

PERSIAN HISTORY

The Elamite civilization in Iran, first developed in the Susian plain, under the influence of nearby Sumeria and Mesopotamia in the Tigris-Euphrates valley.

Around 3500 B.C., animal drawn wheeled carts were in use in Sumeria. They also used ploughs to till their land, and oars to propel their ships on the Euphrates river. The Sumerians were the most advanced and complex civilization in the world at that time, and by 3100 B.C. they had invented a system of writing which was the first of its kind in the world.

In 3000 B.C a group of people called the Akkadians drifted into the northern Sumerian territory. The Akkadians adopted some aspects of Sumerian culture and for that reason, the region is sometimes referred to as Sumer - Akkad. Around 2340 B.C. Sargon, ruler of the Akkad defeated Sumer and went on to conquer Elam and the mountainous lands to the east. His empire spread from the Mediterranean Sea to the Caspian Sea in the north, and the Persian Gulf in the South.

The Guti, among other tribes living in the mountainous areas controlled many of the routes that crossed western Iran. They took advantage of periods of weakness in Babylonian power and, around 2200 B.C., even succeeded in invading Babylon, causing the fall of the empire of Akkad.

This fall allowed Elam to capture Susa, a city that was to become one of its capitals. Elam developed into a civilization that could be compared with that of Sumer, and during the 13th and 12th centuries B.C., at the height of its glory, it succeeded in defeating Assyria and Babylon.

Throughout the centuries that followed, the Assyrian Empire continued to fight for control of the region, at times succeeding with great force. They waged war with deliberate frightfulness, sacking cities, and killing their inhabitants indiscriminately. By 900 B.C. Assyria was busy restoring its control over Babylonia, and by 700 B.C. the Assyrian Empire included the entire Tigris-Euphrates region, and all the Eastern Shore of the Mediterranean. It was the most powerful empire the world had yet seen.

During the second millennia B.C., successive Indo-European (Aryan) invaders broke through into the Iranian plateau, either from the Caucasus, or through Central Asia. Those who settled in Iran were divided into tribes that were distinguished from each other by their different dialects. The most famous of these tribes were the Persians (Parsa), and the Medes (Mada).

The Persians eventually settled in the province of Fars and in the Bakhtiari Mountains, while the Medes occupied the Hamedan plain. The Medes, were fierce warriors and skilled horse breeders, and at first were organised as independent tribes; however, this changed under the tribal chief, Deioces. The Median capital was established at Ecbatana or "Place of Assembly", modern Hamedan. Under the rule of Cyaxares (633-584 B.C.), the Medes put an end to centuries of war against the Assyrians. Their capture of Niniva in 612 B.C. finally brought down the Assyrian Empire. For more than half a century after the fall of Niniva, the Medes ruled over a vast empire with borders stretching from Afghanistan to Turkey.

The Persians achieved unity under the leadership of Achaemenes, whose descendant [Cyrus](#) brought the Achaemenian Empire onto the centre stage of world history. Cyrus was the descendant of a long line of Persian kings and should be referred to as Cyrus II, having been named after his grandfather.

According to the writings of Herodotus, the last ruler of the Medes, Astyages (585 - 550 B.C.) was defeated and captured by Cyrus in 549 B.C.. In all probability Cyrus had the support of the Babylonian sovereign Nabonidus. The Persian king overthrew the Median empire and seized Ecbatana (Place of Assembly), which became his capital. He spared the defeated ruler, preferring not to indulge in the mass killings, which until then had been a feature of Assyrian victories. On the contrary he brought nobles and civilian officials, both Median and Persian, into the government of his kingdom.

From 546 B.C., Cyrus II applied himself to the task of attacking the powerful kingdom of Lydia, where the famous Croesus ruled. There were two battles, then Cyrus besieged and captured Sardis before going on to subdue the rich Greek cities. From this point onwards Cyrus was master of all Asia Minor. He now turned his attention towards his eastern frontiers and conquered a string of provinces one after the other, even crossing the Oxus in order to reach another river, the Jaxartes, which flows into the Aral Sea. A number of fortresses were then built for the purpose of keeping out the nomads of Central Asia.

In 539 B.C., the Persian sovereign assembled the bulk of his army and left his capital, Ecbatana, to follow the course of the Tigris down to Babylon, where he attacked Nabonidus. The city which had been capital of Mesopotamia for a thousand years offered little resistance, and welcomed Cyrus as a liberator.

As usual, Cyrus showed magnanimity in victory. The respect he showed for the religions of others earned him the homage of all Babylonians; Syria and Phoenicia thus came under Achaemenian law. Cyrus the Great now held sway over all the kingdoms of the Near and Middle East. In the space of less than twenty years he had assembled the greatest empire the world had ever seen. All he needed now was Egypt! However, soon after his son Cambyses had been entrusted with making the preparations for such a campaign, Cyrus himself was killed in battle on the eastern frontier of his empire.

When Cyrus died in 530 B. C., the Achaemenian Empire was well established. The sovereign had founded a new capital city at Pasargadae in Fars. Similarly, he had worked out the administration of the empire, appointing a governor, or *satrap*, to represent him in each province. He imposed an annual tax in the form of a tribute on all the races he conquered, to which the Achaemenian power owed much of its wealth and magnificence.

Cyrus was succeeded by his son Cambyses II (530-522 B.C.). After a victorious campaign against Egypt, he annexed the country to his father's empire, but during his absence the throne was seized by the Magus Gaumata, and the King died mysteriously. However, Darius I (522-486 B.C.) ended this reign, when he proclaimed himself the legitimate king. He then continued the work of Cyrus, creating 23 provinces, or *satrapies*, and building the administrative and religious cities of Susa and Persepolis.

The conquest of Persia by Alexander's armies left the Persian army in complete disarray. Alexander captured Babylon, Susa and then Persepolis. The splendour of Persepolis was short lived, as the palaces were looted and burned by Alexander in just one night.

The Greeks were then in possession of the ancient world from Egypt to Indus, and from Oxus to the Danube. Alexander followed a policy of integration between the Greeks and the Persian communities, encouraging marriages and applying the formula of magnanimity and generosity, which had formerly brought success to [Cyrus II](#).

In 324 B.C., having travelled down the Indus as far as its delta, he returned to Babylon where he fell ill and died in 323 B.C., at the age of 32, without having nominated an heir to his empire.

Under Mithridates I (171-138 B.C.), the Parthians continued their conquests and annexed Media, Fars, Babylonia and Assyria, creating an empire that extended from the Euphrates to Herat in Afghanistan. This in effect was a restoration of the ancient Achaemenian Empire of Cyrus the Great.

In addition to the nomads that were a constant menace on its eastern frontier the Parthians also had to face another powerful adversary, Rome. For almost three centuries, Rome and Parthia were to battle over Syria, Mesopotamia and Armenia, without ever achieving any lasting results.

The Parthian kings referred to themselves on their coins as "Hellenophiles", but this was only true in the sense that they were anti-Roman. In reality the Parthians sought to establish themselves as the direct heirs of the Achaemenian Empire, and Mithridates II (123-87 B.C.) was the first Parthian ruler to use the old Achaemenian title "King of Kings" on his coins.

In A.D. 224 Ardashir, a descendant of Sassan and ruler of Fars and Kerman, rebelled against the Parthian king, Artabanus V, and established the Sassanian dynasty.

Within twenty years, Ardashir I (224-241) created a vast empire that stretched as far as the Indus.

His son Shapur I (241-272) continued this expansion, conquering Bactria, and Kushan, while leading several campaigns against Rome. In 259, the Persian army defeated the Roman emperor Valerian at the battle of Edessa and more than 70,000 Roman soldiers were captured.

Abu Bekr, the first successor of the Prophet Mohammed, was head of the Moslem community from 632 to 634. He set about patching up the internal unrest between tribes. Then Omar, caliph (head of the Moslem community) from 634 to 644, initiated an explosive expansion of Islam. He seized Syria, then Jerusalem and finally Damascus in 638 after having defeated Heraclius. In 635, other Arab troops launched an assault on the Sassanian Empire, and crossed the Euphrates. The downfall of the empire was well underway when the Arab horsemen dealt the deathblow to the Sassanid dynasty and overran Persia first entering Ctesiphon in 637. Successive victories were to follow. They emerged victorious from the engagement at Nahavand in 642, which left the way open for them to enter the Iranian plateau. The conquest of Persia continued with the fall of Afghanistan (651) and then Transoxiana (674).

While early on the Turks had an important role to play as soldiers conscripted to the personal guard of the Abbassid caliphs, soon they were no longer satisfied with this subordinate position. Often they took matters into their own hands and elevated themselves to positions of influence.

In 976, one of these military leaders founded the Ghaznavid dynasty (977 - 1186). But the Ghaznavids were unable to prevent the arrival of yet another powerful force, the Seljuks. They derived their name from an ancestor called Seljuk, whose nomadic tribe was converted to Islam, and were themselves originally central-Asian Turks. Toghrul Beg, sultan from 1038, first defeated the Ghaznavids, then sacked Isfahan in 1051 and

went on to seize Baghdad from the Buwayyids in 1055. Named protector of the caliph, Togrul Begh showed himself to be a vigorous defender of Sunni doctrine.

The Mongol conquest of the Persian world brought with it terrible destruction and large-scale massacres. In 1219, Genghis Khan's army attacked the state of Khwarezm, capturing Transoxiana, Samarkand (1220) and Khorassan (1221), while a detachment penetrated as far as Azerbaijan. In 1256, a second expedition led by Hulagu (1217-1265), Genghis Khan's grandson, subdued the whole of Persia. In 1258, Baghdad was captured and the caliph put to death, bringing the Abbasid Caliphate rule to an end. Hulagu's successors, who took the title of il-Khan, established their capital at Tabriz.

The death of Sultan Abu Said in 1335 led to the division of the Mongol Empire in Persia. Once again, local chiefs took advantage of this to declare themselves independent: a Persian Shi'ite dynasty, the Sardebarians (1337-1381), settled in the northwestern part of Khorassan while the Mozzafferids (1340-1392) took control of the south from Fars to Kerman. But these dynasties were short-lived as a third invasion, this time by the Turko-Mongol nomads led by Tamerlane, swept across the region. The east of Iran fell in 1380, and Azerbaijan, Iraq and Fars a few years later.

The Timurids

Tamerlane (Timurid dynasty) dominated all of Persia from 1387. His invasion of Isfahan alone, led to more than 70,000 deaths where the heads of his victims were heaped up into pyramids. Nevertheless, after having established his capital at Samarkand, he drew artists, calligraphers, writers, philosophers, astronomers and mathematicians, from all parts of his empire, the majority of whom came from Shiraz and Isfahan.

Thus, ironically, this ruthless warrior and appalling killer initiated a true civilization in the cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Herat, Balkh and Mashad. In the time of Shah Rukh (1405-1447) and Oleg Begh the whole of Persia became covered with admirable monuments and [the art of miniature](#) reached its peak at Shiraz and heart

During the same period as the Mongols and the Timurids, north-western Iran went through a different historical development. It was here that Turkoman groups fought with each other for power. The Turkoman Dynasty of the Kara-Koyunlu, or "Black Sheep" (1275-1468) was set up at Tabriz, and it was later replaced by the Ak-Koyunlu, or "White Sheep" (1434-1514). However, there was a third dynasty, called the Safavids (1502-1737), that emerged in Azerbaijan, and had as its leader Shah Ismail (1487-1524). He successfully conquered a vast territory which extended from Herat (Afghanistan) to Baghdad (Iraq).

The Safavid dynasty takes its name from Sheikh Safi-od-Din of Ardabil, who was the ancestor of the Safavid kings and spiritual leader of the Safavid Sufi order, founded in 1301.

The Safavid order was initially indistinguishable from the many other Sufi orders in existence in the Muslim world at that time. But Junayd, who became the head of the order in 1447, transformed it into a revolutionary Shi'ite movement that aimed at seizing power in Iran. Though the Safavid family itself was of Iranian origin, the bulk of its supporters were Shi'ite Turkoman tribesmen from Anatolia, Syria, Upper Mesopotamia, and Armenian highlands.

The Safavids were successful in bringing the whole of the Iranian plateau under unified

control, and they made Iran a "national state" in the modern sense of the word. The height of Safavid glory was at the time of the reign of Shah Abbas I (1571-1629), who encouraged contact and trade with Europe and transformed his new capital, Isfahan, into one of the most magnificent cities of Persia. The presence at the Safavid court of foreign envoys and the growing number of merchants and travellers in Iran was later to have a great influence on the arts and literature in Europe.

The cultural growth was accompanied by considerable development in all forms of art. The Persian carpet, for example was at its finest during the Safavid era. [Miniature paintings](#), Chinese and Arabic designs had an important influence in carpet motifs, and carpets became a major Persian export to Europe, India, and even the Ottoman Empire.

The Safavids adopted Shi'ism as their state religion, which had an important role in unifying the Persians against the strict Sunni Ottoman Empire. Two centuries of intermittent wars followed which produced only minor territorial changes.

By 1722 the Safavid rulers had lost much of their power leading to rebellions within the empire. A small force of Afghans, led by the Ghilzai chief Mahmud, took advantage of this, invading Khorassan, and capturing Isfahan.

Afghan rule in eastern Iran lasted only a short period of time (1722-1729); the second ruler, Ashraf Shah, was overthrown by a young chieftain from Khorassan, Nader Khan, who had rallied to the cause of the last remaining Safavid prince, Tahmasp.

The Safavid Dynasty was briefly restored; however, Nader Khan (1736-1747) put a final end to its rule when he set himself on the throne in 1736. Nader Shah then expelled Afghan, Turkish and Russian troops from Iranian soil. He managed in the space of four years to conquer Afghanistan and to capture New Delhi, Bukhara and Khiva, thus creating a greater kingdom than that of Shah Abbas. He was however, considered to be a dictator and was assassinated in 1747. His empire broke up after his death.

There followed half a century of civil war in Iran between the rival Zand and Qajar factions. Finally in 1795 the Qajar leader Agha Muhammed Khan, emerged victorious and established the new Qajar dynasty. He brought the whole country under his authority and was crowned "Shah" (king) in Tehran in 1796.

The 19th and early 20th Century was dominated by a growing conflict of interest between Russia and Great Britain. Russia hoped to reach the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean through Iran, and Great Britain wanted to protect its sea and land routes to India and to slow down Russian expansion. Both obtained concessions from Iranian governments under Naser od-Din Shah (1848-1896) and his successor Muzaffer od-Din Shah (1896-1907). The Qajar monarchs were incapable of establishing a sound fiscal policy, and to compensate for this, they progressively disposed of Iran's economic resources to foreign powers in return for small sums of money that satisfied their immediate financial needs.

Increasing dissatisfaction with the incompetence and corruption of the government together with resentment of foreign political and economic control, led to the formation and revolts by various secret societies and religious groups. This social unrest ultimately focused on the demand for a constitution, which was signed by Muzaffer od-Din Shah on December 30th 1906. This led to the formation of the first "Majlis" (parliament).

History of Media

This history starts about 150 years before the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia. Media had just successfully rebelled from the Assyrian empire, but had no central government.

Deioces (Reigned 53 years - About 709 to 656 B.C.)

- Son of Phraortes (Her.Hist.1.96)
- Media had previously revolted from Assyria, but had no formal government (Her.Hist.1.95)
- Became ruler of Medes because of his ability to judge legal cases (Her.Hist.1.96-98)
- Establishment of rule (Her.Hist.1.98-101)
- Built Agbatana, with 7 circular walls of various colors (Her.Hist.1.98)
- Ruled 53 years (Her.Hist.1.102)

Phraortes (Reigned 22 years - About 656 to 634 B.C.)

- Son of Deioces (Her.Hist.1.102)
- Conquered the Persians (Her.Hist.1.102)
- Attacked Assyrians - Died in battle (Her.Hist.1.102)
- Ruled 22 years (Her.Hist.1.102)

Cyraxares (Reigned 40 years - About 634 to 594 B.C.)

- Son of Phraortes (Her.Hist.1.103)
- Fought the Lydians (Her.Hist.1.103)
- A day turned to night (eclipse?) (Her.Hist.1.103)
- Fought against Ninevah, but during seige the Scythians invaded Media (Her.Hist.1.103-4)
- The Egyptian king Psammetichus convinced the Scythians not to invade Egypt (Her.Hist.1.105)
- Scythians controlled Media for 28 years, before Cyraxares broke their control (Her.Hist.1.106)
- Had some problems with some Scythian nomads which illustrated his hospitality and his hot temper. The Scythians provoked him to anger, and then fled to Sardis who was ruled by Alyattes, son of Sadyattes. The king of Sardis accepted them as suppliants, and then refused to surrender them to the Medes. This led to a 5 year war between the Lydians and Medes, which was finally settled by a treaty in which Alyattes daughter Aryenis was given in marriage to Astyages, son of Cyaxares. (Her.Hist.1.73-74)
- Labynetus was ruler of Babylon (Her.Hist.1.74)
- Ninevah was conquered (Her.Hist.1.106)
- Total ruling time: 40 years (includes 28 years of Scythian rule)

Astyages (Reigned 35 years - About 594 to 559 B.C.)

- Son of Cyraxares (Her.Hist.1.107)
 - Married Aryenis, daughter of Alyattes (king of Sardis), as part of a peace treaty between Sardis and Media (Her.Hist.1.74)
 - Had a dream about his daughter Mandane. The Magi interpreted it to mean that one of her children would be a world ruler. Afraid for his kingdom, he married her to a Persian of a quiet temper (Her.Hist.1.107)
 - After a second dream, Astyages ordered Harpagus to kill Mandane's child (Her.Hist.1.108)
 - Harpagus, afraid to personally kill a child of the royal family, took it to a herdsman to expose on the mountains. However, since the herdsman had just lost a child, he switched children and raised the baby. (Her.Hist.1.109-113)
 - When the child was 10 years old, events happened which caused Astyages to discover who he was (Her.Hist.1.114-6)
 - Astyages was pleased that the child was alive, but angry with Harpagus. In verifying Harpagus' actions, Harpagus admitted that he did not directly kill the child, and had not personally confirmed the death. (Her.Hist.1.117-8)
 - To punish Harpagus, Astyages had his son killed and fed to him at a banquet. Harpagus had the presence of mind to not blame the king for acting wrong. (Her.Hist.1.119)
 - The Magi, called in to determine what to do with the child (Cyrus), decided that Astyages' dream had been fulfilled and he had nothing to worry. The child was returned to his parents in Persia. (Her.Hist.1.120-2)
 - Was a cruel ruler (Her.Hist.1.127, 130)
 - Loss of power - See Cyrus ([rise of the Persians](#))
 - Lived out his life in the court of Cyrus (Her.Hist.1.130)
 - Total ruling time: 35 years (Her.Hist.1.130)
-

History of Persia

Cyrus - (Reigned 29 years - About 559 to 530 B. C.)

Cyrus - Childhood

- See Astyages ([son of Mandane](#))

Cyrus - Rise of the Persians

- To avenge his son's death, Harpagus offered to support Cyrus in a bid for the throne. Method of secretly sending information - hid a letter inside a dead rabbit and disguised the messenger as a hunter. (Her.Hist.1.123-4)
- Cyrus was in charge of Persian army. To convince them to revolt, he made them spend one day cutting a field of thorn bushes, and the next day relaxing at a

banquet. He then asked which one the army preferred. Since the banquet was obviously better, Cyrus then asked why they remained slaves to the Medes when with a little work they could have luxury . (Her.Hist.1.125-6)

- Astyages heard of Cyrus' actions and ordered him to appear before him. Cyrus replied that he would be there very quick. Astyages then prepared for war and put Harpagus in charge of the Median army. When Cyrus' army met Harpagus, most of the army merged and proceeded on to attack Astyages. (Her.Hist.1.127)
- Astyages executed the Magi which had said that Cyrus was not a problem, and then attempted to raise an army. He was defeated and captured by Cyrus. (Her.Hist.1.128-9)

Cyrus - Events during reign

Defeat of the Lydians (Capital was Sardis, ruled by Croesus)

- Croesus provoked the situation, within a few years after Cyrus defeated Astyages. He was concerned with the power of Persia (Her.Hist.1.46), he coveted the land, and he was insulted about the treatment of Astyages, to whom he was related. (Her.Hist.1.73)
- Croesus entered Cappadocia and fought them. Cyrus raised an army and attacked Croesus, but though the initial battle was intense, neither side won. Since Cyrus did not attack the next day, Croesus decided to return to Sardis and be better prepared for war the next year (Her.Hist.1.76). When he arrived home, he disbanded his army (Her.Hist.1.77)
- Sparta, and the Babylonians had a treaty with Lydia. Labynetus was king of Babylon. (Her.Hist.1.77)
- Cyrus, suspecting what Croesus would do, followed Croesus so fast that he had no warning, and could not get support from his allies. (Her.Hist.1.79)
- Lydian warfare: Rode on horseback, with long lances (Her.Hist.1.79). Cyrus disabled the Lydian attack by using camels, which caused the Lydian horses to run in fear. (Her.Hist.1.80)
- Lydia was taken by the Persians climbing a steep cliff on one side of Sardis, which the Lydians felt was too difficult a climb for an army to attempt. (Her.Hist.1.84)
- Croesus was captured and almost executed. When the Persians were plundering Sardis, he came up with a plan to give 1/10 of the money to Cyrus, by pretending that it was going to Zeus. Croesus became an advisor to Cyrus. (Her.Hist.1.89,90)
- The Lydians later revolted. Croesus, to avoid having Sardis destroyed, advised Cyrus to make the Lydians a nation of shopkeepers and musicians, since this would subdue their warlike attitude. (Her.Hist.1.154-157)

Defeat of Ionians and Aeolians

- After defeat of Lydia, the Ionians and Aeolians sent envoys to Cyrus, but he rejected their terms. They prepared for war, and requested aid from Sparta. (Her.Hist.1.141)
- Sparta voted to refuse aid against the Persians, but they did send a ship to observe

their activity, and an envoy who ordered the Persians not to attack any Greek city. (Her.Hist.1.152)

- Cyrus was not impressed with Sparta, but since he wanted to attack Babylon and Egypt, he left one of his generals to conquer the Ionians. (Her.Hist.1.153)
- Harpagus, the Mede, attacked Phocaea first. This city had become known for their long sea voyages. Harpagus first asked for their surrender. They refused, but then evacuated the city by ship, taking their wealth. They tried to buy an island, and when they were refused, they returned to Phocaea and killed the Persians guarding the empty city. They then left and fought with other nations until they could have a city for themselves. (Her.Hist.1.162-167)
- Harpagus then went to other cities. One evacuated like the Phocaeans. The rest fought and lost. (Her.Hist.1.168-170)
- Harpagus then attacked the Carians, Caunians, and Lycians. The Carians and Caunians submitted fairly quick, but the Lycians of Xanthus fought well, and when they were driven back to their city they killed their families, burned the city, and then made a suicidal attack on the Persians. (Her.Hist.1.174-176)

Defeat of Babylon

- Cyrus attacked Labynetus (Nabonitus) son of Nitocris. (Her.Hist.1.188)
- Cyrus split the Gyndes river into a number of streams to cross it (Her.Hist.1.189)
- Cyrus defeated the Babylonians in combat outside the walls, but then the Babylonians simply retreated behind their walls. Cyrus attempted a siege, but Babylon had food supplies for several years.(Her.Hist.1.190)
- Cyrus, unable to deal with the walls, stationed his army where the Euphrates entered and left the city under the walls. He then diverted the river, and the army entered under the walls. If they had been detected, the Babylonians could have easily destroyed them, but they were having a festival and were unaware. (Her.Hist.1.190-1)

Persians attack the Massagetae

- Cyrus wanted the realm of the Massagetae, by the Caspian sea.(Her.Hist.1.200-204)
- Cyrus had a dream that Darius, son of Hystaspes, (who was 20 years old at the time) was to become the future ruler.(Her.Hist.1.209)
- Cyrus won an initial victory, then had a major defeat and was killed. (Her.Hist.1.211-214)

Cyrus, son of Cambyses (ruled 29 years) (Her.Hist.1.214)

Cambyses - (Reigned 7 years, 5 months - About 530 to 523 B. C.)

Cambyses - Events during reign

- Mother was Cassandane, daughter of Pharnaspes (Her.Hist.2.1)
- Capture of Egypt

- Pretext for war, while Amasis was king of Egypt (Her.Hist.3.1-2)
- Persians aided by Phanes, a Greek mercenary originally employed by Amasis (Her.Hist.3.3)
- Persians made an alliance with the Arabs. This was critical, since a land attack of Egypt required methods of obtaining water while crossing a desert. (Her.Hist.3.4-8)
- Arab's method of forming covenants (Her.Hist.3.7)
- Amasis died by the time Cambyses attacked (Her.Hist.3.9)
- Psammenitus, Amasis' son ruled Egypt when Cambyses attacked (Her.Hist.3.9)
- Mercenaries hired by Psammenitus were upset with Phanes, and so they killed his sons and drank their blood before the battle with the Persians. After a fierce battle, the Egyptians were defeated (Her.Hist.3.11, 13)
- Libya, Cyrene & Barca paid tribute rather than risk war (Her.Hist.3.13)
- Cambyses humiliated Psammenitus to test his character, and then relented and allowed him to rule. He later attempted a rebellion, and when discovered he committed suicide. (Her.Hist.3.14-15)
- Cambyses desecrated the body of Amasis, in his frustration that Amasis died before Cambyses arrived. (Her.Hist.3.16-17)
- Cambyses sent his fleet to attack Carthage (Her.Hist.3.18)
- Cambyses' attempts to capture Ethiopia
 - Initially sent spies to Ethiopia with "gifts" (Her.Hist.3.18)
 - Ethiopians were tall, strong, handsome and lived long (120 years). They had plenty of gold, but little bronze. They ate boiled meat and milk. The dead were embalmed and placed in clear caskets in their homes. The Ethiopian king recognized that the Persians were spies, and he insulted the power of the Persians. (Her.Hist.3.19-23)
 - Cambyses, in anger, decided to attack but did not plan for supplies in the desert. He turned back before reaching Ethiopia, after his army was resorting to cannibalism to survive. (Her.Hist.3.25)
- Cambyses attempt to attack the Ammonians failed due to a sandstorm which destroyed the army (Her.Hist.3.26)
- Cambyses arrived back in Memphis after his failure against Ethiopia. The Egyptians were rejoicing because their god **APIS** (a specially marked bull) appeared. Cambyses, thinking that they were rejoicing over his failure, killed the bull. (Her.Hist.3.27-29)

Cambyses - Madness of

- Killed his brother Smerdis because he had a dream that Smerdis would rule the empire (Her.Hist.3.30)
- Married his sister (against Persian custom) and later killed her in anger (Her.Hist.3.31-32)
- Cambyses once asked Prexaspes (who was a message carrier) what the people thought of their king. Displeased with the answer that he drank too much, he killed Prexaspes's son (who was a cupbearer) to prove his skill as an archer. (Her.Hist.3.34-35)

- Cambyses took 12 leading Persians, who were not charged with crimes worthy of death, and buried them up to their necks (Her.Hist.3.35)
- Cambyses, displeased with the advice of Croesus, tried to kill him. Cambyses servants hid Croesus rather than killing him, since they thought he might regret the decision later. Cambyses was glad that Croesus remained alive, but he killed those who had refused to do what he commanded (Her.Hist.3.36)
- Cambyses opened tombs and ridiculed the Egyptian gods in their temples (Her.Hist.3.37)

Cambyses - Events leading to his death

- Cambyses received word in Egypt that "Smerdis" had become the ruler of the Persians. When he realized that he had killed his brother in error, and in his anger at the Magi, he mounted his horse quickly to organize his army to return. His sword accidentally injured him, and after about 20 days, infection caused his death in Agbatana, Syria. Cambyses, on his death bed, told the Persians that he had killed his brother, but this was not believed at first. (Her.Hist.3.61-66)
- Cambyses ruled 7 years, 5 months. He died with no descendents (male or female) (Her.Hist.3.66)

Smerdis (the Magus) - (Reigned 8 months - 522 B. C.)

- Patizeithes, a Magi who was in charge of Cambyses house, knew that Cambyses' brother Smerdis had been secretly killed. Since Patizeithes' brother looked like Smerdis (and shared his name), they decided that he should pretend to be Smerdis, son of Cyrus, and issued a proclamation that all nations and armies should follow Smerdis, rather than Cambyses. (Her.Hist.3.61)
- The two brothers succeeded, since Cambyses died shortly after hearing about the revolt, and Prexaspes refused to admit that he had killed Cambyses' brother. (Her.Hist.3.62-66)
- The two Magi bought the friendship of other nations by repealing the war taxes for three years (Her.Hist.3.67)
- The Persians began to suspect fraud when Smerdis never left the capital, and refused to have any private audiences with the Persian nobles. (Her.Hist.3.68)
- Otanes, a Persian noble whose daughter had been a wife of Cambyses, and therefore became a wife of "Smerdis", used his daughter to verify who was king. Initially this was difficult, since the daughter had never met the real Smerdis, and the king separated all of Cambyses' wives as soon as he became king (since queen Atossa was brother to both Smerdis and Cambyses). However, king Cyrus had cut off the ears of Smerdis the Magi, so Otanes proposed that his daughter check to see if he had ears. This was dangerous, but the daughter waited until it was her turn in rotation to sleep with the king, and then checked his ears when he was asleep. (Her.Hist.3.68-69)
- Otanes gathered six other Persians in a conspiracy to murder the Magi (Aspathines, Gobryas, Intaphernes, Gobryas Megabyzus, Aspathines Hydarnes and Darius, son of Hystapes). (Her.Hist.3.70)
- Otanes wanted to gain more support. Darius urged them to attack the Magi before

their plot could be discovered. (Her.Hist.3.71-73)

- Prexaspes, at a public gathering, admitted that he had killed the brother of Cambyses, and that their king was a fraud. Before the Magi brothers could recover from this, the seven Persians arrived at the court, and were almost admitted to the presence of the king. When guards finally stopped them, they killed the guards and the Magi. (Her.Hist.3.74-78)
- The Persians responded to the revolt by executing all of the Magi that could be found, since they were insulted that they had been ruled by Magi. This later became the start of a yearly festival called the "Slaughter of the Magi". (Her.Hist.3.79)

Darius, son of Hystapes - (Reigned xx years- 522 to xxx B. C.)

Darius - Rise to power

- Darius was one of the conspirators who murdered the Magi "Smerdis"
 - The 7 conspirators met to decide what form of government to set up. There were several opinions, but most voted for a king. 6 decided to select the king from among themselves. The 7th, Otanes, did not want to rule or be ruled. It was agreed that he would not be allowed to be king, but that he and his descendents would not be bound to follow any decree of whoever became king. (Her.Hist.3.80-83)
 - Method to select the king - the one who's horse neighed first after sunrise. Darius, by the help of his groom, won. (Her.Hist.3.84-87)
-

Customs of the Medes

Customs of the Persians

- Nature of Persians before they were a world power: Wore leather pants and clothes, ate what a poor soil provided, drank water instead of wine, had no dessert luxuries like figs (Her.Hist.1.71)
- Wine - Drunk in large quantities. Decisions must be made and confirmed when they are both drunk and sober. (Intellect and Emotion) (Her.Hist.1.133)
- Display of rank in public: People of equal rank give each other a kiss on the lips. One of slightly lower rank receives a kiss on the cheek. One of much lower rank bows to the one of higher rank. (Her.Hist.1.134)
- Easily adopt customs from other nations. They dress like the Medes, wear Egyptian breastplates in war, and adopt luxuries and novelties from others (Her.Hist.1.135)
- Yearly festival - "Slaughter of the Magi" - Honored Darius revold against the Magi. No Magi is allowed to be seen on the day of the festival. (Her.Hist.3.79)

Law and government

- Conception of ranks in nations: The closest neighbors have the highest esteem. Those further away a lesser, and the furthest away are the least esteemed. Therefore the Persians rule the Medes, the Medes rule the nations at their border, and those nations rule the next layer out, etc. (Her.Hist.1.134). They often allow the children of a rebellious king to assume control in place of the father (Her.Hist.3.15)
- Judges are specially picked men, and hold the office for life unless convicted of misconduct. They interpret the old laws and resolve all disputes. (Her.Hist.3.31)
- Persians allowed the king to do anything he wished (Her.Hist.3.31)
- A cupbearer to the king was a highly honored position in Persia (Her.Hist.3.34)
- There was a distinction between the law of the land, and the edicts of a king. All Persians, including the king, were bound to follow the laws of the Persians (Her.Hist.3.31, 83)
- The king is not allowed to execute a man for a single fault (Her.Hist.1.137)
- The Persian people were not allowed to execute a slave for a single fault (Her.Hist.1.137)
- Basic concept in law: Good actions weighed against bad actions, and if the good did not outweigh the bad, the punishment was carried out. (Her.Hist.1.137)
- Persians believe it is unlawful to talk about something that it is unlawful to do (Her.Hist.1.138)
- Telling a lie was the most disgraceful thing for a Persian to do, closely followed as being in debt. (Her.Hist.1.139)

Family

- Persian fathers are greatly honored by having large families of sons. However, infant mortality was likely high, for the father was not allowed to see a son until he was 5 year old. The sons were educated from the age of 5 to 20, being taught to ride, use a bow, tell the truth. (Her.Hist.1.135) After the age of 20, a boy was allowed to go to war (Her.Hist.1.209)
- Birthdays: Most commonly celebrated day. The one having a birthday celebrates with a fancy meal, with a lot of desserts. (Her.Hist.1.133)
- Having multiple wives was common, and men often had more concubines than wives. (Her.Hist.1.135) At least the wives were sleep with them in rotation (Her.Hist.3.69)
- Illegal for a man to marry his sister (Her.Hist.3.31)

Religion

- Have no temples, altars or images of gods. They do climb the highest mountains and offer sacrifices to Zeus. They also worship the sun, moon, earth, fire, water and winds. They also worship Mitra (similar to Aphrodite). Sacrifices are made by cutting up the animal and boiling the flesh. A Magi then chants a hymn, and the worshipper then takes the meat away to use as he pleases. There is no altar,

- grain offerings or music. (Her.Hist.1.131, 132)
- Fire is viewed as a god (Her.Hist.3.16)
- Magi
 - Likely a caste in the Persian society
 - Enjoy killing many types of animals (Her.Hist.1.138)
 - A Magi must be present at sacrifices (Her.Hist.1.132)
 - Called to interpret dreams (Her.Hist.1.107-8, 120)
 - Sometimes killed for giving bad advice (Her.Hist.1.128)

Burial Customs

- Males are not buried before they are torn by a dog or bird of prey. (Her.Hist.1.140)
- After being torn, the body is covered with wax, then buried (Her.Hist.1.140)
- It is unlawful to burn the dead, since fire is considered a god and they felt it was wrong to give a corpse to a god. (Her.Hist.3.16)

Medical practices

- Leprosy: A Persian with leprosy was not allowed to enter a city or interact with others. Foreigners with the disease were forced to leave the country. Even animals (birds) with the disease were driven away. (Her.Hist.1.139)
- Sewage was not dumped in rivers, nor were they used for bathing, because they hold rivers in great honor. (Her.Hist.1.139) Warfare
- Water for the king during the war was brought from a stream near Susa, boiled, and stored in silver jars. (Her.Hist.1.188)

