

History

Persians



THE PERSIANS: c.600BC-300BC

The Power of Persia

Persia is the old name for the country we now call Iran. Around 1300BC, the area was invaded by two tribes known as the Medes and the Persians. They set up two kingdoms, Media in the north and Persia in the south.

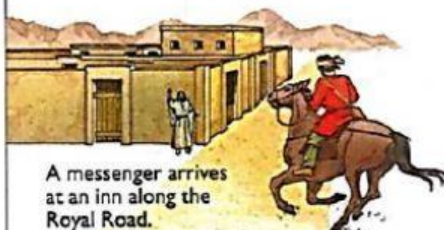


★ Frieze showing Persian soldiers

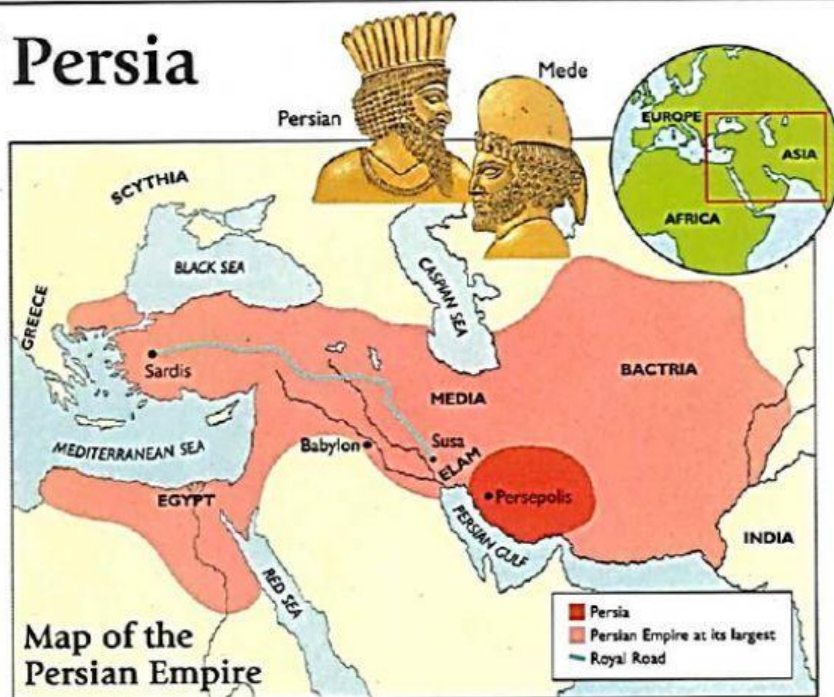
In 550BC, King Cyrus II of Persia defeated the Medes, took over their lands and built up a huge empire. Later, under King Darius I, the Persian Empire grew to become the largest the world had ever seen.

The Royal Road

Darius built good roads across the Empire, so that messengers could travel more quickly. The Royal Road stretched 2700km (1680 miles) from Sardis in the west to the capital city at Susa.



A messenger arrives at an inn along the Royal Road.



Map of the Persian Empire

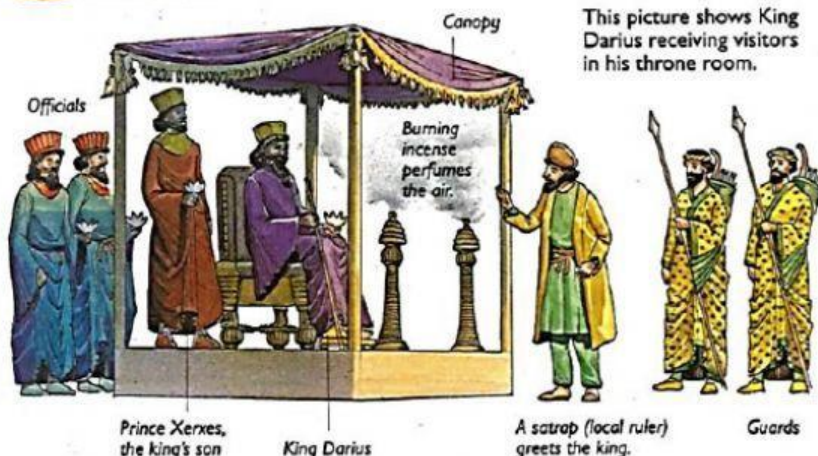


★ Persian armlet made of solid gold

Running the Empire

King Darius collected taxes from conquered people all over the Empire and became fabulously rich. He allowed people to keep their religion and way of life, as long as they paid their taxes.

Darius divided his vast Empire into regions, each one run by a local ruler called a satrap. Officials kept an eye on the satraps and made sure they stayed loyal to the king.



This picture shows King Darius receiving visitors in his throne room.

Prince Xerxes, the king's son

King Darius

A satrap (local ruler) greets the king.

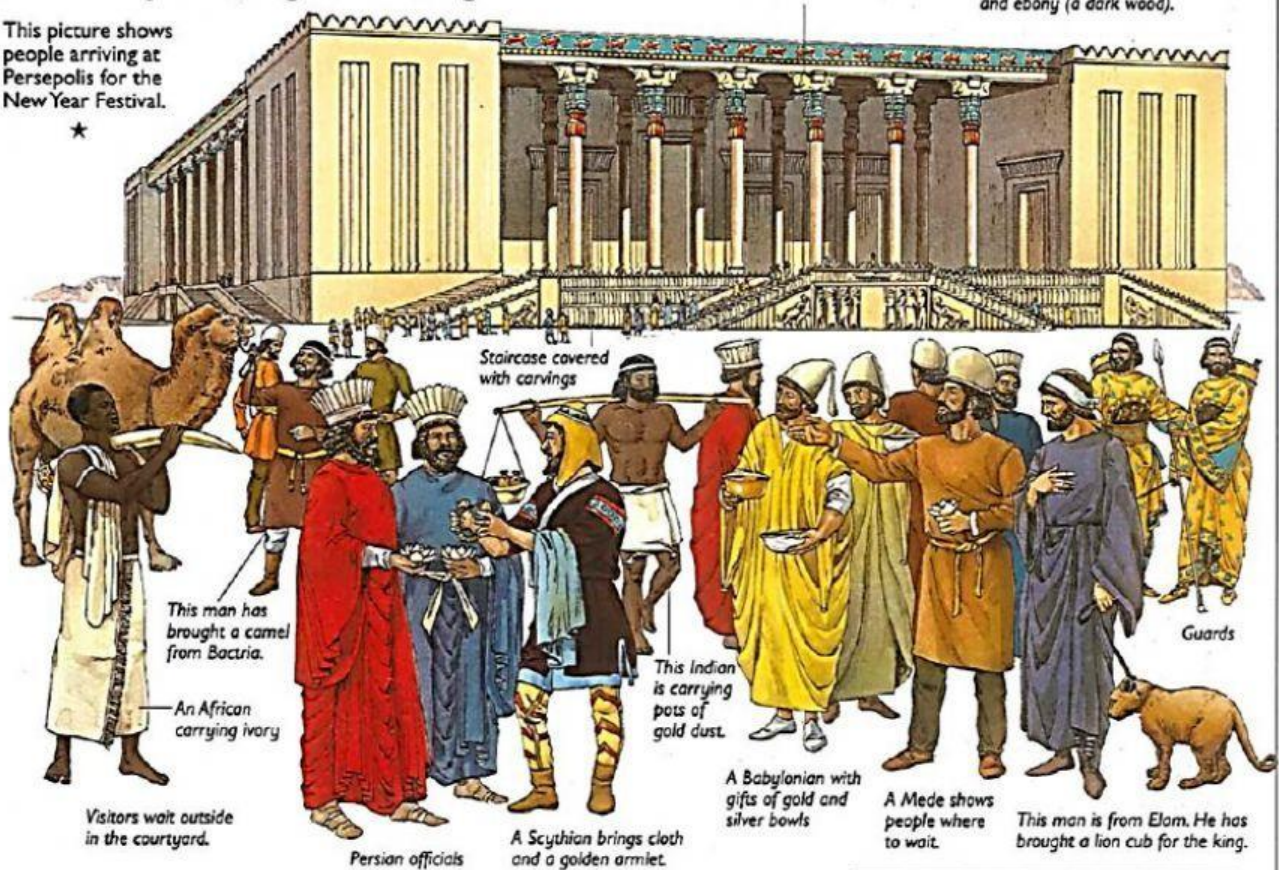
Guards

Persepolis

Darius used some of his wealth to build a magnificent palace at Persepolis. During the New Year Festival, officials from every part of the Empire came to the palace with gifts for the king.

This picture shows people arriving at Persepolis for the New Year Festival.

★



This is the Great Hall, where the king receives his visitors. It can hold 10,000 people.

The tops of the pillars are carved in the shape of bulls.

Inside, the Great Hall is decorated with gold, silver, ivory and ebony (a dark wood).

Staircase covered with carvings

This man has brought a camel from Bactria.

An African carrying ivory

Visitors wait outside in the courtyard.

Persian officials

A Scythian brings cloth and a golden armet.

This Indian is carrying pots of gold dust.

A Babylonian with gifts of gold and silver bowls

A Mede shows people where to wait.

This man is from Elam. He has brought a lion cub for the king.

Guards

Religion

The Persians followed the teachings of a prophet called Zarathustra (or Zoroaster), who taught that there was only one god. Fire was holy, and priests (called Magi) kept a sacred fire burning.

Priests carried twigs to feed the sacred fire.



The end of the Persian Empire

For many years, Persia was at war with Greece. The Persians won some battles, but were eventually beaten back. (You can find out more about these wars on page 155.)

After the death of Darius's son, King Xerxes I, the Empire grew weaker. In 331BC, Persia was conquered by Alexander the Great (see pages 160 and 161).

Important dates

- c.1300bc The Medes and the Persians settle down.
- c.700-600bc The kingdoms of Persia and Media are set up.
- 559-530bc Cyrus II rules Persia.
- 550bc Cyrus defeats the Medes.
- 522-486bc Darius I rules Persia. The Empire is at its largest.
- 490-479bc The Persians are at war with Greece.
- 486-465bc Xerxes I rules Persia.
- 331-330bc Persia is conquered by Alexander the Great. Persepolis is burned.

2000BC

1000BC

500BC

AD1

AD500

Watch the video below
and answer the questions

Why was Persia so powerful?

Because of their tolerance of Non-Persian
citizens living in Persia

Because there is no wars

Who was the Commander of Persia?

Cyrus the Great

Alexander the Great

What happened when he conquered Babylon?

He fought all the Jewish slaves

He freed all the Jewish slaves

**What challenges did the Persians face after they
conquered some parts of Africa and Europe?**

Adapting to change

Communication challenges