faction of the general Piruz Khosrow, which was known as the Parsig (Persian) faction. Shapur-i Shahrvaraz was thus deposed in favor of Azarmidokht, the sister of Boran.

Her sister, Azarmidokht, was then placed on the throne. In order to seize power, Farrukh Hormizd asked Azar to marry him. Not daring to refuse, she had him killed with the aid of the Mihranid Siyavakhsh, who was the grandson of Bahram Chobin, the famous spahbed and briefly shahanshah. She was however, shortly assassinated by the latter's son Rostam Farrokhzad, who was now the new leader of the Pahlav faction.

After the murder of Azarmidokht by Rostam Farrokhzad, Boran took back her throne and shortly made a meeting with the Pahlav and Parsig faction, where both factions agreed to work together.

She was also determind to stablizing a good relationship with the Roman Empire whom they had defended against earlier and won, therefore she dispatched an embassy to Emperor Heraclius led by the dignitaries of the Persian temple. Heraclius sent Boran a formal invitation to visit Constantinople. However, after only one year of reign she was found suffocated by a pillow in her bed. According to the sources and historians, she was assasinated by Piruz Khosrow, which shortly ended ended the Parsig-Pahlav alliance and resuming hostilities between the two factions.

At the end, to just sit and do research on queen Purandokht was absolutely far from easy, partly because after her death, a lot of information about her disappeared, and partly because I have had to reject several documents which weren't credible for five cents.

So this is why working on Queen Purandokht took so much longer than I expected, plus re-drawing as well, and the way she looked was not easy to find. The few portraits that showed her consisted of a coin and the rest was inspiration from other artists who tried to interpret what she looked like. And I also chose to have draw women as bodyguards, and that's because it was not uncommon for women in pre-Islamic era in Persia to serve as warriors which in recent times has been proven by archaeological excavations and the few sources that have managed to preserve from being destroyed. And the unifrom, oh dear. That was very hard to find and not to mention the accurancy, however it wasn't unusual that Scythian warriors could serve Sasanid empire like these bodyguards. The wall was based on inspriation by Sasanid's old castle and the of course during the Sasanian era,

Zoroastrianism by then were the state religion as where you can see Ahura Mazda, the main symbol above the queen. And the flags was the Sasanid Empire flag.

Source :

https://www.deviantart.com/orkideh84/art/Queen-Purandokht-of-Sassanid-Empire-590321368

The impact of Heraclius's victories, the devastation of the richest territories of the Sassanid Empire, and the humiliating destruction of high-profile targets such as Ganzak and Dastagerd fatally undermined Khosrau's prestige and his support among the Persian aristocracy. In early 628, he was overthrown and murdered by his son Kavadh II (628), who immediately brought an end to the war, agreeing to withdraw from all occupied territories. In 629, Heraclius restored the True Cross to Jerusalem in a majestic ceremony. Kavadh died within months, and chaos and civil war followed. Over a period of four years and five successive kings, the Sassanid Empire weakened considerably. The power of the central authority passed into the hands of the generals. It would take several years for a strong king to emerge from a series of coups, and the Sassanids never had time to recover fully.

Extent of the Sasanian Empire in 632 with modern borders superimposed

In early 632, a grandson of Khosrau I, who had lived in hiding in Estakhr, Yazdegerd III, acceded to the throne. The same year, the first raiders from the Arab tribes, newly united by Islam, arrived in Persian territory. According to Howard-Johnston, years of warfare had exhausted both the Byzantines and the Persians. The Sassanids were further weakened by economic decline, heavy taxation, religious unrest, rigid social stratification, the increasing power of the provincial landholders, and a rapid turnover of rulers, facilitating the Islamic conquest of Persia.

The Sassanids never mounted a truly effective resistance to the pressure applied by the initial Arab armies. Yazdegerd was a boy at the mercy of his advisers and incapable of uniting a vast country crumbling into small feudal kingdoms, despite the fact that the Byzantines, under

similar pressure from the newly expansive Arabs, were no longer a threat. Caliph Abu Bakr's commander Khalid ibn Walid, once one of Muhammad's chosen companions-in-arms and leader of the Arab army, moved to capture Iraq in a series of lightning battles. Redeployed to the Syrian front against the Byzantines in June 634, Khalid's successor in Iraq failed him, and the Muslims were defeated in the Battle of the Bridge in 634. However, the Arab threat did not stop there and reemerged shortly via the disciplined armies of Khalid ibn Walid.

Umayyad Caliphate coin imitating Khosrau II. Coin of the time of Mu'awiya I ibn Abi Sufyan. BCRA (Basra) mint; "Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, governor". Dated AH 56 = 675/6. Sasanian style bust imitating Khosrau II right; bismillah and three pellets in margin; c/m: winged creature right / Fire altar with ribbons and attendants; star and crescent flanking flames; date to left, mint name to right.

In 637, a Muslim army under the Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattāb defeated a larger Persian force led by General Rostam Farrokhzad at the plains of al-Qādisiyyah, and then advanced on Ctesiphon, which fell after a prolonged siege. Yazdegerd fled eastward from Ctesiphon, leaving behind him most of the empire's vast treasury. The Arabs captured Ctesiphon shortly afterward. Thus the Muslims were able to seize a powerful financial resource, leaving the Sassanid government strapped for funds. A number of Sassanid governors attempted to combine their forces to throw back the invaders, but the effort was crippled by the lack of a strong central authority, and the governors were defeated at the Battle of Nihawānd. The empire, with its military command structure non-existent, its non-noble troop levies decimated, its financial resources effectively destroyed, and the Asawaran (Azatan) knightly caste destroyed piecemeal, was now utterly helpless in the face of the Arab invaders.

Upon hearing of the defeat in Nihawānd, Yazdegerd along with Farrukhzad and some of the Persian nobles fled further inland to the eastern province of Khorasan. Yazdegerd was assassinated by a miller in Merv in late 651, while some of the nobles settled in Central Asia, where they contributed greatly to spreading the Persian culture and language in those regions and to the establishment of the first native Iranian Islamic dynasty, the Samanid dynasty, which sought to revive Sassanid traditions.

The abrupt fall of the Sassanid Empire was completed in a period of just five years, and most of its territory was absorbed into the Islamic caliphate; however, many Iranian cities resisted and fought against the invaders several times. Islamic caliphates repeatedly suppressed revolts in cities such as Rey, Isfahan, and Hamadan. The local population was initially under little

pressure to convert to Islam, remaining as dhimmi subjects of the Muslim state and paying a jizya. In addition, the old Sassanid "land tax" (known in Arabic as *Kharaj*) was also adopted. Caliph Umar is said to have occasionally set up a commission to survey the taxes, to judge if they were more than the land could bear.

Descendants

It is believed that the following dynasties and noble-families have ancestors among the Sassanian rulers :

The Dabuyid dynasty (642–760) descendant of Jamasp.

The Paduspanids (665–1598) of Mazandaran, descendant of Jamasp.

The Shahs of Shirwan (1100–1382) from Hormizd IV's line.

The Banu Munajjim (9th–10th century) from Mihr Gushnasp, an Sasanian prince.

The Kamkarian family (9th–10th century) a *dehqan* family descended from Yazdegerd III.

The Mikalids (9th–11th century) a family descended from the Sogdian ruler Divashtich, who was in turn a descendant of Bahram V Gur.

Government :

The Sassanids established an empire roughly within the frontiers achieved by the Parthian Arsacids, with the capital at Ctesiphon in the Asoristan province. In administering this empire, Sassanid rulers took the title of *shahanshah* (King of Kings), becoming the central overlords and also assumed guardianship of the sacred fire, the symbol of the national religion. This symbol is explicit on Sassanid coins where the reigning monarch, with his crown and regalia of office, appears on the obverse, backed by the sacred fire, the symbol of the national religion, on the coin's reverse. Sassanid queens had the title of Banbishnan banbishn (Queen of Queens).

On a smaller scale, the territory might also be ruled by a number of petty rulers from a noble family, known as *shahrdar*, overseen directly by the *shahanshah*. The districts of the provinces were ruled by a *shahrab* and a *mowbed* (chief priest). The mowbed's job was to deal with estates and other things relating to legal matters. Sasanian rule was characterized by considerable centralization, ambitious urban planning, agricultural development, and technological improvements. Below the king, a powerful bureaucracy carried out much of the affairs of government; the head of the bureaucracy was the *wuzurg framadar* (vizier or prime minister). Within this bureaucracy the Zoroastrian priesthood was immensely powerful. The head of the Magi priestly class, the *mowbedan mowbed*, along with the commander-in-chief, the *spahbed*, the head of traders and merchants syndicate *Ho Tokhshan Bod* and minister of agriculture (*wastaryoshan-salar*), who was also head of farmers, were, below the emperor, the most powerful men of the Sassanid state.

The Sassanian rulers always considered the advice of their ministers. A Muslim historian, Masudi, praised the "excellent administration of the Sasanian kings, their well-ordered policy, their care for their subjects, and the prosperity of their domains". In normal times, the monarchical office was hereditary, but might be transferred by the king to a younger son; in two instances the supreme power was held by queens. When no direct heir was available, the nobles and prelates chose a ruler, but their choice was restricted to members of the royal family.

The Sasanian nobility was a mixture of old Parthian clans, Persian aristocratic families, and noble families from subjected territories. Many new noble families had risen after the dissolution of the Parthian dynasty, while several of the once-dominant Seven Parthian clans remained of high importance. At the court of Ardashir I, the old Arsacid families of the House of Karen and the House of Suren, along with several other families, the Varazes and Andigans, held positions of great honor. Alongside these Iranian and non-Iranian noble families, the kings of Merv, Abarshahr, Kirman, Sakastan, Iberia, and Adiabene, who are mentioned as holding positions of honor amongst the nobles, appeared at the court of the *shahanshah*. Indeed, the extensive domains of the Surens, Karens and Varazes, had become part of the original Sassanid state as semi-independent states. Thus, the noble families that attended at the court of the Sassanid empire continued to be ruling lines in their own right, although subordinate to the *shahanshah*.

In general, *Wuzurgan* from Iranian families held the most powerful positions in the imperial administration, including governorships of border provinces (*marzban*). Most of these positions were patrimonial, and many were passed down through a single family for generations. The *marzbans* of greatest seniority were permitted a silver throne, while *marzbans* of the most strategic border provinces, such as the Caucasus province, were allowed a golden throne. In military campaigns, the regional *marzbans* could be regarded as field marshals, while lesser *spahbeds* could command a field army.

Culturally, the Sassanids implemented a system of social stratification. This system was supported by Zoroastrianism, which was established as the state religion. Other religions appear to have been largely tolerated, although this claim has been debated. Sassanid emperors consciously sought to resuscitate Persian traditions and to obliterate Greek cultural influence.

Sasanian military :

The Walls of Derbent, part of the Sasanian defence lines

The active army of the Sassanid Empire originated from Ardashir I, the first *shahanshah* of the empire. Ardashir restored the Achaemenid military organizations, retained the Parthian cavalry model, and employed new types of armour and siege warfare techniques.

Role of priests :

The relationship between priests and warriors was important, because the concept of Ērānshahr had been revived by the priests. Without this relationship, the Sassanid Empire would not have survived in its beginning stages. Because of this relationship between the warriors and the priests, religion and state were considered inseparable in the Zoroastrian religion. However, it is this same relationship that caused the weakening of the Empire, when each group tried to impose their power onto the other. Disagreements between the priests and the warriors led to fragmentation within the empire, which led to its downfall.
Infantry

Sasanian army helmet

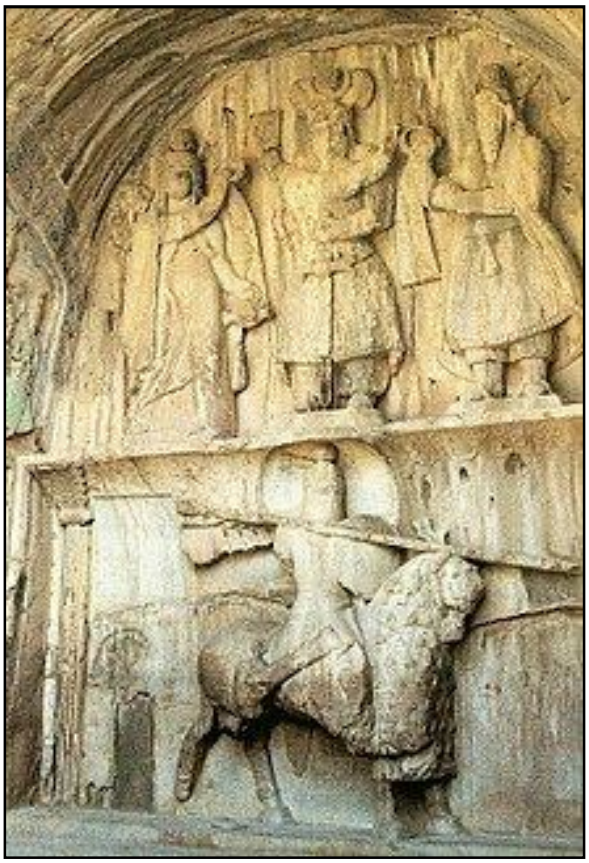
The Paygan formed the bulk of the Sassanid infantry, and were often recruited from the peasant population. Each unit was headed by an officer called a "Paygan-salar," which meant "commander of the infantry" and their main task was to guard the baggage train, serve as pages to the Asvaran (a higher rank), storm fortification walls, undertake entrenchment projects, and excavate mines.

Those serving in the infantry were fitted with shields and lances. To make the size of their army larger, the Sassanids added soldiers provided by the Medes and the Dailamites to their own. The Medes provided the Sassanid army with high-quality javelin throwers, slingers and heavy infantry. Iranian infantry are described by Ammianus Marcellinus as "armed like gladiators" and "obey orders like so many horse-boys". The Dailamite people also served as infantry and were Iranian people who lived mainly within Gilan, Iranian Azerbaijan and Mazandaran. They are reported as having fought with weapons such as daggers, swords and javelins and reputed to have been recognized by Romans for their skills and hardiness in close-quarter combat. One account of Dailamites recounted their participation in an invasion of Yemen where 800 of them were led by the Dailamite officer Vahriz. Vahriz would eventually defeat the Arab forces in Yemen and its capital Sana'a making it a Sasanian vassal until the invasion of Persia by Arabs.

Navy :

The Sasanian navy was an important constituent of the Sasanian military from the time that Ardashir I conquered the Arab side of the Persian Gulf. Because controlling the Persian Gulf was an economic necessity, the Sasanian navy worked to keep it safe from piracy, prevent Roman encroachment, and keep the Arab tribes from getting hostile. However, it is believed by many historians that the naval force could not have been a strong one, as the men serving in the navy were those who were confined in prisons. The leader of the navy bore the title of *nāvbed*.

Cavalry :



A Sassanid king posing as an armored cavalryman, Taq-e Bostan, Iran

Sassanian silver plate showing lance combat between two nobles

The cavalry used during the Sassanid Empire were two types of heavy cavalry units: Clibanarii and Cataphracts. The first cavalry force, composed of elite noblemen trained since youth for military service, was supported by light cavalry, infantry and archers. Mercenaries and tribal people of the empire, including the Turks, Kushans, Sarmatians, Khazars, Georgians, and Armenians were included in these first cavalry units. The second cavalry involved the use of the war elephants. In fact, it was their specialty to deploy elephants as cavalry support.

Unlike the Parthians, the Sassanids developed advanced siege engines. The development of siege weapons was a useful weapon during conflicts with Rome, in which success hinged upon the ability to seize cities and other fortified points; conversely, the Sassanids also developed a number of techniques for defending their own cities from attack. The Sassanid army was much like the preceding Parthian army, although some of the Sassanid's heavy cavalry were equipped with lances, while Parthian armies were heavily equipped with bows. The Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus's description of Shapur II's clibanarii cavalry manifestly shows how heavily equipped it was, and how only a portion were spear equipped.

All the companies were clad in iron, and all parts of their bodies were covered with thick plates, so fitted that the stiff-joints conformed with those of their limbs; and the forms of human faces were so skillfully fitted to their heads, that since their entire body was covered with metal, arrows that fell upon them could lodge only where they could see a little through tiny openings opposite the pupil of the eye, or where through the tip of their nose they were able to get a little breath. Of these, some who were armed with pikes, stood so motionless that you would have thought them held fast by clamps of bronze.

Horsemen in the Sassanid cavalry lacked a stirrup. Instead, they used a war saddle which had a cantle at the back and two guard clamps which curved across the top of the rider's thighs. This allowed the horsemen to stay in the saddle at all times during the battle, especially during violent encounters.

The Byzantine emperor Maurikios also emphasizes in his *Strategikon* that many of the Sassanid heavy cavalry did not carry spears, relying on their bows as their primary weapons. However the Taq-i Bustan reliefs and Al-Tabari's famed list of equipment required for dihqan knights which included the lance, provide a contrast. What is certain is that the horseman's paraphernalia was extensive.

The amount of money involved in maintaining a warrior of the Asawaran (Azatan) knightly caste required a small estate, and the Asawaran (Azatan) knightly caste received that from the throne, and in return, were the throne's most notable defenders in time of war.

Relations with neighboring regimes :

Frequent warfare with the Romans and to a lesser extent others

A fine cameo showing an equestrian combat of Shapur I and Roman emperor Valerian in which the Roman emperor is seized following the Battle of Edessa, according to Shapur's own statement, "with our own hand", in 260

The Sassanids, like the Parthians, were in constant hostilities with the Roman Empire. The Sassanids, who succeeded the Parthians, were recognized as one of the leading world powers alongside its neighboring rival the Byzantine Empire, or Eastern Roman Empire, for a period of more than 400 years. Following the division of the Roman Empire in 395, the Byzantine Empire, with its capital at Constantinople, continued as Persia's principal western enemy, and main enemy in general. Hostilities between the two empires became more frequent. The Sassanids, similar to the Roman Empire, were in a constant state of conflict with neighboring kingdoms and nomadic hordes. Although the threat of nomadic incursions could never be fully resolved, the Sassanids generally dealt much more successfully with these matters than did the Romans, due to their policy of making coordinated campaigns against threatening nomads. The last of the many and frequent wars with the Byzantines, the climactic Byzantine–Sasanian War of 602–628, which included the siege of the Byzantine capital Constantinople, ended with both rivalling sides having drastically exhausted their human and material resources.

Furthermore, social conflict within the Empire had considerably weakened it further. Consequently, they were vulnerable to the sudden emergence of the Islamic Rashidun Caliphate, whose forces invaded both empires only a few years after the war. The Muslim forces swiftly conquered the entire Sasanian Empire and in the Byzantine–Arab Wars deprived the Byzantine Empire of its territories in the Levant, the Caucasus, Egypt, and North Africa. Over the following centuries, half the Byzantine Empire and the entire Sasanian Empire came under Muslim rule.

In general, over the span of the centuries, in the west, Sassanid territory abutted that of the large and stable Roman state, but to the east, its nearest neighbors were the Kushan Empire and nomadic tribes such as the White Huns. The construction of fortifications such

as Tus citadel or the city of Nishapur, which later became a center of learning and trade, also assisted in defending the eastern provinces from attack.

In south and central Arabia, Bedouin Arab tribes occasionally raided the Sassanid empire. The Kingdom of Al-Hirah, a Sassanid vassal kingdom, was established to form a buffer zone between the empire's heartland and the Bedouin tribes. The dissolution of the Kingdom of Al-Hirah by Khosrau II in 602 contributed greatly to decisive Sassanid defeats suffered against Bedouin Arabs later in the century. These defeats resulted in a sudden takeover of the Sassanid empire by Bedouin tribes under the Islamic banner.

Sassanian fortress in Derbent, Dagestan. Now inscribed on Russia's UNESCO world heritage list since 2003

In the north, Khazars and the Western Turkic Khaganate frequently assaulted the northern provinces of the empire. They plundered Media in 634. Shortly thereafter, the Persian army defeated them and drove them out. The Sassanids built numerous fortifications in the Caucasus region to halt these attacks, of which perhaps the most notably are the imposing fortifications built in Derbent (Dagestan, North Caucasus, now a part of Russia) that to a large extent, have remained intact up to this day.

On the eastern side of the Caspian Sea, the Sassanians erected the Great Wall of Gorgan, a 200 km-long defensive structure probably aimed to protect the empire from northern peoples, such as the White Huns.

Egyptian woven pattern woolen curtain or trousers, which was a copy of a Sassanid silk import, which was in turn based on a fresco of King Khosrau II fighting Axum Ethiopian forces in Yemen, 5–6th century.

In 522, before Khosrau's reign, a group of monophysite Axumites led an attack on the dominant Himyarites of southern Arabia. The local Arab leader was able to resist the attack but appealed to the Sassanians for aid, while the Axumites subsequently turned towards the Byzantines for help. The Axumites sent another force across the Red Sea and this time successfully killed the Arab leader and replaced him with an Axumite man to be king of the region.

In 531, Justinian suggested that the Axumites of Yemen should cut out the Persians from Indian trade by maritime trade with the Indians. The Ethiopians never met this request because an Axumite general named Abraha took control of the Yemenite throne and created an independent nation. After Abraha's death one of his sons, Ma'd-Karib, went into exile while his half-brother took the throne. After being denied by Justinian, Ma'd-Karib sought help from Khosrau, who sent a small fleet and army under commander Vahriz to depose the new king of Yemen. After capturing the capital city San'a'l, Ma'd-Karib's son, Saif, was put on the throne.
Justinian was ultimately responsible for Sassanian maritime presence in Yemen. By not providing the Yemenite Arabs support, Khosrau was able to help Ma'd-Karib and subsequently established Yemen as a principality of the Sassanian Empire.

Relations with China :

Like their predecessors the Parthians, the Sassanid Empire carried out active foreign relations with China, and ambassadors from Persia frequently traveled to China. Chinese documents report on thirteen Sassanid embassies to China. Commercially, land and sea trade with China was important to both the Sassanid and Chinese Empires. Large numbers of Sassanid coins have been found in southern China, confirming maritime trade.

On different occasions, Sassanid kings sent their most talented Persian musicians and dancers to the Chinese imperial court at Luoyang during the Jin and Northern Wei dynasties, and to Chang'an during the Sui and Tang dynasties. Both empires benefited from trade along the Silk Road and shared a common interest in preserving and protecting that trade. They cooperated in guarding the trade routes through central Asia, and both built outposts in border areas to keep caravans safe from nomadic tribes and bandits.

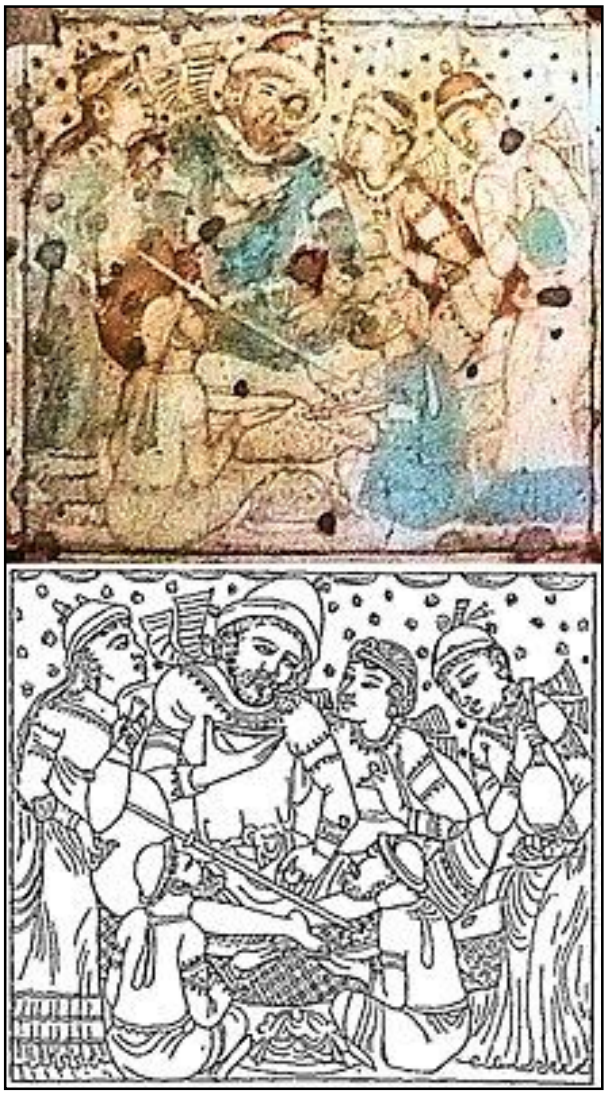
Politically, there is evidence of several Sassanid and Chinese efforts in forging alliances against the common enemy, the Hephthalites. Upon the rise of the nomadic Göktürks in Inner Asia, there is also what looks like a collaboration between China and the Sassanids to defuse Turkic advances. Documents from Mt. Mogh talk about the presence of a Chinese general in the service of the king of Sogdiana at the time of the Arab invasions.

Following the invasion of Iran by Muslim Arabs, Peroz III, son of Yazdegerd III, escaped along with a few Persian nobles and took refuge in the Chinese imperial court. Both Peroz and his son Narsieh (Chinese *neh-shie*) were given high titles at the Chinese court. On at least two occasions, the last possibly in 670, Chinese troops were sent with Peroz in order to restore him to the Sassanid throne with mixed results, one possibly ending in a short rule of Peroz in Sakastan, from which we have some remaining numismatic evidence. Narsieh later attained the position of a commander of the Chinese imperial guards, and his descendants lived in China as respected princes, Sassanian refugees fleeing from the Arab conquest to settle in China. The Emperor of China at this time was Emperor Gaozong of Tang.

Relations with India :

Coin of the Indo-Sassanid *Kushanshah* Varhran (mid-4th century)

***Obv:* King Varhran with characteristic head-dress *Rev:* Shiva and bull**



Foreign dignitary drinking wine, on ceiling of Cave 1, at Ajanta Caves, possibly depicting the Sasanian embassy to Indian king Pulakesin II (610–642), photograph and drawing

Following the conquest of Iran and neighboring regions, Shapur I extended his authority northwest of the Indian subcontinent (Pakistan and Afghanistan). The previously autonomous Kushans were obliged to accept his suzerainty. These were the western Kushans which controlled Afghanistan while the eastern Kushans were active in India. Although the Kushan empire declined at the end of the 3rd century, to be replaced by the Indian Gupta Empire in the 4th century, it is clear that the Sassanids remained relevant in India's northwest throughout this period.

Persia and northwestern India, the latter that made up formerly part of the Kushans, engaged in cultural as well as political intercourse during this period, as certain Sassanid practices spread into the Kushan territories. In particular, the Kushans were influenced by the Sassanid conception of kingship, which spread through the trade of Sassanid silverware and textiles depicting emperors hunting or dispensing justice.

This cultural interchange did not, however, spread Sassanid religious practices or attitudes to the Kushans. Lower-level cultural interchanges also took place between India and Persia during this period. For example, Persians imported the early form of chess, the *chaturanga* (Middle

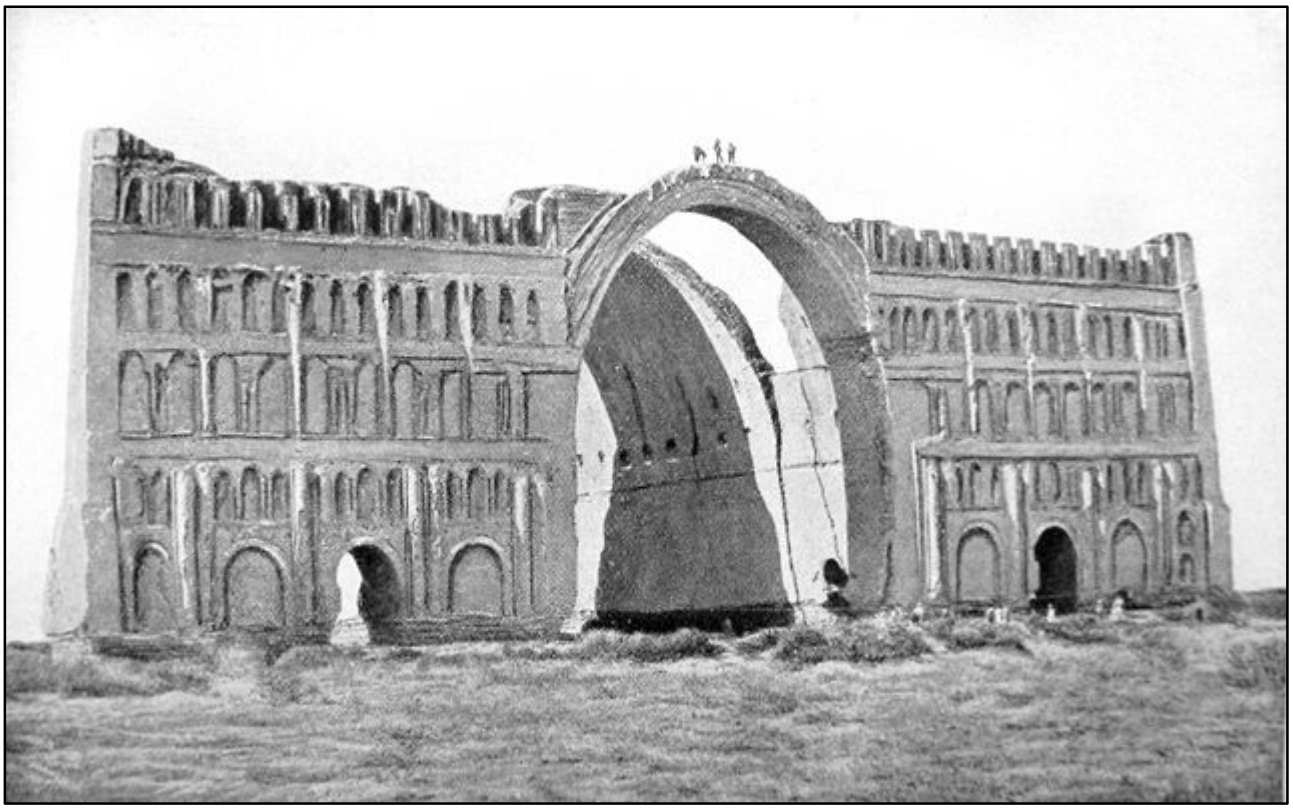
Persian: *chatrang*) from India. In exchange, Persians introduced backgammon (*Nēw-Ardašēr*) to India.

During Khosrau I's reign, many books were brought from India and translated into Middle Persian. Some of these later found their way into the literature of the Islamic world and Arabic literature. A notable example of this was the translation of the Indian *Panchatantra* by one of Khosrau's ministers, Borzuya. This translation, known as the *Kalīlag ud Dimnag*, later made its way into the Arabic literature and Europe. The details of Burzoe's legendary journey to India and his daring acquisition of the Panchatantra are written in full detail in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, which says:

In Indian books, Borzuya read that on a mountain in that land there grows a plant which when sprinkled over the dead revives them. Borzuya asked Khosrau I for permission to travel to India to obtain the plant. After a fruitless search, he was led to an ascetic who revealed the secret of the plant to him: The "plant" was word, the "mountain" learning, and the "dead" the ignorant. He told Borzuya of a book, the remedy of ignorance, called the Kalila, which was kept in a treasure chamber. The king of India gave Borzuya permission to read the Kalila, provided that he did not make a copy of it. Borzuya accepted the condition but each day memorized a chapter of the book. When he returned to his room he would record what he had memorized that day, thus creating a copy of the book, which he sent to Iran. In Iran, Bozorgmehr translated the book into Pahlavi and, at Borzuya's request, named the first chapter after him.

Society :

Urbanism and nomadism :



The Palace of Taq-i Kisra in Sasanian capital Ctesiphon. The city developed into a rich commercial metropolis. It may have been the most populous city of the world in 570–622.

In contrast to Parthian society, the Sassanids renewed emphasis on a charismatic and centralized government. In Sassanid theory, the ideal society could maintain stability and justice, and the necessary instrument for this was a strong monarch. Thus, the Sasanians aimed to be an urban empire, at which they were quite successful. During the late Sasanian period, Mesopotamia had the largest population density in the medieval world. This can be credited to, among other things, the Sasanians founding and re-founding a number of cities, which is talked about in the surviving Middle Persian text Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr (the provincial capitals of Iran). Ardashir I himself built and re-built many cities, which he named after himself, such as Veh-Ardashir in Asoristan, Ardashir-Khwarrah in Pars and Vahman-Ardashir in Meshan. During the Sasanian period, many cities with the name "Iran-khwarrah" were established. This was because Sasanians wanted to revive Avesta ideology.

Many of these cities, both new and old, were populated not only by native ethnic groups, such as the Iranians or Syriacs, but also by the deported Roman prisoners of war, such as Goths, Slavs, Latins, and others. Many of these prisoners were experienced workers, who were used to build things such as cities, bridges, and dams. This allowed the Sasanians to become familiar with Roman technology. The impact these foreigners made on the economy was significant, as many of them were Christians, and the spread of the religion accelerated throughout the empire.

Unlike the amount of information about the settled people of the Sasanian Empire, there is little about the nomadic/unsettled ones. It is known that they were called "Kurds" by the Sasanians, and that they regularly served the Sasanian military, particularly the Dailamite and Gilani nomads. This way of handling the nomads continued into the Islamic period, where the service of the Dailamites and Gilanis continued unabated.
Shahanshah

Bust of a Sasanian king, most likely Shapur II

The head of the Sasanian Empire was the *shahanshah* (king of kings), also simply known as the *shah* (king). His health and welfare was of high importance—accordingly, the phrase "May you be immortal" was used to reply to him. The Sasanian coins which appeared from the 6th-century and afterwards depict a moon and sun, which, in the words of the Iranian historian Touraj Daryaee, "suggest that the king was at the center of the world and the sun and moon revolved around him. In effect he was the "king of the four corners of the world," which was an old Mesopotamian idea." The king saw all other rulers, such as the Romans, Turks, and Chinese, as being beneath him. The king wore colorful clothes, makeup, a heavy crown, while his beard was decorated with gold. The early Sasanian kings considered themselves of divine descent; they called themselves "bay" (divine).

When the king went out in public, he was hidden behind a curtain, and had some of his men in front of him, whose duty was to keep the masses away from him and to clear the way. When one came to the king, one was expected to prostrate oneself before him, also known as *proskynesis*. The king's guards were known as the *pushtigban*. On other occasions, the king was protected by a discrete group of palace guards, known as the *darigan*. Both of these groups were enlisted from royal families of the Sasanian Empire, and were under the command of the *hazarbed*, who was in charge of the king's safety, controlled the entrance of the kings palace, presented visitors to the king, and was allowed military commands or used as a negotiator. The *hazarbed* was also allowed in some cases to serve as the royal executioner. During Nowruz (Iranian new year) and Mihragan (Mihr's day), the king would hold a speech.

Class division :

Sassanid society was immensely complex, with separate systems of social organization governing numerous different groups within the empire. Historians believe society comprised four social classes:

- Asronan (priests)
- Arteshtaran (warriors)
- Wastaryoshan (commoners)
- Hutukhshan (artisans)

At the center of the Sasanian caste system the *shahanshah* ruled over all the nobles. The royal princes, petty rulers, great landlords and priests, together constituted a privileged stratum, and were identified as *wuzurgan*, or grandees. This social system appears to have been fairly rigid.

The Sasanian caste system outlived the empire, continuing in the early Islamic period.

Slavery :

In general, mass slavery was never practiced by the Iranians, and in many cases the situation and lives of semi-slaves (prisoners of war) were, in fact, better than those of the commoner. In Persia, the term "slave" was also used for debtors who had to use some of their time to serve in a fire-temple.

The most common slaves in the Sasanian Empire were the household servants, who worked in private estates and at the fire-temples. Usage of a woman slave in a home was common, and her master had outright control over her and could even produce children with her if he wanted to. Slaves also received wages and were able to have their own families whether they were female or male. Harming a slave was considered a crime, and not even the king himself was allowed to do it.

The master of a slave was allowed to free the person when he wanted to, which, no matter what faith the slave believed in, was considered a good deed. A slave could also be freed if his/her master died.

Culture :

Education :

There was a major school, called the Grand School, in the capital. In the beginning, only 50 students were allowed to study at the Grand School. In less than 100 years, enrollment at the Grand School was over 30,000 students.

Society :

Membership in a class was based on birth, although it was possible for an exceptional individual to move to another class on the basis of merit. The function of the king was to ensure that each class remained within its proper boundaries, so that the strong did not oppress the weak, nor the weak the strong. To maintain this social equilibrium was the essence of royal justice, and its effective functioning depended on the glorification of the monarchy above all other classes.

On a lower level, Sasanian society was divided into Azatan (freemen), who jealously guarded their status as descendants of ancient Aryan conquerors, and the mass of originally non-Aryan peasantry. The Azatan formed a large low-aristocracy of low-level administrators, mostly living on small estates. The Azatan provided the cavalry backbone of the Sasanian army.

Art, science and literature :

A bowl with Khosrau I's image at the center

Horse head, gilded silver, 4th century, Sasanian art

A Sasanian silver plate featuring a simurgh. The mythical bird was used as the royal emblem in the Sasanian period.

A Sasanian silver plate depicting a royal lion hunt

The Sasanian kings were patrons of letters and philosophy. Khosrau I had the works of Plato and Aristotle, translated into Pahlavi, taught at Gundishapur, and read them himself. During his reign, many historical annals were compiled, of which the sole survivor is the Karnamak-i Artaxshir-i Papakan (Deeds of Ardashir), a mixture of history and romance that served as the basis of the Iranian national epic, the Shahnameh. When Justinian I closed the schools of Athens, seven of their professors went to Persia and found refuge at Khosrau's court. In his treaty of 533 with Justinian, the Sasanian king stipulated that the Greek sages should be allowed to return and be free from persecution.

Under Khosrau I, the Academy of Gundishapur, which had been founded in the 5th century, became "the greatest intellectual center of the time", drawing students and teachers from every quarter of the known world. Nestorian Christians were received there, and brought Syriac translations of Greek works in medicine and philosophy. Neoplatonists also came to Gundishapur, where they planted the seeds of Sufi mysticism. The medical lore of India, Persia, Syria and Greece mingled there to produce a flourishing school of therapy.

Artistically, the Sasanian period witnessed some of the highest achievements of Iranian civilization. Much of what later became known as Muslim culture, including architecture and writing, was originally drawn from Persian culture. At its peak, the Sasanian Empire stretched from western Anatolia to northwest India (today Afghanistan/Pakistan), but its influence was felt far beyond these political boundaries. Sasanian motifs found their way into the art of Central Asia and China, the Byzantine Empire, and even Merovingian France. Islamic art however, was the true heir to Sasanian art, whose concepts it was to assimilate while at the same time instilling fresh life and renewed vigor into it. According to Will Durant.

Sasanian art exported its forms and motifs eastward into India, Turkestan and China, westward into Syria, Asia Minor, Constantinople, the Balkans, Egypt and Spain. Probably its influence helped to change the emphasis in Greek art from classic representation to Byzantine ornament, and in Latin Christian art from wooden ceilings to brick or stone vaults and domes and buttressed walls.

Sasanian carvings at Taq-e Bostan and Naqsh-e Rustam were colored; so were many features of the palaces; but only traces of such painting remain. The literature, however, makes it clear that the art of painting flourished in Sasanian times; the prophet Mani is reported to have founded a school of painting; Firdowsi speaks of Persian magnates adorning their mansions with pictures of Iranian heroes; and the poet al-Buhturi describes the murals in the palace at Ctesiphon. When a Sasanian king died, the best painter of the time was called upon to make a portrait of him for a collection kept in the royal treasury.

Painting, sculpture, pottery, and other forms of decoration shared their designs with Sasanian textile art. Silks, embroideries, brocades, damasks, tapestries, chair covers, canopies, tents and rugs were woven with patience and masterly skill, and were dyed in warm tints of yellow, blue and green. Every Persian but the peasant and the priest aspired to dress above his class; presents often took the form of sumptuous garments; and great colorful carpets had been an appendage of wealth in the East since Assyrian days. The two dozen Sasanian textiles that have survived are among the most highly valued fabrics in existence. Even in their own day, Sasanian textiles were admired and imitated from Egypt to the Far East; and during the Middle Ages, they were favored for clothing the relics of Christian saints. When Heraclius captured the

palace of Khosrau II Parvez at Dastagerd, delicate embroideries and an immense rug were among his most precious spoils. Famous was the "Winter Carpet", also known as "Khosrau's Spring" (Spring Season Carpet قـالی بهارسـتان) of Khosrau Anushirvan, designed to make him forget winter in its spring and summer scenes: flowers and fruits made of inwoven rubies and diamonds grew, in this carpet, beside walks of silver and brooks of pearls traced on a ground of gold. Harun al-Rashid prided himself on a spacious Sasanian rug thickly studded with jewelry. Persians wrote love poems about their rugs.

Studies on Sasanian remains show over 100 types of crowns being worn by Sasanian kings. The various Sasanian crowns demonstrate the cultural, economic, social and historical situation in each period. The crowns also show the character traits of each king in this era. Different symbols and signs on the crowns–the moon, stars, eagle and palm, each illustrate the wearer's religious faith and beliefs.

The Sasanian Dynasty, like the Achaemenid, originated in the province of Pars. The Sasanians saw themselves as successors of the Achaemenids, after the Hellenistic and Parthian interlude, and believed that it was their destiny to restore the greatness of Persia.

In reviving the glories of the Achaemenid past, the Sasanians were no mere imitators. The art of this period reveals an astonishing virility, in certain respects anticipating key features of Islamic art. Sasanian art combined elements of traditional Persian art with Hellenistic elements and influences. The conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great had inaugurated the spread of Hellenistic art into Western Asia. Though the East accepted the outward form of this art, it never really assimilated its spirit. Already in the Parthian period, Hellenistic art was being interpreted freely by the peoples of the Near East. Throughout the Sasanian period, there was reaction against it. Sasanian art revived forms and traditions native to Persia, and in the Islamic period, these reached the shores of the Mediterranean. According to Fergusson.

With the accession of the [Sasanians], Persia regained much of that power and stability to which she had been so long a stranger. The improvement in the fine arts at home indicates returning prosperity, and a degree of security unknown since the fall of the Achaemenidae.

Surviving palaces illustrate the splendor in which the Sasanian monarchs lived. Examples include palaces at Firuzabad and Bishapur in Fars, and the capital city of Ctesiphon in the Asoristan province (present-day Iraq). In addition to local traditions, Parthian architecture influenced Sasanian architectural characteristics. All are characterized by the barrel-vaulted iwans introduced in the Parthian period. During the Sasanian period, these reached massive proportions, particularly at Ctesiphon. There, the arch of the great vaulted hall, attributed to the reign of Shapur I (241–272), has a span of more than 80 feet (24 m) and reaches a height of 118 feet (36 m).

This magnificent structure fascinated architects in the centuries that followed and has been considered one of the most important examples of Persian architecture. Many of the palaces contain an inner audience hall consisting, as at Firuzabad, of a chamber surmounted by a dome. The Persians solved the problem of constructing a circular dome on a square building by employing squinches, or arches built across each corner of the square, thereby converting it into an octagon on which it is simple to place the dome. The dome chamber in the palace of

Firuzabad is the earliest surviving example of the use of the squinch, suggesting that this architectural technique was probably invented in Persia.

The unique characteristic of Sasanian architecture was its distinctive use of space. The Sasanian architect conceived his building in terms of masses and surfaces; hence the use of massive walls of brick decorated with molded or carved stucco. Stucco wall decorations appear at Bishapur, but better examples are preserved from Chal Tarkhan near Rey (late Sasanian or early Islamic in date), and from Ctesiphon and Kish in Mesopotamia. The panels show animal figures set in roundels, human busts, and geometric and floral motifs.

At Bishapur, some of the floors were decorated with mosaics showing scenes of banqueting. The Roman influence here is clear, and the mosaics may have been laid by Roman prisoners. Buildings were decorated with wall paintings. Particularly fine examples have been found on Mount Khajeh in Sistan.

Economy :

The remains of the Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

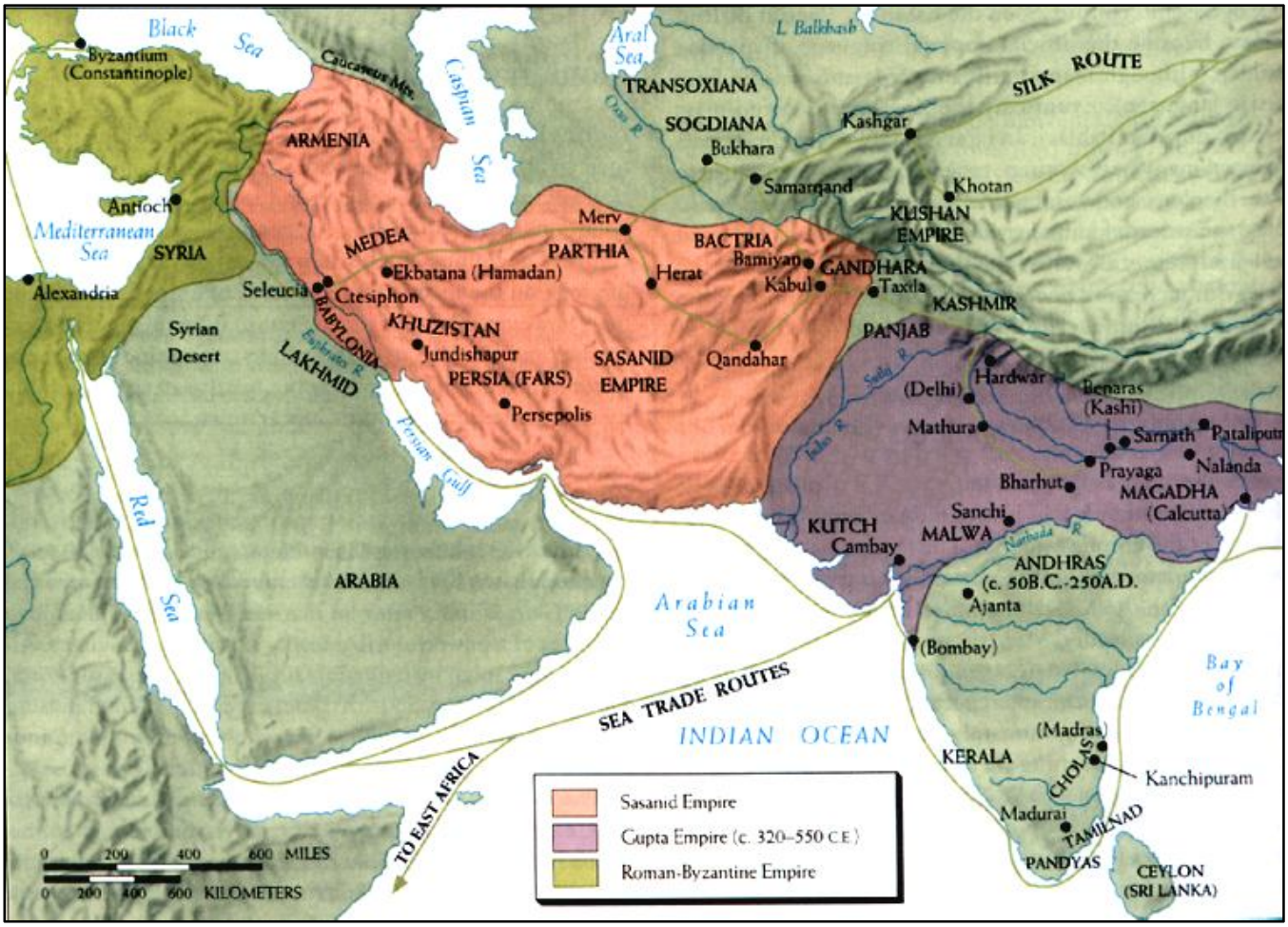
Sasanian silk twill textile of a simurgh in a beaded surround, 6th–7th century. Used in the reliquary of Saint Len, Paris

Due to the majority of the inhabitants being of peasant stock, the Sasanian economy relied on farming and agriculture, Khuzestan and Iraq being the most important provinces for it. The Nahravan Canal is one of the greatest examples of Sasanian irrigation systems, and many

of these things can still be found in Iran. The mountains of the Sasanian state were used for lumbering by the nomads of the region, and the centralized nature of the Sasanian state allowed it to impose taxes on the nomads and inhabitants of the mountains. During the reign of Khosrau I, further land was brought under centralized administration.

Two trade routes were used during the Sasanian period: one in the north, the famous Silk Route, and one less prominent route on the southern Sasanian coast. The factories of Susa, Gundeshapur, and Shushtar were famously known for their production of silk, and rivaled the Chinese factories. The Sasanians showed great toleration to the inhabitants of the countryside, which allowed the latter to stockpile in case of famine.

Industry and trade :



Sasanian sea trade routes

Persian industry under the Sasanians developed from domestic to urban forms. Guilds were numerous. Good roads and bridges, well patrolled, enabled state post and merchant caravans to link Ctesiphon with all provinces; and harbors were built in the Persian Gulf to quicken trade with India. Sasanian merchants ranged far and wide and gradually ousted Romans from the lucrative Indian Ocean trade routes. Recent archeological discovery has shown the interesting fact that Sasanians used special labels (commercial labels) on goods as a way of promoting their brands and distinguish between different qualities.

Khosrau I further extended the already vast trade network. The Sasanian state now tended toward monopolistic control of trade, with luxury goods assuming a far greater role in the trade than heretofore, and the great activity in building of ports, caravanserais, bridges and the like, was linked to trade and urbanization. The Persians dominated international trade, both in the Indian Ocean, Central Asia and South Russia, in the time of Khosrau, although competition with the Byzantines was at times intense. Sassanian settlements in Oman and Yemen testify to the importance of trade with India, but the silk trade with China was mainly in the hands of Sasanian vassals and the Iranian people, the Sogdians.

The main exports of the Sasanians were silk; woolen and golden textiles; carpets and rugs; hides; and leather and pearls from the Persian Gulf. There were also goods in transit from China (paper, silk) and India (spices), which Sasanian customs imposed taxes upon, and which were re-exported from the Empire to Europe.

It was also a time of increased metallurgical production, so Iran earned a reputation as the "armory of Asia". Most of the Sasanian mining centers were at the fringes of the Empire – in Armenia, the Caucasus and above all, Transoxania. The extraordinary mineral wealth of the Pamir Mountains on the eastern horizon of the Sasanian empire led to a legend among the Tajiks, an Iranian people living there, which is still told today. It said that when God was creating the world, he tripped over the Pamirs, dropping his jar of minerals, which spread across the region.

Religion :

Zoroastrianism :

Under Parthian rule, Zoroastrianism had fragmented into regional variations which also saw the rise of local cult-deities, some from Iranian religious tradition but others drawn from Greek tradition too. Greek paganism and religious ideas had spread and mixed with Zoroastrianism when Alexander the Great had conquered the Persian Empire from Darius III—a process of Greco-Persian religious and cultural synthesisation which had continued into the Parthian era. However, under the Sassanids, an orthodox Zoroastrianism was revived and the religion would undergo numerous and important developments.

Sassanid Zoroastrianism would develop to have clear distinctions from the practices laid out in the Avesta, the holy books of Zoroastrianism. It is often argued that the Sassanid Zoroastrian clergy later modified the religion in a way to serve themselves, causing substantial religious uneasiness. Sassanid religious policies contributed to the flourishing of numerous religious reform movements, most importantly the Mani and Mazdak religions.

The relationship between the Sassanid kings and the religions practiced in their empire became complex and varied. For instance, while Shapur I tolerated and encouraged a variety of religions and seems to have been a Zurvanite himself, religious minorities at times were suppressed under later kings, such as Bahram II. Shapur II, on the other hand, tolerated religious groups except Christians, whom he only persecuted in the wake of Constantine's conversion.

Tansar and his justification for Ardashir I's rebellion.

From the very beginning of Sassanid rule in 224 an orthodox Pars-oriented Zoroastrian tradition would play an important part in influencing and lending legitimization to the state until its collapse in the mid-7th century. After Ardashir I had deposed the last Parthian King, Artabanus V, he sought the aid of Tansar, a *herbad* (high priest) of the Iranian Zoroastrians to aid him in acquiring legitimization for the new dynasty. This Tansar did by writing to the nominal and vassal kings in different regions of Iran to accept Ardashir I as their new King, most notably in the *Letter of Tansar*, which was addressed to Gushnasp, the vassal king of Tabarestan. Gushnasp had accused Ardashir I of having forsaken tradition by usurping the throne, and that while his actions 'may have been good for the World' they were 'bad for the faith'. Tansar refuted these charges in his letter to Gushnasp by proclaiming that not all of the old ways had been good, and that Ardashir was more virtuous than his predecessors. The *Letter of Tansar* included some attacks on the religious practices and orientation of the Parthians, who did not follow an orthodox Zoroastrian tradition but rather a heterodox one, and so attempted to justify Ardashir's rebellion against them by arguing that Zoroastrianism had 'decayed' after Alexander's invasion, a decay which had continued under the Parthians and so needed to be 'restored'.

Tansar would later help to oversee the formation of a single 'Zoroastrian church' under the control of the Persian magi, alongside the establishment of a single set of Avestan texts, which he himself approved and authorised.

Influence of Kartir :

Kartir, a very powerful and influential Persian cleric, served under several Sassanid Kings and actively campaigned for the establishment of a Pars-centred Zoroastrian orthodoxy across the Sassanid Empire. His power and influence grew so much that he became the only 'commoner' to later be allowed to have his own rock inscriptions carved in the royal fashion (at Sar Mashhad, Naqsh-e Rostam, Ka'ba-ye Zartosht and Naqsh-e Rajab). Under Shapur I, Kartir was made the 'absolute authority' over the 'order of priests' at the Sassanid court and throughout the empire's regions too, with the implication that all regional Zoroastrian clergies would now for the first time be subordinated to the Persian Zoroastrian clerics of Pars. To some extent Kartir was an iconoclast and took it upon himself to help establish numerous Bahram fires throughout Iran in the place of the 'bagins / ayazans' (monuments and temples containing images and idols of cult-deities) that had proliferated during the Parthian era. In expressing his doctrinal orthodoxy, Kartir also encouraged an obscure Zoroastrian concept known as *khvedodah* among the common-folk (marriage within the family; between siblings, cousins). At various stages during his long career at court, Kartir also oversaw the periodic persecution of the non-Zoroastrians in Iran, and secured the execution of the prophet Mani during the reign of Bahram I. During the reign of Hormizd I (the predecessor and brother of Bahram I) Kartir was awarded the new Zoroastrian title of *mobad* – a clerical title that was to be considered higher than that of the eastern-Iranian (Parthian) title of *herbad*.

Zoroastrian calendar reforms under the Sasanians :

The Persians had long known of the Egyptian calendar, with its 365 days divided into 12 months. However, the traditional Zoroastrian calendar had 12 months of 30 days each. During the reign of Ardashir I, an effort was made to introduce a more accurate Zoroastrian calendar for the year, so 5 extra days were added to it. These 5 extra days were named the Gatha

days and had a practical as well as religious use. However, they were still kept apart from the 'religious year', so as not to disturb the long-held observances of the older Zoroastrian calendar.

Some difficulties arose with the introduction of the first calendar reform, particularly the pushing forward of important Zoroastrian festivals such as Hamaspat-maedaya and Nowruz on the calendar year by year. This confusion apparently caused much distress among ordinary people, and while the Sassanids tried to enforce the observance of these great celebrations on the new official dates, much of the populace continued to observe them on the older, traditional dates, and so parallel celebrations for Nowruz and other Zoroastrian celebrations would often occur within days of each other, in defiance of the new official calendar dates, causing much confusion and friction between the laity and the ruling class. A compromise on this by the Sassanids was later introduced, by linking the parallel celebrations as a 6-day celebration/feast. This was done for all except Nowruz.

A further problem occurred as Nowruz had shifted in position during this period from the spring equinox to autumn, although this inconsistency with the original spring-equinox date for Nowruz had possibly occurred during the Parthian period too.

Further calendar reforms occurred during the later Sassanid era. Ever since the reforms under Ardashir I there had been no intercalation. Thus with a quarter-day being lost each year, the Zoroastrian holy year had slowly slipped backwards, with Nowruz eventually ending up in July. A great council was therefore convened and it was decided that Nowruz be moved back to the original position it had during the Achaemenid period – back to spring. This change probably took place during the reign of Kavad I in the early 6th century. Much emphasis seems to have been placed during this period on the importance of spring and on its connection with the resurrection and *Frashegerd*.

Three Great Fires :

Ruins of Adur Gushnasp, one of three main Zoroastrian temples in the Sassanian Empire

Reflecting the regional rivalry and bias the Sassanids are believed to have held against their Parthian predecessors, it was probably during the Sassanid era that the two great fires in Pars and Media—the *Adur Farnbag* and *Adur Gushnasp* respectively—were promoted to rival, and even eclipse, the sacred fire in Parthia, the *Adur Burzen-Mehr*. The Adur Burzen-Mehr, linked (in legend) with Zoroaster and Vishtasp (the first Zoroastrian King), was too holy for the Persian magi to end veneration of it completely.

It was therefore during the Sassanid era that the three *Great Fires* of the Zoroastrian world were given specific associations. The *Adur Farnbag* in Pars became associated with the magi, *Adur Gushnasp* in Media with warriors, and *Adur Burzen-Mehr* in Parthia with the lowest estate, farmers and herdsmen.

The *Adur Gushnasp* eventually became, by custom, a place of pilgrimage by foot for newly enthroned Kings after their coronation. It is likely that, during the Sassanid era, these three *Great Fires* became central places for pilgrimage among Zoroastrians.

Iconoclasm and the elevation of Persian over other Iranian languages.

The early Sassanids ruled against the use of cult images in worship, and so statues and idols were removed from many temples and, where possible, sacred fires were installed instead. This policy extended even to the 'non-Iran' regions of the empire during some periods.

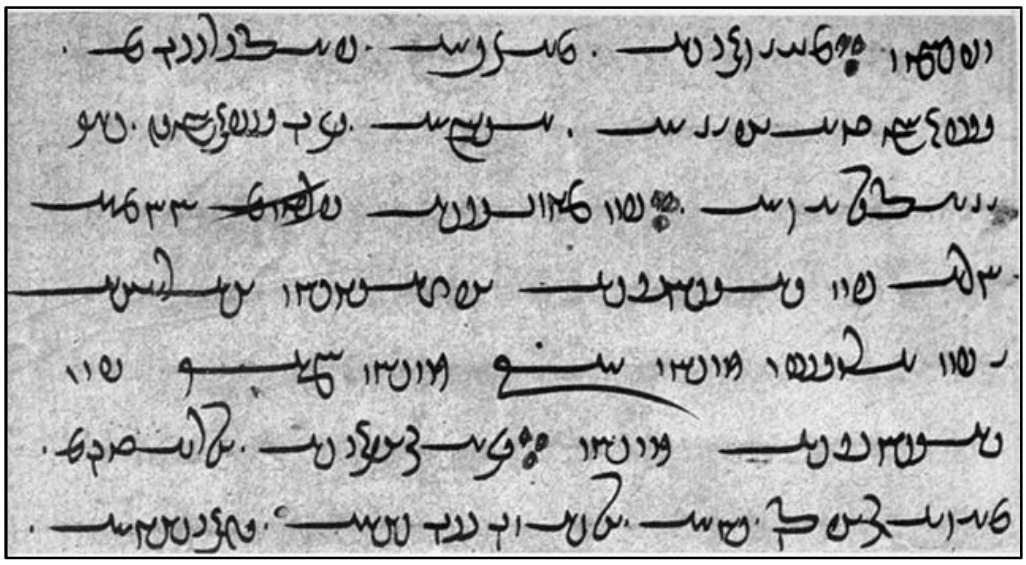
Hormizd I allegedly destroyed statues erected for the dead in Armenia. However, only cult-statues were removed. The Sassanids continued to use images to represent the deities of Zoroastrianism, including that of Ahura Mazda, in the tradition that was established during the Seleucid era.

In the early Sassanid period royal inscriptions often consisted of Parthian, Middle Persian and Greek. However, the last time Parthian was used for a royal inscription came during the reign of Narseh, son of Shapur I. It is likely therefore that soon after this, the Sassanids made the decision to impose Persian as the sole official language within Iran, and forbade the use of written Parthian. This had important consequences for Zoroastrianism, given that all secondary literature, including the Zand, was then recorded only in Middle Persian, having a profound impact in orienting Zoroastrianism towards the influence of the Pars region, the homeland of the Sassanids.

Developments in Zoroastrian literature and liturgy by the Sasanians.

Some scholars of Zoroastrianism such as Mary Boyce have speculated that it is possible that the *yasna* service was lengthened during the Sassanid era 'to increase its impressiveness'. This appears to have been done by joining the Gathic *Staota Yesnya* with the *haoma* ceremony. Furthermore, it is believed that another longer service developed, known as the *Visperad*, which derived from the extended yasna. This was developed for the celebration of the seven holy days of obligation (the *Gahambars* plus *Nowruz*) and was dedicated to *Ahura Mazda*.

While the very earliest Zoroastrians eschewed writing as a form of demonic practice, the Middle Persian Zand, along with much secondary Zoroastrian literature, was recorded in writing during the Sassanid era for the first time. Many of these Zoroastrian texts were original works from the Sassanid period. Perhaps the most important of these works was the *Bundahishn* – the mythical Zoroastrian story of 'Creation'. Other older works, some from remote antiquity, were possibly translated from different Iranian languages into Middle Persian during this period. For example, two works, the *Drakht-i Asurig* (Assyrian Tree) and *Ayadgar-i Zareran* (Exploits of Zarter) were probably translated from Parthian originals.



The Sasanians developed an accurate, phonetic alphabet to write down the sacred Avesta

Of great importance for Zoroastrianism was the creation of the Avestan alphabet by the Sassanids, which enabled the accurate rendering of the Avesta in written form (including in its original language/phonology) for the first time. The alphabet was based on the Pahlavi one, but rather than the inadequacy of that script for recording spoken Middle Persian, the Avestan alphabet had 46 letters, and was well suited to recording Avestan in written form in the way the language actually sounded and was uttered. The Persian magi were therefore finally able to record all surviving ancient Avestan texts in written form.

As a result of this development, the Sasanian Avesta was then compiled into 21 nasks (divisions) to correspond with the 21 words of the *Ahunavar* invocation. The nasks were further divided into three groups of seven. The first group contained the *Gathas* and all texts associated with them, while the second group contained works of scholastic learning. The final section contained treatises of instruction for the magi, such as the *Vendidad*, law-texts and other works, such as *yashts*.

An important literary text, the *Khwaday-Namag* (Book of Kings), was composed during the Sasanian era. This text is the basis of the later *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi. Another important Zoroastrian text from the Sasanian period includes the *Dadestan-e Menog-e Khrad* (Judgments of the Spirit of Wisdom).

Christianity :

Christians in the Sasanian Empire belonged mainly to the Nestorian Church (Church of the East) and the Jacobite Church (Syriac Orthodox Church) branches of Christianity. Although these churches originally maintained ties with Christian churches in the Roman Empire, they were indeed quite different from them. One reason for this was that the liturgical language of the Nestorian and Jacobite Churches was Syriac rather than Greek, the language of Roman Christianity during the early centuries (and the language of Eastern Roman Christianity in later centuries). Another reason for a separation between Eastern and Western Christianity was strong pressure from the Sasanian authorities to sever connections with Rome, since the Sasanian Empire was often at war with the Roman Empire.

Christianity was recognized by king Yazdegerd I in 409 as an allowable faith within the Sasanian Empire.

The major break with mainstream Christianity came in 431, due to the pronouncements of the First Council of Ephesus. The Council condemned Nestorius, a theologian of Cilician/Kilikian origin and the patriarch of Constantinople, for teaching a view of Christology in accordance with which he refused to call Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, "Theotokos" or Mother of God. While the teaching of the Council of Ephesus was accepted within the Roman Empire, the Sasanian church disagreed with the condemnation of Nestorius' teachings. When Nestorius was deposed as patriarch, a number of his followers fled to the Sasanian Empire. Persian emperors used this opportunity to strengthen Nestorius' position within the Sasanian church (which made up the vast majority of the Christians in the predominantly Zoroastrian Persian Empire) by eliminating the most important pro-Roman clergymen in Persia and making sure that their places were taken by Nestorians. This was to assure that these Christians would be loyal to the Persian Empire, and not to the Roman.

Most of the Christians in the Sasanian empire lived on the western edge of the empire, predominantly in Mesopotamia, but there were also important extant communities in the more northern territories, namely Caucasian Albania, Lazica, Iberia, and the Persian part of Armenia. Other important communities were to be found on the island of Tylos (present day Bahrain), the southern coast of the Persian Gulf, and the area of the Arabian kingdom of Lakhm. Some of these areas were the earliest to be Christianized; the kingdom of Armenia became the first independent Christian state in the world in 301. While a number of Assyrian territories had almost become fully Christianized even earlier during the 3rd century, they never became independent nations.

Other religions :

Some of the recent excavations have discovered the Buddhist, Hindu and Jewish religious sites in the empire. Buddhism and Hinduism were competitors of Zoroastrianism in Bactria and Margiana, in the far easternmost territories. A very large Jewish community flourished under Sasanian rule, with thriving centers at Isfahan, Babylon and Khorasan, and with its own semiautonomous *Exilarchate* leadership based in Mesopotamia. Jewish communities suffered only occasional persecution. They enjoyed a relative freedom of religion, and were granted privileges denied to other religious minorities. Shapur I (Shabur Malka in Aramaic) was a particular friend to the Jews. His friendship with Shmuel produced many advantages for the Jewish community. He even offered the Jews in the Sasanian empire a fine white Nisaean horse, just in case the Messiah, who was thought to ride a donkey or a mule, would come. Shapur II, whose mother was Jewish, had a similar friendship with a Babylonian rabbi named Rabbah. Raba's friendship with Shapur II enabled him to secure a relaxation of the oppressive laws enacted against the Jews in the Persian Empire. Moreover, in the eastern portion of the empire, various Buddhist places of worship, notably in Bamiyan, were active as Buddhism gradually became more popular in that region.

Language :

Official languages :

During the early Sasanian period, Middle Persian along with Greek and Parthian appeared in the inscriptions of the early Sasanian kings. However, by the time Narseh (r. 293–302) was ruling, Greek was no longer in use, perhaps due to the disappearance of Greek or the efforts of the anti-Hellenic Zoroastrian clergy to remove it once and for all. This was probably also because Greek was commonplace among the Romans/Byzantines, the rivals of the Sasanians. Parthian soon disappeared as an administrative language too, but was continued to be spoken and written in the eastern part of the Sasanian Empire, the homeland of the Parthians. Furthermore, many of the Parthian aristocrats who had entered into Sasanian service after the fall of the Parthian Empire still spoke Parthian, such as the seven Parthian clans, who possessed much power within the empire. Sometimes one of the members of the clans would even protest against Sasanian rule.

Aramaic, like in the Achaemenid Empire, was widely used in the Sasanian Empire, and provided scripts for Middle Persian and other languages.

Regional languages :

Although Middle Persian was the native language of the Sasanians (who, however, were not originally from Pars), it was only a minority spoken-language in the vast Sasanian Empire; it only formed the majority of Pars, while it was widespread around Media and its surrounding regions. However, there were several different Persian dialects during that time. Besides Persian, Adhari along with one of its dialects, Tati, was spoken in Adurbadagan (Azerbaijan). Daylamite and Gilaki was spoken in Gilan, while Mazandarani (also known as Tabari) was spoken in Tabaristan. Furthermore, many other languages and dialects were spoken in the two regions.

In the Sasanian territories in the Caucasus, numerous languages were sproken including Georgian, various Kartvelian languages (notably in Lazica), Middle Persian, Armenian, Caucasian Albanian, Scythian, Greek, and others.

In Khuzestan, several languages were spoken; Persian in the north and east, while Aramaic was spoken in the rest of the place. Furthermore, Neo-Elamite was also spoken in the province. In Meshan, the Arameans, along with settled Arabs (known as Mesenian Arabs), and the nomadic Arabs, formed the Semitic population of the province along with Nabataean and Palmyrene merchants. Iranians had also begun to settle in the province, along with the Zutt, who had been deported from India. Other Indian groups such as the Malays may also have been deported to Meshan, either as captives or recruited sailors. In Asoristan the majority of the people were Aramaic-speaking Nestorian Christians while the Persians, Jews and Arabs formed a minority in the province.

Due to invasions from the Scythians and their sub-group, the Alans, into Azerbaijan, Armenia, and other places in the Caucasus, the places gained a larger, although small, Iranian population. Parthian, along with other Iranian dialects and languages was spoken in Khorasan, while to the further east in places which were not always controlled by the Sasanians, Sogdian, Bactrian and Khwarazmian was spoken. To the further south in Sistan, which saw an influx of Scythians during the Parthian period, Sistani was spoken. Kirman was populated by an Iranian group which closely resembled the Persians, while, farther to the east in Paratan, Turan and Makran, Balochi and non-Iranian languages were spoken. In major cities such as Gundeshapur and Ctesiphon, Latin, Greek and Syriac were spoken by Roman/Byzantine prisoners of war. Furthermore, Slavic and Germanic were also spoken in the Sasanian Empire, once again due to the capture of Roman soldiers. Semitic languages including Himyaritic and Sabaean were spoken in Yemen.

Legacy and importance :

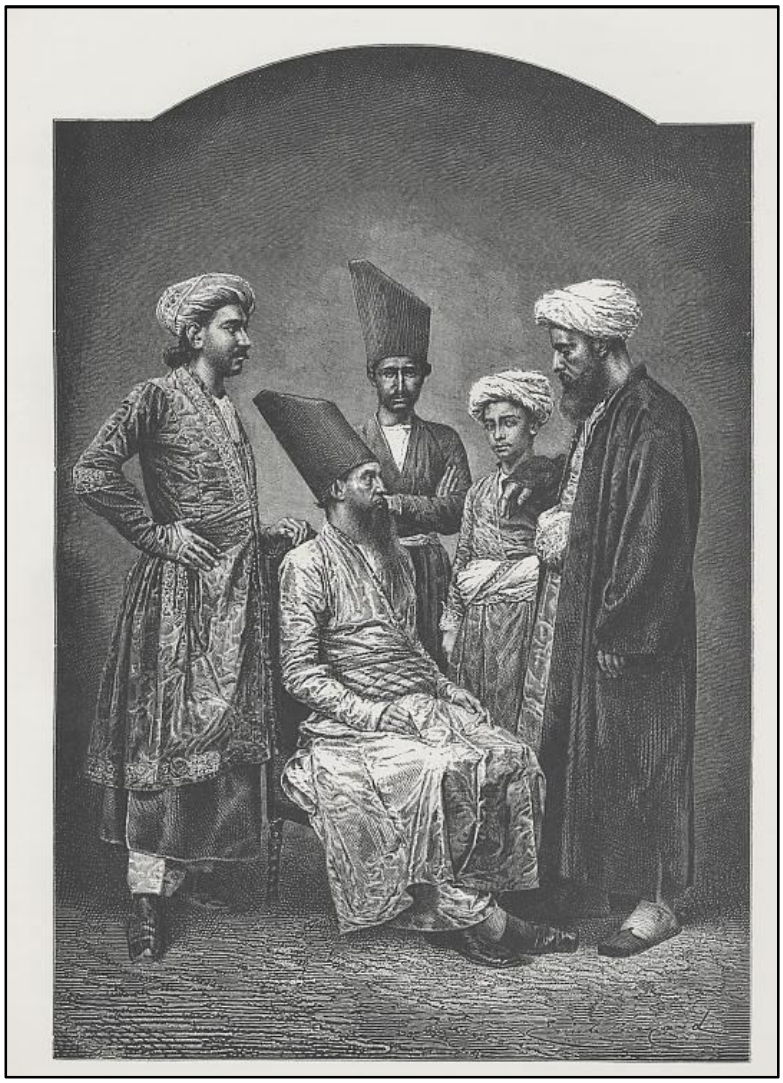
The influence of the Sasanian Empire continued long after it fell. The empire, through the guidance of several able emperors prior to its fall, had achieved a Persian renaissance that would become a driving force behind the civilization of the newly established religion of Islam. In modern Iran and the regions of the Iranosphere, the Sasanian period is regarded as one of the high points of Iranian civilization.

In Europe :

A Sasanian fortress in Derbent, Russia (the Caspian Gates)

Sasanian culture and military structure had a significant influence on Roman civilization. The structure and character of the Roman army was affected by the methods of Persian warfare. In a modified form, the Roman Imperial autocracy imitated the royal ceremonies of the Sasanian court at Ctesiphon, and those in turn had an influence on the ceremonial traditions of the courts of medieval and modern Europe. The origin of the formalities of European diplomacy is attributed to the diplomatic relations between the Persian governments and the Roman Empire.

In Jewish history :



"Parsees of Bombay" a wood engraving, c. 1878 :

Important developments in Jewish history are associated with the Sassanian Empire. The Babylonian Talmud was composed between the third and sixth centuries in Sasanian Persia and major Jewish academies of learning were established in Sura and Pumbedita that became cornerstones of Jewish scholarship. Several individuals of the Imperial family such as Ifra Hormizd the Queen mother of Shapur II and Queen Shushandukht, the Jewish wife of Yazdegerd I, significantly contributed to the close relations between the Jews of the empire and the government in Ctesiphon.

In India :

The collapse of the Sasanian Empire led to Islam slowly replacing Zoroastrianism as the primary religion of Iran. A large number of Zoroastrians chose to emigrate to escape Islamic persecution. According to the *Qissa-i Sanjan*, one group of those refugees landed in what is now Gujarat, India, where they were allowed greater freedom to observe their old customs and to preserve their faith. The descendants of those Zoroastrians would play a small but significant role in the development of India. Today there are over 70,000 Zoroastrians in India.

The Zoroastrians still use a variant of the religious calendar instituted under the Sasanians. That calendar still marks the number of years since the accession of Yazdegerd III, just as it did in 632. (*See also: Zoroastrian calendar*

Chronology :

Sasanian Empire timeline including important events and territorial evolution :

224–241: Reign of Ardashir I :

224: Overthrow of the Parthian Empire

229–232: War with Rome

Zoroastrianism is revived as official religion :

The collection of texts known as the Zend Avesta is assembled

241–271: Reign of Shapur I "the Great" :

241–244: War with Rome

252–261: War with Rome. Decisive victory of Persian at Edessa and Capture of Roman emperor Valerian

215–271: Mani, founder of Manicheanism

271–301: A period of dynastic struggles.

283: War with Rome.

293: Revolt of Narseh.

296–298: War with Rome – Persia cedes five provinces east of the Tigris to Rome.

309–379: Reign of Shapur II "the Great" :

325: Shapur II defeats many Arab tribes and makes the Lakhmid kingdom his vassal.

337–350: First war with Rome with relatively little success

359–363: Second war with Rome. Rome cedes Northern and Eastern Mesopotamia, Georgia and Armenia including fifteen fortresses as well as Nisibis to Persia.

387: Armenia partitioned into Roman and Persian zones

399–420: Reign of Yazdegerd I "the Sinner" :

410: Church of the East formalised at the synod of Isaac under the patronage of Yazdegerd. Christians are permitted to publicly worship and to build churches

416–420: Persecution of Christians as Yazdegerd revokes his earlier order

420–438: Reign of Bahram V :

421–422: War with Rome

424: Council of Dad-Ishu declares the Eastern Church independent of Constantinople

428: Persian zone of Armenia annexed to Sasanian Empire

438–457: Reign of Yazdegerd II :

440: War with the Byzantine Empire, the Romans gives some payments to the Sasanians

449–451: Armenian revolt. Battle of Avarayr fought in 451 against the

Christian Armenian rebels led by Vardan Mamikonian.

482–3: Armenian and Iberian revolt

483: Edict of Toleration granted to Christians

484: Peroz I defeated and killed by Hephthalites. The Nvarsak Treaty grants the Armenians the right to profess Christianity freely.

491: Armenian revolt. Armenian Church repudiates the Council of Chalcedon; Nestorian Christianity becomes dominant Christian sect in Sasanian Empire

502–506: War with the Byzantine Empire. In the end the Byzantine Empire pays 1,000 pounds of gold to the Sasanian Empire The Sasanians capture Theodosiopolis and Martyropolis. Byzantine Empire received Amida for 1,000 pounds of gold.

526–532: War with the Byzantine Empire. Treaty of Eternal Peace: The Sasanian Empire keeps Iberia and the Byzantine Empire receives Lazica & Persarmenia
Byzantine Empire paid tribute 11,000 lbs gold/year

531–579: Reign of Khosrau I, "with the immortal soul" (Anushirvan).

541–562: War with the Byzantine Empire.

572–591: War with the Byzantine Empire.

580: The Sasanians under Hormizd IV abolish the monarchy of the Kingdom of Iberia. Direct control through Sasanian-appointed governors starts.

590: Rebellion of Bahram Chobin and other Sasanian nobles, Khosrau II overthrows Hormizd IV but loses the throne to Bahram Chobin.

591: Khosrau II regains the throne with help from the Byzantine Empire and cedes Persian Armenia and western half of Iberia to the Byzantine Empire.

593: Attempted usurpation of Hormizd V

595–602: Rebellion of Vistahm

603–628: War with the Byzantine Empire. Persia occupies Byzantine Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and the Transcaucasus, before being driven to withdraw to pre-war frontiers by Byzantine counter-offensive

610: Arabs defeat a Sasanian army at Dhu-Qar

626: Unsuccessful siege of Constantinople by Avars, Persians, and Slavs.

627: Byzantine Emperor Heraclius invades Sasanian Mesopotamia. Decisive defeat of Persian forces at the battle of Nineveh

628: Kavadh II overthrows Khosrau II and becomes Shahanshah.

628: A devastating plague kills half of the population in Western Persia, including Kavadh II.

628–632: Civil war

632–644: Reign of Yazdegerd III :

636: Decisive Sasanian defeat at the Battle of al-Qādisiyyah during the Islamic conquest of Iran

641: The Muslims defeats a massive Sasanian army with heavy casualties during the Battle of Nihawānd

644: The Muslims conquer Khorasan, Yazdegerd III becomes a hunted fugitive

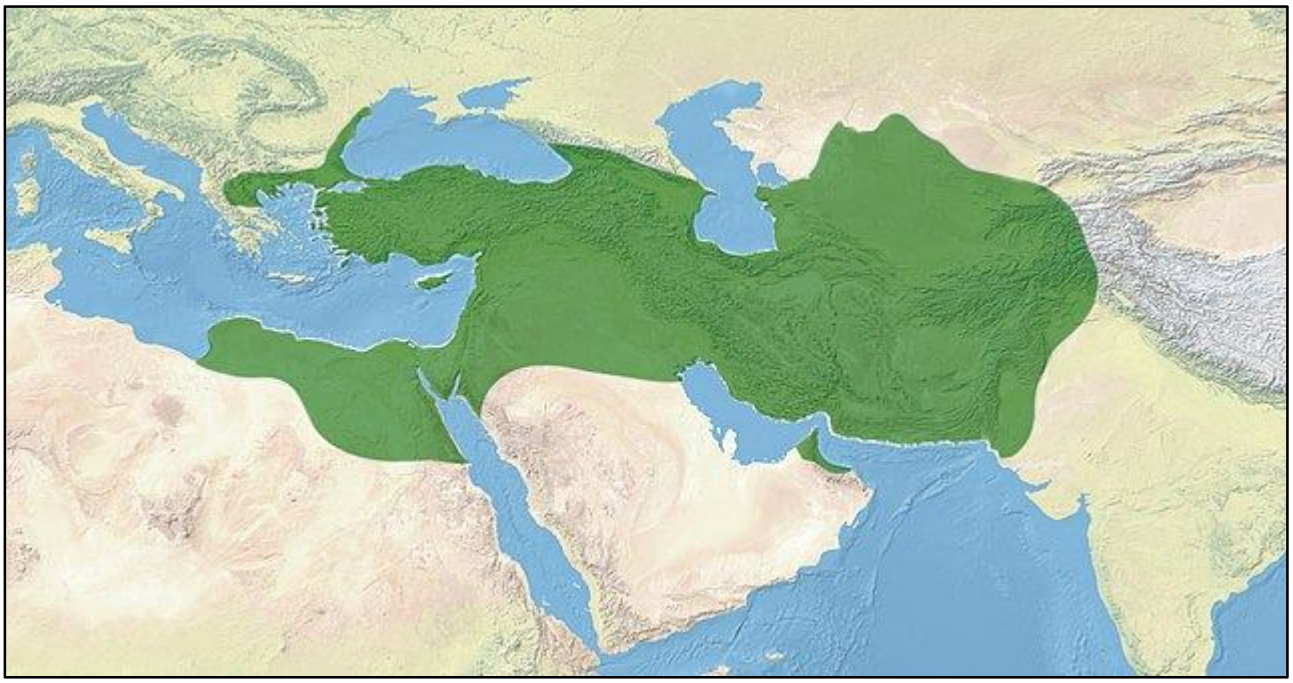
651: Yazdegerd III fled eastward from one district to another, until at last he was killed by a local miller for his purse at Merv (present-day Turkmenistan), ending the dynasty. Yazdegerd is given a burial by the Assyrian bishop Mar Gregory. His son, Peroz III, and many others went into exile in China.

Source :

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sasanian_Empire

44. Achaemenid Empire :

Standard of Cyrus the Great



The Achaemenid Empire at its greatest territorial extent, under the rule of Darius I (522 BC to 486 BC)

Achaemenid Empire	
550 BC–330 BC	
Standard of Cyrus the Great	
The Achaemenid Empire at its greatest territorial extent, under the rule of Darius I (522 BC to 486 BC)	
Capital	Babylon (main capital), Pasargadae, Ecbatana, Susa, Persepolis
Common languages	Old Persian (official) Aramaic (official, lingua franca) Babylonian Median Greek Elamite Sumerian Egyptian many others
Religion	Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, Babylonian religion
Government	Monarchy

King or King of Kings	
• 559–529 BC	Cyrus the Great
• 336–330 BC	Darius III
Historical era	Classical antiquity
• Persian Revolt	550 BC
• Conquest of Lydia	547 BC
• Conquest of Babylon	539 BC
• Conquest of Egypt	525 BC
• Greco-Persian Wars	499–449 BC
• Corinthian War	395–387 BC
• Second conquest of Egypt	343 BC
• Fall to Macedonia	330 BC
Area	
500 BC	5,500,000 km^2 (2,100,000 sq mi)
Population	
• 500 BC	17 million to 35 million
Currency	Daric, siglos

Preceded by	Succeeded by
Median Empire Neo-Babylonian Empire Lydia Twenty-sixth Dynasty of Egypt	Empire of Alexander the Great Twenty-eighth Dynasty of Egypt

Gandhar
Sogdia
Massagetae

The Achaemenid Empire (/əˈkiːmənɪd/; *Xšāça* (Old Persian) "The Empire" c. 550–330 BC), also called the First Persian Empire, was an ancient Iranian empire based in Western Asia founded by Cyrus the Great. Ranging at its greatest extent from the Balkans and Eastern Europe proper in the west to the Indus Valley in the east, it was larger than any previous empire in history, spanning 5.5 (or 8) million square kilometers. Incorporating various peoples of different origins and faiths, it is notable for its successful model of a centralised, bureaucratic administration (through satraps under the King of Kings), for building infrastructure such as road systems and a postal system, the use of an official language across its territories, and the development of civil services and a large professional army. The empire's successes inspired similar systems in later empires.

By the 7th century BC, the Persians had settled in the south-western portion of the Iranian Plateau in the region of Persis, which came to be their heartland. From this region, Cyrus the Great advanced to defeat the Medes, Lydia, and the Neo-Babylonian Empire, establishing the Achaemenid Empire. Alexander the Great, an avid admirer of Cyrus the Great, conquered most of the empire by 330 BC. Upon Alexander's death, most of the empire's former territory fell under the rule of the Ptolemaic Kingdom and Seleucid Empire, in addition to other minor territories which gained independence at that time. The Iranian elites of the central plateau reclaimed power by the second century BC under the Parthian Empire.

The Achaemenid Empire is noted in Western history as the antagonist of the Greek city-states during the Greco-Persian Wars and for the emancipation of the Jewish exiles in Babylon. The historical mark of the empire went far beyond its territorial and military influences and included cultural, social, technological and religious influences as well. Despite the lasting conflict between the two states, many Athenians adopted Achaemenid customs in their daily lives in a reciprocal cultural exchange, some being employed by or allied to the Persian kings. The impact of Cyrus's edict is mentioned in Judeo-Christian texts, and the empire was instrumental in the spread of Zoroastrianism as far east as China. The empire also set the tone for the politics, heritage and history of Iran (also known as Persia).

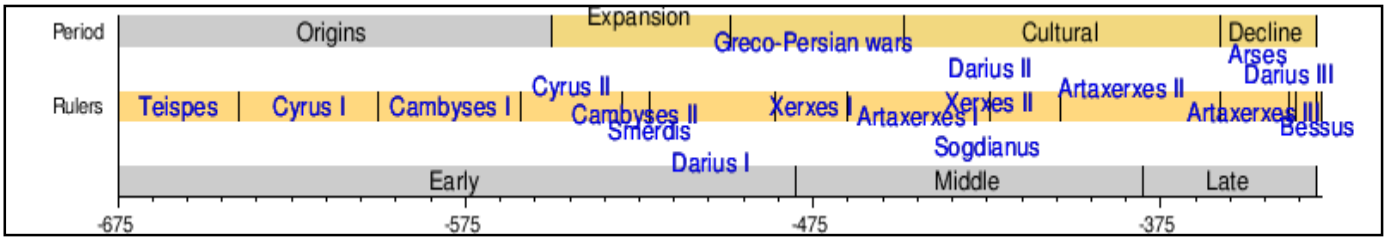
Etymology :

The term *Achaemenid* means "of the family of the Achaemenis/Achaemenes" (Old Persian: *Haxāmaniš*; a bahuvrihi compound translating to "having a friend's mind"). Achaemenes was himself a minor seventh-century ruler of the Anshan in southwestern Iran, and a vassal of Assyria.

History :

Achaemenid timeline :

Astronomical year numbering :

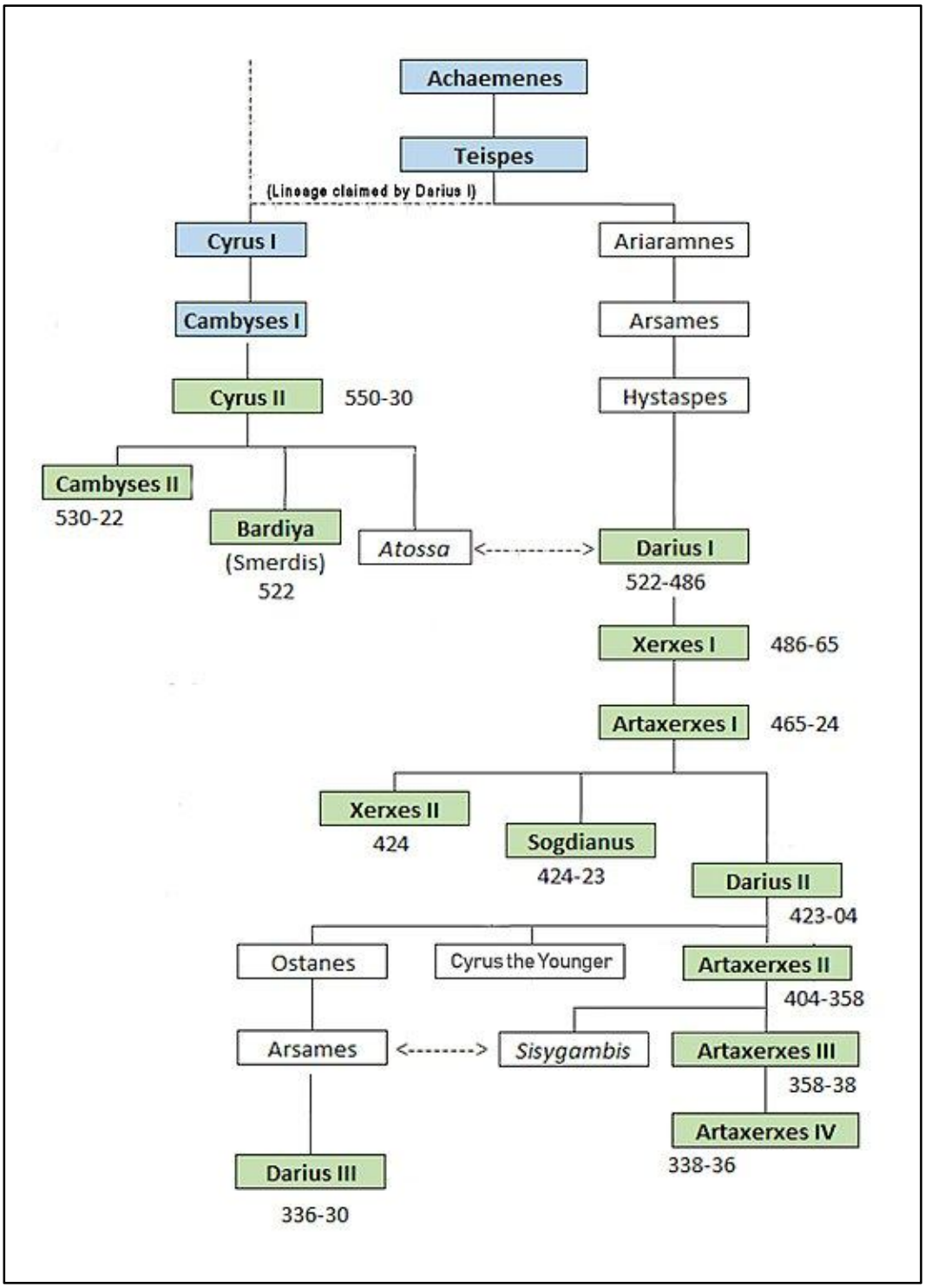


Dates are approximate, consult particular article for details

Origin :

The Persian nation contains a number of tribes as listed here. The Pasargadae, Maraphii, and Maspii, upon which all the other tribes are dependent. Of these, the Pasargadae are the most distinguished; they contain the clan of the Achaemenids from which spring the Perseid kings. Other tribes are the Panthialaei, Derusiaei, Germanii, all of which are attached to the soil, the remainder -the Dai, Mardi, Dropici, Sagarti, being nomadic.

—*Herodotus, Histories 1.101 & 125*



Family tree of the Achaemenid rulers

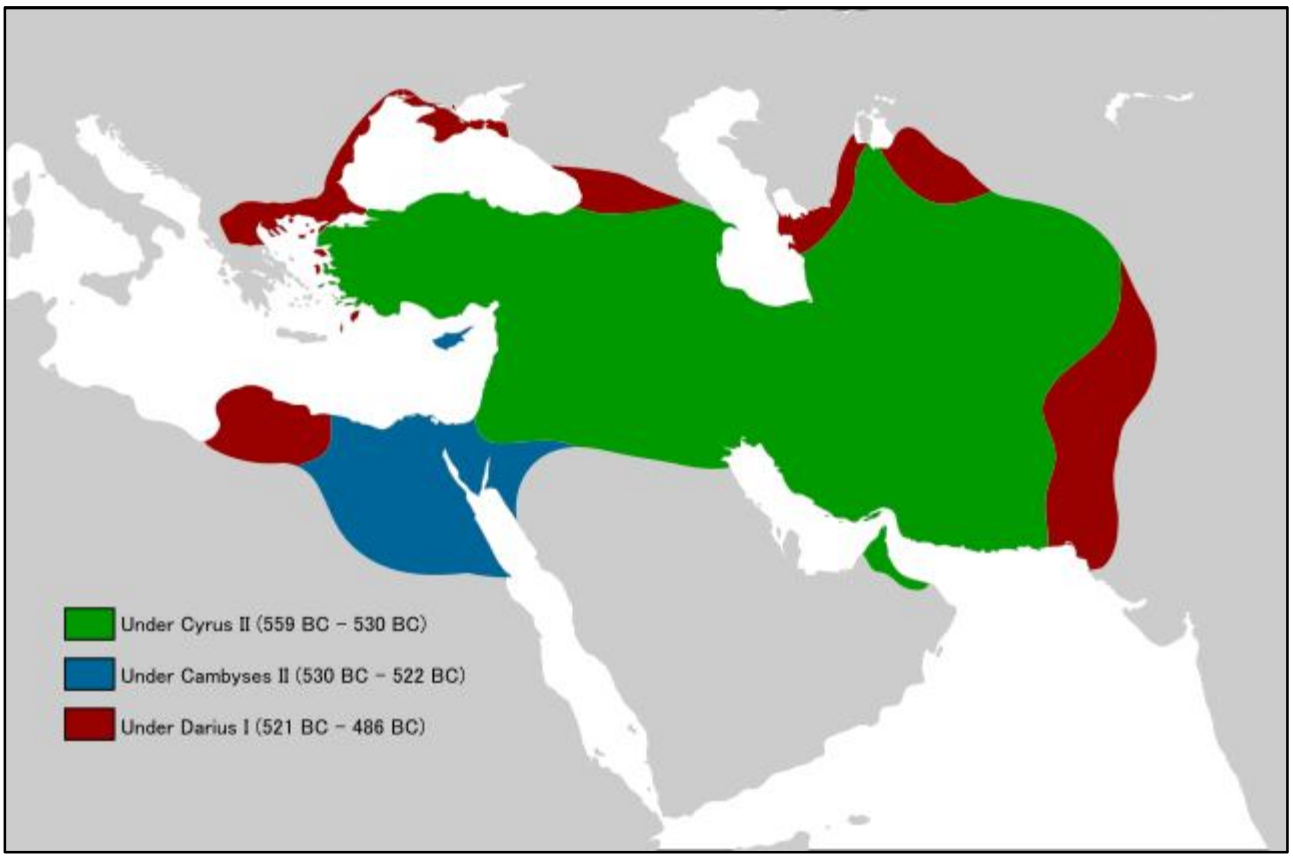
The Achaemenid Empire was created by nomadic Persians. The name "Persia" is a Greek and Latin pronunciation of the native word referring to the country of the people originating from Persis (Old Persian: *Pārsa*). The Persians were an Iranian people who arrived in what is today Iran c. 1000 BC and settled a region including north-western Iran, the Zagros Mountains and Persis alongside the native Elamites. For a number of centuries they fell under the domination of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (911–609 BC), based in northern Mesopotamia. The Persians were originally nomadic pastoralists in the western Iranian Plateau and by 850 BC were calling themselves the *Parsa* and their constantly shifting territory *Parsua*, for the most part localized around Persis. The Achaemenid Empire was not the

first Iranian empire, as the Medes, another group of Iranian peoples, established a short-lived empire and played a major role in the overthrow of the Assyrian.

The Achaemenids were initially rulers of the Elamite city of Anshan near the modern city of Marvdasht; the title "King of Anshan" was an adaptation of the earlier Elamite title "King of Susa and Anshan". There are conflicting accounts of the identities of the earliest Kings of Anshan. According to the Cyrus Cylinder (the oldest extant genealogy of the Achaemenids) the kings of Anshan were Teispes, Cyrus I, Cambyses I and Cyrus II, also known as Cyrus the Great, who created the empire (the later Behistun Inscription, written by Darius the Great, claims that Teispes was the son of Achaemenes and that Darius is also descended from Teispes through a different line, but no earlier texts mention Achaemenes). In Herodotus' Histories, he writes that Cyrus the Great was the son of Cambyses I and Mandane of Media, the daughter of Astyages, the king of the Median Empire.

Formation and expansion :

Further information: Battle of the Persian Border, Persian Revolt, Battle of Pteria, Battle of Opis, Battle of Pelusium (525 BC), Achaemenid invasion of the Indus Valley, and European Scythian campaign of Darius I



Map of the expansion process of Achaemenid territories

Cyrus revolted against the Median Empire in 553 BC, and in 550 BC succeeded in defeating the Medes, capturing Astyages and taking the Median capital city of Ecbatana. Once in control of Ecbatana, Cyrus styled himself as the successor to Astyages and assumed control of the entire

empire. By inheriting Astyages' empire, he also inherited the territorial conflicts the Medes had had with both Lydia and the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

King Croesus of Lydia sought to take advantage of the new international situation by advancing into what had previously been Median territory in Asia Minor. Cyrus led a counterattack which not only fought off Croesus' armies, but also led to the capture of Sardis and the fall of the Lydian Kingdom in 546 BC. Cyrus placed Pactyes in charge of collecting tribute in Lydia and left, but once Cyrus had left Pactyes instigated a rebellion against Cyrus. Cyrus sent the Median general Mazares to deal with the rebellion, and Pactyes was captured. Mazares, and after his death Harpagus, set about reducing all the cities which had taken part in the rebellion. The subjugation of Lydia took about four years in total.

When power in Ecbatana changed hands from the Medes to the Persians, many tributaries to the Median Empire believed their situation had changed and revolted against Cyrus. This forced Cyrus to fight wars against Bactria and the nomadic Saka in Central Asia. During these wars, Cyrus established several garrison towns in Central Asia, including the Cyropolis.

Cyrus the Great is said in the Bible to have liberated the Hebrew captives in Babylon to resettle and rebuild Jerusalem, earning him an honored place in Judaism.

Nothing is known of Persian-Babylonian relations between 547 BC and 539 BC, but it is likely that there were hostilities between the two empires for several years leading up to the war of 540-539 BC and the Fall of Babylon. In October 539 BC, Cyrus won a battle against the Babylonians at Opis, then took Sippar without a fight before finally capturing the city of Babylon on 12 October, where the Babylonian king Nabonidus was taken prisoner. Upon taking control of the city, Cyrus depicted himself in propaganda as restoring the divine order which had been disrupted by Nabonidus, who had promoted the cult of Sin rather than Marduk, and he also portrayed himself as restoring the heritage of the Neo-Assyrian Empire by comparing himself to the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal. The Hebrew Bible also unreservedly praises Cyrus for his actions in the conquest of Babylon, referring to him as Yahweh's anointed. He is credited with freeing the people of Judah from their exile and with authorizing the reconstruction of much of Jerusalem, including the Second Temple.

The tomb of Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid Empire

In 530 BC, Cyrus died while on a military expedition against the Massagetae in Central Asia. He was succeeded by his eldest son Cambyses II, while his younger son Bardiya received a large territory in Central Asia. By 525 BC, Cambyses had successfully subjugated Phoenicia and Cyprus and was making preparations to invade Egypt with the newly created Persian navy.

The great Pharaoh Amasis II had died in 526 BC and had been succeeded by Psamtik III, resulting in the defection of key Egyptian allies to the Persians. Psamtik positioned his army at Pelusium in the Nile Delta. He was soundly defeated by the Persians in the Battle of Pelusium before fleeing to Memphis, where the Persians defeated him and took him prisoner.

Herodotus depicts Cambyses as openly antagonistic to the Egyptian people and their gods, cults, temples and priests, in particular stressing the murder of the sacred bull Apis. He says that these actions led to a madness that caused him to kill his brother Bardiya (who Herodotus says was killed in secret), his own sister-wife and Croesus of Lydia. He then concludes that Cambyses completely lost his mind, and all later classical authors repeat the themes of Cambyses' impiety and madness. However, this is based on spurious information, as the epitath of Apis from 524 BC shows that Cambyses participated in the funeral rites of Apis styling himself as pharaoh.

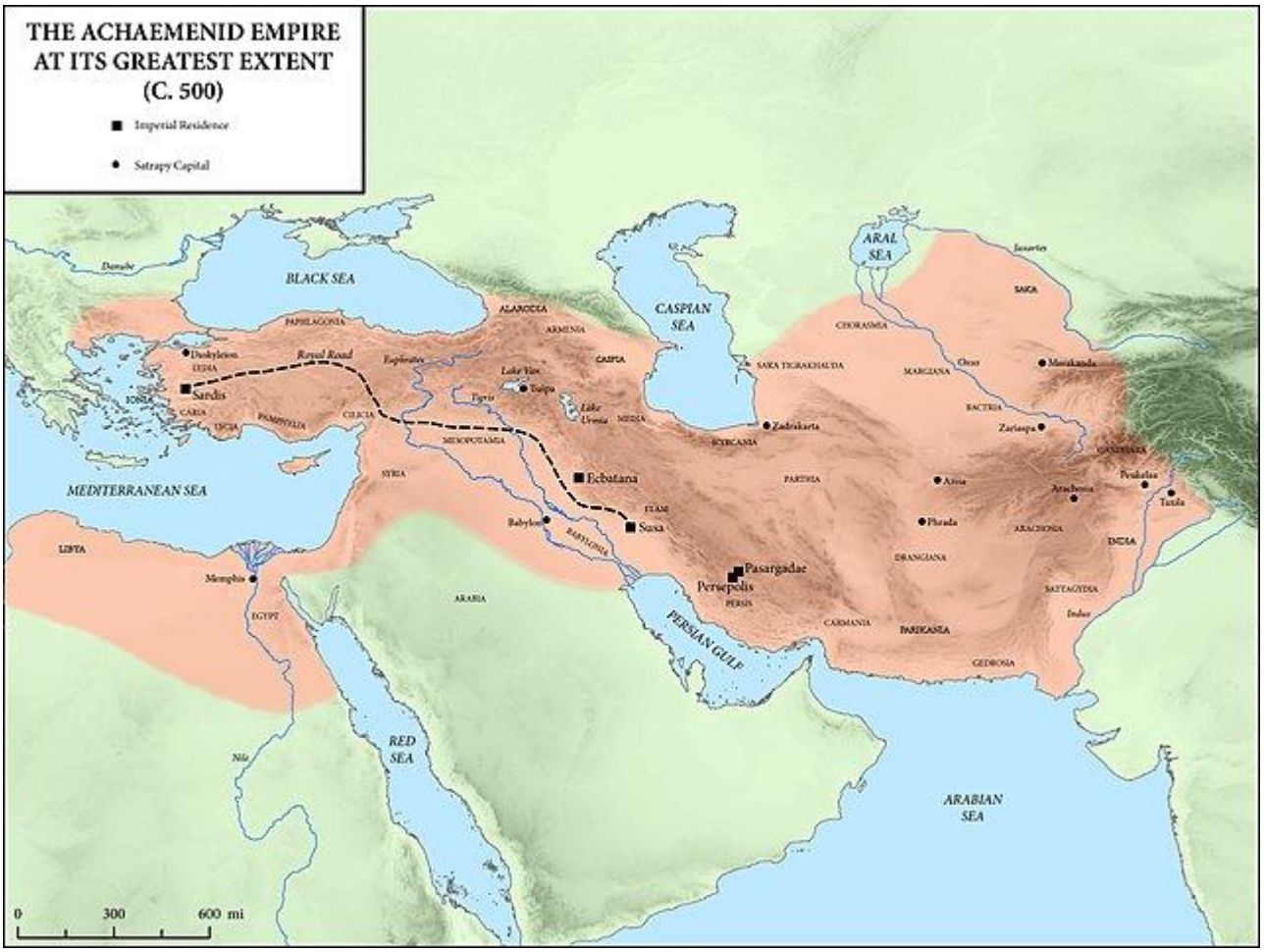
Following the conquest of Egypt, the Libyans and the Greeks of Cyrene and Barca in Libya surrendered to Cambyses and sent tribute without a fight. Cambyses then planned invasions of Carthage, the oasis of Ammon and Ethiopia. Herodotus claims that the naval invasion of Carthage was cancelled because the Phoenicians, who made up a large part of Cambyses' fleet, refused to take up arms against their own people, but modern historians doubt whether an invasion of Carthage was ever planned at all. However, Cambyses dedicated his efforts to the other two campaigns, aiming to improve the Empire's strategic position in Africa by conquering the Kingdom of Meroë and taking strategic positions in the western oases.

To this end, he established a garrison at Elephantine consisting mainly of Jewish soldiers, who remained stationed at Elephantine throughout Cambyses' reign. The invasions of Ammon and Ethiopia themselves were failures. Herodotus claims that the invasion of Ethiopia was a failure due to the madness of Cambyses and the lack of supplies for his men, but archaeological evidence suggests that the expedition was not a failure, and a fortress at the Second Cataract of the Nile, on the border between Egypt and Kush, remained in use throughout the Achaemenid period.

The events surrounding Cambyses' death and Bardiya's succession are greatly debated as there are many conflicting accounts. According to Herodotus, as Bardiya's assassination had been committed in secret, the majority of Persians still believed him to be alive. This allowed two Magi to rise up against Cambyses, with one of them sitting on the throne able to impersonate Bardiya because of their remarkable physical resemblance and shared name (Smerdis in Herodotus' accounts). Ctesias writes that when Cambyses had Bardiya killed he immediately put the magus Sphendadates in his place as satrap of Bactria due to a remarkable physical resemblance. Two of Cambyses' confidants then conspired to usurp Cambyses and put Sphendadates on the throne under the guise of Bardiya.

According to the Behistun Inscription, written by the following king Darius the Great, a magus named Gaumata impersonated Bardiya and incited a revolution in Persia. Whatever the exact circumstances of the revolt, Cambyses heard news of it in the summer of 522 BC and began to return from Egypt, but he was wounded in the thigh in Syria and died of gangrene, so Bardiya's impersonator became king. The account of Darius is the earliest, and although the later historians all agree on the key details of the story, that a magus impersonated Bardiya and took the throne, this may have been a story created by Darius to justify his own

usurpation. Iranologist Pierre Briant hypothesises that Bardiya was not killed by Cambyses, but waited until his death in the summer of 522 BC to claim his legitimate right to the throne as he was then the only male descendant of the royal family. Briant says that although the hypothesis of a deception by Darius is generally accepted today, "nothing has been established with certainty at the present time, given the available evidence".



The Achaemenid Empire at its greatest extent, c. 500 BC

According to the Behistun Inscription, Gaumata ruled for seven months before being overthrown in 522 BC by Darius the Great (Darius I) (Old Persian *Dāryavuš*, "who holds firm the good", also known as *Darayarahush* or Darius the Great). The Magi, though persecuted, continued to exist, and a year following the death of the first pseudo-Smerdis (Gaumata), saw a second pseudo-Smerdis (named Vahyazdāta) attempt a coup. The coup, though initially successful, failed.

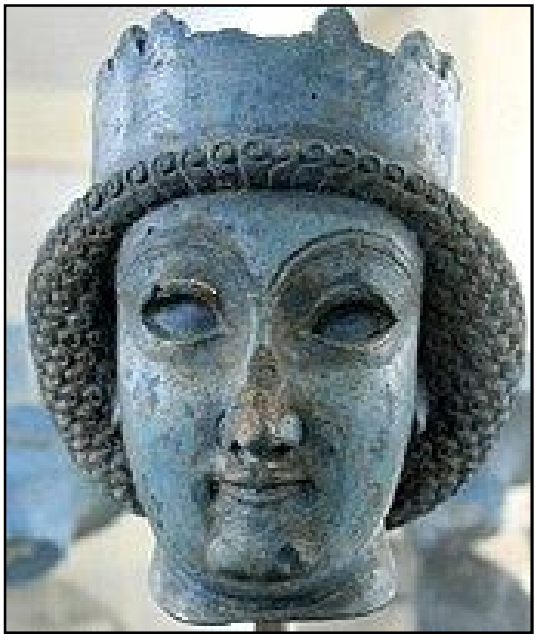
Herodotus writes that the native leadership debated the best form of government for the empire. It was agreed that an oligarchy would divide them against one another, and democracy would bring about mob rule resulting in a charismatic leader resuming the monarchy. Therefore, they decided a new monarch was in order, particularly since *they* were in a position to choose him. Darius I was chosen monarch from among the leaders. He was cousin to Cambyses II and Bardiya (Smerdis), claiming Ariaramnes as his ancestor.

The Achaemenids thereafter consolidated areas firmly under their control. It was Cyrus the Great and Darius the Great who, by sound and far-sighted administrative planning, brilliant

military manoeuvring, and a humanistic world view, established the greatness of the Achaemenids and, in less than thirty years, raised them from an obscure tribe to a world power. It was during the reign of Darius the Great (Darius I) that Persepolis was built (518–516 BC) and which would serve as capital for several generations of Achaemenid kings. Ecbatana (*Hagmatāna* "City of Gatherings", modern: Hamadan) in Media was greatly expanded during this period and served as the summer capital.

Ever since the Macedonian king Amyntas I surrendered his country to the Persians in about 512–511, Macedonians and Persians were strangers no more as well. Subjugation of Macedonia was part of Persian military operations initiated by Darius the Great (521–486) in 513 – after immense preparations – a huge Achaemenid army invaded the Balkans and tried to defeat the European Scythians roaming to the north of the Danube river. Darius' army subjugated several Thracian peoples, and virtually all other regions that touch the European part of the Black Sea, such as parts of nowadays Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, and Russia, before it returned to Asia Minor. Darius left in Europe one of his commanders named Megabazus whose task was to accomplish conquests in the Balkans. The Persian troops subjugated gold-rich Thrace, the coastal Greek cities, as well as defeating and conquering the powerful Paeonians.

Finally, Megabazus sent envoys to Amyntas, demanding acceptance of Persian domination, which the Macedonians did. The Balkans provided many soldiers for the multi-ethnic Achaemenid army. Many of the Macedonian and Persian elite intermarried, such as the Persian official Bubares who married Amyntas' daughter, Gygaea. Family ties the Macedonian rulers Amyntas and Alexander enjoyed with Bubares ensured them good relations with the Persian kings Darius and Xerxes I. The Persian invasion led indirectly to Macedonia's rise in power and Persia had some common interests in the Balkans; with Persian aid, the Macedonians stood to gain much at the expense of some Balkan tribes such as the Paeonians and Greeks. All in all, the Macedonians were "willing and useful Persian allies. Macedonian soldiers fought against Athens and Sparta in Xerxes' army. The Persians referred to both Greeks and Macedonians as *Yauna* ("Ionians", their term for "Greeks"), and to Macedonians specifically as *Yaunã Takabara* or "Greeks with hats that look like shields", possibly referring to the Macedonian kausia hat.



The Persian queen Atossa, Daughter of Cyrus the Great, sister-wife of Cambyses II, Darius the Great's wife, and mother of Xerxes I

By the 5th century BC the Kings of Persia were either ruling over or had subordinated territories encompassing not just all of the Persian Plateau and all of the territories formerly held by the Assyrian Empire (Mesopotamia, the Levant, Cyprus and Egypt), but beyond this all of Anatolia and Armenia, as well as the Southern Caucasus and parts of the North Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, all of Bulgaria, Paeonia, Thrace and Macedonia to the north and west, most of the Black Sea coastal regions, parts of Central Asia as far as the Aral Sea, the Oxus and Jaxartes to the north and north-east, the Hindu Kush and the western Indus basin (corresponding to modern Afghanistan and Pakistan) to the far east, parts of northern Arabia to the south, and parts of northern Libya to the south-west, and parts of Oman, China, and the UAE.

Greco-Persian Wars :

Map showing events of the first phases of the Greco-Persian Wars

Greek hoplite and Persian warrior depicted fighting, on an ancient kylix, 5th century BC

The Ionian Revolt in 499 BC, and associated revolts in Aeolis, Doris, Cyprus and Caria, were military rebellions by several regions of Asia Minor against Persian rule, lasting from 499 to 493 BC. At the heart of the rebellion was the dissatisfaction of the Greek cities of Asia Minor with the tyrants appointed by Persia to rule them, along with the individual actions of two Milesian tyrants, Histiaeus and Aristagoras. In 499 BC, the then tyrant of Miletus, Aristagoras, launched a joint expedition with the Persian satrap Artaphernes to conquer Naxos, in an attempt to bolster his position in Miletus (both financially and in terms of prestige). The mission was a debacle, and sensing his imminent removal as tyrant, Aristagoras chose to incite the whole of Ionia into rebellion against the Persian king Darius the Great.

The Persians continued to reduce the cities along the west coast that still held out against them, before finally imposing a peace settlement in 493 BC on Ionia that was generally considered to be both just and fair. The Ionian Revolt constituted the first major conflict between Greece and the Achaemenid Empire, and as such represents the first phase of the Greco-Persian Wars. Asia Minor had been brought back into the Persian fold, but Darius had vowed to punish Athens and Eretria for their support of the revolt. Moreover, seeing that the political situation in Greece posed a continued threat to the stability of his Empire, he decided to embark on the conquest of all of Greece. The first campaign of the invasion was to bring the territories in the Balkan peninsula back within the empire.

The Persian grip over these territories had loosened following the Ionian Revolt. In 492 BC, the Persian general Mardonius re-subjugated Thrace and made Macedon a fully subordinate part of the empire; it had been a vassal as early as the late 6th century BC, but retained a great deal of autonomy. However, in 490 BC the Persian forces were defeated by the Athenians at the Battle of Marathon and Darius would die before having the chance to launch an invasion of Greece.

Xerxes I (485–465 BC, Old Persian *Xšayārša* "Hero Among Kings"), son of Darius I, vowed to complete the job. He organized a massive invasion aiming to conquer Greece. His army entered Greece from the north, meeting little or no resistance through Macedonia and Thessaly, but was delayed by a small Greek force for three days

at Thermopylae. A simultaneous naval battle at Artemisium was tactically indecisive as large storms destroyed ships from both sides. The battle was stopped prematurely when the Greeks received news of the defeat at Thermopylae and retreated. The battle was a strategic victory for the Persians, giving them uncontested control of Artemisium and the Aegean Sea.

Following his victory at the Battle of Thermopylae, Xerxes sacked the evacuated city of Athens and prepared to meet the Greeks at the strategic Isthmus of Corinth and the Saronic Gulf. In 480 BC the Greeks won a decisive victory over the Persian fleet at the Battle of Salamis and forced Xerxes to retire to Sardis. The land army which he left in Greece under Mardonius retook Athens but was eventually destroyed in 479 BC at the Battle of Plataea. The final defeat of the Persians at Mycale encouraged the Greek cities of Asia to revolt, and the Persians lost all of their territories in Europe; Macedonia once again became independent.

Cultural phase :

After Xerxes I was assassinated, he was succeeded by his eldest son Artaxerxes I. It was during his reign that Elamite ceased to be the language of government, and Aramaic gained in importance. It was probably during this reign that the solar calendar was introduced as the national calendar. Under Artaxerxes I, Zoroastrianism became the *de facto* religion of state.

After Persia had been defeated at the Battle of Eurymedon (469 BC or 466 BC), military action between Greece and Persia was halted. When Artaxerxes I took power, he introduced a new Persian strategy of weakening the Athenians by funding their enemies in Greece. This indirectly caused the Athenians to move the treasury of the Delian League from the island of Delos to the Athenian acropolis. This funding practice inevitably prompted renewed fighting in 450 BC, where the Greeks attacked at the Battle of Cyprus. After Cimon's failure to attain much in this expedition, the Peace of Callias was agreed between Athens, Argos and Persia in 449 BC.

Artaxerxes I offered asylum to Themistocles, who was the winner of the Battle of Salamis, after Themistocles was ostracized from Athens. Also, Artaxerxes I gave him Magnesia, Myus, and Lampsacus to maintain him in bread, meat, and wine. In addition, Artaxerxes I gave him Palaescepsis to provide him with clothes, and he also gave him Percote with bedding for his house.

Achaemenid gold ornaments, Brooklyn Museum

When Artaxerxes died in 424 BC at Susa, his body was taken to the tomb already built for him in the Naqsh-e Rustam Necropolis. It was Persian tradition that kings begin constructing their own tombs while they were still alive. Artaxerxes I was immediately succeeded by his eldest son Xerxes II, who was the only legitimate son of Artaxerxes. However, after a few days on the throne, he was assassinated while drunk by Pharnacyas and Menostanes on the orders of his illegitimate brother: Sogdianus who apparently had gained the support of his regions. He reigned for six months and fifteen days before being captured by his half-brother, Ochus, who had rebelled against him. Sogdianus was executed by being suffocated in ash because Ochus had promised he would not die by the sword, by poison or by hunger. Ochus then took the royal name Darius II. Darius' ability to defend his position on the throne ended the short power vacuum.

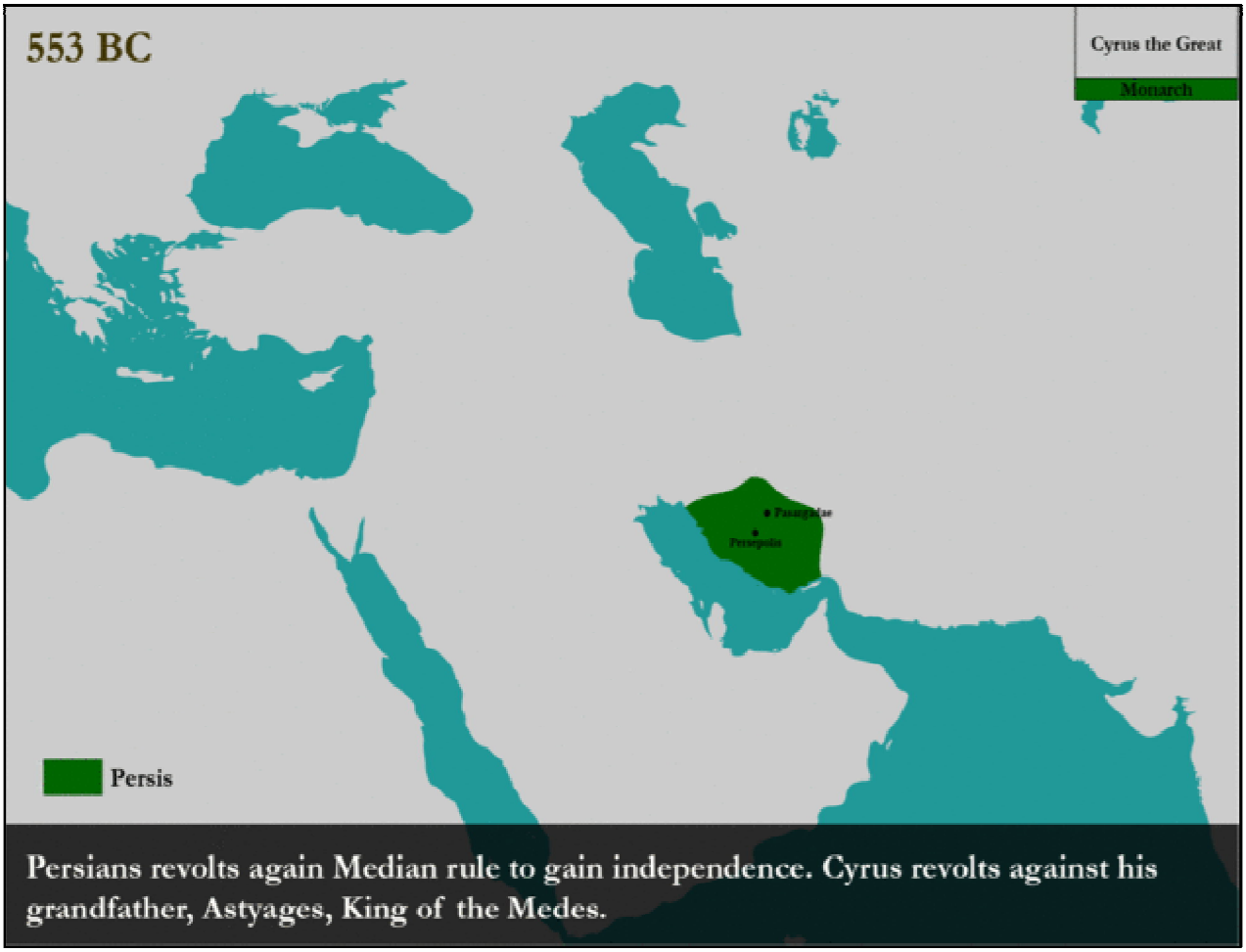
From 412 BC Darius II, at the insistence of Tissaphernes, gave support first to Athens, then to Sparta, but in 407 BC, Darius' son Cyrus the Younger was appointed to replace Tissaphernes and aid was given entirely to Sparta which finally defeated Athens in 404 BC. In the same year, Darius fell ill and died in Babylon. His death gave an Egyptian rebel named Amyrtaeus the opportunity to throw off Persian control over Egypt. At his death bed, Darius' Babylonian wife Parysatis pleaded with him to have her second eldest son Cyrus (the Younger) crowned, but Darius refused. Queen Parysatis favoured Cyrus more than her eldest son Artaxerxes II. Plutarch relates (probably on the authority of Ctesias) that the displaced Tissaphernes came to the new king on his coronation day to warn him that his younger brother Cyrus (the Younger) was preparing to assassinate him during the ceremony. Artaxerxes had Cyrus arrested and would have had him executed if their mother Parysatis had not intervened. Cyrus was then sent back as Satrap of Lydia, where he prepared an armed rebellion. Cyrus assembled a large army, including a contingent of Ten Thousand Greek mercenaries, and made his way deeper into Persia.

The army of Cyrus was stopped by the royal Persian army of Artaxerxes II at Cunaxa in 401 BC, where Cyrus was killed. The Ten Thousand Greek Mercenaries including Xenophon were now deep in Persian territory and were at risk of attack. So they searched for others to offer their services to but eventually had to return to Greece.

Artaxerxes II was the longest reigning of the Achaemenid kings and it was during this 45-year period of relative peace and stability that many of the monuments of the era were constructed. Artaxerxes moved the capital back to Persepolis, which he greatly extended. Also the summer capital at Ecbatana was lavishly extended with gilded columns and roof tiles of silver and copper. The extraordinary innovation of the Zoroastrian shrines can also be dated to his reign, and it was probably during this period that Zoroastrianism spread from Armenia throughout Asia Minor and the Levant.

The construction of temples, though serving a religious purpose, was not a purely selfless act, as they also served as an important source of income. From the Babylonian kings, the Achaemenids had taken over the concept of a mandatory temple tax, a one-tenth tithe which all inhabitants paid to the temple nearest to their land or other source of income. A share of this income called the *Quppu Sha Sharri*, "king's chest"—an ingenious institution originally introduced by Nabonidus—was then turned over to the ruler. In retrospect, Artaxerxes is generally regarded as an amiable man who lacked the moral fiber to be a really successful ruler. However, six centuries later Ardeshir I, founder of the second Persian Empire, would

consider himself Artaxerxes' successor, a grand testimony to the importance of Artaxerxes to the Persian psyche.



Persian Empire timeline including important events and territorial evolution 550 BC - 323 BC.

Artaxerxes II became involved in a war with Persia's erstwhile allies, the Spartans, who, under Agesilaus II, invaded Asia Minor. In order to redirect the Spartans' attention to Greek affairs, Artaxerxes II subsidized their enemies: in particular the Athenians, Thebans and Corinthians. These subsidies helped to engage the Spartans in what would become known as the Corinthian War. In 387 BC, Artaxerxes II betrayed his allies and came to an arrangement with Sparta, and in the Treaty of Antalcidas he forced his erstwhile allies to come to terms.

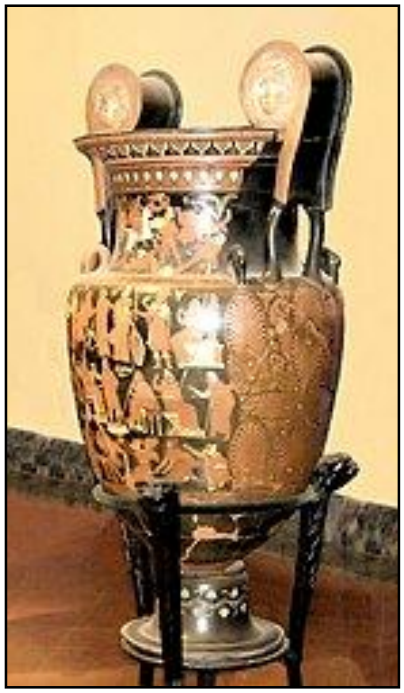
This treaty restored control of the Greek cities of Ionia and Aeolis on the Anatolian coast to the Persians, while giving Sparta dominance on the Greek mainland. In 385 BC he campaigned against the Cadusians. Although successful against the Greeks, Artaxerxes II had more trouble with the Egyptians, who had successfully revolted against him at the beginning of his reign. An attempt to reconquer Egypt in 373 BC was completely unsuccessful, but in his waning years the Persians did manage to defeat a joint Egyptian–Spartan effort to conquer Phoenicia. He quashed the Revolt of the Satraps in 372–362 BC. He is reported to have had a number of wives. His main wife was Stateira, until she was poisoned by Artaxerxes II's mother Parysatis in about 400 BC. Another chief wife was a Greek woman of Phocaea named Aspasia (not the

same as the concubine of Pericles). Artaxerxes II is said to have had more than 115 sons from 350 wives.

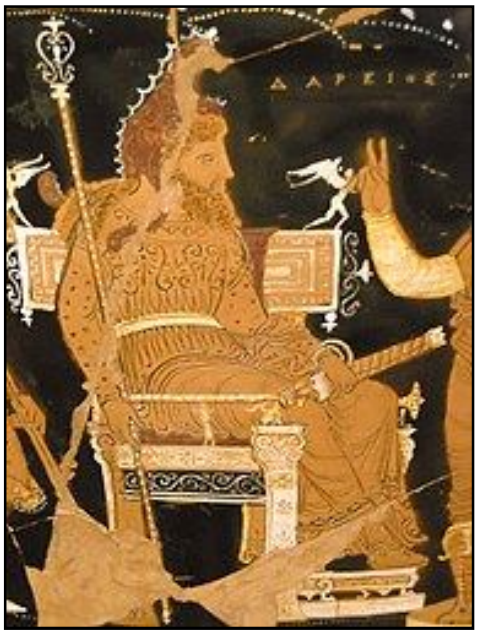
In 358 BC Artaxerxes II died and was succeeded by his son Artaxerxes III. In 355 BC, Artaxerxes III forced Athens to conclude a peace which required the city's forces to leave Asia Minor and to acknowledge the independence of its rebellious allies. Artaxerxes started a campaign against the rebellious Cadusians, but he managed to appease both of the Cadusian kings. One individual who successfully emerged from this campaign was Darius Codomannus, who later occupied the Persian throne as Darius III.

Artaxerxes III then ordered the disbanding of all the satrapal armies of Asia Minor, as he felt that they could no longer guarantee peace in the west and was concerned that these armies equipped the western satraps with the means to revolt. The order was however ignored by Artabazos II of Phrygia, who asked for the help of Athens in a rebellion against the king. Athens sent assistance to Sardis. Orontes of Mysia also supported Artabazos and the combined forces managed to defeat the forces sent by Artaxerxes III in 354 BC.

However, in 353 BC, they were defeated by Artaxerxes III's army and were disbanded. Orontes was pardoned by the king, while Artabazos fled to the safety of the court of Philip II of Macedon. In around 351 BC, Artaxerxes embarked on a campaign to recover Egypt, which had revolted under his father, Artaxerxes II. At the same time a rebellion had broken out in Asia Minor, which, being supported by Thebes, threatened to become serious. Levying a vast army, Artaxerxes marched into Egypt, and engaged Nectanebo II. After a year of fighting the Egyptian Pharaoh, Nectanebo inflicted a crushing defeat on the Persians with the support of mercenaries led by the Greek generals Diophantus and Lamius. Artaxerxes was compelled to retreat and postpone his plans to reconquer Egypt. Soon after this defeat, there were rebellions in Phoenicia, Asia Minor and Cyprus.



The "Darius Vase" at the Achaeological Museum of Naples. Circa 340-320 BC



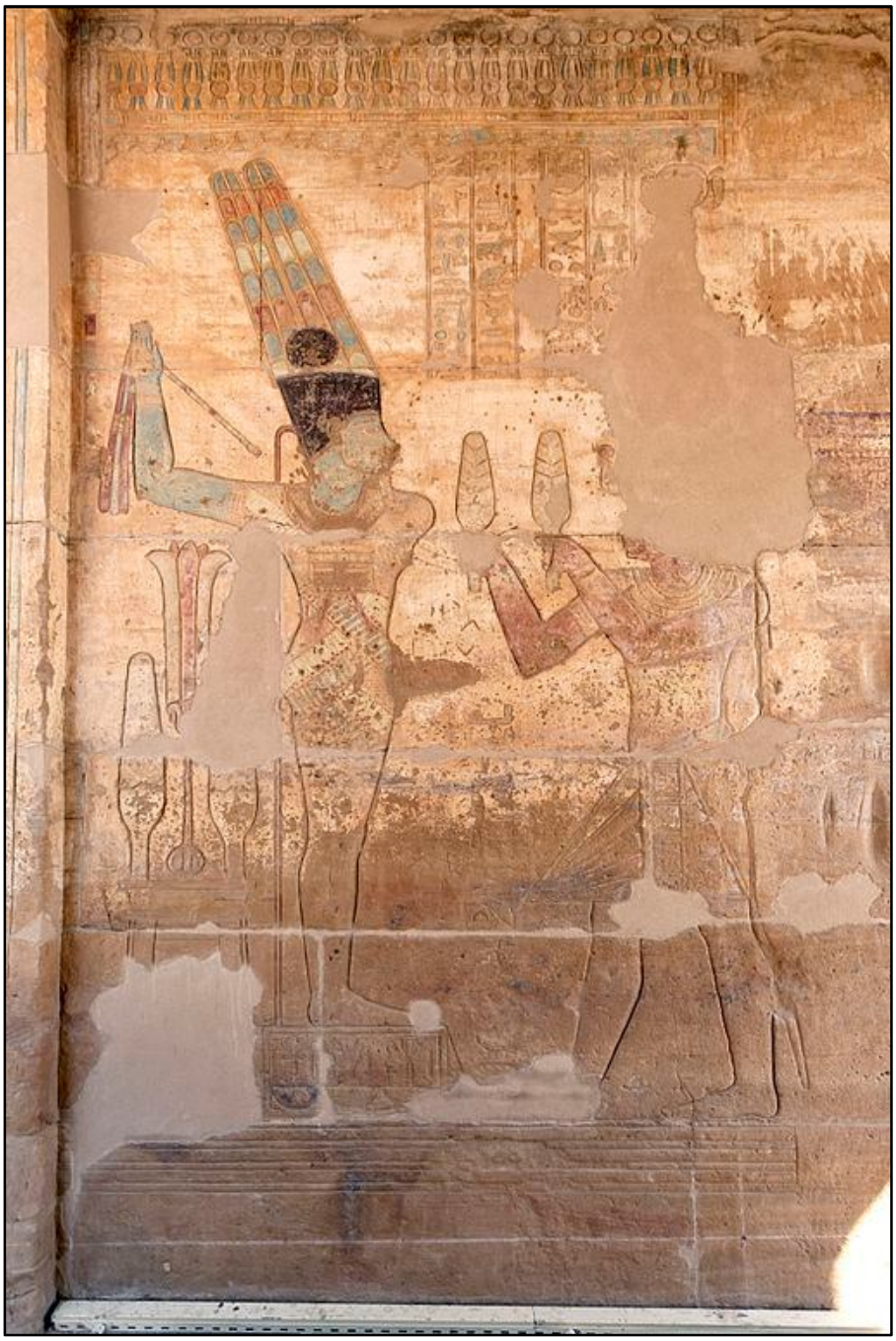
Detail of Darius, with a label in Greek (ΔΑΡΕΙΟΣ, top right) giving his name

In 343 BC, Artaxerxes committed responsibility for the suppression of the Cyprian rebels to Idrieus, prince of Caria, who employed 8,000 Greek mercenaries and forty triremes, commanded by Phocion the Athenian, and Evagoras, son of the elder Evagoras, the Cypriot monarch. Idrieus succeeded in reducing Cyprus. Artaxerxes initiated a counter-offensive against Sidon by commanding Belesys, satrap of Syria, and Mazaeus, satrap of Cilicia, to invade the city and to keep the Phoenicians in check. Both satraps suffered crushing defeats at the hands of Tennes, the Sidonese king, who was aided by 40,000 Greek mercenaries sent to him by Nectanebo II and commanded by Mentor of Rhodes. As a result, the Persian forces were driven out of Phoenicia.

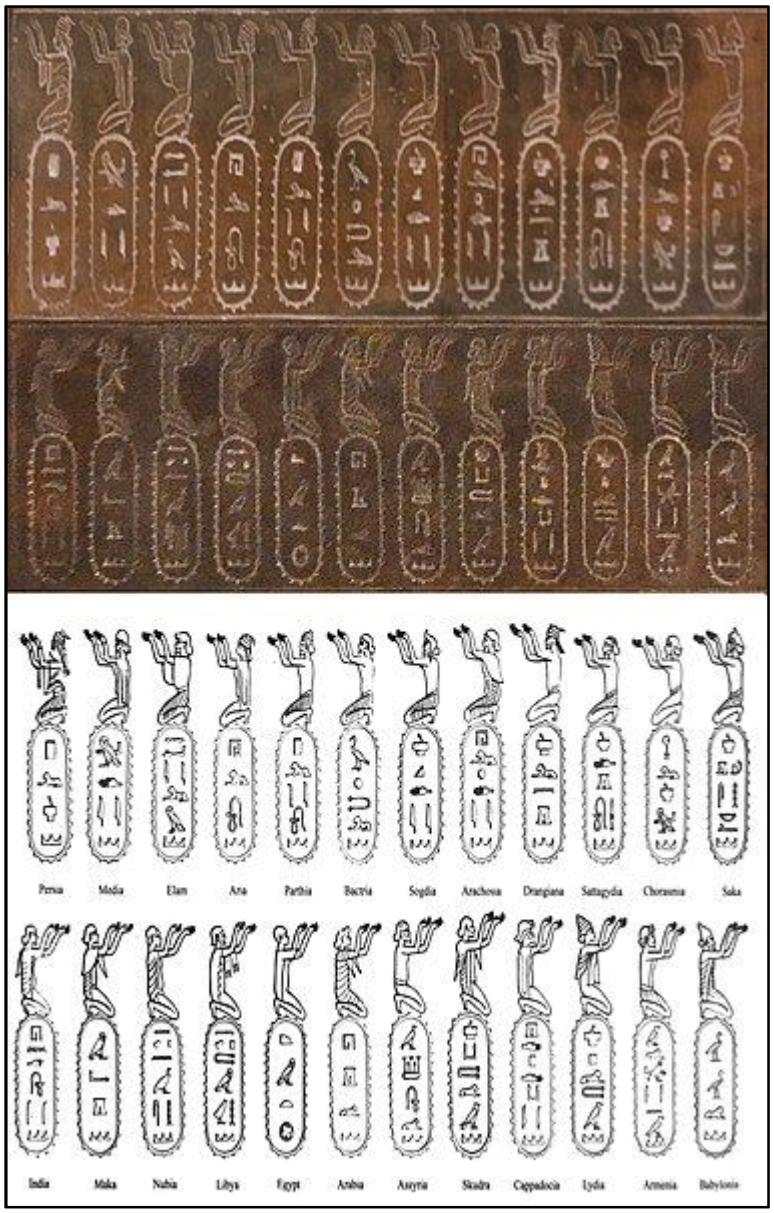
After this, Artaxerxes personally led an army of 330,000 men against Sidon. Artaxerxes' army comprised 300,000 foot soldiers, 30,000 cavalry, 300 triremes, and 500 transports or provision ships. After gathering this army, he sought assistance from the Greeks. Though refused aid by Athens and Sparta, he succeeded in obtaining a thousand Theban heavy-armed hoplites under Lacrates, three thousand Argives under Nicostratus, and six thousand Æolians, Ionians, and Dorians from the Greek cities of Asia Minor. This Greek support was numerically small, amounting to no more than 10,000 men, but it formed, together with the Greek mercenaries from Egypt who went over to him afterwards, the force on which he placed his chief reliance, and to which the ultimate success of his expedition was mainly due.

The approach of Artaxerxes sufficiently weakened the resolution of Tennes that he endeavoured to purchase his own pardon by delivering up 100 principal citizens of Sidon into the hands of the Persian king, and then admitting Artaxerxes within the defences of the town. Artaxerxes had the 100 citizens transfixed with javelins, and when 500 more came out as supplicants to seek his mercy, Artaxerxes consigned them to the same fate. Sidon was then burnt to the ground, either by Artaxerxes or by the Sidonian citizens. Forty thousand people died in the conflagration. Artaxerxes sold the ruins at a high price to speculators, who calculated on reimbursing themselves by the treasures which they hoped to dig out from among the ashes. Tennes was later put to death by Artaxerxes. Artaxerxes later sent Jews who supported the revolt to Hyrcania on the south coast of the Caspian Sea.

Second conquest of Egypt :



Relief showing Darius I offering lettuces to the Egyptian deity Amun-Ra Kamutef, Temple of Hibis



The 24 countries subject to the Achaemenid Empire at the time of Darius, on the Egyptian Statue of Darius I

The reduction of Sidon was followed closely by the invasion of Egypt. In 343 BC, Artaxerxes, in addition to his 330,000 Persians, had now a force of 14,000 Greeks furnished by the Greek cities of Asia Minor: 4,000 under Mentor, consisting of the troops that he had brought to the aid of Tennes from Egypt; 3,000 sent by Argos; and 1000 from Thebes. He divided these troops into three bodies, and placed at the head of each a Persian and a Greek. The Greek commanders were Lacrates of Thebes, Mentor of Rhodes and Nicostratus of Argos while the Persians were led by Rhossaces, Aristazanes, and Bagoas, the chief of the eunuchs. Nectanebo II resisted with an army of 100,000 of whom 20,000 were Greek mercenaries. Nectanebo II occupied the Nile and its various branches with his large navy.

The character of the country, intersected by numerous canals and full of strongly fortified towns, was in his favour and Nectanebo II might have been expected to offer a prolonged, if not even a successful, resistance. However, he lacked good generals, and, over-confident in his own powers of command, he was out-manoeuvred by the Greek mercenary generals and his forces were eventually defeated by the combined Persian armies at the Battle of Pelusium (343

BC). After his defeat, Nectanebo hastily fled to Memphis, leaving the fortified towns to be defended by their garrisons. These garrisons consisted of partly Greek and partly Egyptian troops; between whom jealousies and suspicions were easily sown by the Persian leaders. As a result, the Persians were able to rapidly reduce numerous towns across Lower Egypt and were advancing upon Memphis when Nectanebo decided to quit the country and flee southwards to Ethiopia. The Persian army completely routed the Egyptians and occupied the Lower Delta of the Nile. Following Nectanebo fleeing to Ethiopia, all of Egypt submitted to Artaxerxes. The Jews in Egypt were sent either to Babylon or to the south coast of the Caspian Sea, the same location that the Jews of Phoenicia had earlier been sent.

After this victory over the Egyptians, Artaxerxes had the city walls destroyed, started a reign of terror, and set about looting all the temples. Persia gained a significant amount of wealth from this looting. Artaxerxes also raised high taxes and attempted to weaken Egypt enough that it could never revolt against Persia. For the 10 years that Persia controlled Egypt, believers in the native religion were persecuted and sacred books were stolen. Before he returned to Persia, he appointed Pherendares as satrap of Egypt. With the wealth gained from his reconquering Egypt, Artaxerxes was able to amply reward his mercenaries. He then returned to his capital having successfully completed his invasion of Egypt.

After his success in Egypt, Artaxerxes returned to Persia and spent the next few years effectively quelling insurrections in various parts of the Empire so that a few years after his conquest of Egypt, the Persian Empire was firmly under his control. Egypt remained a part of the Persian Empire until Alexander the Great's conquest of Egypt.

After the conquest of Egypt, there were no more revolts or rebellions against Artaxerxes. Mentor and Bagoas, the two generals who had most distinguished themselves in the Egyptian campaign, were advanced to posts of the highest importance. Mentor, who was governor of the entire Asiatic seaboard, was successful in reducing to subjection many of the chiefs who during the recent troubles had rebelled against Persian rule. In the course of a few years Mentor and his forces were able to bring the whole Asian Mediterranean coast into complete submission and dependence.

Bagoas went back to the Persian capital with Artaxerxes, where he took a leading role in the internal administration of the Empire and maintained tranquillity throughout the rest of the Empire. During the last six years of the reign of Artaxerxes III, the Persian Empire was governed by a vigorous and successful government.

The Persian forces in Ionia and Lycia regained control of the Aegean and the Mediterranean Sea and took over much of Athens' former island empire. In response, Isocrates of Athens started giving speeches calling for a 'crusade against the barbarians' but there was not enough strength left in any of the Greek city-states to answer his call.

Although there weren't any rebellions in the Persian Empire itself, the growing power and territory of Philip II of Macedon in Macedon (against which Demosthenes was in vain warning the Athenians) attracted the attention of Artaxerxes. In response, he ordered that Persian influence was to be used to check and constrain the rising power and influence of the Macedonian kingdom. In 340 BC, a Persian force was dispatched to assist the Thracian prince, Cersobleptes, to maintain his independence. Sufficient effective aid was given to the

city of Perinthus that the numerous and well-appointed army with which Philip had commenced his siege of the city was compelled to give up the attempt. By the last year of Artaxerxes' rule, Philip II already had plans in place for an invasion of the Persian Empire, which would crown his career, but the Greeks would not unite with him.

In 338 BC Artaxerxes was poisoned by Bagoas with the assistance of a physician.

Fall of the empire :

The Battle of Issus, between Alexander the Great on horseback to the left, and Darius III in the chariot to the right, represented in a Pompeii mosaic dated 1st century BC – Naples National Archaeological Museum

Alexander's first victory over Darius, the Persian king depicted in medieval European style in the 15th century romance *The History of Alexander's Battles.*

Artaxerxes III was succeeded by Artaxerxes IV Arses, who before he could act was also poisoned by Bagoas. Bagoas is further said to have killed not only all Arses' children, but many of the other princes of the land. Bagoas then placed Darius III, a nephew of Artaxerxes IV, on the throne. Darius III, previously Satrap of Armenia, personally forced Bagoas to swallow poison. In 334 BC, when Darius was just succeeding in subduing Egypt again, Alexander and his battle-hardened troops invaded Asia Minor.

Alexander the Great (Alexander III of Macedon) defeated the Persian armies at Granicus (334 BC), followed by Issus (333 BC), and lastly at Gaugamela (331 BC). Afterwards, he marched on Susa and Persepolis which surrendered in early 330 BC. From Persepolis, Alexander headed north to Pasargadae where he visited the tomb of Cyrus, the burial of the man whom he had heard of from the *Cyropedia*.

In the ensuing chaos created by Alexander's invasion of Persia, Cyrus's tomb was broken into and most of its luxuries were looted. When Alexander reached the tomb, he was horrified by the manner in which it had been treated, and questioned the Magi, putting them on trial. By some accounts, Alexander's decision to put the Magi on trial was more an attempt to undermine their influence and display his own power than a show of concern for Cyrus's tomb. Regardless, Alexander the Great ordered Aristobulus to improve the tomb's condition and restore its interior, showing respect for Cyrus. From there he headed to Ecbatana, where Darius III had sought refuge.

Darius III was taken prisoner by Bessus, his Bactrian satrap and kinsman. As Alexander approached, Bessus had his men murder Darius III and then declared himself Darius' successor, as Artaxerxes V, before retreating into Central Asia leaving Darius' body in the road to delay Alexander, who brought it to Persepolis for an honourable funeral. Bessus would then create a coalition of his forces, in order to create an army to defend against Alexander. Before Bessus could fully unite with his confederates at the eastern part of the empire, Alexander, fearing the danger of Bessus gaining control, found him, put him on trial in a Persian court under his control, and ordered his execution in a "cruel and barbarous manner."

Alexander generally kept the original Achaemenid administrative structure, leading some scholars to dub him as "the last of the Achaemenids". Upon Alexander's death in 323 BC, his empire was divided among his generals, the Diadochi, resulting in a number of smaller states. The largest of these, which held sway over the Iranian plateau, was the Seleucid Empire, ruled by Alexander's general Seleucus I Nicator. Native Iranian rule would be restored by the Parthians of northeastern Iran over the course of the 2nd century BC.

Descendants in later Persian dynasties :

"Frataraka" Governors of the Seleucid Empire :

Frataraka dynasty ruler Vadfradad I (Autophradates I). 3rd century BC. Istakhr (Persepolis) mint.

Several later Persian rulers, forming the *Frataraka* dynasty, are known to have acted as representatives of the Seleucids in the region of Fārs. They ruled from the end of the 3rd century BC to the beginning of the 2nd century BC, and Vahbarz or Vādfradād I obtained independence circa 150 BC, when Seleucid power waned in the areas of southwestern Persia and the Persian Gulf region.

Kings of Persis, under the Parthian Empire :

Dārēv I (Darios I) used for the first time the title of *mlk* (King). 2nd century BC

During a apparent transitional period, corresponding to the reigns of Vādfradād II and another uncertain king, no titles of authority appeared on the reverse of their coins. The earlier title *prtrk' zy alhaya* (Frataraka) had disappeared. Under Dārēv I however, the new title of *mlk*, or king, appeared, sometimes with the mention of *prs* (Persis), suggesting that the kings of Persis had become independent rulers.

When the Parthian Arsacid king Mithridates I (ca. 171-138 BC) took control of Persis, he left the Persian dynasts in office, known as the Kings of Persis, and they were allowed to continue minting coins with the title of *mlk* ("King").

Sasanian Empire :

With the reign of Šābuhr, the son of Pāpag, the kingdom of Persis then became a part of the Sasanian Empire. Šābuhr's brother and successor, Ardaxšir (Artaxerxes) V, defeated the last legitimate Parthian king, Artabanos V in 224 CE, and was crowned at Ctesiphon as Ardaxšir I (Ardashir I), *šāhanšāh ī Ērān*, becoming the first king of the new Sasanian Empire.

Kingdom of Pontus :

The Achaemenid line would also be carried on through the Kingdom of Pontus, based in the Pontus region of northern Asia Minor. This Pontic Kingdom, a state of Persian origin, may even have been directly related to Darius the Great and the Achaemenid dynasty. It was founded by Mithridates I in 281 BC and lasted until its conquest by the Roman Republic in 63 BC. The kingdom grew to its largest extent under Mithridates VI the Great, who conquered Colchis, Cappadocia, Bithynia, the Greek colonies of the Tauric Chersonesos and for a brief time the Roman province of Asia. Thus, this Persian dynasty managed to survive and prosper in the Hellenistic world while the main Persian Empire had fallen.

Winged sphinx from the Palace of Darius the Great at Susa, Louvre

Both the later dynasties of the Parthians and Sasanians would on occasion claim Achaemenid descent. Recently there has been some corroboration for the Parthian claim to Achaemenid ancestry via the possibility of an inherited disease (neurofibromatosis) demonstrated by the physical descriptions of rulers and from evidence of familial disease on ancient coinage.

Causes of decline :

Part of the cause of the Empire's decline had been the heavy tax burden put upon the state, which eventually led to economic decline. An estimate of the tribute imposed on the subject nations was up to U.S. $180M per year. This does not include the material goods and supplies that were supplied as taxes. After the high overhead of government – the military, the bureaucracy, whatever the satraps could safely dip into the coffers for themselves – this money went into the royal treasury. According to Diodorus, at Persepolis, Alexander III found some 180,000 Attic talents of silver besides the additional treasure the Macedonians were carrying that already had been seized in Damascus by Parmenion. This amounted to U.S. $2.7B. On top of this, Darius III had taken 8,000 talents with him on his flight to the north. Alexander put this static hoard back into the economy, and upon his death some 130,000 talents had been spent on the building of cities, dockyards, temples, and the payment of the troops, besides the ordinary government expenses. Additionally, one of the satraps, Harpalus, had made off to Greece with some 6,000 talents, which Athens used to rebuild its economy after seizing it during the struggles with the Corinthian League. Due to the flood of money from Alexander's hoard entering Greece, however, a disruption in the economy occurred, in agriculture, banking, rents, the great increase in mercenary soldiers that cash allowed the wealthy, and an increase in piracy.

Another factor contributing to the decline of the Empire, in the period following Xerxes, was its failure to ever mold the many subject nations into a whole; the creation of a national identity was never attempted. This lack of cohesion eventually affected the efficiency of the military.

Government :

Daric of Artaxerxes II

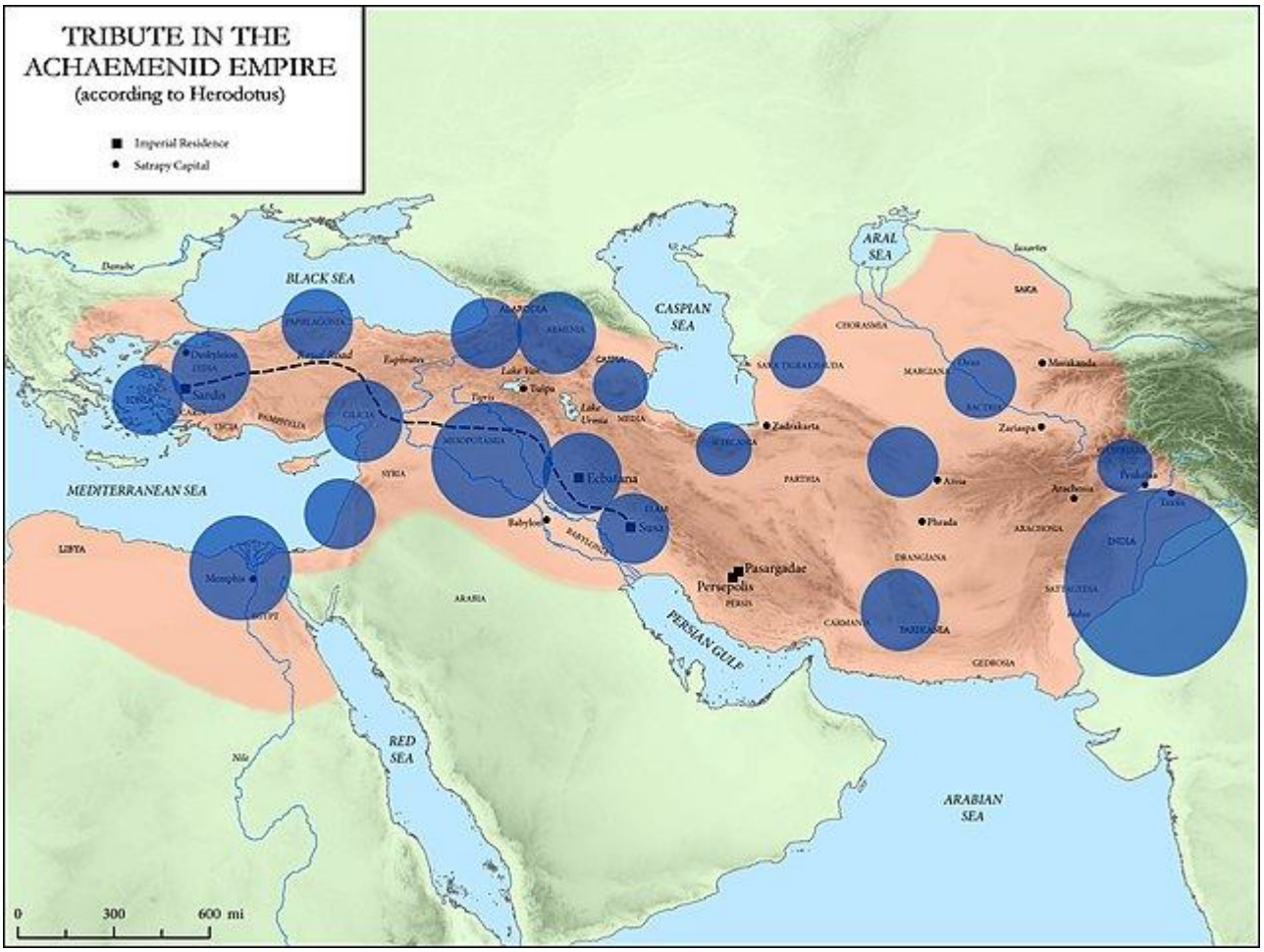
Cyrus the Great founded the empire as a multi-state empire, governed from four capital cities: Pasargadae, Babylon, Susa and Ecbatana. The Achaemenids allowed a certain amount of regional autonomy in the form of the satrapy system. A satrapy was an administrative unit, usually organized on a geographical basis. A 'satrap' (governor) was the governor who administered the region, a 'general' supervised military recruitment and ensured order, and a 'state secretary' kept the official records. The general and the state secretary reported directly to the satrap as well as the central government. At differing times, there were between 20 and 30 satrapies.

Cyrus the Great created an organized army including the Immortals unit, consisting of 10,000 highly trained soldiers Cyrus also formed an innovative postal system throughout the empire, based on several relay stations called Chapar Khaneh.

Achaemenid coinage :

The Persian daric was the first gold coin which, along with a similar silver coin, the siglos, introduced the bimetallic monetary standard of the Achaemenid Persian Empire which has continued till today. This was accomplished by Darius the Great, who reinforced the empire and expanded Persepolis as a ceremonial capital; he revolutionized the economy by placing it on the silver and gold coinage.

Tax districts :



Volume of annual tribute per district, in the Achaemenid Empire, according to Herodotus

Darius also introduced a regulated and sustainable tax system that was precisely tailored to each satrapy, based on their supposed productivity and their economic potential. For instance, Babylon was assessed for the highest amount and for a startling mixture of commodities – 1000 silver talents, four months supply of food for the army. India was clearly already fabled for its gold; Egypt was known for the wealth of its crops; it was to be the granary of the Persian Empire (as later of Rome's) and was required to provide 120,000 measures of grain in addition to 700 talents of silver. This was exclusively a tax levied on subject peoples.

Achaemenid tax collector, calculating on an Abax or Abacus, according to the Darius Vase (340-320 BC)

Other accomplishments of Darius' reign included codification of the data, a universal legal system, and construction of a new capital at Persepolis.

Under the Achaemenids, the trade was extensive and there was an efficient infrastructure that facilitated the exchange of commodities in the far reaches of the empire. Tariffs on trade were one of the empire's main sources of revenue, along with agriculture and tribute.

The satrapies were linked by a 2,500-kilometer highway, the most impressive stretch being the Royal Road from Susa to Sardis, built by command of Darius I. It featured stations and caravanserais at specific intervals. The relays of mounted couriers (the angarium) could reach the remotest of areas in fifteen days. Herodotus observes that "there is nothing in the world that travels faster than these Persian couriers. Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these courageous couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." Despite the relative local independence afforded by the satrapy system, royal inspectors, the "eyes and ears of the king", toured the empire and reported on local conditions. The practice of slavery in Achaemenid Persia was generally banned, although there is evidence that conquered and/or rebellious armies were sold into captivity. The kings of Achaemenid Persia, especially the founder Cyrus the Great, occasionally declined to adopt slavery, as evidenced by the freeing of the Jews at Babylon, and the construction of Persepolis by paid workers.

Transportation and Communication :

Under the Achaemenids, the trade was extensive and there was an efficient infrastructure that facilitated the exchange of commodities in the far reaches of the empire. Tariffs on trade were one of the empire's main sources of revenue, along with agriculture and tribute.

Letter from the Satrap of Bactria to the governor of Khulmi, concerning camel keepers, 353BC

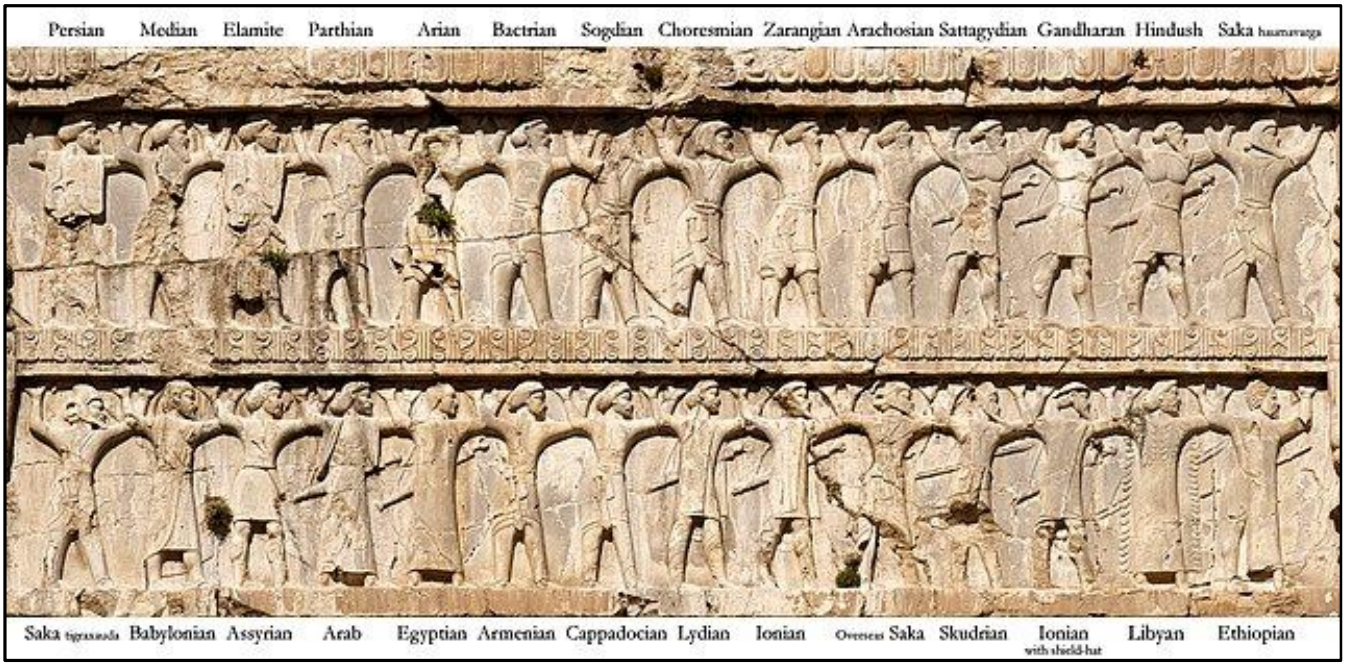
The satrapies were linked by a 2,500-kilometer highway, the most impressive stretch being the Royal Road from Susa to Sardis, built by command of Darius I. It featured stations and caravanserais at specific intervals. The relays of mounted couriers (the angarium) could reach the remotest of areas in fifteen days. Herodotus observes that "there is nothing in the world that travels faster than these Persian couriers. Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these courageous couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." Despite the relative local independence afforded by the satrapy system, royal inspectors, the "eyes and ears of the king", toured the empire and reported on local conditions.[citation needed]

Another highway of commerce was the Great Khorasan Road, an informal mercantile route that originated in the fertile lowlands of Mesopotamia and snaked through the Zagros highlands, through the Iranian plateau and Afghanistan into the Central Asian regions of Samarkand, Merv and Ferghana, allowing for the construction of frontier cities like Cyropolis. Following Alexander's conquests, this highway allowed for the spread of cultural syncretic fusions like Greco-Buddhism into Central Asia and China, as well as empires like the Kushan, Indo-Greek and Parthian to profit from trade between East and West. This route was greatly rehabilitated and formalized during the Abbasid Caliphate, during which it developed into a major component of the famed Silk Road.

Military :

Despite its humble origins in Persis, the empire reached an enormous size under the leadership of Cyrus the Great. Cyrus created a multi-state empire where he allowed regional rulers, called the "satrap", to rule as his proxy over a certain designated area of his empire called the satrapy. The basic rule of governance was based upon loyalty and obedience of each satrapy to the central power, or the king, and compliance with tax laws. Due to the ethno-cultural diversity of the subject nations under the rule of Persia, its enormous geographic size, and the constant struggle for power by regional competitors, the creation of a professional army was necessary for both maintenance of the peace and to enforce the authority of the king in cases of rebellion and foreign threat. Cyrus managed to create a strong land army, using it to advance in his campaigns in Babylonia, Lydia, and Asia Minor, which after his death was used by his son Cambyses II, in Egypt against Psamtik III. Cyrus would die battling a local Iranian insurgency in the empire, before he could have a chance to develop a naval force. That task would fall to Darius the Great, who would officially give Persians their own royal navy to allow them to engage their enemies on multiple seas of this vast empire, from the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea, to the Persian Gulf, Ionian Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.

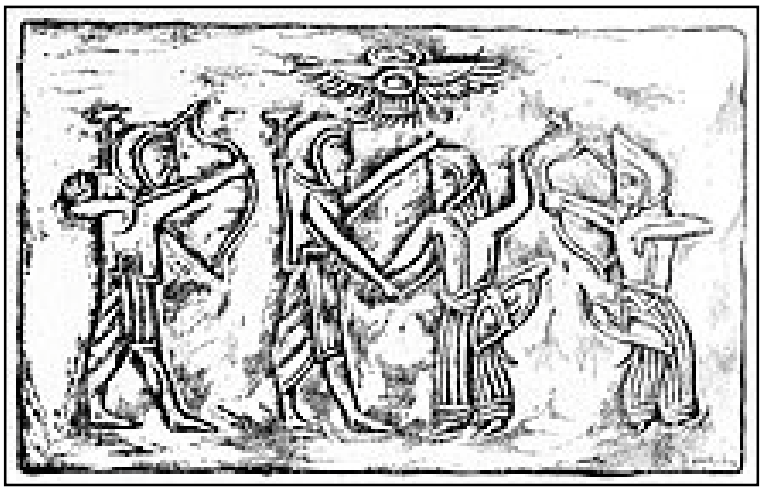
Military composition :



Relief of throne-bearing soldiers in their native clothing at the tomb of Xerxes I, demonstrating the satrapies under his rule

Infantry :

Achaemenid king killing a Greek hoplite. Circa 500 BC–475 BC, at the time of Xerxes I. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Achaemenid soldiers fighting against Scythians. Cylinder seal impression (drawing)

The Achaemenid infantry consisted of three groups: the Immortals, the Sparabara, and the Takabara, though in the later years of the Achaemenid Empire, the Cardaces, were introduced.

The Immortals were described by Herodotus as being heavy infantry, led by Hydarnes, that were kept constantly at a strength of exactly 10,000 men. He claimed that the unit's name stemmed from the custom that every killed, seriously wounded, or sick member was immediately replaced with a new one, maintaining the numbers and cohesion of the unit. They had wicker shields, short spears, swords or large daggers, bow and arrow. Underneath their robes they wore scale armour coats. The spear counterbalances of the common soldiery were of silver; to differentiate commanding ranks, the officers' spear butt-spikes were golden. Surviving Achaemenid coloured glazed bricks and carved reliefs represent the

Immortals as wearing elaborate robes, hoop earrings and gold jewellery, though these garments and accessories were most likely worn only for ceremonial occasions.

Color reconstruction of Achaemenid infantry on the Alexander Sarcophagus (end of 4th century BC)

The Sparabara were usually the first to engage in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. Although not much is known about them today, it is believed that they were the backbone of the Persian army who formed a shield wall and used their two-metre-long spears to protect more vulnerable troops such as archers from the enemy. The Sparabara were taken from the full members of Persian society, they were trained from childhood to be soldiers and when not called out to fight on campaigns in distant lands they practised hunting on the vast plains of Persia. However, when all was quiet and the Pax Persica held true, the Sparabara returned to normal life farming the land and grazing their herds. Because of this they lacked true professional quality on the battlefield, yet they were well trained and courageous to the point of holding the line in most situations long enough for a counter-attack.

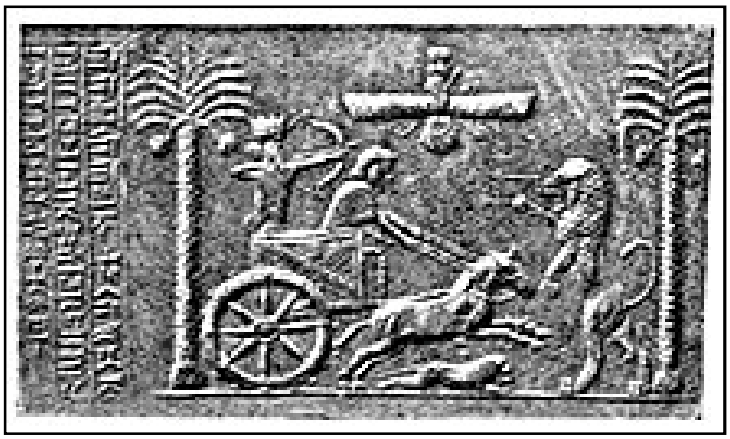
They were armoured with quilted linen and carried large rectangular wicker shields as a form of light manoeuvrable defence. This, however, left them at a severe disadvantage against heavily armoured opponents such as the hoplite, and his two-metre-long spear was not able to give the Sparabara ample range to plausibly engage a trained phalanx. The wicker shields were able to effectively stop arrows but not strong enough to protect the soldier from spears. However, the Sparabara could deal with most other infantry, including trained units from the East.

The Achaemenids relied heavily on archery. Major contributing nations were the Scythians, Medes, Persians, and the Elamites. The composite bow was used by the Persians and Medes, who adopted it from the Scythians and transmitted it to other nations, including the Greeks. The socketed, three-bladed (also known as trilobate or

Scythian) arrowheads made of copper alloy was the arrowhead variant normally used by the Achaemenid army. This variant required more expertise and precision to build.

The Takabara were a rare unit who were a tough type of peltasts. They tended to fight with their own native weapons which would have included a crescent-shaped light wickerwork shield and axes as well as light linen cloth and leather. The Takabara were recruited from territories that incorporated modern Iran.

Cavalry :



Seal of Darius the Great hunting in a chariot, reading "I am Darius, the Great King" in Old Persi "*adam Dārayavaʰuš xšāyaθiya*", as well as in Elamite and Babylonian. The word 'great' only appears in Babylonian. British Museum.

> “ The armoured Persian horsemen and their death dealing chariots were invincible. No man dared face them ”

—*Herodotus*

The Persian cavalry was crucial for conquering nations, and maintained its importance in the Achaemenid army to the last days of the Achaemenid Empire. The cavalry were separated into four groups. The chariot archers, horse cavalry, the camel cavalry, and the war elephants.

Achaemenid calvalryman in the satrapy of Hellespontine Phrygia, Altıkulaç Sarcophagus, early 4th century BC

In the later years of the Achaemenid Empire, the chariot archer had become merely a ceremonial part of the Persian army, yet in the early years of the Empire, their use was widespread. The chariot archers were armed with spears, bows, arrows, swords, and scale armour. The horses were also suited with scale armour similar to scale armour of the Sassanian cataphracts. The chariots would contain imperial symbols and decorations.

Armoured cavalry: Achaemenid Dynast of Hellespontine Phrygia attacking a Greek psiloi, Altıkulaç Sarcophagus, early 4th century BC.

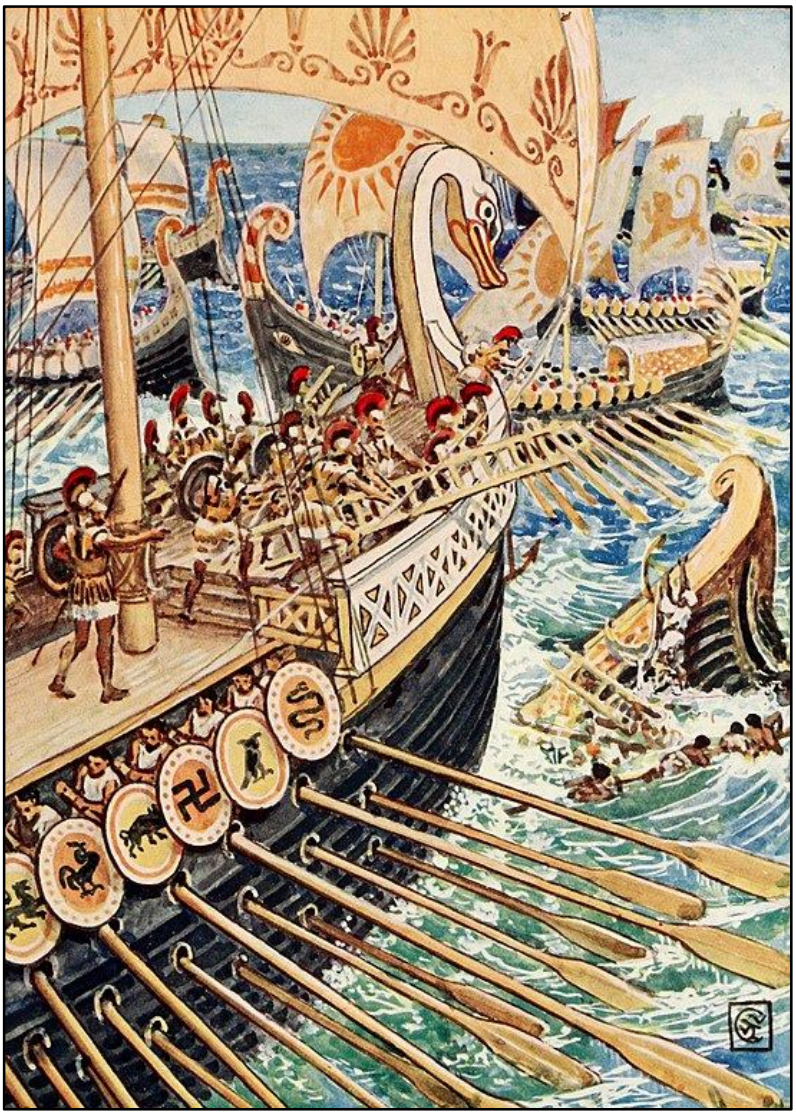
The horses used by the Achaemenids for cavalry were often suited with scale armour, like most cavalry units. The riders often had the same armour as Infantry units, wicker shields, short spears, swords or large daggers, bow and arrow and scale armour coats. The camel cavalry was different, because the camels and sometimes the riders, were provided little protection against enemies, yet when they were offered protection, they would have spears, swords, bow, arrow, and scale armour. The camel cavalry was first introduced into the Persian army by Cyrus the Great, at the Battle of Thymbra. The elephant was most likely introduced into the Persian army by Darius I after his conquest of the Indus Valley. They may have been used in Greek campaigns by Darius and Xerxes I, but Greek accounts only mention 15 of them being used at the Battle of Gaugamela.

Navy :

Since its foundation by Cyrus, the Persian empire had been primarily a land empire with a strong army, but void of any actual naval forces. By the 5th century BC, this was to change, as the empire came across Greek, and Egyptian forces, each with their own maritime traditions and capabilities. Darius the Great (Darius I) was the first Achaemenid king to invest in a Persian fleet. Even by then no true "imperial navy" had existed either in Greece or Egypt. Persia would become the first empire, under Darius, to inaugurate and deploy the first regular imperial navy. Despite this achievement, the personnel for the imperial navy would not come from Iran, but were often Phoenicians (mostly from Sidon), Egyptians and Greeks chosen by Darius the Great to operate the empire's combat vessels.

Reconstitution of Persian landing ships at the Battle of Marathon

At first the ships were built in Sidon by the Phoenicians; the first Achaemenid ships measured about 40 meters in length and 6 meters in width, able to transport up to 300 Persian troops at any one trip. Soon, other states of the empire were constructing their own ships, each incorporating slight local preferences. The ships eventually found their way to the Persian Gulf. Persian naval forces laid the foundation for a strong Persian maritime presence in the Persian Gulf. Persians were not only stationed on islands in the Persian Gulf, but also had ships often of 100 to 200 capacity patrolling the empire's various rivers including the Karun, Tigris and Nile in the west, as well as the Indus.



Greek ships against Achaemenid ships at the Battle of Salamis

The Achaemenid navy established bases located along the Karun, and in Bahrain, Oman, and Yemen. The Persian fleet was not only used for peace-keeping purposes along the Karun but also opened the door to trade with India via the Persian Gulf. Darius's navy was in many ways a world power at the time, but it would be Artaxerxes II who in the summer of 397 BC would build a formidable navy, as part of a rearmament which would lead to his decisive victory at Knidos in 394 BC, re-establishing Achaemenid power in Ionia. Artaxerxes II would also utilize his navy to later on quell a rebellion in Egypt.

The construction material of choice was wood, but some armoured Achaemenid ships had metallic blades on the front, often meant to slice enemy ships using the ship's momentum. Naval ships were also equipped with hooks on the side to grab enemy ships, or to negotiate their position. The ships were propelled by sails or manpower. The ships the Persians created were unique. As far as maritime engagement, the ships were equipped with two mangonels that would launch projectiles such as stones, or flammable substances.

Xenophon describes his eyewitness account of a massive military bridge created by joining 37 Persian ships across the Tigris. The Persians utilized each boat's buoyancy, in order to support

a connected bridge above which supply could be transferred. Herodotus also gives many accounts of Persians utilizing ships to build bridges.

Darius the Great, in an attempt to subdue the Scythian horsemen north of the Black Sea, crossed over at the Bosphorus, using an enormous bridge made by connecting Achaemenid boats, then marched up to the Danube, crossing it by means of a second boat bridge. The bridge over the Bosphorus essentially connected the nearest tip of Asia to Europe, encompassing at least some 1000 meters of open water if not more. Herodotus describes the spectacle, and calls it the "bridge of Darius":

"*Strait called Bosphorus, across which the bridge of Darius had been thrown is hundred and twenty furlongs in length, reaching from the Euxine, to the Propontis. The Propontis is five hundred furlongs across, and fourteen hundred long. Its waters flow into the Hellespont, the length of which is four hundred furlongs.*"

Years later, a similar boat bridge would be constructed by Xerxes the Great (Xerxes I), in his invasion of Greece. Although the Persians failed to capture the Greek city states completely, the tradition of maritime involvement was carried down by the Persian kings, most notably Artaxerxes II. Years later, when Alexander invaded Persia and during his advancement into India, he took a page from the Persian art of war, by having Hephaestion and Perdiccas construct a similar boat-bridge at the Indus river, in India in the spring of 327 BC.

Culture :

Iconic relief of lion and bull fighting, Apadana of Persepolis

Achaemenid golden bowl with lioness imagery

The ruins of Persepolis

Herodotus, in his mid-5th century BC account of Persian residents of the Pontus, reports that Persian youths, from their fifth year to their twentieth year, were instructed in three things –*to ride a horse, to draw a bow, and to speak the Truth*.

He further notes that :

the most disgraceful thing in the world [the Persians] think, is to tell a lie; the next worst, to owe a debt: because, among other reasons, the debtor is obliged to tell lies.

In Achaemenid Persia, the lie, *druj*, is considered to be a cardinal sin, and it was punishable by death in some extreme cases. Tablets discovered by archaeologists in the 1930s at the site of Persepolis give us adequate evidence about the love and veneration for the culture of truth during the Achaemenian period. These tablets contain the names of ordinary Persians, mainly traders and warehouse-keepers. According to Stanley Insler of Yale University, as many as 72 names of officials and petty clerks found on these tablets contain the word *truth*. Thus, says Insler, we have *Artapana*, protector of truth, *Artakama*, lover of truth, *Artamanah*, truth-minded, *Artafarnah*, possessing splendour of truth, *Artazusta*, delighting in truth, *Artastuna*, pillar of truth, *Artafrida*, prospering the truth and *Artahunara*, having nobility of truth. It was Darius the Great who laid down the *ordinance of good regulations* during his reign. King Darius' testimony about his constant battle against the lie is found in cuneiform inscriptions. Carved high up in the Behistun mountain on the road to Kermanshah, Darius the Great (Darius I) testifies:

I was not a lie-follower, I was not a doer of wrong ... According to righteousness I conducted myself. Neither to the weak or to the powerful did I do wrong. The man who cooperated with my house, him I rewarded well; who so did injury, him I punished well.

Darius had his hands full dealing with large-scale rebellion which broke out throughout the empire. After fighting successfully with nine traitors in a year, Darius records his battles against them for posterity and tells us how it was the *lie* that made them rebel against the empire. At Behistun, Darius says:

I smote them and took prisoner nine kings. One was Gaumata by name, a Magian; he lied; thus he said: I am Smerdis, the son of Cyrus ... One, Acina by name, an Elamite; he lied; thus he said: I am king in Elam ... One, Nidintu-Bel by name, a Babylonian; he lied; thus he said: I am Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabonidus.

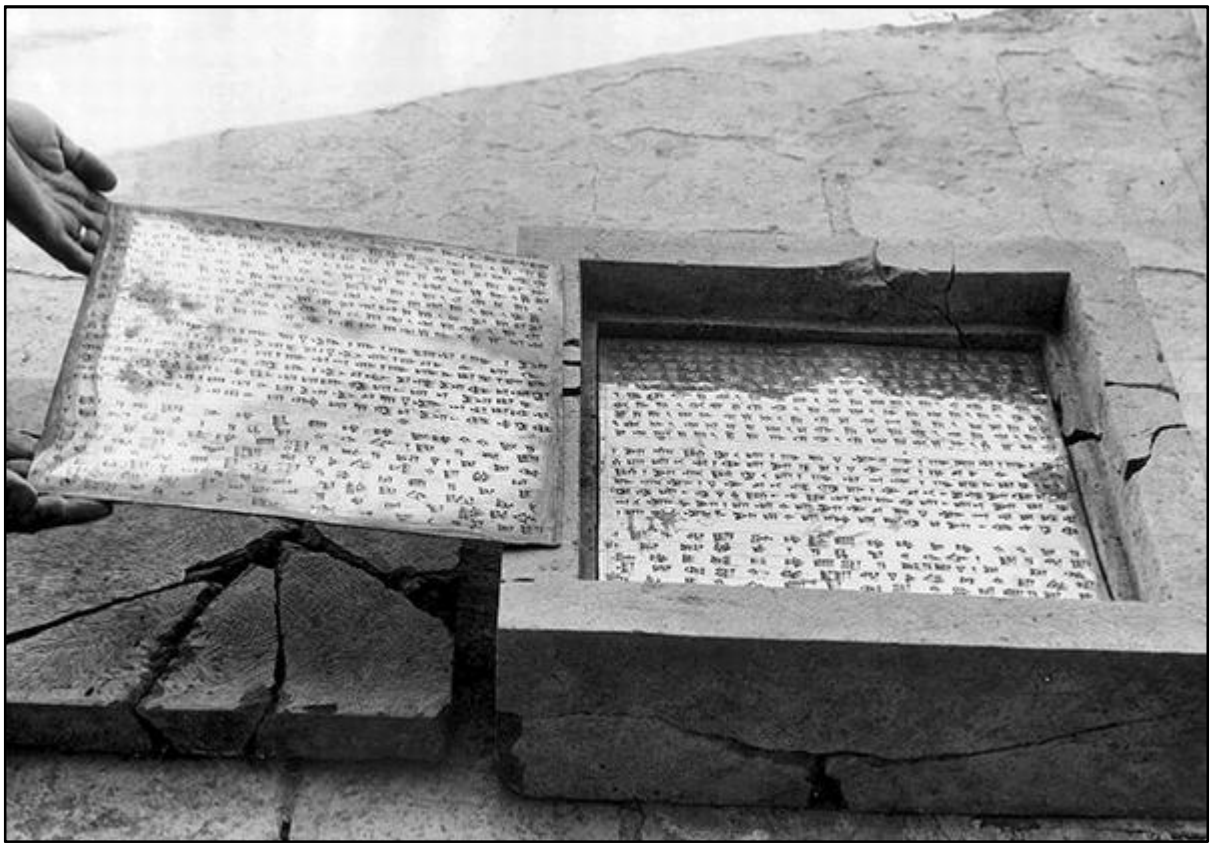
King Darius then tells us,

The Lie made them rebellious, so that these men deceived the people.

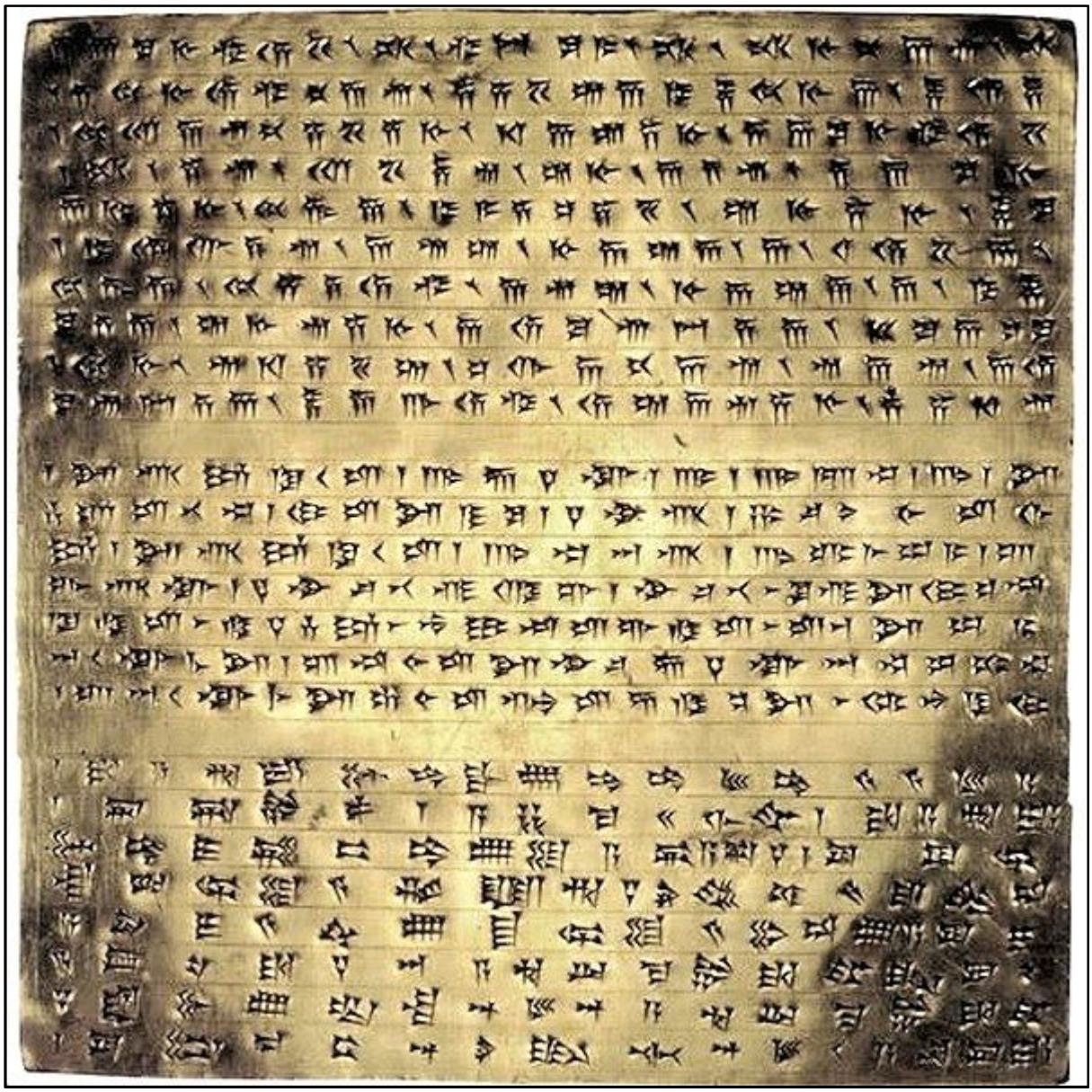
Then advice to his son Xerxes, who is to succeed him as the great king:

Thou who shalt be king hereafter, protect yourself vigorously from the Lie; the man who shall be a lie-follower, him do thou punish well, if thus thou shall think. May my country be secure!

Languages :



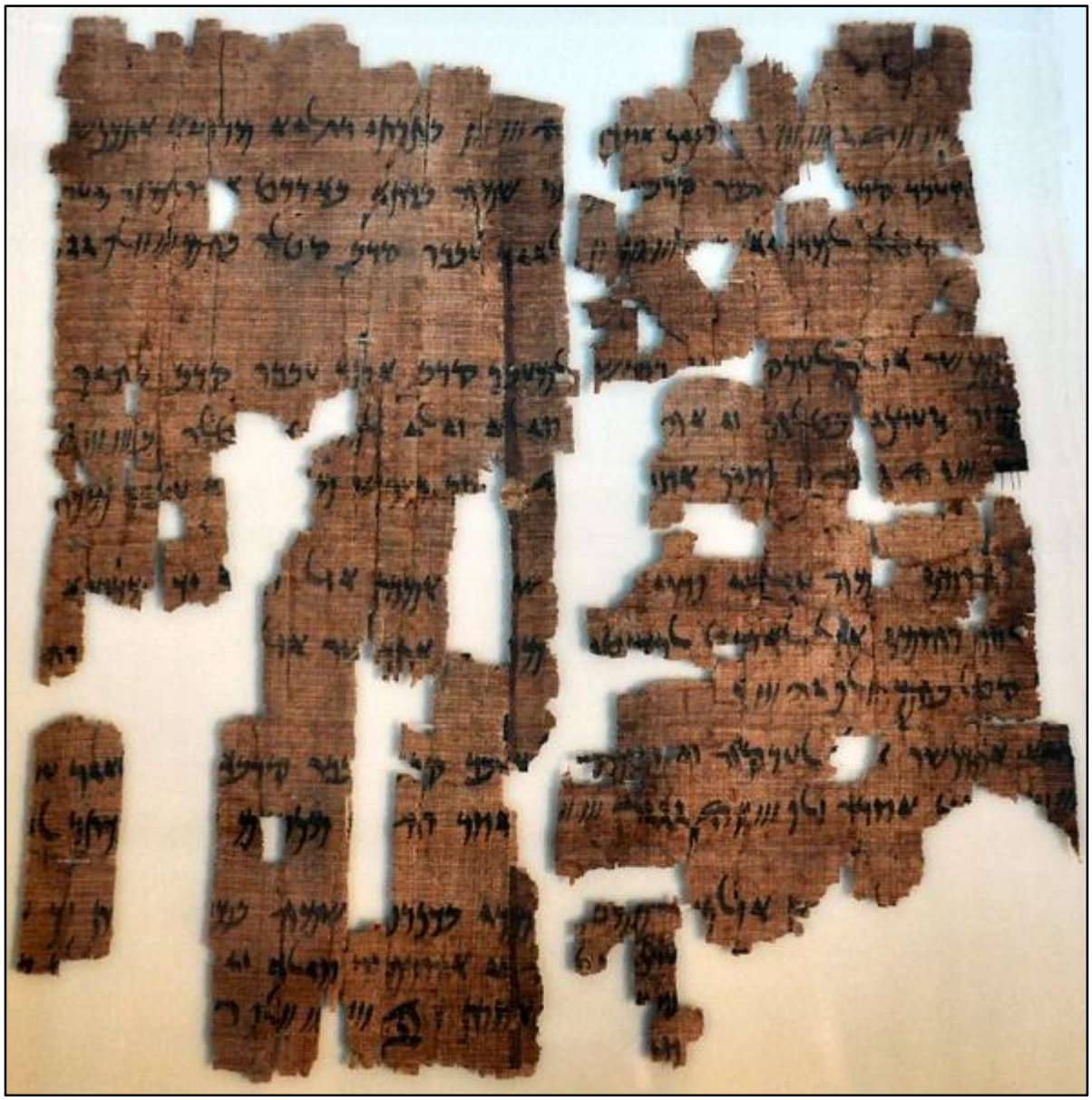
Gold foundation tablets of Darius I for the Apadana Palace, in their original stone box. The Apadana coin hoard had been deposited underneath c. 510 BC



One of the two gold deposition plates. Two more were in silver. They all had the same trilingual inscription (DPh inscription)

During the reign of Cyrus and Darius, and as long as the seat of government was still at Susa in Elam, the language of the chancellery was Elamite. This is primarily attested in the Persepolis fortification and treasury tablets that reveal details of the day-to-day functioning of the empire. In the grand rock-face inscriptions of the kings, the Elamite texts are always accompanied by Akkadian (Babylonian dialect) and Old Persian inscriptions, and it appears that in these cases, the Elamite texts are translations of the Old Persian ones. It is then likely that although Elamite was used by the capital government in Susa, it was not a standardized language of government everywhere in the empire. The use of Elamite is not attested after 458 BC.

A section of the Old Persian part of the trilingual Behistun inscription. Other versions are in Babylonian and Elamite



A copy of the Behistun inscription in Aramaic on a papyrus. Aramaic was the *lingua franca* of the empire

Following the conquest of Mesopotamia, the Aramaic language (as used in that territory) was adopted as a "vehicle for written communication between the different regions of the vast empire with its different peoples and languages. The use of a single official language, which modern scholarship has dubbed "Official Aramaic" or "Imperial Aramaic", can be assumed to have greatly contributed to the astonishing success of the Achaemenids in holding their far-flung empire together for as long as they did." In 1955, Richard Frye questioned the classification of Imperial Aramaic as an "official language", noting that no surviving edict expressly and unambiguously accorded that status to any particular language. Frye reclassifies Imperial Aramaic as the *lingua franca* of the Achaemenid territories, suggesting then that the Achaemenid-era use of Aramaic was more pervasive than generally thought. Many centuries after the fall of the empire, Aramaic script and – as ideograms – Aramaic vocabulary would survive as the essential characteristics of the Pahlavi writing system.

Although Old Persian also appears on some seals and art objects, that language is attested primarily in the Achaemenid inscriptions of Western Iran, suggesting then that Old Persian was

the common language of that region. However, by the reign of Artaxerxes II, the grammar and orthography of the inscriptions was so "far from perfect" that it has been suggested that the scribes who composed those texts had already largely forgotten the language, and had to rely on older inscriptions, which they to a great extent reproduced verbatim.

When the occasion demanded, Achaemenid administrative correspondence was conducted in Greek, making it a widely used bureaucratic language. Even though the Achaemenids had extensive contacts with the Greeks and vice versa, and had conquered many of the Greek-speaking areas both in Europe and Asia Minor during different periods of the empire, the native Old Iranian sources provide no indication of Greek linguistic evidence. However, there is plenty of evidence (in addition to the accounts of Herodotus) that Greeks, apart from being deployed and employed in the core regions of the empire, also evidently lived and worked in the heartland of the Achaemenid Empire, namely Iran. For example, Greeks were part of the various ethnicities that constructed Darius' palace in Susa, apart from the Greek inscriptions found nearby there, and one short Persepolis tablet written in Greek.

Customs :

An Achaemenid drinking vessel

Herodotus mentions that the Persians were invited to great birthday feasts (Herodotus, *Histories* 8), which would be followed by many desserts, a treat which they reproached the Greeks for omitting from their meals. He also observed that the Persians drank wine in large quantities and used it even for counsel, deliberating on important affairs when

drunk, and deciding the next day, when sober, whether to act on the decision or set it aside. Bowing to superiors, or royalty was one of the many Persian customs adopted by Alexander the Great.

Religion :

Religious toleration has been described as a "remarkable feature" of the Achaemenid Empire. The Old Testament reports that king Cyrus the Great released the Jews from their Babylonian captivity in 539–530 BC, and permitted them to return to their homeland. Cyrus the Great assisted in the restoration of the sacred places of various cities.

It was during the Achaemenid period that Zoroastrianism reached South-Western Iran, where it came to be accepted by the rulers and through them became a defining element of Persian culture. The religion was not only accompanied by a formalization of the concepts and divinities of the traditional Iranian pantheon but also introduced several novel ideas, including that of free will. Under the patronage of the Achaemenid kings, and by the 5th century BC as the *de facto* religion of the state, Zoroastrianism reached all corners of the empire.

Bas-relief of Farvahar at Persepolis

During the reign of Artaxerxes I and Darius II, Herodotus wrote "[the Persians] have no images of the gods, no temples nor altars, and consider the use of them a sign of folly. This comes, I think, from their not believing the gods to have the same nature with men, as the Greeks imagine." He claims the Persians offer sacrifice to: "the sun and moon, to the earth, to fire, to water, and to the winds. These are the only gods whose worship has come down to them from ancient times. At a later period they began the worship of Urania, which they borrowed from the Arabians and Assyrians. Mylitta is the name by which the Assyrians know this goddess, to whom the Persians referred as Anahita." (The original name here is Mithra,

which has since been explained to be a confusion of Anahita with Mithra, understandable since they were commonly worshipped together in one temple).

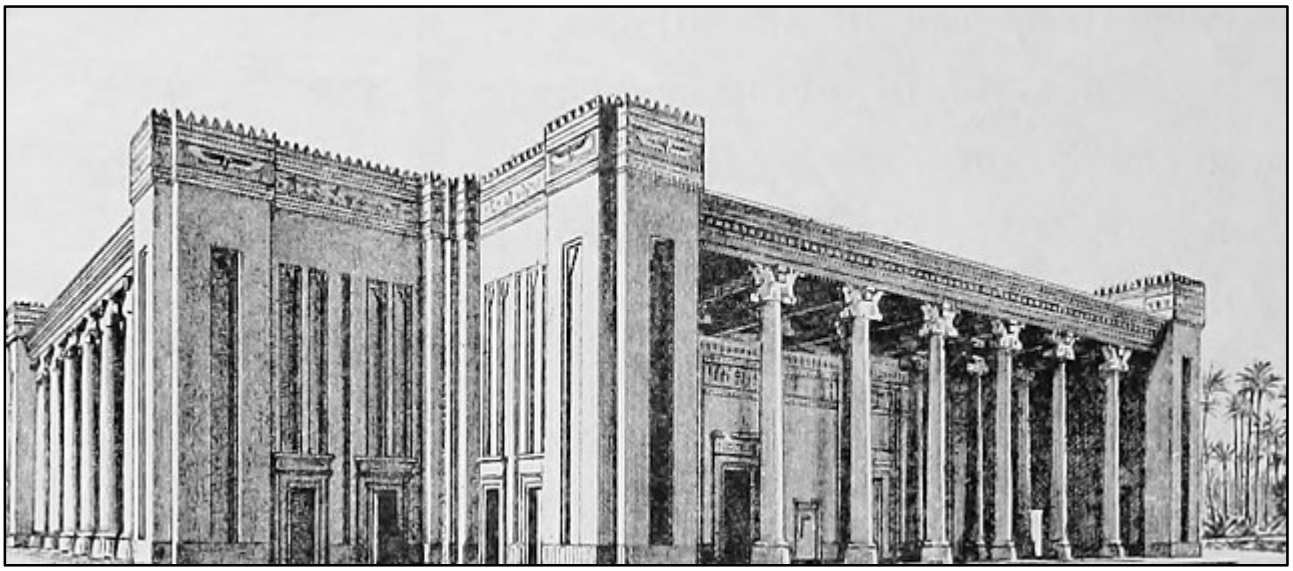
From the Babylonian scholar-priest Berosus, who—although writing over seventy years after the reign of Artaxerxes II Mnemon—records that the emperor had been the first to make cult statues of divinities and have them placed in temples in many of the major cities of the empire. Berosus also substantiates Herodotus when he says the Persians knew of no images of gods until Artaxerxes II erected those images. On the means of sacrifice, Herodotus adds "they raise no altar, light no fire, pour no libations. This sentence has been interpreted to identify a critical (but later) accretion to Zoroastrianism. An altar with a wood-burning fire and the Yasna service at which libations are poured are all clearly identifiable with modern Zoroastrianism, but apparently, were practices that had not yet developed in the mid-5th century. Boyce also assigns that development to the reign of Artaxerxes II (4th century BC), as an orthodox response to the innovation of the shrine cults.

Herodotus also observed that "no prayer or offering can be made without a magus present" but this should not be confused with what is today understood by the term *magus*, that is a *magupat* (modern Persian: *mobed*), a Zoroastrian priest. Nor does Herodotus' description of the term as one of the tribes or castes of the Medes necessarily imply that these *magi* were Medians. They simply were a hereditary priesthood to be found all over Western Iran and although (originally) not associated with any one specific religion, they were traditionally responsible for all ritual and religious services. Although the unequivocal identification of the *magus* with Zoroastrianism came later (Sassanid era, 3rd–7th century AD), it is from Herodotus' *magus* of the mid-5th century that Zoroastrianism was subject to doctrinal modifications that are today considered to be revocations of the original teachings of the prophet. Also, many of the ritual practices described in the Avesta's *Vendidad* (such as exposure of the dead) were already practised by the *magu* of Herodotus' time.

Art and architecture :

Achaemenid architecture includes large cities, temples, palaces, and mausoleums such as the tomb of Cyrus the Great. The quintessential feature of Persian architecture was its eclectic nature with elements of Median, Assyrian, and Asiatic Greek all incorporated, yet maintaining a unique Persian identity seen in the finished products.

Achaemenid art includes frieze reliefs, Metalwork such as the Oxus Treasure, decoration of palaces, glazed brick masonry, fine craftsmanship (masonry, carpentry, etc.), and gardening. Although the Persians took artists, with their styles and techniques, from all corners of their empire, they produced not simply a combination of styles, but a synthesis of a new unique Persian style. Cyrus the Great in fact had an extensive ancient Iranian heritage behind him; the rich Achaemenid gold work, which inscriptions suggest may have been a speciality of the Medes, was for instance in the tradition of the delicate metalwork found in Iron Age II times at Hasanlu and still earlier at Marlik.



Reconstruction of the Palace of Darius at Susa. The palace served as a model for Persepolis

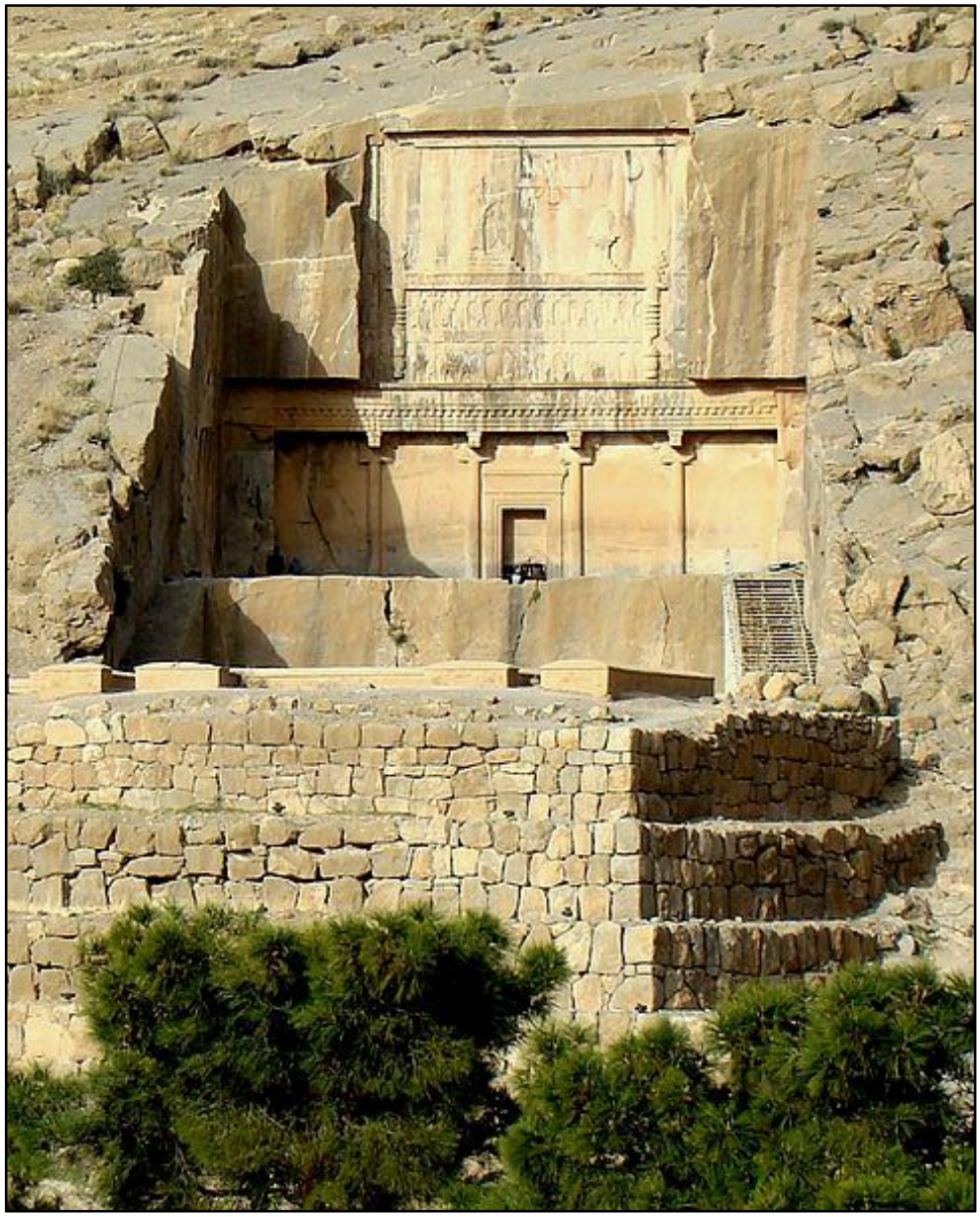
Lion on a decorative panel from Darius I the Great's palace, Louvre

One of the most remarkable examples of both Achaemenid architecture and art is the grand palace of Persepolis, and its detailed workmanship, coupled with its grand scale. In describing the construction of his palace at Susa, Darius the Great records that:

Yaka timber was brought from Gandara and from Carmania. The gold was brought from Sardis and from Bactria ... the precious stone lapis-lazuli and carnelian. was brought from Sogdiana. The turquoise from Chorasmia, the silver and ebony from Egypt, the ornamentation from Ionia, the ivory from Ethiopia and from Sindh and from Arachosia. The stone-cutters who wrought the stone, those were Ionians and Sardians. The goldsmiths were Medes and Egyptians. The men who wrought the wood, those were Sardians and Egyptians. The men who wrought the baked brick, those were Babylonians. The men who adorned the wall, those were Medes and Egyptians.

This was imperial art on a scale the world had not seen before. Materials and artists were drawn from all corners of the empire, and thus tastes, styles, and motifs became mixed together in an eclectic art and architecture that in itself mirrored the Persian empire.

Tombs :



Tomb of Artaxerxes III in Persepolis

Many Achaemenid rulers built tombs for themselves. The most famous, Naqsh-e Rustam, is an ancient necropolis located about 12 km north-west of Persepolis, with the tombs of four of the kings of the dynasty carved in this mountain: Darius I, Xerxes I, Artaxerxes I and Darius II. Other kings constructed their own tombs elsewhere. Artaxerxes II and Artaxerxes III preferred to carve their tombs beside their spring capital Persepolis, the left tomb belonging to Artaxerxes II and the right tomb belonging to Artaxerxes III, the last Achaemenid king to have a tomb. The tomb of the founder of the Achaemenid dynasty, Cyrus the Great, was built in Pasargadae (now a world heritage site).

Legacy :

The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, one of the Seven wonders of the ancient world, was built by Greek architects for the local Persian satrap of Caria, Mausolus.

The Achaemenid Empire left a lasting impression on the heritage and cultural identity of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, and influenced the development and structure of future empires. In fact, the Greeks, and later on the Romans, adopted the best features of the Persian method of governing an empire.

Georg W. F. Hegel in his work *The Philosophy of History* introduces the Persian Empire as the "first empire that passed away" and its people as the "first historical people" in history.

According to his account :

The Persian Empire is an empire in the modern sense – like that which existed in Germany, and the great imperial realm under the sway of Napoleon; for we find it consisting of a number of states, which are indeed dependent, but which have retained their own individuality, their manners, and laws. The general enactments, binding upon all, did not infringe upon their political and social idiosyncrasies, but even protected and maintained them; so that each of the nations that constitute the whole, had its own form of constitution. As light illuminates everything – imparting to each object a peculiar vitality – so the Persian Empire extends over a multitude of nations, and leaves to each one its particular character. Some have even kings of their own; each one its distinct language, arms, way of life and customs. All this diversity coexists harmoniously under the impartial dominion of Light ... a combination of peoples – leaving each of them free. Thereby, a stop is put to that barbarism and ferocity with which the nations had been wont to carry on their destructive feuds.

American Orientalist Arthur Upham Pope (1881–1969) said: "The western world has a vast unpaid debt to the Persian Civilization!

Will Durant, the American historian and philosopher, during one of his speeches, "Persia in the History of Civilization", as an address before the *Iran–America Society* in Tehran on 21 April 1948, stated:

For thousands of years Persians have been creating beauty. Sixteen centuries before Christ there went from these regions or near it. You have been here a kind of watershed of civilization, pouring your blood and thought and art and religion eastward and westward into the world ... I need not rehearse for you again the achievements of your Achaemenid period. Then for the first time in known history an empire almost as extensive as the United States received an orderly government, a competence of administration, a web of swift communications, a security of movement by men and goods on majestic roads, equalled before our time only by the zenith of Imperial Rome.

Achaemenid kings and rulers :

There were four unattested kings who ruled as satraps to the Neo-Assyrian Empire and the Median Empire.

Name	Image	Comments	Dates
Achaemenes		First ruler of the Achaemenid kingdom	705 BC
Teispes		Son of Achaemenes	640 BC
Cyrus I		Son of Teispes	580 BC
Cambyses I		Son of Cyrus I and father of Cyrus II	550 BC

Attested :

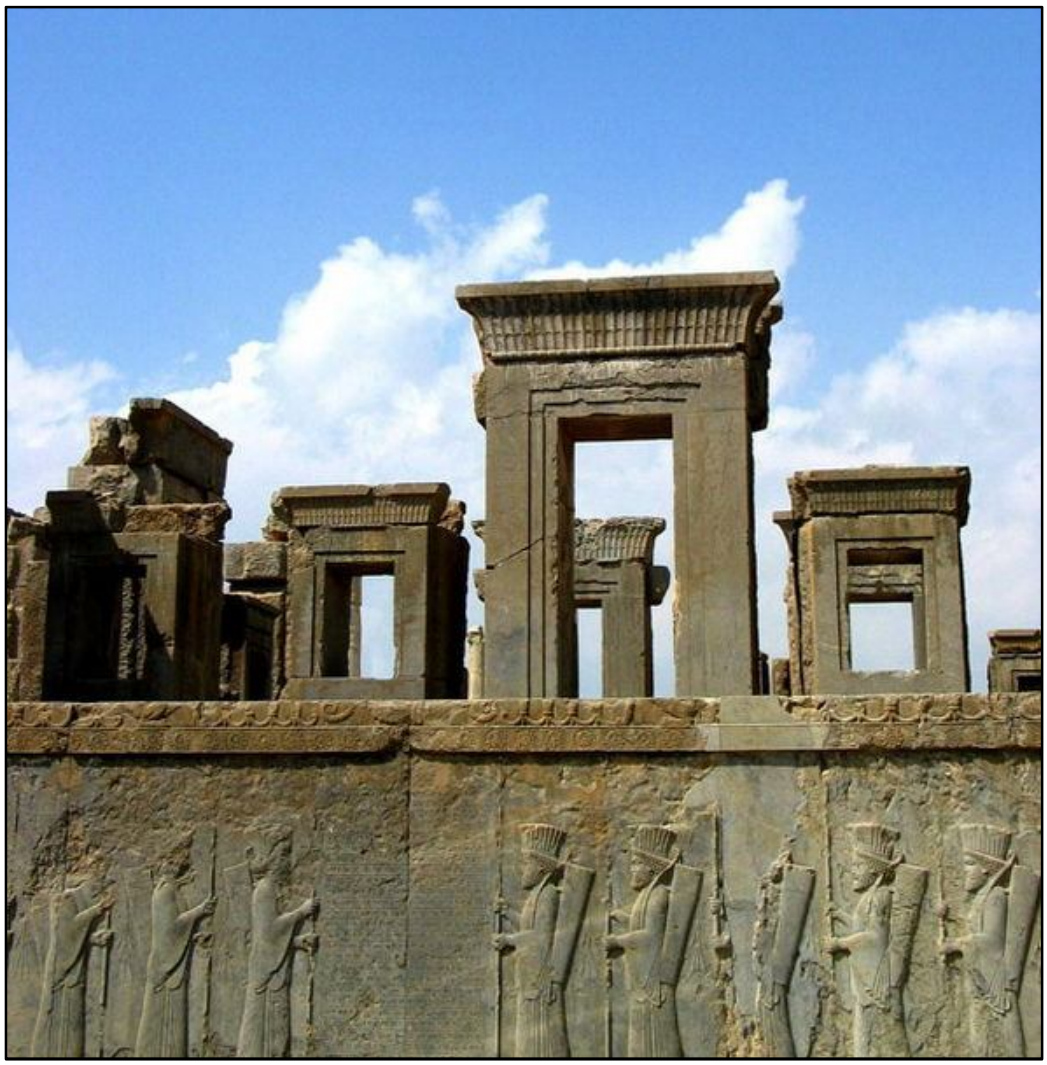
There were 13 attested kings during the 220 years of the Achaemenid Empire's existence. The reign of Artaxerxes II was the longest, lasting 47 years

Name	Image	Comments	Dates
Cyrus the Great		Founder of the empire; King of the "four corners of the world"	560–530 BC
Cambyses II		King of Persia in addition to Pharaoh of Egypt	530–522 BC
Bardiya/Smerdis		King of Persia, allegedly an imposter	522 BC

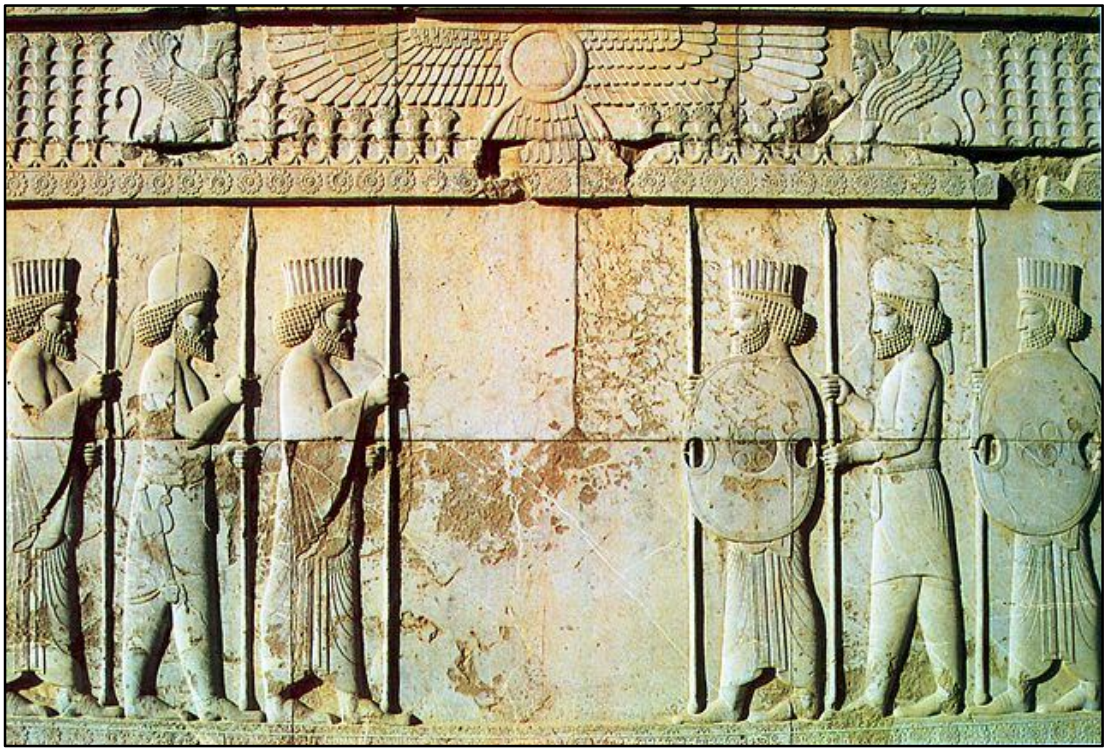
Darius I		King of Persia in addition to Pharaoh of Egypt	522–486 BC
Xerxes I		King of Persia in addition to Pharaoh of Egypt	486–465 BC
Artaxerxes I		King of Persia in addition to Pharaoh of Egypt	465–424 BC
Xerxes II		King of Persia in addition to Pharaoh of Egypt	424 BC (45 days)
Sogdianus		King of Persia in addition to Pharaoh of Egypt	424–423 BC
Darius II		King of Persia in addition to Pharaoh of Egypt	423–405 BC
Artaxerxes II		King of Persia	405–358 BC

Artaxerxes III		King of Persia in addition to Pharaoh of Egypt (Regained control over Egypt after 50 years)	358–338 BC
Artaxerxes IV		King of Persia in addition to Pharaoh of Egypt	338–336 BC
Darius III		King of Persia in addition to Pharaoh of Egypt; last ruler of the empire	336–330 BC

Gallery :



Ruins of Throne Hall, Persepolis



Apadana Hall, Persian and Median soldiers at Persepolis

Lateral view of tomb of Cambyses II, Pasargadae, Iran

Plaque with horned lion-griffins. The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Source :

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire

45. Where did the Scythians come from? :

The Lomonosov Moscow State University anthropologists have put forward an assumption that the Scythian gene pool was formed on the basis of local tribes with some participation of populations, migrated to the northern Black Sea region from Central Asia. The research results have been published in the American Journal of Physical Anthropology.

Members of the Lomonosov Moscow State University have conducted a comparative analysis of variouscranial series in terms of nonmetric cranial traits frequencies in order to evaluate genetic succession between the Scythians from the northern Black Sea region and Bronze Age populations from Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Alla Movsesyan, a leading researcher at the Anthropology Department of the Lomonosov Moscow State University and one of the article authors tells: "Nowadays there are two main hypotheses of the origin of the Scythians. According to the first one they came to the northern Black Sea region from Central Asia as invaders and local Indo-European population was assimilated by them. And as follows from the second hypothesis, the Scythians were genetically linked to the local population of the Srubnaya culture-historical society (the Timber-grave culture) - the ethno-cultural consociation of tribes in the Late Bronze Age (16th-12th centuries BC), inhabited steppe and forest-steppe belts between the Dnieper and Ural Mountains."

We should clarify that a cranial series means a group of skulls from one or several closely-spaced burials, belonging to one ethnic group or one archeological culture, and discrete-varying, nonmetric traits reflect minor anatomical variants of the human skull. They include various additional or irregular holes, irregular skull sutures and processes, small bones in

fonticuli and skull sutures. These traits are supposed to have genetic nature and could characterize the gene pool of a population. It has been revealed that the matrices of genetic distances between populations, built on the basis of nonmetric traits, correlate with the matrices of genetic distances between the same populations, built in accordance to the data on molecular genetic markers. Consequently, a comparative analysis of nonmetric cranial traits could be considered as a sort of alternative to DNA-researches in ancient populations' studies.
Alla Movsesyan explains: "Unlike the ancient DNA studies on skeletal material, which is still quite a complicated and expensive process, using nonmetric cranial traits allows to carry out a population genetic analysis of unrestrictedly large quantity of cranial series, and this is very valuable for the studies of genetic links between ancient populations. This technique is quite widely-spread in foreign anthropology".

In order to distinguish the measure of differences between populations anthropologists have used a statistical approach, known as a mean measure of divergence. It implies that genetic distances between populations were calculated on the basis of nonmetric traits frequencies data. The obtained results allow to assume that both hypotheses of the Scythian ethnogenesis are partly correct: the Scythian gene pool was formed on the basis of descendants both of the Bronze Age local Srubnaya culture and populations, migrated from Central Asia.

The idea that the Scythians were predecessors of the Slavs is one of the stable myths in spite of the fact that scientists have proved long before that there was almost no succession between these two tribes. Alla Movsesyan specifies: "According to B.A. Rybakov's hypothesis, stated in his book "Herodotus' Scythia", a part of the Scythian tribes, so called Scythians-Ploughmen, probably took some part in the Slavs ethnogenesis due to the longstanding geographic proximity. However, the idea that the Scythians are direct predecessors of the Slavs is not supported by any archeological, anthropological, genetic or linguistic data."

Source :

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2017-03/lmsu-wdt030717.php