

Farsinameh

1. Introduction

Farsinameh – Summary of the Iranians chronicle from Persepolis to Jamaran. For a reviewer's advance draft copy (due in 2008), please email Arash-Monzavi-Kia@hotmail.com.

2. Ancient Iran

Today's intelligent humans (homo-sapiens) emerged around 200,000 years ago, in North East Africa. Fifty thousand years ago, a group of those humans moved into Asia and Europe. When the last ice-age ended at 10,000 years ago, a group of those migrants created the first civilization in today's Iraq (Sumer).



Figure 1: Out of Africa

Soon, the Sumerian civilization was flooded by waves of Semitic immigrants (forefathers of today's Jews and Arabs), and at about 5,000 years ago, morphed into the Akkadian civilization. The Akkadians in turn were defeated and absorbed into the Assyrian and Babylonian states.



Figure 2: Sumerian Chariots

The first Iran-based civilization was created by the people of today's Khuzestan (Elamites), at 3,000 BC and around the main city of Susa (near today's Shush-e-Daniel). Elamites were neither Semite nor Indo-European, but (like the Sumerians) indigenous and unique. Influenced by their neighbours militancy for 2,000 years, Elamites waged wars against their Mesopotamian rivals, but were finally defeated and decimated by the Assyrians in 640 BC.



Figure 3: Elamite Ziggurat in Chogazanbil

The population vacuum left by the annihilation of Elamites was quickly filled by two Indo-European (Arian) migrant tribes of Medes and Persians. Those nomadic tribes had moved into the Iranian plateau since 1,500 BC, but were relentlessly haunted by the Assyrian warlords. Finally, the Medes grew strong enough to establish a central power near today's Hamadan (Ecbatana), and defeated the great Assyrian empire at their own game (610 BC). Consequently, the Persians who had moved into the Elamite lands in today's Fars, became vassals to the Mede kings.



Figure 4: Mede nobility

Persians and Medes went to war in 550 BC, which resulted in a spectacular victory by Cyrus II (the great) who captured Ecbatana and sent the Mede king (his maternal grandfather) to exile. Cyrus's victory had a lot to do with his brilliant diplomatic skills that could attract most of the Mede nobles and generals to his cause and against the cruel old king. For the next twenty years, Cyrus continued with a string of incredible military expansions and established the fabled Persian Empire.



Figure 5: Cyrus the great

3. Achaemenids

In 545 BC, Cyrus defeated the Greek city-states of Asia Minor (Lydia), and captured the legendary treasures of their king. That defeat effectively crippled the Greek civilization in today's Turkey, and led to the looting and destruction of a number of their cities and monuments.

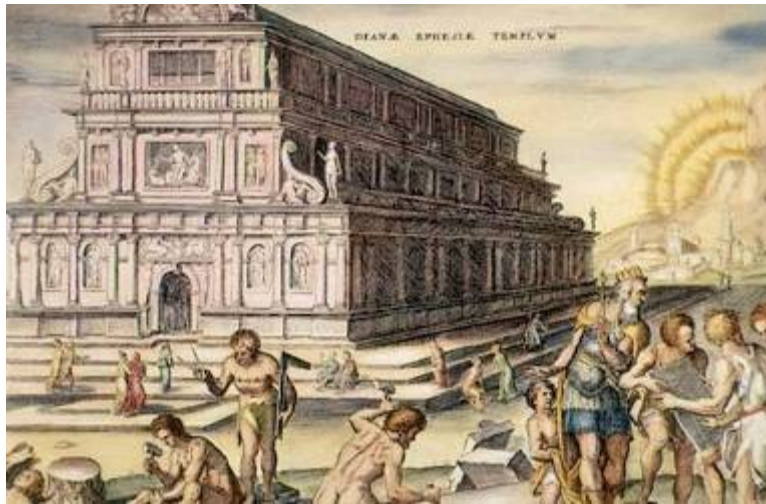


Figure 6: Depiction of Artemis Temple in Lydia (a destroyed world wonder)

Next in 540 BC, Cyrus's army (greatly assisted by local sympathizers) easily defeated the despised Babylonian king and took over the Mesopotamia. Unlike their previous rulers, Cyrus freed the varied Mesopotamian minorities to practice their cultures and religions, which also included the release of Jews and assistance for their return to Zion (today's Israel).



Figure 7: Babylon Lion Relief

Cyrus then focused his attention to expanding the Eastern frontiers of the empire, but was killed during a fierce battle with the nomadic Scythians (530 BC). Cambyses II succeeded his father, and conquered the ancient civilization of Egypt, in a brutal campaign. However, unlike his father, the cruel Cambyses was unable to gain the respect of his new subjects or the loyalty of his generals. He was assassinated during the eighth year of his bloody rein, and the multinational Persian empire faced numerous rebellions by its subjugated peoples. Another of Cyrus's sons (Bardia) came to power, but was challenged by a group of Persian princes led by Darius, who successfully overthrew and killed him. This coup brought a new dynasty to power, who claimed a common ancestry (Achaemenid) with Cyrus.



Figure 8: Darius the great

Unlike Cyrus, who was more interested in conquering new realms and then leaving each nation's organization to the subdued local nobility, Darius created a truly centralized government. He first forcefully crushed all the rebellions in the subject nations and vanquished a dozen of their leaders. Darius

then turned each nation into a Satrapy (province), strictly governed by his Persian appointees, who directly reported to the Shahanshah.



Figure 9: The Persian empire at its peak

To govern this vast empire, which included Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian, Mede and Scythian nations, Darius built a network of roads, postal service, common currency, regular army and navy. Although Cyrus is credited with starting the Persian domination, Darius was the king who built it into a functioning empire!



Figure 10: Persian army

Among the rebellious subject nations during Darius's reign, were the Greek cities of Asia Minor (today's Turkey). However, Darius's army suppressed that uprising, and then shipped an expeditionary attack force (~20,000 strong) to punish the mainland Greek city-states who had helped their Asian kindred. This ignited the legendary Persian-Greek wars of antiquity that is most famously remembered by the Marathon defeat of the Darius's army.



Figure 11: Reconstruction of the beached Persian ships near Marathon

After 35 years of Darius as ShahanShah, his son Xerxes (Khashayar) became emperor and tried to finish what his father had started, i.e. take over the mainland Greece. Xerxes summoned the largest army in the near East history (some 200,000), complete with a contingent of the subjugated Egyptian navy. However, despite initial victories and even the capture of Athens, the Greek city-states who had united since the battle of Marathon, sank the Xerxes navy and decimated the stranded Persian army in 480 BC.



Figure 12: Ruins of ancient Athens

For the next 140 years, the Persian Empire continued a fierce rivalry against the Greek city-states, until the latter were captured or united under the domineering Macedonian king, Phillip. After the suspicious assassination of Philip, his son Alexander accused the Persian Shah (Darius III) of the murder, and summoned a formidable Balkan force to take revenge, liberate the Asian Greek cities and pillage the riches of Persia. Unfortunately, the Achaemenid dynasty had severely deteriorated under the absolute corruption of the absolute rule, continuously falling into brutal royal murders, court intrigues and state blunders. Hence, Alexander the great defeated Darius and conquered Egypt, Mesopotamia and Persia.



Figure 13: Persepolis in ruins

4. Parthians

In progress ...

5. Sassanians

In progress ...

6. Arab conquest to Safavids

In progress ...

7. Afshar, Zand and Qajars

In progress ...

8. Constitutional revolution

In progress ...

9. Collapse of Qajar

In progress ...

10. Reza Shah

In progress ...

11. 2nd world war and Mosaddeg

In progress ...

12. Mohammad Reza Shah

In progress ...

13. Islamic Republic in Iran

In progress ...

14. References

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