

# The Empire...



- Calling themselves the Parsa after their original territorial range Parsua, Persians had settled in the southwest Iranian plateau, bounded on the west by the Tigris River and on the south by the Persian Gulf which had become their heartland for the duration of the Achaemenid Empire. It was from this region that eventually Cyrus the Great (Cyrus II of Persia) would advance to defeat the Median, the Lydian, and the Babylonian Empires, opening the way for subsequent conquests into Egypt and Asia minor.

- At the height of its power after the conquest of Egypt, the empire encompassed approximately 8 million km<sup>2</sup> spanning three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe.

- The Achaemenid Empire (Old Persian Haxâmanishiya) (c. 550–330 BCE), known as the first Persian Empire, was the successor state of the Median Empire, expanding to eventually rule over significant portions of the ancient world which at around 500 BCE stretched from the Indus Valley in the east, to Thrace (Turkey) and Macedon (Greece) on the northeastern border of Greece. The Achaemenid Empire would eventually control Egypt, unified by a complex network of roads and, ruled by monarchs, to become the greatest empire the world had yet seen.

- The empire had a centralised, bureaucratic administration under the Emperor and a large professional army and civil services, inspiring similar developments in later empires.

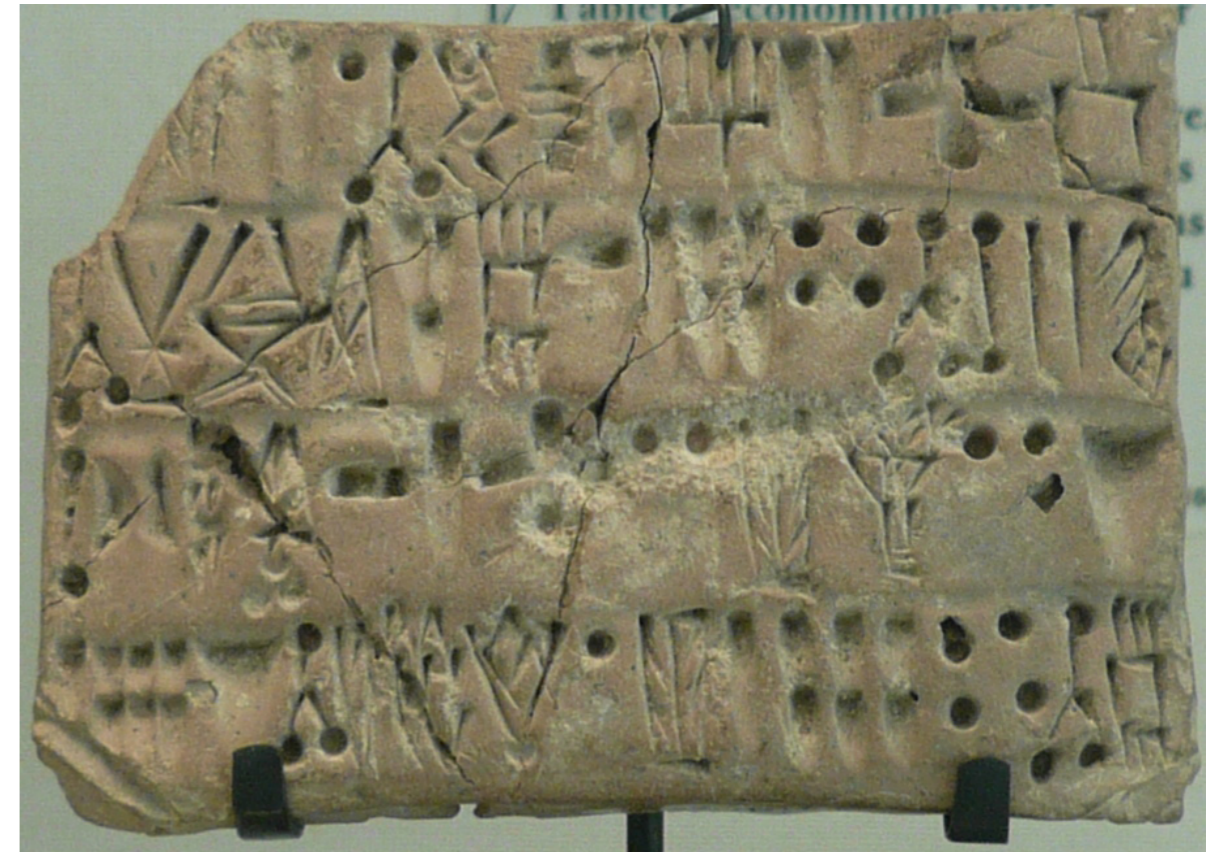
# The People...



Herodotus, in his mid-5th century BCE account of Persian residents of the Pontus, reports that Persian youths, from their fifth year to their twentieth year, were instructed in three things – to ride a horse, to draw a bow, and to speak the Truth.

He further notes that: the most disgraceful thing in the world [the Perses] think, is to tell a lie; the next worst, to owe a debt: because, among other reasons, the debtor is obliged to tell lies.

- Herodotus mentions that the Persians were given to great birthday feasts (Herodotus, Histories 8), which would be followed by many desserts, a treat which they reproached the Greeks for omitting from their meals. He also observed that the Persians drank wine in large quantities and used it even for counsel, deliberating on important affairs when drunk, and deciding the next day, when sober, whether to act on the decision or set it aside.



- Elamite is an extinct language spoken by the ancient Elamites. Elamite was the primary language in Persia from the sixth to fourth centuries BC. The last written records in Elamite appear about the time of the conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great.

# The Religion...



- It was during the Achaemenid period that Zoroastrianism reached South-Western Iran, where it came to be accepted by the rulers and through them became a defining element of Persian culture. The religion was not only accompanied by a formalization of the concepts and divinities of the traditional Indo-Iranian pantheon, but also introduced several novel ideas, including that of free will.
- Zoroastrianism /ˌzɒrɒʊˈæstriənɪzəm/ (or Mazdaism) is a religion and philosophy based on the teachings of prophet Zoroaster (also known as Zarathustra, in Avestan) and was formerly among the world's largest religions. It was probably founded some time before the 6th century BCE in Persia (Iran).
- In Zoroastrianism, the Creator Ahura Mazda is all good, and no evil originates from Him. Thus, in Zoroastrianism good and evil have distinct sources, with evil (druj) trying to destroy the creation of Mazda (asha), and good trying to sustain it. Mazda is not immanent in the world, and His creation is represented by the Amesha Spentas and the host of other Yazatas, through whom the works of God are evident to humanity, and through whom worship of Mazda is ultimately directed.

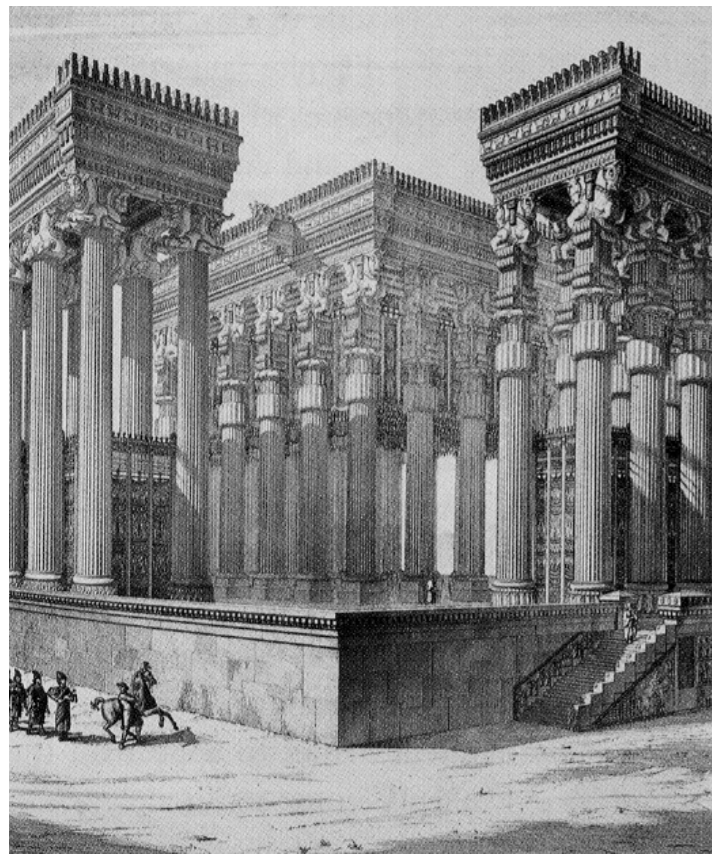
- Faravahar (OP \*fravarti > MP: pr'whr)[1] is one of the best-known symbols of Zoroastrianism, the state religion of ancient Iran. This religious-cultural symbol was adapted by the Pahlavi dynasty to represent the Iranian nation.

# Art and Architecture...



- Achaemenid architecture refers to the architectural achievements of the Achaemenid Persians manifesting in construction of spectacular cities utilized for governance and inhabitation, temples made for worship and social gatherings (such as Zoroastrian temples), and mausoleums erected in honor of fallen kings (such as the burial tomb of Cyrus the Great). The quintessential feature of Persian architecture was its eclectic nature with elements of Median, Assyrian, and Asiatic Greek all incorporated, yet maintaining a unique Persian identity seen in the finished products.

- Achaemenid art refers to the artistic achievements of the Achaemenid Persians manifesting in construction of complicated frieze reliefs, crafting of precious metals, decoration of palaces, glazed brick masonry, fine craftsmanship (masonry, carpentry, etc.), and gardening, and out door decoration.



- It is critical to understand that although Persians borrowed techniques from all corners of their empire, it was not simply a combination of styles, but synthesis of a new unique Persian style.

- This was imperial art on a scale the world had not seen before. Materials and artists were drawn from all corners of the empire, and thus tastes, styles, and motifs became mixed together in an eclectic art and architecture that in itself mirrored the Persian empire.





