

Ch. 3

The Fertile Crescent

Section 3: The Assyrian & Persian Empires

Assyrian Empire

- City-state of fierce warriors:
 - first cavalry
 - Iron weapons and tools
 - Empire stretched from the Persian Gulf, across the Fertile Crescent, and into Egypt



Assyrian Government

- Divided the empire into 70 provinces
 - A governor was in charge of each province
- Ashurbanipal: Assyrian king
 - Reign 668-627 BC (41 years)
 - Built a library in the capital city Nineveh
 - 20,000 of these tablets still survive today



Ashurbanipal

- Popular King
 - Ruled citizens fairly
 - Showed cruelty towards people he defeated
 - Example: Captured a king from another city-state and put a dog chain through his jaw, being forced to live in a kennel after capture



Neo-Babylonian Empire

- After Ashurbanipal's death, civil war broke out.
 - Assyrian empire grew weak
- King Nebuchadnezzar II became king of Babylon (Reign 605 BC-562 BC; 43 years)
 - Greatest king of Ancient Babylon
 - Best known for: Building the Hanging Gardens of Babylon for his wife and conquering the Jews
 - Captured Jerusalem, destroyed the Jewish Temple, and exiled Jews to Babylon
 - Spent a lot of money on the Hanging Gardens of Babylon



Rise of the Persian Empire

- All of Mesopotamia fell under the control of Persia
 - Persia—east of Mesopotamia (Iran)
- Cyrus the Great expanded Persian empire—treated all conquered people very well
 - Known for founding the Persian Empire and freeing the Jews/re-building temple
- According to legend, his grandpa had him taken to the mountains and left to die due to a dream he had that Cyrus would overthrow him
 - Found and raised by farmers
 - Eventually at 10 years it was realized who he was

Reign 559-530 BC
(30 years)





**The Persian Empire
in 600 AD
(under the Sassanid Dynasty)**

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www.WorldHistoryMaps.info

The Immortals



- Persian strength due to its “standing army”
 - AKA The “Immortals”:
A force of exactly 10,000 elite soldiers
 - Every killed, seriously wounded, or sick member was immediately replaced with a new

Persian

Government



- Under King Darius, Persian empire grew even larger.
 - Ruled Persia at its height of power (522 BC-486 BC; 36 years)
- He divided the empire into 20 provinces
 - Each had a leader (satrap) that had a great amount of freedom
 - Each leader could set their own local laws and traditions
 - Tributes were set based on what people could afford
 - Created a common currency \$\$ (called daric)
 - New roads
 - Strong believer in Zoroastrianism

Persian Religion

- One of the oldest religions in the world.
 - Influenced later religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam
- Zoroaster
 - A Persian man
 - Zoroastrianism means “golden light”
 - Monotheistic – 150,000 followers today
 - Taught there was one supreme god: Ahura Mazda
 - Means “Lord”/ “Wisdom”
 - Angra Mainyu is the destructive spirit
- Zoroastrianism became the official religion of the Persian empire:
 - Sacred texts (prayers/hymns/psalms): Avesta (means praise)
 - Worshipped in fire temples– fire and water important to their rituals
 - Central belief is that the universe is in a constant state of struggle between good and evil
 - Belief that people are to work for the common good
 - Believed in the existence of life after dead
 - In the 300s BC, Alexander the Great destroyed their temples, burned books and killed their priests. A lot of religious items lost during this time.
 - Burial:
http://altrigion.about.com/od/ritualsandpractices/a/zoro_funeral.htm

