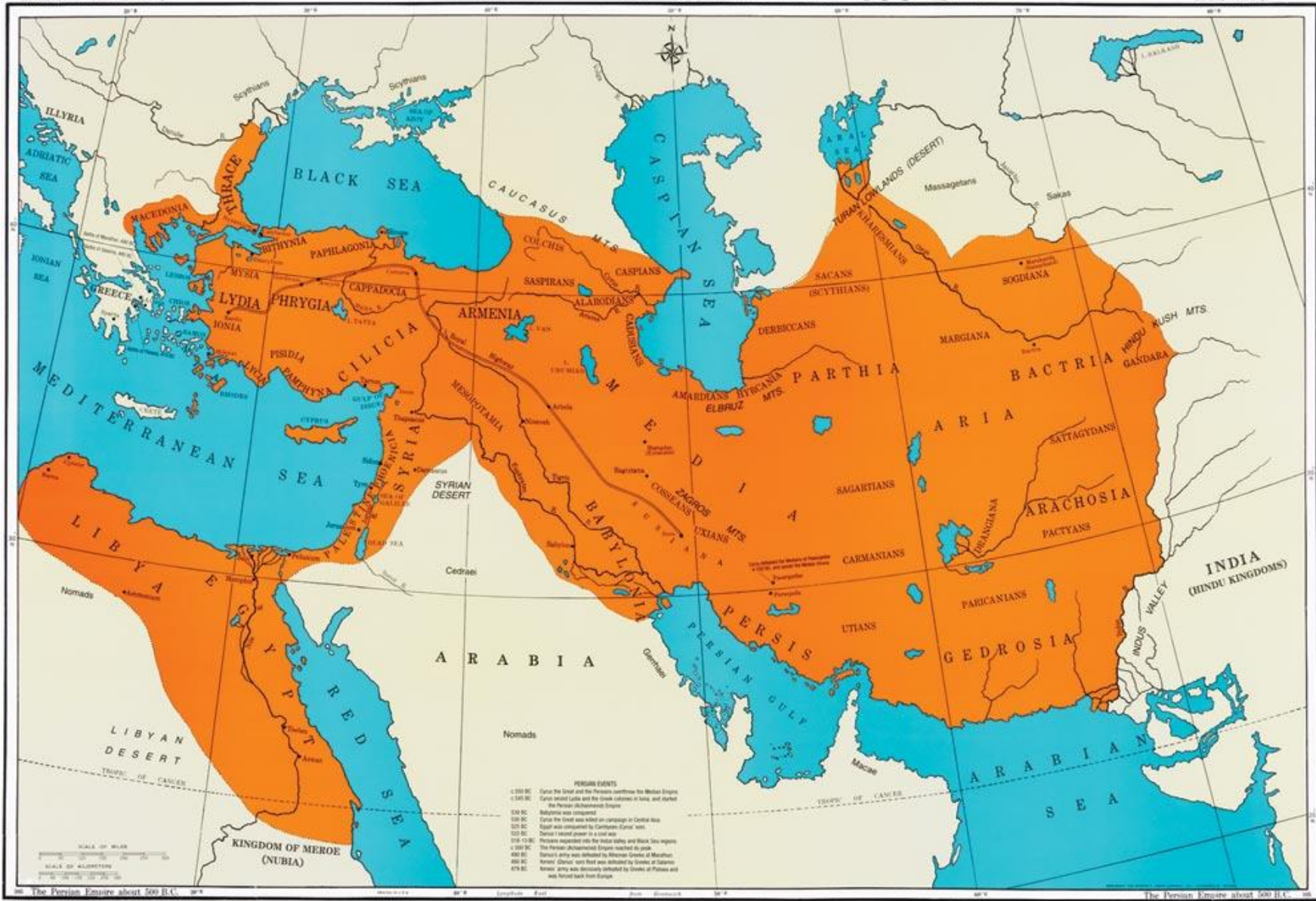


The Persian Empire

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THE PERSIAN EMPIRE ABOUT 500 B.C.

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The Persian Empire about 500 B.C.

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Rise of the Persian Empire

The Persians originated in what is today southwestern Iran.

Achaemenid family unites tribes;

Cyrus r. 559-530 B.C. created a powerful Persian State that stretched from Asia Minor to western India;

539 B.C. captured Babylon; showed restraint;

Babylonia becomes Persian province but

- kept many Babylonian officials in positions;
- permitted Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild temple;

Cyrus the Great

- demonstrated wisdom and compassion in the conquest and organization of his empire;
- won approval by using native officials as government officials in their own states;
- Reputation for mercy; contrast to Assyrians;
- Accepted as ruler by Medes, Babylonians and Jews
- Respect for ancient civilizations; customs and religions of lands he conquered; used variety of cultural designs and building methods;
- Tolerant and magnanimous

Xenophon on Cyrus

- And those who were subject to him, he treated with esteem and regard, as if they were his own children, while his subjects themselves respected Cyrus as their "Father" ... What other man but 'Cyrus', after having overturned an empire, ever died with the title of "The Father" from the people whom he had brought under his power? For it is plain fact that this is a name for one that bestows, rather than for one that takes away!

Jewish sacred writings on Cyrus

- *Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD, the God of heaven given me; and He hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all His people – the LORD, his God, be with him – let him go there. — (2 chronicles 36:22)*

Empire

Cyrus's conquests began a new era in the age of empire building, where a vast superstate, comprising many dozens of countries, races, religions, and languages, were ruled under a single administration headed by a central government.

Persian Empire Continues to Expand

Cambyses:

- successful invasion of Egypt;

Darius:

- added new province in western India
- into Europe – Thrace
- largest empire until that time;
- invades Greek mainland; famous Battle of Marathon;

Structure of Persian Government

- Empire divided into twenty provinces(satrapies);
- Each province ruled by governor or satrap(protector of the kingdom);
 - Collected taxes
 - Administered justice
 - Recruited soldiers for the royal army;
- some regional autonomy in each state, in the form of a satrapy system. A satrapy was an administrative unit, usually organized on a geographical basis. A '**satrap**' (governor) 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.

King - “Great King”

- all subjects king’s servants;
- source of all justice;
- power of life and death over everyone;

Darius Philosophy of Government

- generous to loyal and effective servants;
- harsh to enemies;

Roads!

well run empire requires efficient
communication system;

importance of well maintained roads;

Royal Road from Lydia to Susa;

stations for king's messengers;

Military

- ruler's power depended on military;
- standing army of professional soldiers;
- international army; recruits from all over empire;
- cavalry force of ten thousand;
- elite infantry force of ten thousand (immortals);

Decline

- kings more isolated;
- kings immersed in luxuries;
- ever higher taxes leads to resentment and undermines loyalty;
- Court intrigue and power struggles; of nine rulers after Darius, six murdered;
- Persian Empire will eventually weaken and be overtaken by the Greek ruler Alexander the Great;

Religion

Zoroastrianism

born 660 B.C.

wandering and solitude

visions

revered as prophet; teachings recorded in sacred book: Zend Avesta;

- Monotheistic – Ahuramazda(Wise Lord), supreme god who brought all things into being; the only god;
- Possessed qualities all humans should aspire to;
- Good thought, justice, piety;
- Opposed from the beginning of the world by evil spirit – Ahriman;

View of Man

- All humans have freedom to choose between right and wrong;
- There will be an end to the struggle between good and evil; a final judgement at the end of the world – a final separation of good and evil;
- Individuals to be judged
 - good lives lead to bliss of paradise;
 - bad lives lead to torment and misery in the abyss;

