The Rise of Persia
Assyria ca. 825 BC
Assyria 911 – 612 BC

• Reconstruction of the empire
• Division of lands amongst nobility
• Revolt of 827 BC.
• Semiramis:
  • Sammuramat
  • Wife of Shamshi-Adad V (823 – 811), mother of Adad-nirari III (810-783)
  • Successors ineffective.
Tiglathpileser III

- 744 – 727 BC
- Reforms concentrated power in the king
- ‘Duchies’ reduced to provincial governorships
- Professional standing army
- Cavalry replaces chariots
- Mass deportations
The end of Chariot Warfare

- **Cavalry:**
  - Faster and more manoeuvrable
  - Cheaper
  - Reconnaissance and light skirmishes

- **Heavy Infantry:**
  - Better armour
  - Inexpensive
  - If well trained, able to take down a chariot
The End of the Chariot

Well trained in warfare, Phegeus and Idaios. These two Diomedes faced as they came forward Upon their car; on foot he braced to meet them. As the range narrowed, Phegeus aimed and cast His long spear first: the point cleared Diomedes' Shoulder on the left, and failed to touch him. Then Diomedes, wheeling in his turn, Let fly his bronze-shod spear. No miss, But a clean hit in the centre of the chest Knocked the man backward from his team. Idaios Left the beautiful chariot, leaping down, But dared not stand his ground over his brother • Iliad 5.12f.
Sargon II

• 721 – 705 BC
• Succession uncertain
• Successive rebellions in Palestine
• Conquest of Babylon (710 BC)
• Assyrian domination of the Zagros
The Sargonids

- Sennacherib
  - 704 - 681 BC
  - Judean revolt of 701 BC
  - Destruction of Babylon 689 BC

- Essarhaddon
  - 680 – 669 BC
  - Rebuilt Babylon
  - Conquest of Egypt in 671 BC

- Ashurbanipal
  - 668 – 627 BC
  - Abdication
The Rise of Media

- **Deioces (728-675 BC.)**
- **Phraortes (675-653 BC.)**
  - Unites the Median tribes
  - Begins wars of independence against Assyria.
- **Cyaxares (653-c.645)**
  - Is overrun by the Scythians while attacking Assyria.
Media and Babylon

• Babylon:
  • Nabopolassar (625-605)
    • Asserts Babylonian independence.
    • Defeats the Assyrians at Qablinu in 615 BC.

  • Media:
  • Cyaxares (c.617-585)
    • Drives the Scythians from Media
    • Resumes attacks on Assyria.

612 BC:

Nabopolassar and Cyaxares
defeat the Assyrians and raze Nineveh.
Academic Debate:

• Helm, Peyton. 1980 ‘Herodotus’ Medikos Logos and Median History’ in *Iran* 19: 85 – 90.
  • “The *Mêdikos Logos* misleads the historian with artificial chronology and an unhistorical narrative constructed from independent sagas based on the lives of a few originally unrelated Zagros heroes” (88).

• Brown, Stuart C. 1988. *Achaemenid History III*
  • Largely agreeing with Helm

• Sancisi-Weerdenburg, Heleen. 1988. ‘Was there Ever a Median Empire?’ *Achaemenid History III*
  • “The fact that both the Behistun inscription and the Babylonian chronicle call Cyaxares the king of Media does not imply that Cyaxares was the head of a unified Median state” (202).
Documentary Concordance

• Ca. 735: A Median capital is identified at Zakruti
• Sargon accepts tribute from 28 Median chieftains
• 715: Dahyaku taken as hostage to Nineveh
  • Deioces (728 – 675)
• 711: Tribute accepted from Uaksatar of Kar Kashi
  • Cyaxares (according to Diodorus)
• 680: Medes ally with Hakhamanish of Parsua to attack Assyria
  • Achaemenes (700 – 679)
Median Expansion

- **Cyaxares:**
  - Attacks Lydia in 590 BC.
  - On 28 May 585 BC. the war ends.

- **Astyages (585-550 BC.)**
  - Married Aryenis in 585 BC.
  - Gave Mandane to Cambyses I before 580 BC.
  - Deserted by his troops and defeated by his grandson, Cyrus, in 550 BC.
Cyrus

- Cambyses I
- king of Anshan 600-560 BC.
- Married Mandane before 580
- Cyrus
- born c. 580 BC.
- Herodotus: founder myths
- Xenophon: Cyropaedia
- Nabunaid Chronicle
- The Cyrus Cylinder
Cyrus, Great King, King of Kings

- King of Anshan in 560 BC.
- Attacked Media in 550 BC.
- Defeated Croesus of Lydia in 547/6 BC.
- Defeated Babylon in 539 BC.
- Benevolent monarch
- Died in 530 BC. attacking the Massagetae
Cyrus' Campaigns

560: King on Anshan
550: King of Media
547: Conquest of Lydia
539: Conquest of Babylon
535 – 530: Expansion East
Cambyses II

- King of Babylon by 27 March, 538 BC.
- Cambyses ‘King of Babylon’ and Cyrus ‘King of Lands’ by 26 March, 530.
- Great King in Sept, 530 BC.
- Invaded Egypt in 525 BC.
- Cambyses was “not in his right mind, but mad” (Hdt.3.25).
- Died accidentally in 522 BC.
The Madness of Cambyses

• Exhumed and burned the mummy of Amasis (impiety)
• Sent out ill planned military expeditions (reckless endangerment)
• Killed the sacred Apis bull (impiety)
• Killed his pregnant sister/wife. (incest, murder)
• Had his own brother killed (fratricide, paranoia)
• Killed the son of Prexaspes as well as 12 other nobles (murder, abuse of power, treason?)
Smerdis
Bardiya/ Barziya/ Tanaoxares/ Mergis

• Second son of Cyrus by Cassandane
• Bactria, Chorasmia, Karmainia and Parthia. (Phot.)
• Seized the throne on 11 March, 522 BC. or
• Was killed before Cambyses went to Egypt, or
• Killed after Cambyses went to Egypt & before March 522,
• Killed on Cambyses’ orders, or
• Killed by the Magi acting without Cambyses
• Killed by the Paladins on 29 Sept 522 BC.
Smerdis the Magus
Gaumata/ Spandadates/Sphendadates/ Oropastes

• A Magus
• Brother of Patizeithes (Hdt.3.61).
• Assumed the throne in March 522 BC.
• Reigned 7 months
• Discovered by Phaedime
• Betrayed by Prexaspes
• Killed by the Paladins on 29 Sept 522 BC.
The Paladins

- **Otanes** (Vittana /Onophas /Anaphas / Hostanes)
- **Gobryas** (Gubarus/Gaubaruva/ Mardonios)
- **Aspathines** (Ardimanish/ Norondabates)
- **Hydarnes** (Vidarna/ Widarna/ Idernes)
- **Intaphrenes** (Vintaparna/ Vintafarna/ Vindafarna/ Ataphernes)
- **Megabyzus** (Bagabukshu/ Barisses)
- **Darius I** (Dareios/Darayavaush)
Darius I

- Revolts across the empire, even Persia.
- Consolidated power by 520 BC.
- Reorganized the empire into 20 satrapies
- Faced two revolts in Babylon
- Reclaimed Sardis from Oroetes (ca. 520)
- Subdued Samos
- Subdued the Levant
- Invaded Scythia via Europe in 513 BC.
- Established a satrapy in Europe (Skudra)
- Began the construction of Persepolis
Bisoton, Iran (Behistun)
Behistun (Bisitun)
The Empire

- **Satrapy**
  - Imperial territory
  - Satrap holds office at the discretion of the King
  - Some became hereditary
  - Similar to European Feudal system

- **Satrap**
  - Administration
  - Military recruitment
  - Taxes
The Royal Road

- 2700 kilometers from Susa to Sardis
- Pony Express
- "these are stayed neither by snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness of night from accomplishing their appointed course."
  (Hdt. viii.98)
Satrapies of the Persian Empire

The boundaries of the Satrapies are difficult to establish in many cases. Names are placed over the general area. Not all of the Satrapies are named and not all names are of Satrapies. * represents towns on the Royal Road.
Zoroastrianism

- **Zoroaster/ Zarathushtra/ Zarthosht:**
  - Prophet ca 1500 – 600 BC
  - Composed the 5 Gathas in Avestan (the Avesta)

- **Ahura-Mazda**
  - Single supreme deity

- **Zorastrianism:**
  - Duality of good and evil
  - Eternal life (or damnation)
  - Goodness of thought, word and deed
Farohar (Faravahar)
On the National Bank of Iran (Shah Pahlavi, 1925 – 1979)
The 2500th Anniversary

• In 1971, Shah Mohammad Reza Palavi presented a replica of the Cyrus Cylinder to the United Nations.

• Secretary General U Thant wrote: “Another replica of man’s early attempts to establish peace in the world now graces this corridor, the scene of our present-day efforts towards the same end.”

• http://www.livius.org/a/1/inscriptions/cyrus.pdf