


## The Rise of the Persian Empire 559-530



1	The Persian Empire grew in the Near East. This area was home to the world's first ancient civilisations including Egyptians and Sumerians. The Ancient Near East This area can be divided into <b>Asia Minor</b> (or Anatolia, Turkey), The Levant, Egypt, and <b>Mesopotamia</b> . The <b>Zagros Mountains</b> were important in this area.
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### Key events

2	559BC	Cyrus becomes King of Persia
3	550	Cyrus conquers the Medes
4	546	Cyrus conquerors the Lydians
5	545	Asiatic Greek cities brought into the Persian Empire
6	539	Cyrus conquerors Babylon
7	530s	Submission of lands in the Levant
8	530	Death of Cyrus

### Key ideas and developments

9	Sources 	There is a lack of evidence during this period, historians have their own perspectives and agendas. Many writings are from the Greeks, the most famous being <b>Herodotus</b> ( <i>Histories</i> c. 430-420) who wrote about events between the Greeks and Persians. However, Herodotus was writing over a century after the events happened and it is thought that he did not speak the Persian language. Some Non-Greek sources are available and come from Babylonia, for example the <b>Nabonidus Chronicle</b> .
10	Cyrus and the Medes	According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, Cyrus won a conflict against the <b>Medes</b> and King Astyages in 550BC. Astyages' army is reported to have mutinied in both sources available. Herodotus reports in folklore style the childhood and upbringing of Cyrus and his relationship with Astyages as his grandson. Cyrus was later encouraged to attack Astyages with the assurance of Harpagus. No non-Greek sources label Cyrus the grandson of Astyages, this may have been introduced by later Persian sources presenting Cyrus as the legitimate ruler of the Medes.
11	Conquest of Lydia	Having taken the lands of the Medes, Cyrus came into conflict with the Lydians. There are no non-Greek sources

		for this conflict. Lydia had been ruled by King Croesus since 560 and was famed for its wealth. Croesus of Lydia conquered the Greek cities of Asia minor in 555. <b>Asiatic Greeks</b> lived in Greek founded cities, along the western coast of Asia Minor. Two important cities were <b>Aeolis</b> and <b>Ionia</b> . The region's most powerful city was <b>Miletus</b> . Croesus attacked Cyrus' Persians fearing an attack. The battle that followed was inconclusive and Croesus appealed to the Babylonians, Egyptians and Spartans for help. But Cyrus made a counter attack on the Lydians at Sardis. The Persians then took control. The Greek cities of Asia Minor were now bought into the Persian Empire. <b>Xenophanes</b> , a Greek philosopher offers a fragment of a poem regarding the Persian invasion.
12	Conquest of Babylon 	Between 546 and 539 Herodotus claims that Cyrus was engaged in campaigns to the east of Persia. In 539 he turns to the Babylonian Empire, his rival. There are a number of Babylonian sources for this conquest but are fragmentary and in favour of Cyrus. The Nabonidus Chronicle gives an account of this campaign as does Herodotus. The fall of Babylon was a turning point in history, after this, the Persians could take all the lands in the Levant as well. People may have seen Cyrus as a liberator of Babylonian rule as in Babylonian sources, King Nabonidus is seen as a wicked king. The Jews who had previously been exiled to Babylon, were liberated. The <b>Cyrus Cylinder</b> is a key source for this period, written in <b>cuneiform</b> .
13	Parsargadae 	Parsagadae was the site Cyrus' newly commissioned palace. Located in the valley of the Zagros mountains. It was not just a royal residence but an administrative centre, offering key examples of art and architecture. Greek authors emphasise the beauty of the gardens ( <i>paradaiza</i> ).
17	Death of Cyrus	Cyrus continued to campaign in central Asia, but then the Nabonidus Chronicle reports his death in 530. Herodotus reports a final campaign against the <b>Massagetae</b> tribe led by Tomyris. The Massagatae were victorious and Cyrus was killed. A later Greek writer records Cyrus' death as peaceful in his new capital city.


## Cambyses II, Smerdis and Darius 530-522


1	On the Cyrus Cylinder, Cambyses is the only son named by Cyrus, though other sources record a younger son Bardiya. Bardiya is known in the work of Herodotus as Smerdis.
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### Key events

2	530	Cambyses II becomes King of Persia
3	525	Cambyses conquerors Egypt
4	522	Death of Cambyses, Darius I takes power after a revolt

### Key ideas and developments

13	Cambyses in sources	It is difficult to form a non-biased view of Cambyses II as Greek sources (Herodotus) show him as a cruel, mad king. Herodotus based his work on Egyptian sources. Sources contrast Cyrus as a 'good ruler' and Cambyses as a 'cruel ruler'. We know little about this reign apart from what is told about his conquest of Egypt.
14	Conquest of Egypt 	After a suggestion that Cambyses should marry the daughter of <b>Amasis</b> and the trickery that followed, Cambyses invaded Egypt. It is also likely that Egypt had been seen by Cyrus as the next most suitable target to expand the empire. Amasis was succeeded by <b>Psammetichus</b> . Cambyses marched with a multi-national army including Asiatic Greeks. When the Persians moved south to Memphis, the Egyptians were forced to surrender. <b>Military garrisons</b> were set up to defend the state. Peoples to the west of Egypt such as <b>Libya</b> and <b>Cyrene</b> submitted to Cambyses to avoid a similar fate.
15	Cambyses as ruler of Egypt	<b>Herodotus</b> presents Cambyses as a madman. Cambyses firstly disrespected the corpse of Amasis. The Egyptians were then celebrating the appearance of the god <b>Ptah</b> in the form of the <b>Apis Bull</b> . Cambyses did not understand the celebrations and in an attempt to prove the mortality of the 'god', he stabbed the calf. Prexaspes was also sent to Persia to kill the king's brother <b>Smerdis</b> , and later Cambyses also ordered his sister to be killed. These actions all led to the impression of Cambyses being mad.

16	The death of Cambyses	Herodotus is our main source. Two brothers (Patizeithes and Smerdis) who were <b>Magi</b> , plotted against the king. One brother pretended to be the King's brother Smerdis (previously ordered to be murdered) and stated that orders should be taken from him. A <b>proclamation</b> was sent to Egypt. Cambyses rode to attack the imposter, later dying from an infected wound. He died leaving the empire unstable and in chaos.
17	Cambyses in non-Greek sources	Other sources differ to the tales of Herodotus. Records from the <b>Serapeum</b> in Egypt show that Cambyses ensured the Apis bull was buried and received appropriate ceremonies - presenting himself as a true Egyptian king, rather than committing religious crimes told in Herodotus. Cambyses is also portrayed as a true pharaoh in the text of <b>Udjahorresne</b> where he is shown to restore order and worship Egyptian gods. Here Cambyses is shown in a similar light to Cyrus in Babylon. The motives of the authors must be taken into account here.
18	Accession of Darius 	When Cambyses died in 522 there was a power vacuum that was filled by his distant relative Darius. There is both an account from Herodotus and an account from Darius in a public inscription. After Cambyses, the false Smerdis reigned for several months. Conspirators attacked the <b>Magi</b> , killing them. After discussing how to proceed, the conspirators decided Persia should remain a monarchy, the king was decided by declaring whose horse was the first to neigh after the sun came up. In 520, Darius commissioned a monument explaining his successes – the <b>Bisitun Inscription</b> . This account supports that it was the Magus brothers who falsely took control of the empire. Another similarity is that six of the seven named conspirators match in both sources. Possibly, Herodotus read a Greek translation of this inscription.
19	Propaganda	Darius' inscription is suspicious to modern historians. It seems more likely that Cambyses' real brother ( <b>Bardiya</b> ) came to the throne and was then killed by Darius and the conspirators. The inscription was most likely evidence of propaganda, designed to hide the murder.


## The reign of Darius the Great 522-486



1	Darius is known as Darius the Great. He is known for imposing a new order and identity in on the Persian Empire, in both political and religious terms.
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### Key events

2	522	Darius takes power
3	513	Darius invades Thrace and Scythia
4	499	Outbreak of the Ionian Revolt
5	492	Mardonius campaigns in the North Aegean
6	490	First Persian invasion of Greece. Persians lose the Battle of Marathon
7	486	Death of Darius, Xerxes becomes king

### Key ideas and developments

13	Revolts against Darius	In the aftermath of the accession of Darius, the empire was hit with a series of revolts. These are mentioned in the <b>Bisitun Inscription</b> . Herodotus does not tell us much about them. The inscription can be understood as a propagandist version of events, where Darius supresses all revolts (such as in Elam and Babylonia, Media and Egypt). He proudly states how ruthless he was, fighting battles and taking prisoners. It is unclear why there were so many rebellions during this time, perhaps instability.
14	Ideology of Darius 	Some historians argue that when Darius established his empire, this was when the Persian Empire was properly created. From inscriptions, it is clear that Darius had new ideas for Persian kingship. Darius presents himself as King of Persia rather than just King of Anshan, he lists the 23 lands in his control. Darius seeks to link himself to Cyrus through <b>genealogy</b> . When he became king, he marries two of Cyrus' daughters. We can also see the introduction of the god <b>Ahuramazda</b> , although Persians were <b>polytheistic</b> , this inscription does not mention other gods. Darius presents himself as being given his kingly powers by god. Darius' reign also saw developments in areas such as politics, sculpture, architecture and technology. According to Herodotus, he carried out reforms in government,

		organising the empire into <b>satrapies</b> , with a satrap in charge of each. The empire was ruled from major cities including <b>Susa, Ecbatana, Pasargadae</b> and <b>Persepolis</b> . The empire also had a strong road system as described by Herodotus, acting as arteries of the empire.
15	Building projects 	Darius constructed major building projects during his reign. Susa was rebuilt, the most impressive building being the <b>apadana</b> . Susa was also home to the <b>Foundation Charter</b> . He established a new city, Persepolis (Greek) or Parsa (Persian) where the best preserved palace from this period is found. It is known for its elaborate sculptures and reliefs. In addition to buildings, Darius also commissioned a great canal in Egypt joining the River Nile to the Red Sea, promoting trade routes. In Egypt, the Persians also built a new irrigation system to help crops grow productively.
16	Imperial expansion 	It is clear that Darius wanted to expand the empire both east and west. Herodotus that he was convinced by his wife Atossa to send a mission to the Mediterranean. Darius would have wanted to live up to the reputations of Cyrus and Cambyses before him. He had an enormous amount of troops at his disposal, keeping them busy on a campaign would have been a good idea to prevent rebellion. A mission was sent out to the east of the empire to the <b>Indus Valley</b> , bringing Indians into the empire. Their image appears on inscriptions bringing <b>tribute</b> to the Persian cities. Indian scribes are also recorded in Persepolis at this time. In addition to this, Darius also launched campaigns in Europe, particularly in <b>Scythia</b> .
17	Ionian revolt 499	The Greeks of Asia Minor initially did not rebel and they were loyal during his expeditions to Scythia. But a major revolt broke out in 499, and it took almost 5 years to put down. Herodotus assumes this was due to a lack of freedom and the fact that they no longer wanted their <b>tyrant</b> leaders. Darius I of Persia used Athens' involvement as an excuse for his invasion of Greece in 490, initiating the <b>Greco-Persian Wars</b> (Battle of Marathon). Herodotus argues that the Athenian involvement of the Ionian Revolt made this invasion inevitable.

## Xerxes I and the Greeks 486-465



1	Xerxes suppressed two revolts and invaded Greece during his time as emperor. In contrast to Darius, non-Greek sources are few. One key theme for his reign is the completion of Darius' building projects. Xerxes is portrayed by <b>Aeschylus</b> as a hot-headed ruler who lacked maturity.
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### Key events

2	486	Xerxes becomes King of Persia
3	484	Xerxes crushes the revolt in Egypt
4	480	Major invasion of Greece. The Persians win at Thermopylae but lose at Salamis
5	479	Persian defeat at Plataea sees them abandon the invasion
6	469	Athenian led forces win a major land and sea victory over the Persians at Eurymedon
7	465	Death of Xerxes

### Key ideas and developments

12	Rise of Xerxes	According to Herodotus, Xerxes was not Darius' oldest son but was still named heir following the Spartan system. Atossa, Xerxes' mother was also a powerful influence.
13	Revolts in Egypt and Babylon	The Egyptians revolted in the final year of Darius' reign due to a combination of influences. Herodotus gives little detail about Xerxes' campaign to Egypt. The Persians also faces two revolts in Babylon which were put down swiftly.
14	Invasion of Greece	Herodotus dedicates his final part of the Histories to the Persian invasion of Greece, but there is little mention of this in Persian sources. Accounts of the campaign come through Greek eyes. Persia sought revenge against the Athenians. Soldiers were brought to fight from throughout the Persian Empire, modern historians predict this to be 60,000-80,000 men, whilst Herodotus states it to be more than 2.6 million. The invasion assembled at Sardis in the winter of 481, setting out in spring 480. The army arrived on the Asian side of the <b>Hellespont</b> , then marched through Thrace and Macedonia. All people in these regions <b>medised</b> .
15	Persian army	Herodotus lists 47 nations and describes the army's armour and weaponry. The Persians wore soft felt caps, tunics, and trousers. They defended themselves with wicker shields and

		fought with swords, spears and bows. The Persians were well known for their <b>archers</b> . A famous unit known as the <b>Immortals</b> protected the king. The Greeks used a tight formation used as a <b>phalanx</b> . Whereas the Persians also used <b>cavalry</b> and were great horsemen.
16	Battle of Thermopylae 	This battle was a defeat for the Greeks but showed the great fighting spirit of the 300 Spartans who fought. Herodotus gives us the Spartan view of the battle. Greek cities resisting the Persians joined in the <b>Hellenic League</b> , led by the Spartans. In 480, they wanted to block the Persians at a narrow path. The Persians suffered heavy losses until a local Greek, <b>Ephialtes</b> , told Xerxes of a mountain pass that could allow them to surround the Greeks. Some troops were dismissed but the Spartans, Thespians and Thebans remained to fight. Herodotus tells us that Xerxes had the body of <b>Leonidus</b> , the Spartan King, decapitated.
17	Battle of Salamis 	After the Greek defeat at Thermopylae, Greek ships retreated to southern Greece. The Persians marched through central Greece brutally attacking cities with the focus being Athens. Herodotus tells that 21 different cities provided ships for the Greek fleet. <b>Themistocles</b> engineered a fight at the narrow straits of Salamis. Greek <b>triremes</b> rammed Persian ships and their superior numbers worked against them. The Greeks won and remaining Persian ships retreated to Asia Minor. Xerxes left Greece and returned to Sardis, leaving <b>Mardonius</b> with a reduced army. The Greeks delivered at final defeat to the Persians at <b>Plataea</b> as well as <b>Mycale</b> . The invasion had failed.
18	Battle of Eurymedon	A defensive alliance led by Athens, the <b>Delian League</b> was formed. In the 460s, the league led a combined land and sea battle against the Persians at Eurymedon in southern Asia Minor. <b>Thucydides</b> tells us that the Greeks won a great victory. We also have access to an account from <b>Diodorus Siculus</b> and <b>Plutarch</b> . Xerxes died soon after the battle in 465 and his successor Artaxerxes accepted the new western limits of the empire.

Persian Empire key words		
1	<b>Anshan</b>	Capital of Persia
2	<b>Apis Bull</b>	A manifestation of the god Ptah in the form of a bull. Kept in Memphis, Egypt.
3	<b>archers</b>	Soldiers using a bow and arrow as a weapon of choice.
4	<b>Asia Minor</b>	The region roughly equivalent to Turkey today.
5	<b>barbarian</b>	A word used by the Greeks to refer to non-Greeks
6	<b>Bisitun inscription</b>	On a main road connecting Babylon and Ecbatana, Darius set up this inscription on a rock face so travellers could read about his successes as king.
7	<b>cavalry</b>	Soldiers on horseback
8	<b>conquer</b>	To take control by military force
9	<b>cuneiform</b>	Characters used in Mesopotamia to form the first recorded language, remaining mainly on clay tablets.
10	<b>Cyrus Cylinder</b>	Issued by Cyrus the Great and written in cuneiform, created when Cyrus took Babylon ending the Neo-Babylonian empire.
11	<b>Elam</b>	An old kingdom absorbed by Persia (capital: Susa)
12	<b>Hellenic League</b>	An association of Greek city states against the Persians during the Greco-Persian wars of the 5 <sup>th</sup> century BC.
13	<b>Hellespont</b>	The strait connecting the Sea of Marmara with the Aegean Sea to the west. It currently separates European Turkey and Asian Turkey (Istanbul/Constantinople).
14	<b>Immortals</b>	Elite soldiers that protected the Persian king. Their units were always immediately replaced. They were stationed at the gates of Persepolis when not on campaign.
15	<b>medised</b>	Collaborating or sympathising with Persians.
16	<b>Mesopotamia</b>	A fertile region equivalent to modern day Iraq, between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.
17	<b>military garrisons</b>	A place where troops are stationed to protect a particular area.
18	<b>Nabonidus Chronicle</b>	Text from ancient Babylonia. It describes the reign of <b>Nabonidus</b> , the last king of the Babylonian Empire, who lost his realm to the Persian king Cyrus the Great in 539 BCE.
19	<b>phalanx</b>	Soldiers moving in very close formation to prevent attack
20	<b>proclamation</b>	A public or official announcement with great importance
21	<b>Serapeum</b>	The official burial place of the Apis Bull in Saqqara, Memphis in Egypt.
22	<b>The Levant</b>	A region with on the eastern Mediterranean, from southern Turkey to modern Egypt.
23	<b>magi</b>	The priestly class in Persia. They performed rituals, interpreted dreams and omens and acted as advisors. They also trained princes and guarded tombs. (singular: Magus)
24	<b>trireme</b>	An ancient type of ship used by civilisation in the Mediterranean.
25	<b>tyrant</b>	A cruel and controlling ruler.