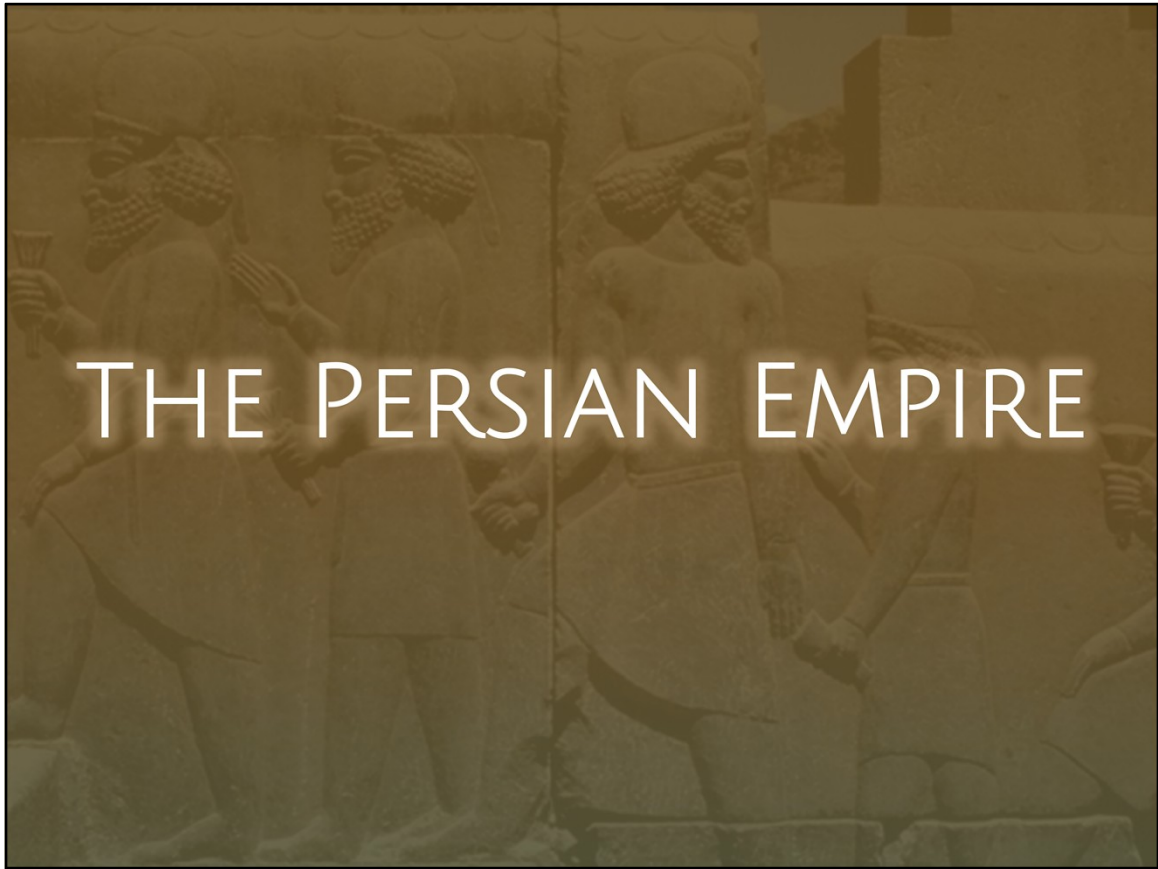


**Module 3: Religious Traditions**  
**Topic 1 Content: The Persian Empire**

**Introduction**




The Persian Empire



## Module 3: Religious Traditions

### Topic 1 Content: The Persian Empire

#### Cyrus the Great



- ROSE TO POWER IN 550 B.C.
- UNITED NOMADIC PEOPLE OF PERSIA
- EXERCISED TOLERANCE OVER CONQUERED PEOPLE

## CYRUS THE GREAT

Around 550 B.C. (B.C.E.), Cyrus II, also known as Cyrus the Great, rose in power to establish the Persian Empire by uniting the nomadic people of Persia under the rule of one family. As he conquered populations and added to the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great exercised tolerance over those groups. Conquered people were permitted to retain their own cultures and religions, and the armies of the Persian Empire did not destroy the structures of the conquered lands. He allowed the Jews, who had been conquered by the Chaldeans and taken to Babylon, to return to Israel and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

## Module 3: Religious Traditions

### Topic 1 Content: The Persian Empire

#### Darius I



## DARIUS I

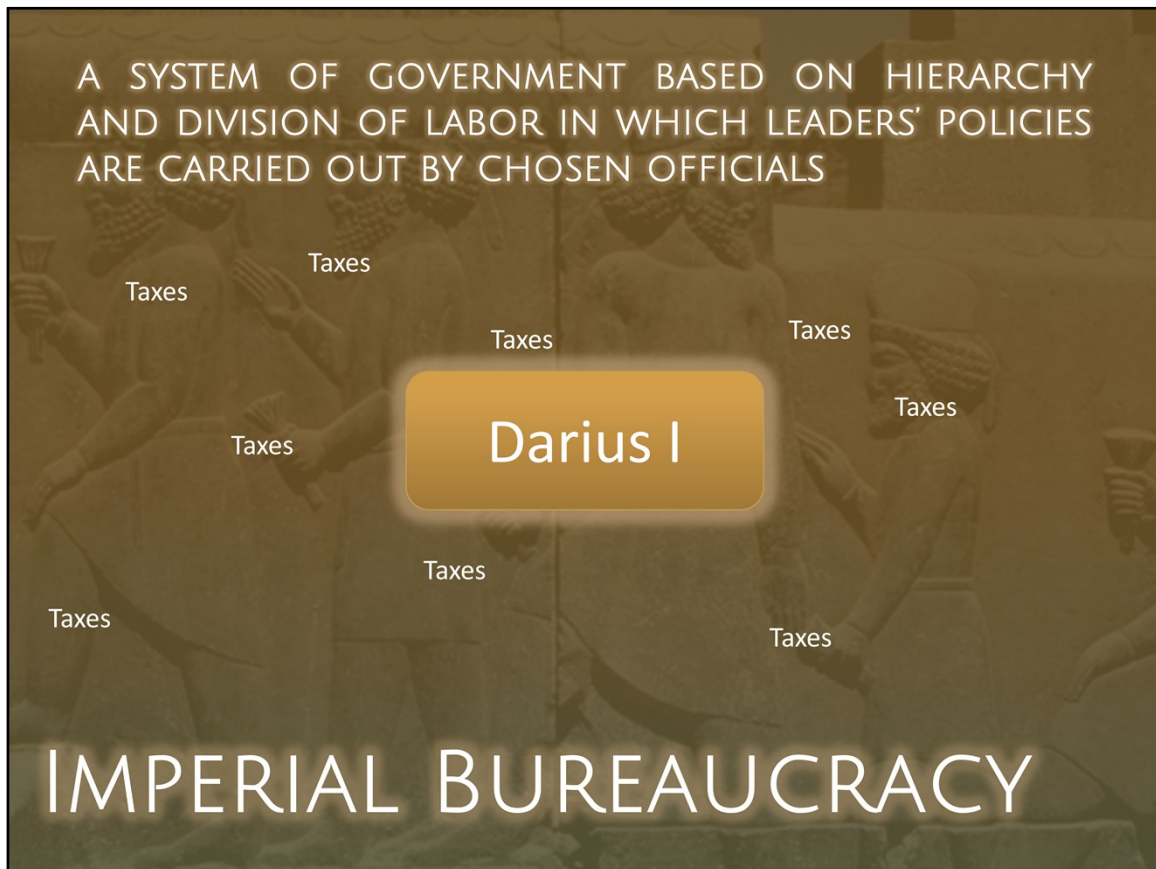
- RULED FROM 521 UNTIL 486 B.C.
- CONTINUED A TRADITION OF TOLERANCE
- LARGE AND ORGANIZED ARMY

Darius I ruled the Persian Empire from 521 to 486 B.C. (B.C.E.). He ruled during the height of the empire, and like Cyrus the Great, he continued a tradition of tolerance toward conquered groups. Darius I also oversaw one of the largest and most-organized armies in world history. The army of the Persian Empire assigned roles to soldiers based on rank and skill.

## Module 3: Religious Traditions

### Topic 1 Content: The Persian Empire

#### Imperial Bureaucracy



Darius I created an imperial bureaucracy in the Persian Empire. An imperial bureaucracy is a system of government based on hierarchy and division of labor in which leaders' policies are carried out by chosen officials. Darius I divided the land into twenty satrapies, or provinces, and each satrapy paid taxes to the central government. The taxes usually included goods, gold, and food. The satrapies were governed by a satrap, who carried out the rule of Darius I in the individual provinces.

## Module 3: Religious Traditions

### Topic 1 Content: The Persian Empire

#### The Royal Road



Due to the size and diversity of the Persian Empire, Darius I invested heavily in roads, particularly the Royal Road. The Royal Road was in existence since ancient times, and Darius I reorganized and improved it.

Roads were used for communication and trade. Well-structured roads meant that people could trade goods quickly and safely. Roads were also used for the armies; it was easier to travel along roads that were established.

## Module 3: Religious Traditions

### Topic 1 Content: The Persian Empire

#### Xerxes



## XERXES

- RULED FROM 485 UNTIL 465 B.C.
- BATTLED AGAINST GREEKS
- LOST THE BATTLE OF SALAMIS IN 480 B.C.


Xerxes was the leader of the Persian Empire from 485 to 465 B.C. (B.C.E.). He was the son of Darius I and the grandson of Cyrus the Great. Xerxes led the Persian Empire in battles against the Greeks, finding victory at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 B.C. (B.C.E.), and loss at the Battle of Salamis later that year.

After the rule of Xerxes, the empire was weakened from within by internal struggle and deception. The Persian Empire fell in pieces to the Greeks and Alexander the Great in the 330s B.C. (B.C.E.).

## Module 3: Religious Traditions

### Topic 1 Content: The Persian Empire

#### Zoroastrianism



- BASED ON THE TEACHINGS OF ZOROASTER
- MONOTHEISTIC
- GOOD VS. EVIL
- HOLY BOOK – AVESTA
- SYMBOL – FARAVAHAR

# ZOROASTRIANISM

Religion was important to the Persians. The Persian religion of Zoroastrianism was based on the teachings of the Persian philosopher, Zoroaster, who was born in 660 B.C. (B.C.E.). Zoroaster did not believe in the worship of many gods; instead, he believed that the Persians should become monotheistic and believe in only one god. He believed that there was a single wise god named Ahura Mazda, who ruled over the world. Ahura Mazda was in a constant struggle with Ahriman, who was the prince of lies and evil. Followers of Zoroastrianism believed that people should choose between these two opposing forces -- good or evil -- and that there would be a final judgment day.

The Avesta is the holy book of Zoroastrianism. The oldest portions of the Avesta are the Gathas, which are religious songs believed to have been written by Zoroaster. The common symbol for Zoroastrianism is the Faravahar. As seen in the image shown here, the Faravahar is a winged disc that includes a human bust. The icon has roots in the Egyptian and Assyrian cultures as a winged-sun hieroglyph.