

Lesson 3 Persia Controls Southwest Asia

MAIN IDEAS

Geography Persia's location between Mesopotamia and India was a bridge between eastern and western Asia.

Government Cyrus used a policy of toleration to control the Persian Empire.

Government To better govern, Persia divided its lands into smaller units.

A Land Between East and West

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What was the land of the Persians like?

Mountains, Deserts, and a Plateau

- The lands of the Medes included Persians in modern-day Iran
- Mountain ranges isolated Persia from rest of Fertile Crescent
 - ranges are Zagros, Caucasus, Hindu Kush
- Most people lived on a high plateau in middle of region, or in valleys
- Iron, copper, semiprecious gems found in the land

Persians Occupy the Land

- Medes lands often invaded by Central Asian nomads
 - nomads' customs mixed with other societies living in area
- Persians entered region, created tiny kingdoms around 1000 B.C.
 - traded horses, minerals with eastern and western Asia
- Persian kingdoms grew in power, threatened Medes' control of land

REVIEW QUESTION

How did the presence of nomadic tribes affect Persia?

Cyrus Found the Persian Empire

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What was the rule of Cyrus like?

Fearless Military Leader

- Medes ruled Persia until Persian king Cyrus the Great took control
- Cyrus wanted to conquer and unite surrounding lands as one empire
 - quickly conquered **Anatolia**, or Asia Minor, within modern-day Turkey
 - conquered Fertile Crescent between 550 and 539 B.C.

A Wise Emperor

- Cyrus controlled lands of different peoples with policy of toleration
 - **toleration**—allowing people to keep their customs and beliefs
 - conquered people kept own religions, languages; paid tribute
- Policies made friends of conquered peoples, such as Hebrews
 - freed Hebrews allowed them to rebuild temple and Jerusalem
 - fewer revolts and people lived in peace

REVIEW QUESTION

Why can Cyrus be considered a wise emperor?

Darius Expands the Empire

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did Darius control his empire?

Darius Extends Persian Control

- After Cyrus’s death, weaker ruler faced rebellions
- Darius I followed weak ruler, put down revolts
- Darius conquered lands as far east as India
 - Persian Empire grew to 2,800 miles from east to west

Political Organization

- Darius divided large empire into 20 provinces
 - **provinces**—areas of land similar to states, each with local government
 - set up **satraps**—governors who ran provinces, collected taxes
 - appointed military commanders for each satrap
 - spies called “king’s eyes and ears” helped Darius control satraps

Uniting the Empire

- Darius started use of **Royal Road** for government purposes
 - royal messages sent by a relay of horseback messengers
 - stretched from Sardis to Susa; moved troops, mail, and promoted trade
- Darius set up law code based on Hammurabi’s and used minted coins

Enemies of Persia

- Darius died in 486 B.C., before attacking Egyptian rebels
 - followed by son, Xerxes, who had to deal with Egypt and Greece

REVIEW QUESTION

Why did Darius divide the empire into provinces?

Lesson Summary

- Tiny Persian kingdoms succeed due to trade.
- Cyrus the Great ruled the Persian Empire with a policy of toleration.
- Darius formed provinces and appointed satraps to improve government.

Why It Matters Now...

The Persians showed that lands ruled with policies of toleration could be stable and peaceful.