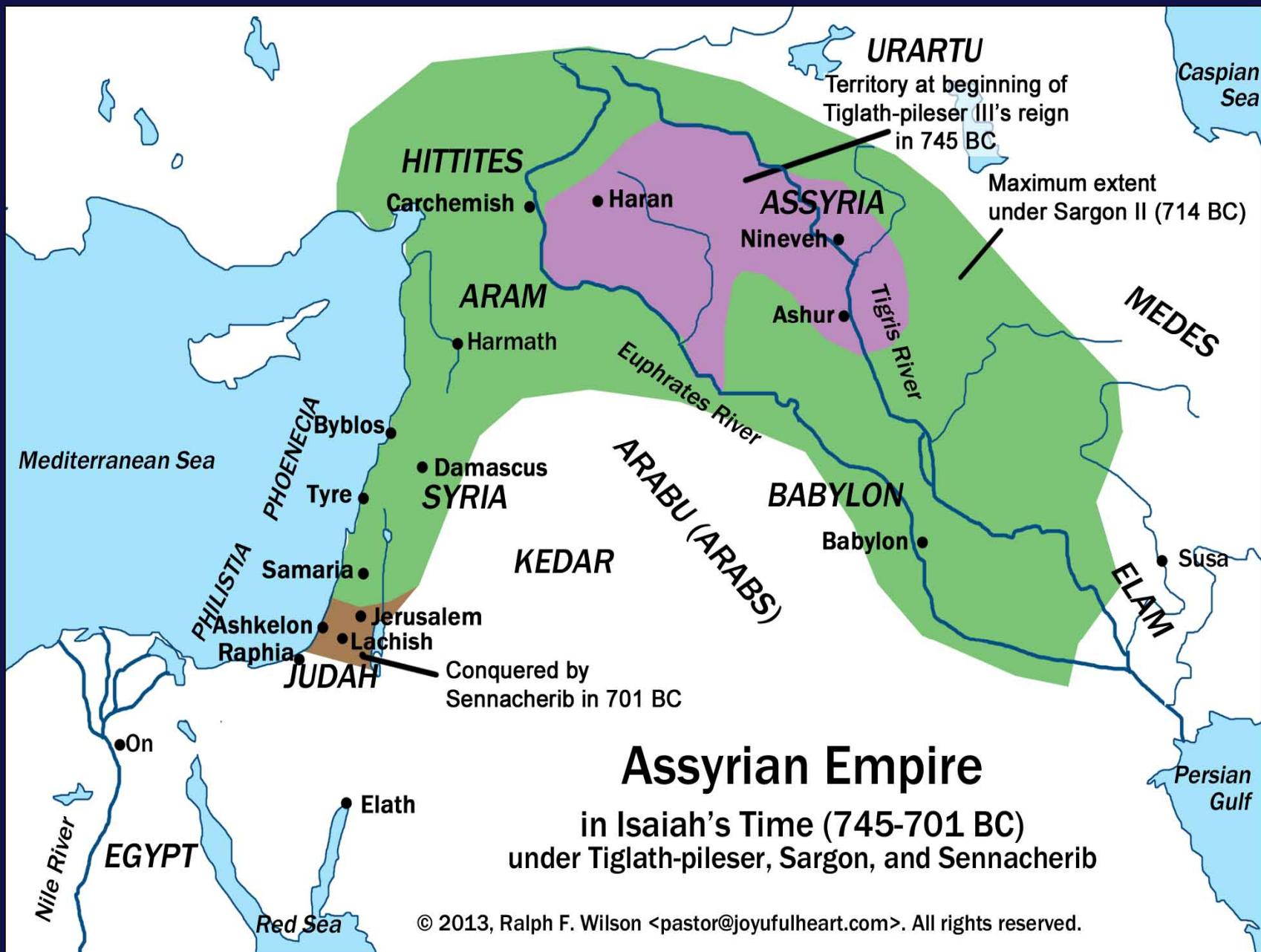




T11: Neo-Assyrian and Achaemenid Empires

Assyrians and Neo-Assyrians

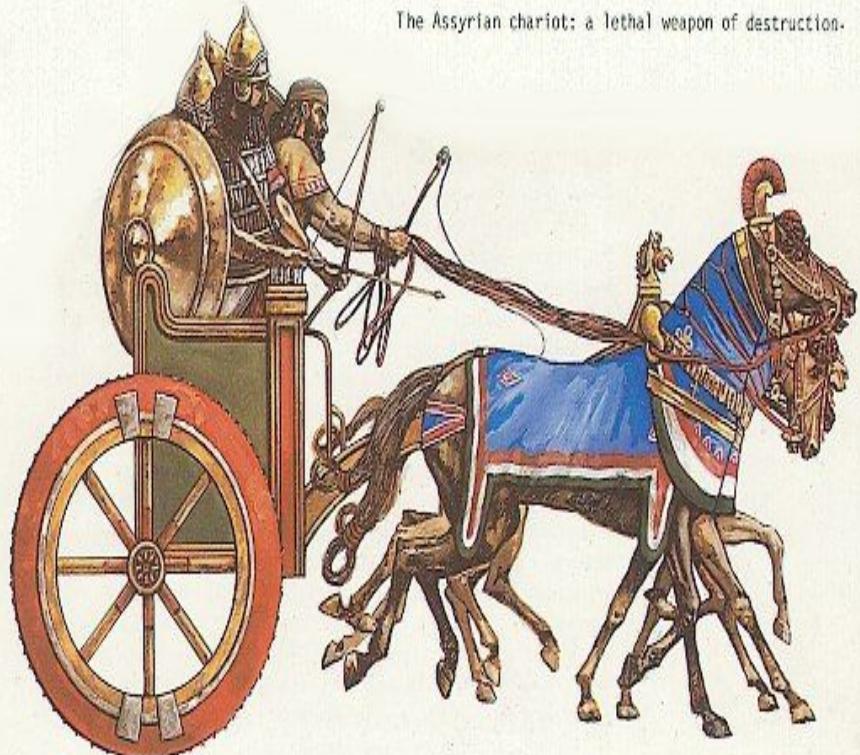
- Semitic people - originally lived in **Assur** and **Nineveh** in Northern Mesopotamia
- **Assyrian Empire** - c. 2025 BCE
- Empire expanded under **Tiglath Pileser I** (r.1115-1076 BCE)
- **Neo-Assyrian Empire** (c.911– c.612 BCE)
 - largest and strongest - over three centuries of rule by brute force and other techniques



Strengths of Neo-Assyrian Empire

- **Superior military power:** disciplined, well trained professional troops – effective war strategy: combined use of **infantry** and **cavalry** – expertise in **siege warfare** – use of **chariots**, **battering rams** and other weapons
- **Terror techniques:** deportation, forced labor and severe punishment for rebels
- **Assimilation** of conquered people
- Propaganda of **Assyrian superiority**
- Use of the national god **Ashur** for national integration

The Assyrian chariot; a lethal weapon of destruction.



Assyrian chariot



Assyrian Battering Ram

Weaknesses and causes of fall

- **Over-expansion** – difficult to manage - constant need for troops deployment
- **Hatred** among the conquered peoples
- **Discontent** among the nobility – eventually leading to civil war
- **Population growth** and **drought** in mid-7th century BCE
- **Coalition** of opponents (Persians, Chaldeans, Babylonians,) – fall in c. 612 BCE

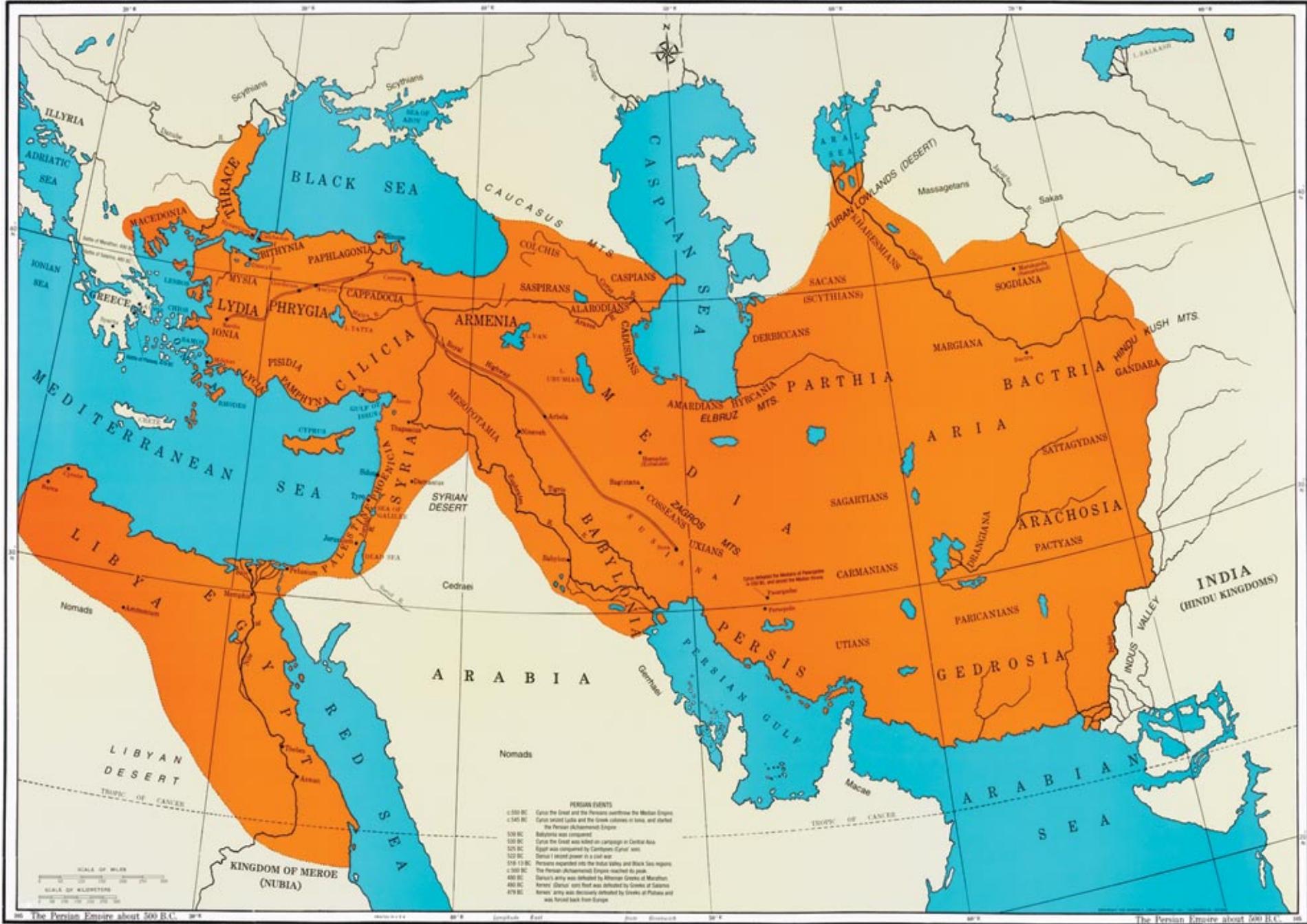
Persia: Achaemenid Empire

- Persians - Central Asian people of Indo-European language group
- Empire founded by Cyrus the Great in 559 BCE – included Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Armenia - expanded by Darius the Great (550- 486 BCE) – Greco-Persian Wars (499 - 449 BCE)
- Conquered by Alexander the Great in 330 BC

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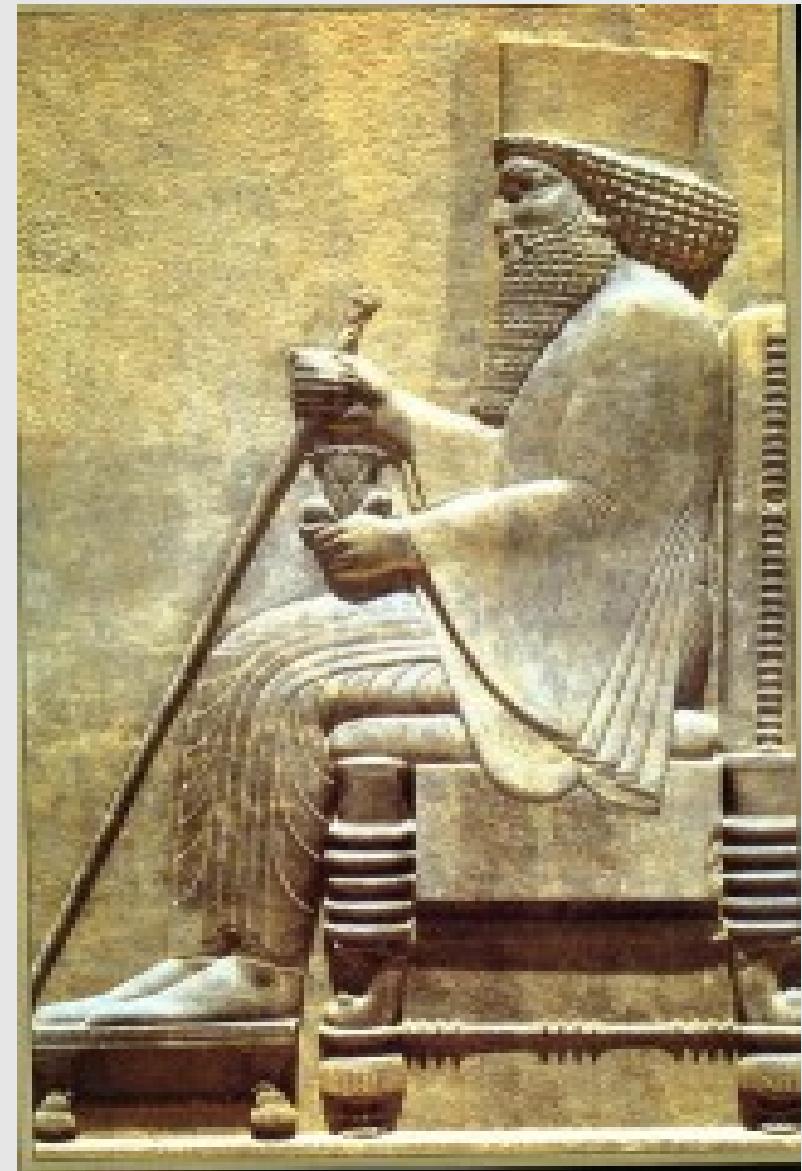
THE PERSIAN EMPIRE ABOUT 500 B.C.



Two Great Kings of Persia



Cyrus the Great

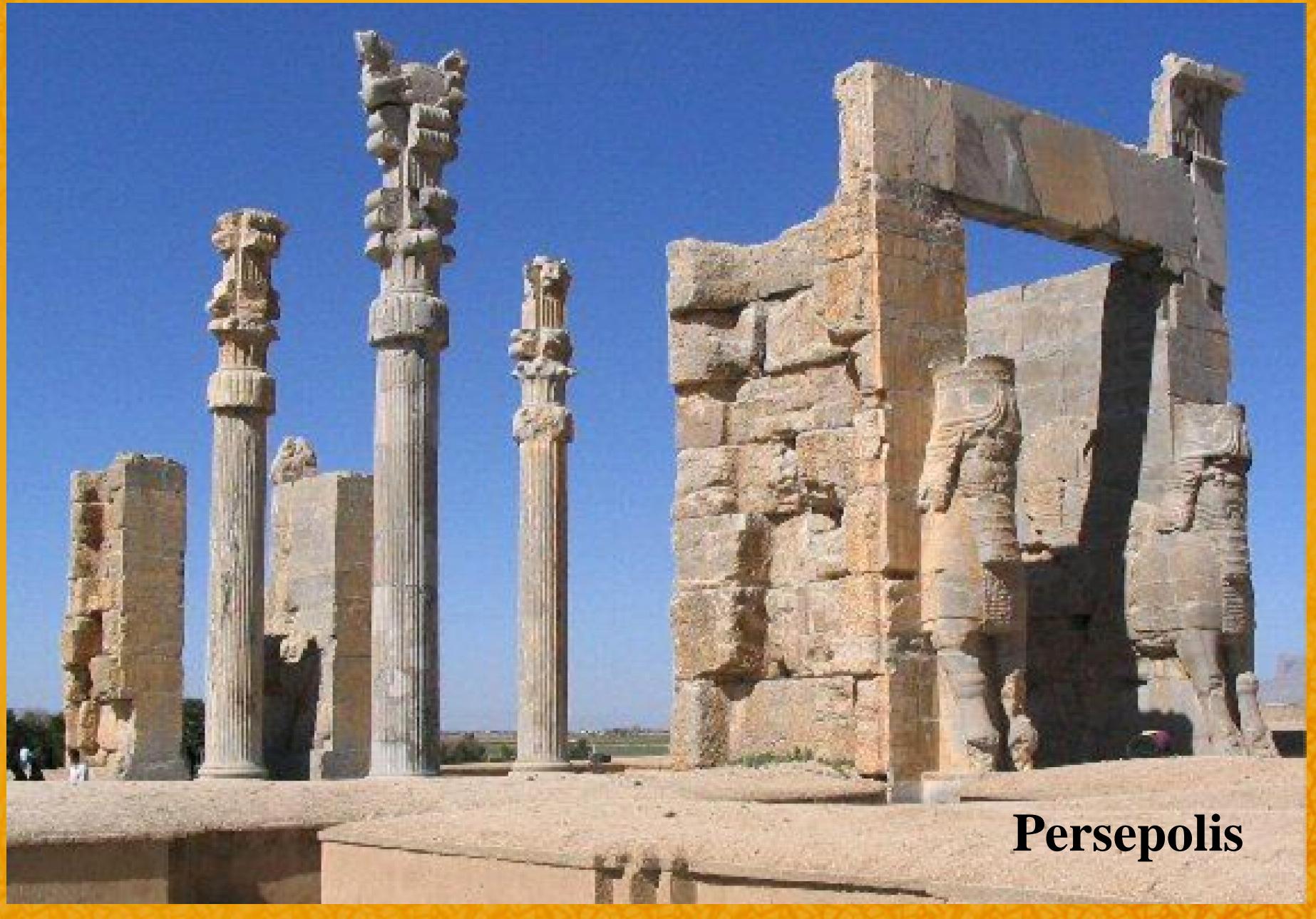


Darius the Great

Empire Management

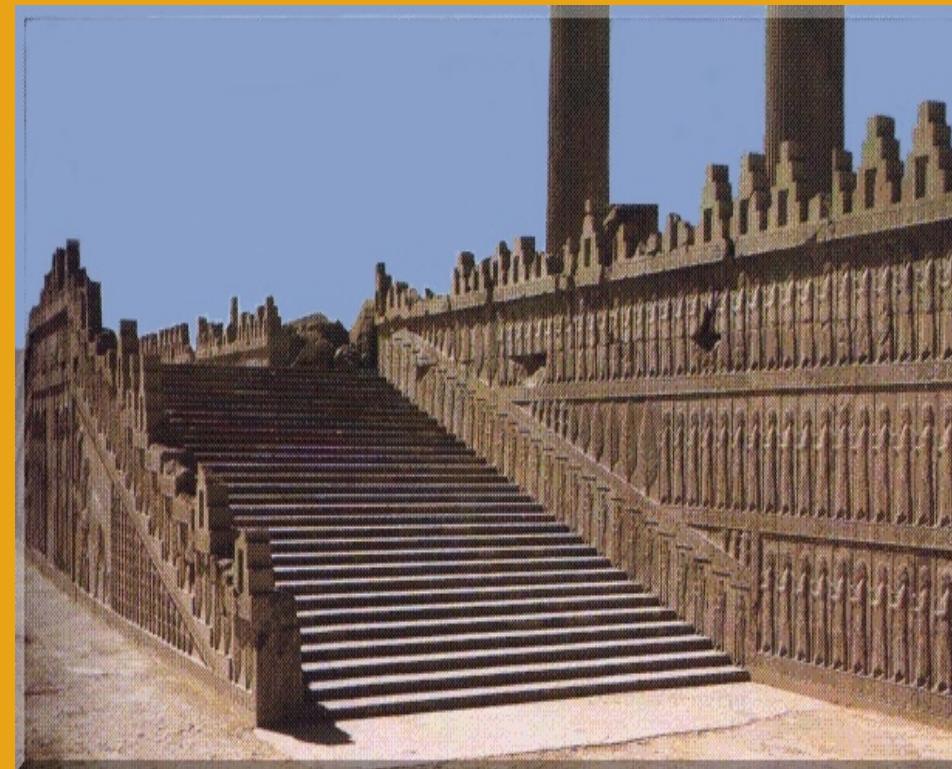
- **Absolute monarchy** - rule by “**divine power**”
- **Satrapy** – provinces ruled by governors (Satraps) under the Emperor’s monitoring
- A **standing army** guarded the borders
- Effective **Communication system** among provinces
- Integration with local traditions & economy
- Use of religion for cultural assimilation

Persian Architecture



Persepolis

Ruins of Persepolis Palace



Zoroastrianism

- One of the oldest **Monotheistic** religion founded by **Zoroaster (Zarathustra)** – c. 628 - c. 551 BCE
- Three basic principles: **Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds**
- **Dualism:** existence but complete separation of good and evil
- Struggle between good and evil forces in the universe as well as in human mind – ultimate triumph of goodness over evil

Zoroastrianism (contd.)

- **Ahura Mazda** – creator god representing creative spirit; **Ahriman (Angra Mainyu)** the destructive spirit
- **Avesta** – the holy book – written in **Avestan** language – close to **Sanskrit**
- Concepts of day of judgment – heaven and hell – eternal life
- Official Persian religion during 600 BCE- 650 CE



Zoroaster



Ahura Mazda



Ahriman

Study Questions

- Who were the Assyrians?
- Trace the origins of the Neo-Assyrian Empire.
- How did the Neo-Assyrians succeed in maintaining their empire for over three centuries?
- What were the weaknesses of the Neo-Assyrians that led to their fall?
- Outline the history of the Achaemenid Empire.
- Examine the techniques of empire management in Achaemenid Persia.
- Analyze Zoroastrianism as a monotheistic religion.
- How do you perceive Dualism in the Zoroastrian religion?

Thank You