

The Origins of “Inquiry” & of the Greco- Persian Wars

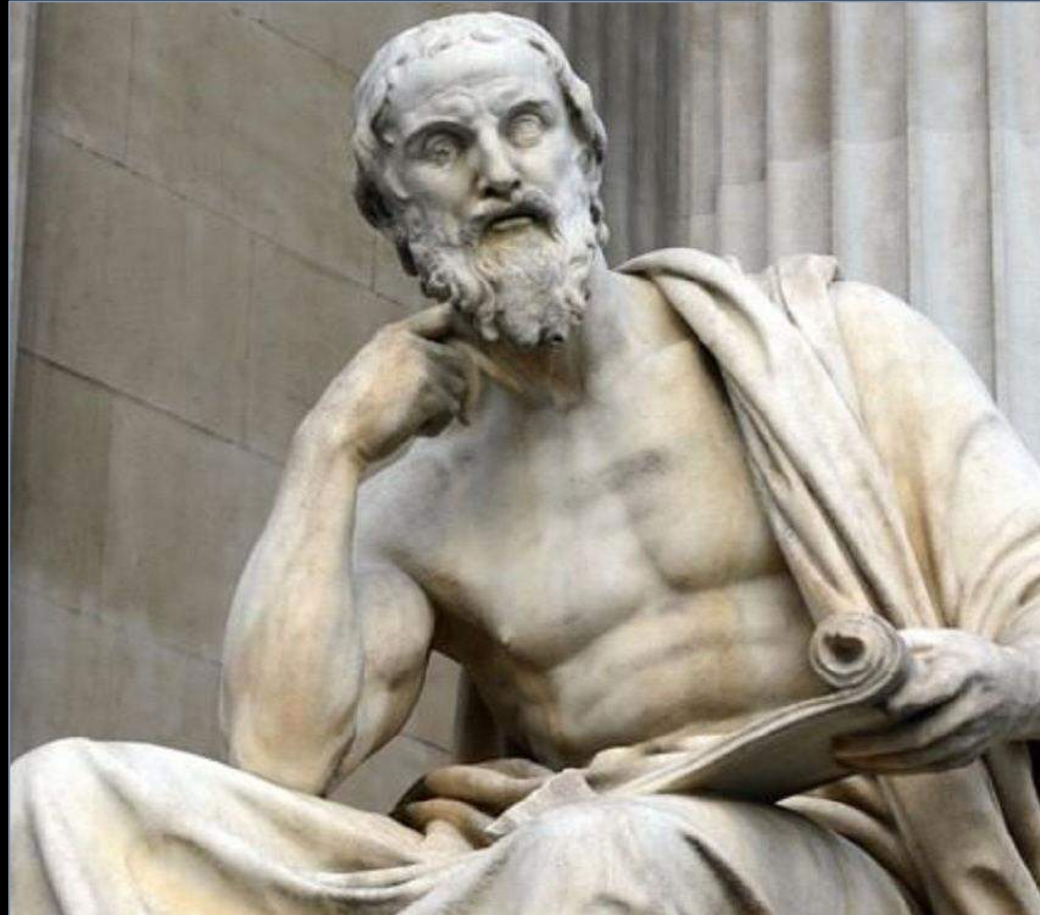


Guide for the Week:

Transitioning from Archaic Age to Classical Age

- **Today:** (Brief!) Introduction to Herodotus and the Greco-Persian Wars
[~ Mc. Chapter 7]
- **Wednesday:** Conclusions of above (including brief remarks on battles), with spotlight on Greek constructions of the Persians [~ Mc. Chapter 7]
- **Friday:** Further Developments at Athens [~ Mc. Chapter 8]

Herodotus of Halicarnassus (ca. 484-425 BCE), author of *The Histories*



The Invention
of
Authorship?

AUTHOR(ITY)

Herodotus, *Histories*, first sentence

“This is the display of the *historia* of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, so that neither human events become faint with time, nor that the tremendous and wondrous accomplishments, some displayed by Greeks, some by barbarians, become things without glory, and everything else, including the reason for which they went to war with each other.” (tr. Kirkland)

Herodotus's inquiry (*historia*) into ...

- The growth of the Persian Empire, which includes:
 - Egypt, its customs, its wonders, its animals (cats, alligators, hippos)
 - Persia's attempted takeover of Scythia
 - The Ionian Revolt (revolt by Eastern Greeks from Persian Rule)
 - The ultimate clash between Persian and Greece
- Hinting at the consequences of victory for Athens and Greece (Herodotus is writing about the Greco-Persian Wars during the later war between Athens and Sparta)

DIGRESSION (?)



Among Herodotus's Intellectual Influences? Heraclitus of Miletus (535-475 BCE)

- “Let us not make arbitrary conjectures about great matters.” (fr. 47)
- “Everything flows and nothing abides.” (fr. 91+12)
- “War is the common condition ... all things comes to pass through the compulsion of strife.” (fr. 80)

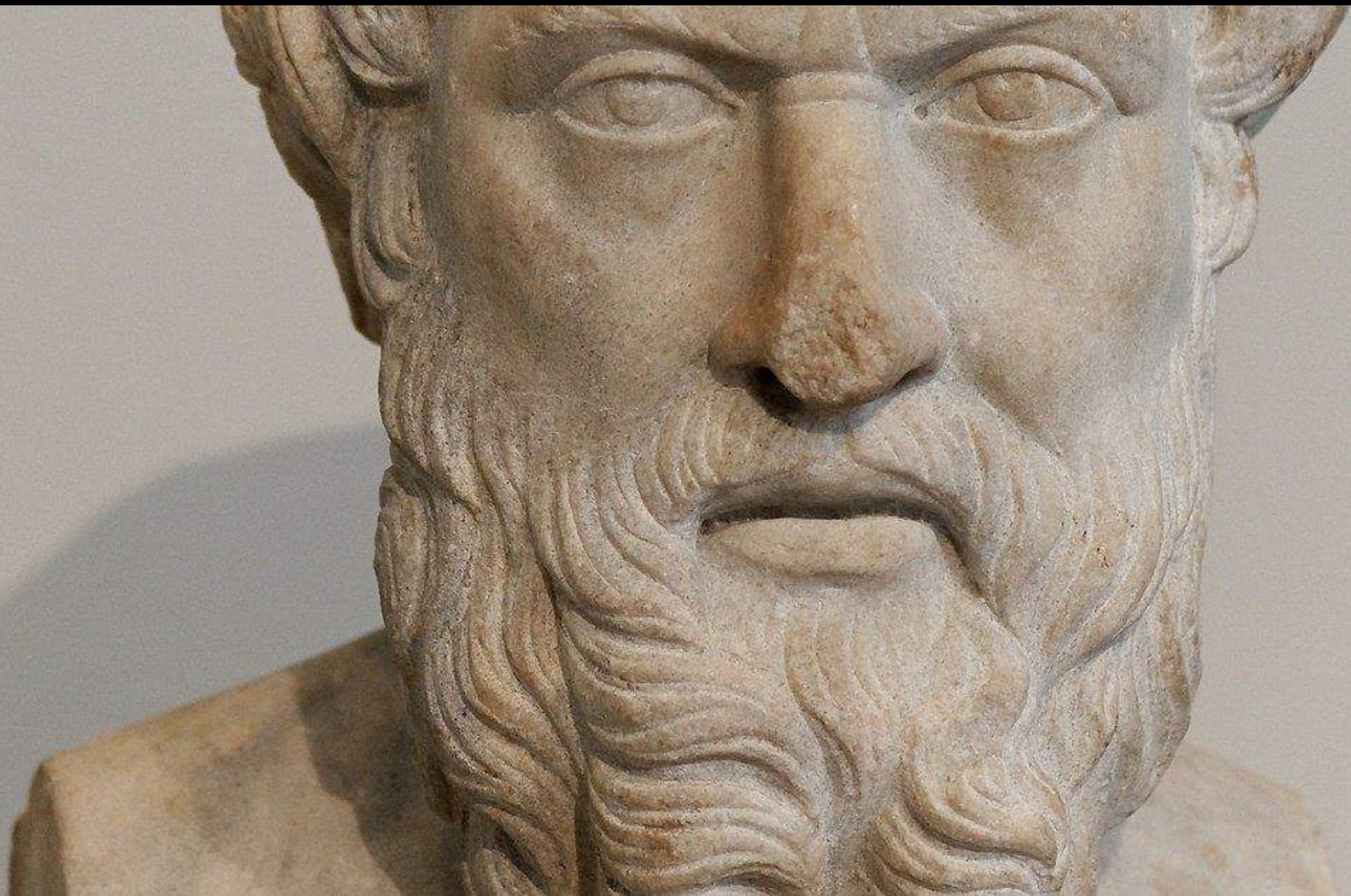
Herodotus's Wheel of Fortune

“For cities that were great in early times have become small, and those that were great in my time were formerly small. Knowing, therefore, that human happiness never abides in the same place, I will make equal mention of both.” (Herodotus 1.5)

“The way up
and the way
down are the
same.”

Heraclitus, fr.
69



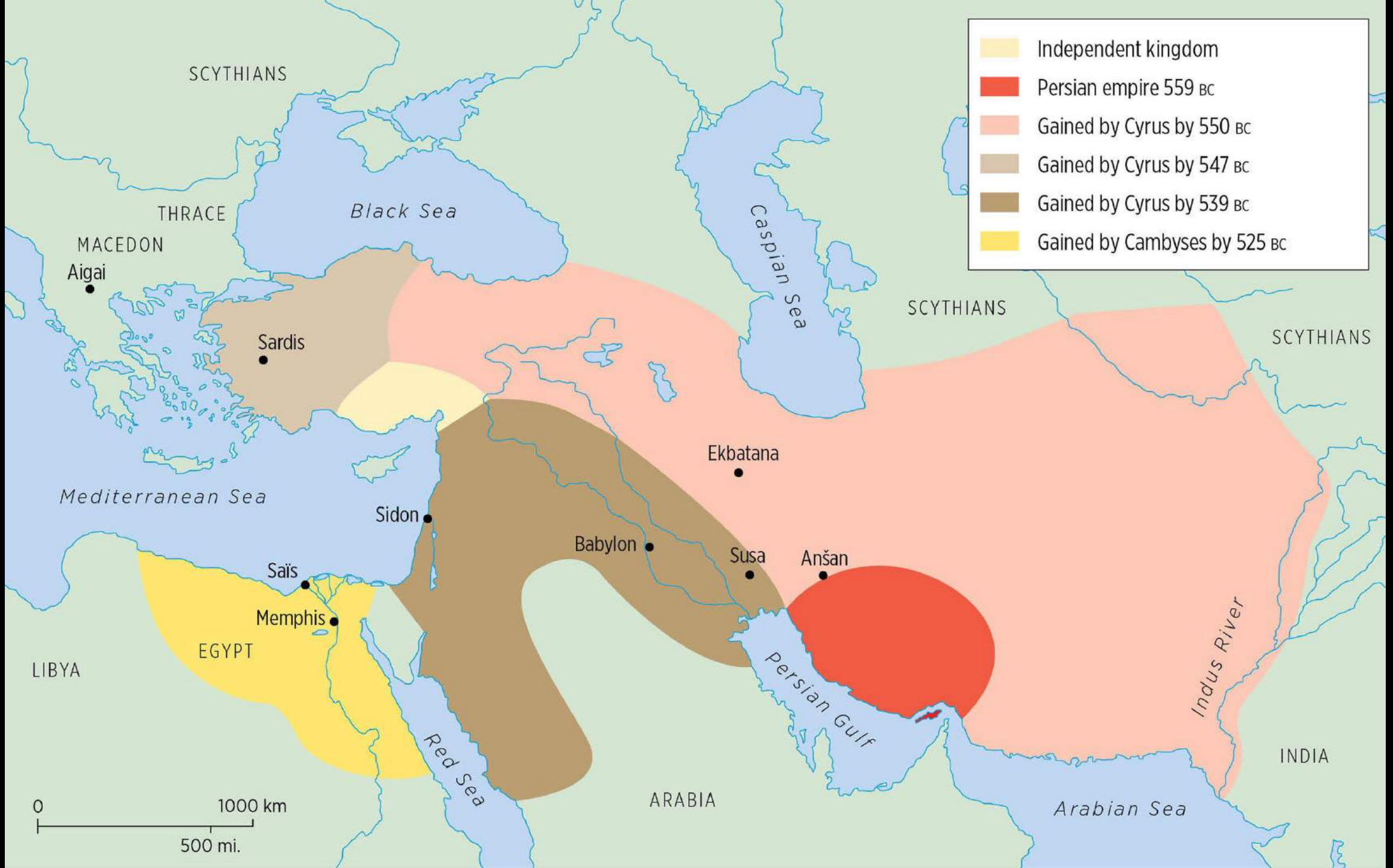


Herodotus's Famous Recusal (7.152.3)

“I have an obligation to relay the things that are said to me, but to believe them is in no way my duty. And you can let this utterance (*epos*) apply to the entirety of my account (*logos*).” (trans. Kirkland).

logos (pl. *logoi*) = “account, story”

Not *mythos* or *epos*



Achaemenid Kings of Persia

Cyrus the Great (600 – ca. 530 BCE)

- Conqueror of the Medes
- → **to “medize” – to submit to Persia**

Cambyses (ruled 530-522 BCE)

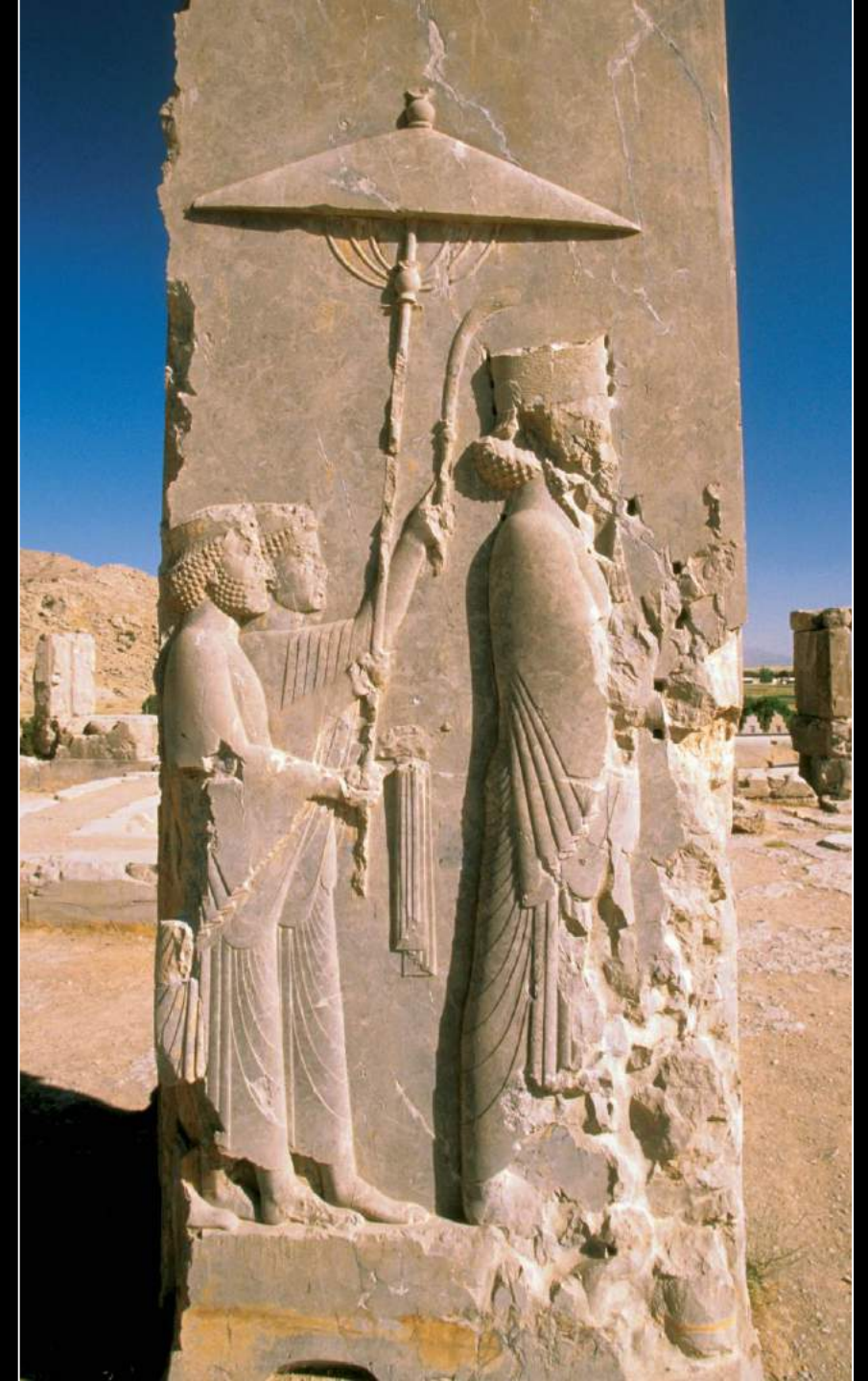
- Conquest of Egypt

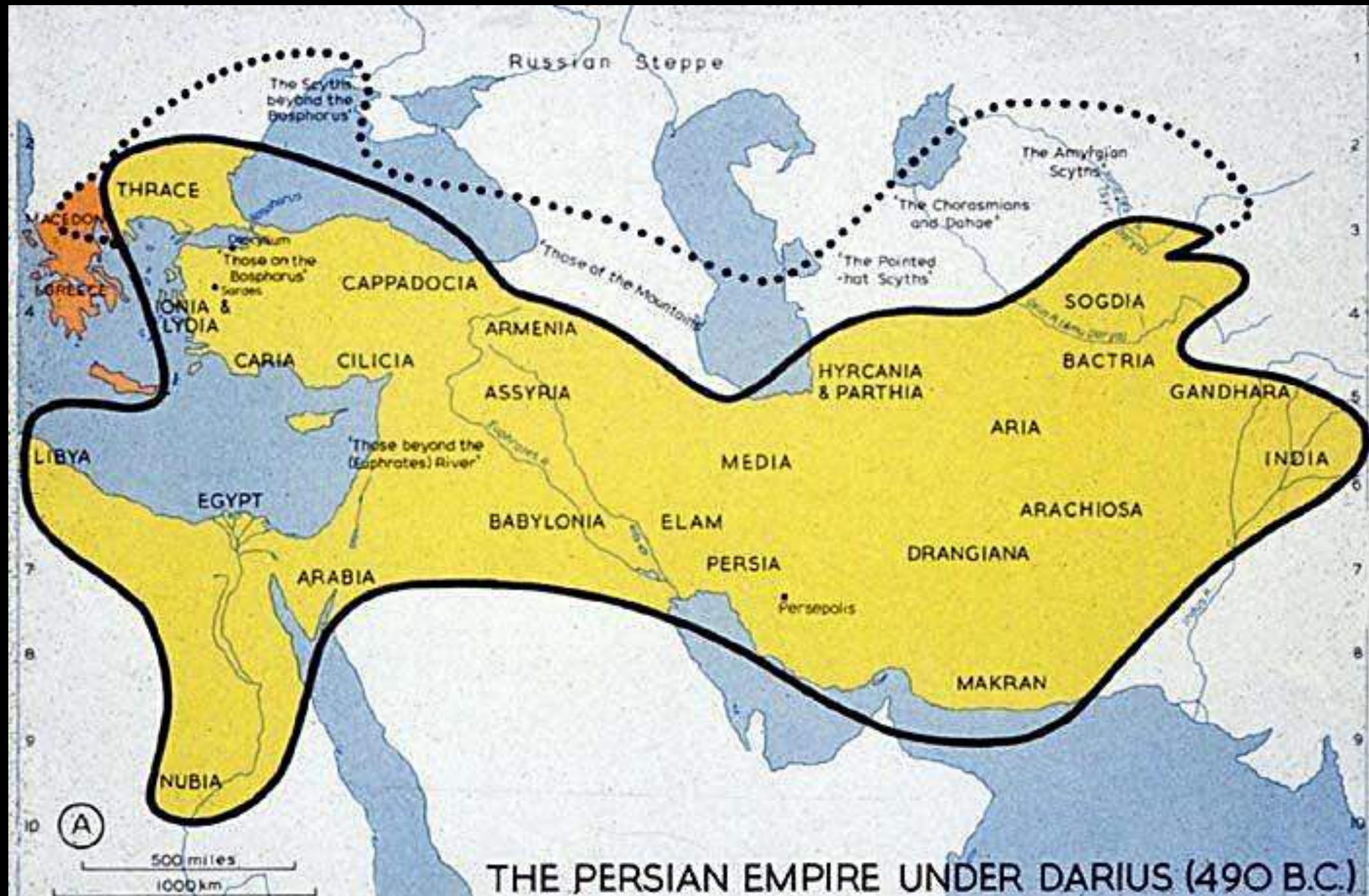
Darius I (reigned 522 – 486 BCE)

- Responsible for Persian incursions into Scythia
- King during Ionian Revolt
- Invasion at Marathon

Xerxes (reigned 486 – 465 BCE)

- Responsible for bridging of Hellespont
- Invasion of Greece for Thermopylae and Salamis
- King at time of Persian defeat





PERSIAN ROADS!

“It is said that as many days as there are in the whole journey, so many are the men and horses that stand along the road, each horse and man at the interval of a day’s journey; and *these are stayed neither by snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness of night from accomplishing their appointed rounds with all speed.*”

Herodotus *Histories* 8.98





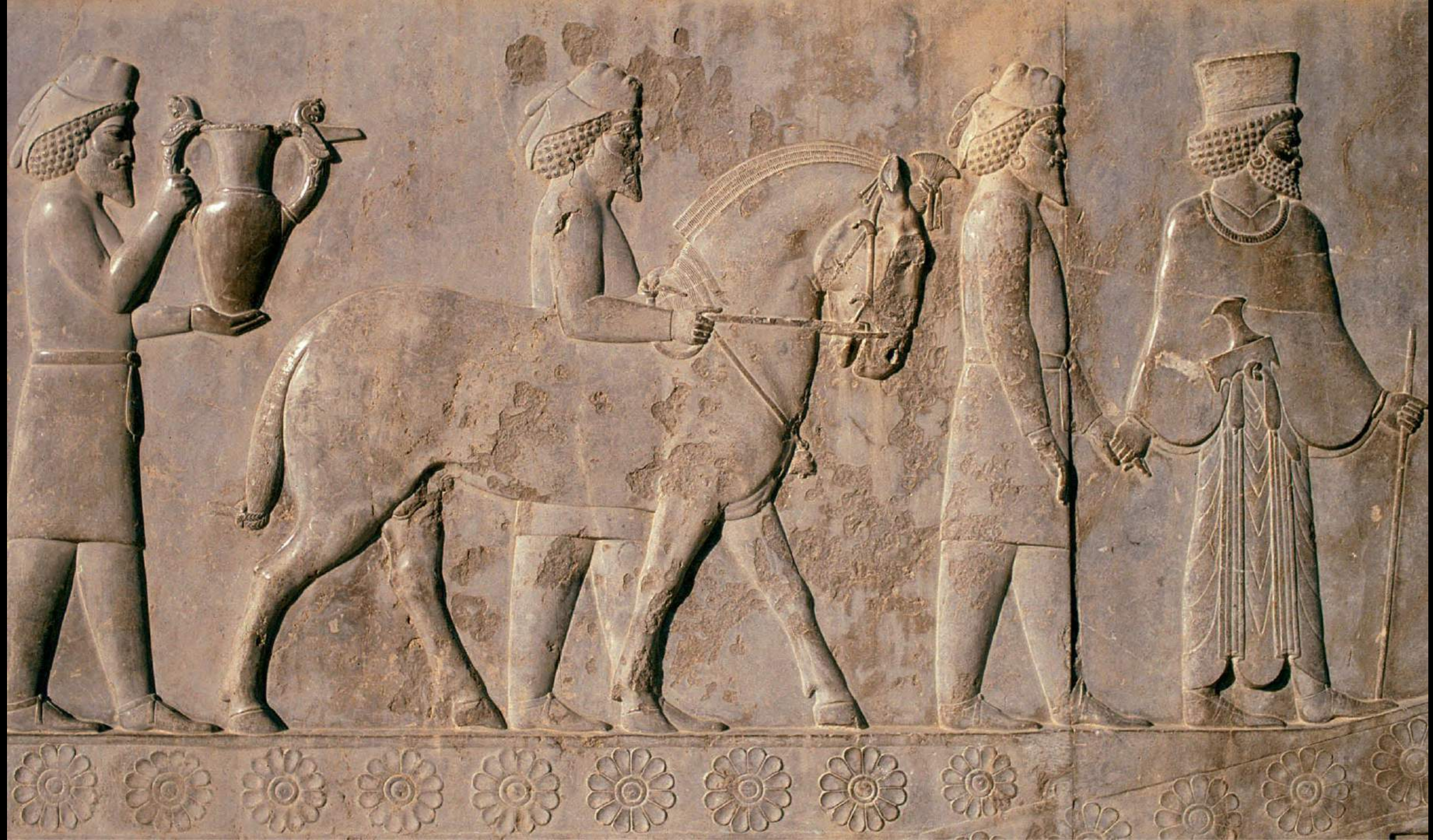
The Persian Empire: Some Notable Aspects

- Satrapies (provinces), governed by satraps
- Respect for religiosity: Cyrus's restoration of the Jews in Babylonian exile (*Ezra* 6:3-5) and Darius's command to a satrap not to dishonor land sacred to a foreign god (Apollo)
- Network of roads allowed for tribute payments to king



As you read Herodotus, consider:

- Conventional view states that Herodotus stresses differences between Greeks and Persians.
- Many scholars now question that view: in fact, a few prominent scholars believe that what Herodotus is doing is showing the *similarities* between the Persian Empire and what would become the *Athenian Empire of Herodotus's own time* in the 430s and 420 BCE.
- In what ways are the Persians and Greeks differentiated, and in what ways does Herodotus imply important similarities between them? It is notable, for instance, that one of the most intense debate scenes in the *Histories* occurs among the Persians as they consider whether to go to war (Book 7, ch. 8 and following).





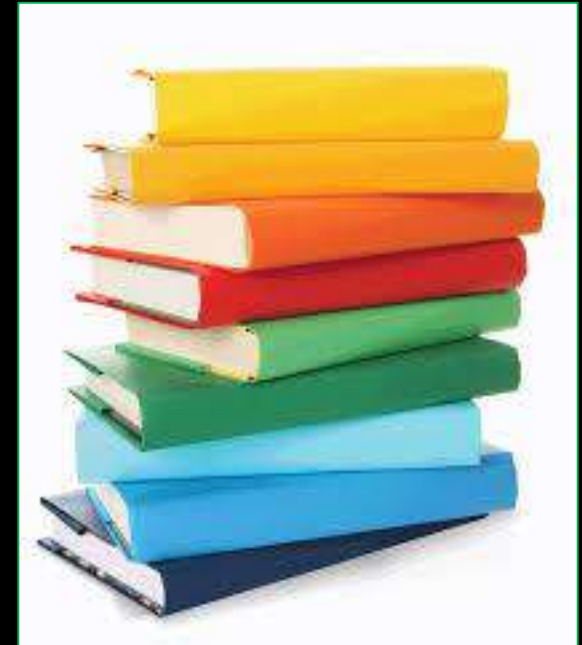


Herodotus's “Independence” from Others’ Views?

“So this is what the Persians and Phoenicians say [about who started hostilities between Greeks and non-Greeks]. I for my part will not proceed by stating that these things happened this way or some other way. But I know of the man who first began unjust deeds against the Greeks, and by indicating this man [Croesus], I will proceed into the rest of my account, traversing equally among human towns both small and great.” (Herodotus 1.5)

General Structure of Herodotus's *Histories*

- **Books 1-4:** Background on Growth of Persian Empire
- **Books 5-6:** Ionian Revolt from Persia and Start of Greco-Persian Wars
- **Books 7-9:** Continuation of Greco-Persian Wars Narrative and Consequences of Greek Victory





Major Events in the Greco-Persian Wars (499-479 BCE)

- **Ionian Revolt** (499-494 BCE), including the Greek burning of the Persian city of Sardis
- **Battle of Marathon** (490 BCE)
- **Battle of Thermopylae** (480 BCE)
- **Battles of Salamis and Plataia** (479 BCE)



Ionian Revolt and the Help of Athens (499-94 BCE)

“It was exactly at this juncture – just when the Athenians were in this frame of mind and had fallen out with Persia – that Aristagoras of Miletus arrived in Athens after he had been thrown out of Sparta by king Cleomenes. He chose to come to Athens after Sparta because it was the most powerful Greek state. He presented himself before the Assembly and gave substantially the same speech as he had given in Sparta, emphasizing how rich Asia was and how easy it would be to beat the Persians, since they did not use either shields or long spears when fighting. He went on, however, to point out that Miletus was an Athenian colony, and that therefore it was appropriate to expect Athens to use its considerable power to protect them ...

Ionian Revolt (*continued*)

“... In the end, he won them over. It seems easier to fool a crowd than a single person, since Aristagoras could not persuade Cleomenes of Lacedaemon [Sparta], who was all alone, but he succeeded with thirty thousand Athenians. So now that they had been won over, the Athenians voted to send a fleet of twenty ships to help the Ionians.

These twenty ships were the beginning of evils for Greeks and barbarians.” (5.97, trans. Waterfield, adapted)

Herodotus is Complicated. Embrace that.

- How does Herodotus depict the Persians?
- How does the narration of Marathon and Thermopylae serve Greek cultural memory and/or Greek stereotypes about Persians?
- How do the Greco-Persian Wars contribute to a sense of Greek unity – and, later, to a Greek sense of *hubris*?