

## Lecture 10: Assyrian Terror and Persian Pride




---



---



---



---



---



---



---

### Neo-Assyrian Empire (934-609)




---



---



---



---



---



---



---

### Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE)

- embarked on vast expansion program
- moved capital to Nimrud
  - development of wealth and art
- Earthly representative of the god Assur
- extensive bureaucracy
- Military-Religious ethos
- “holy war”
- exacting tribute through terror




---



---



---



---



---



---



---

### Assyrian Military innovation

First "professional" Army

- Standing Army 200,000
- Field army 50,000
  - first all iron weapons and knee length coat of armor
  - spearmen had conical helmet with wool liner
  - first standard issue knee-high leather boots with iron plates
  - advanced bow design (2 men to string)
  - first arrow quiver for rapid fire, iron tipped arrows, cotton
- Assurbanipal's harshness prompted a revolt that was crushed decisively in a pitched, two-day battle
- Afterwards he advanced without opposition as far as the Mediterranean and exacted tribute from Phoenicia.
- Unlike any before, the Assyrians began boasting in their ruthlessness around this time.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Assyrian Heavy Cavalry

- Originally cavalry just ordinary foot soldier equipped with armor, lance, sword and heavy boots
- Over time heavy armored coat introduced with blanket, saddle girth, crupper;
- *musarkisus*: appointed by king to obtain horses
- national system of stables and corrals
  - In Nineveh, 3,000 month
  - (100 day)



Assyrian Cavalry (bas relief) 7th century BCE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Shalmaneser III (858-823)

- Army increases in size and sophistication

Battle of Karkar

- 20,000 infantry
- 1,200 chariots
- 12,000 cavalry

- Importance of cavalry increased under Sargon II

Sargon's Palace

- single weapons room contained 200 tons of iron weapons, helmets and armor

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

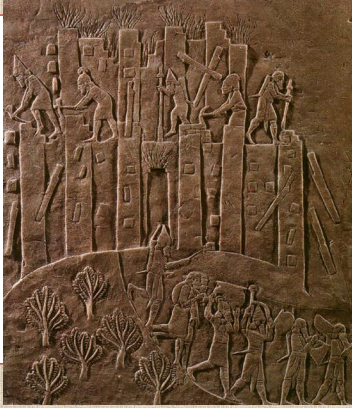
---

---

Siege Warfare:

Mobile Siege Towers  
Battering Rams

Specialized units of  
wall-breakers with  
scaling ladders and  
axes and levers to  
weaken defensive  
walls



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Assyrians on their OWN cruelty

- "I cut off their heads and formed them into pillars"
- "Bubo, son of Buba, I flayed in the city of Arbela and I spread his skin upon the city wall"
- "I flayed all the chief men who had revolted, and I covered the pillar with their skins"
- "Many within the border of my own land I flayed, and spread their skins upon the walls"
- "I cut off the limbs of the officers, the royal officers who had rebelled"
- "3,000 captives I burned with fire"
- "Their corpses I formed into pillars"
- "From some I cut off their hands and their fingers, and from other I cut off their noses, their ears, and their fingers, of many I put out their eyes"
- "I made one pillar of the living, and another of heads, I bound their heads to posts round about the city"

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Bronze band from the gates of the palace of Shalmaneser III (852 B.C.) excavated at Nimrud revealing the horrifying cruelty of the Assyrians and the brutal treatment of their prisoners. British Museum

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Rise of Neo-Babylonian [Chaldean] Empire (612-539 BCE)

Coalition of Medes and Babylonians absorb Assyria:

612 sack Nineveh

610 sack Harran

609 Battle of Carcamesh

- Assyria ceased to exist as an independent power

**Nebuchadnezzar II**

- Hanging Gardens of Babylon
- Book of Daniel; Jewish exile
- Medes expand north and West into Anatolia
- Confronted by new rising power (Lydians)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

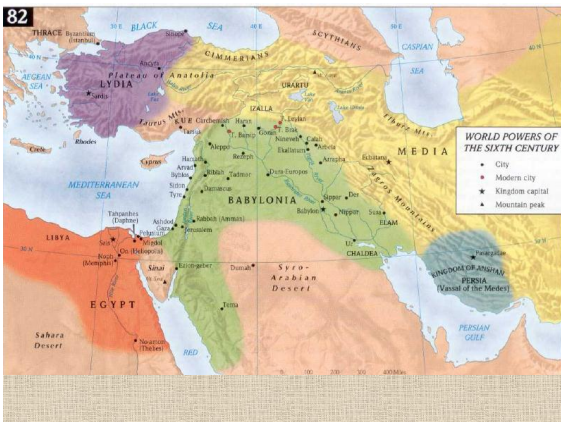
---

---

---

---

---




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Rise of Cyrus and the Persians

- 559 Cyrus ascends the throne of Anshan
- Achaemenid Dynasty
  - unifies Parsa tribes (horsemen)
  - builds capital in Parsagade
  - Cyrus makes secret peace accord with Babylonia and plots to overthrow the Medes

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Cyrus the Great (600-530 BCE)

- 550 BCE army of Median King sent to stop Cyrus
- defects to Cyrus
- Persians march on Ecbatana (Medes capital)
- Median troops rebel and hand over King to Cyrus
- 546-539 conquers Near East everything after that
- Conquers the Ionian Greeks and installs loyal tyrants
  - Herodotus calls Persians the "Medes"



Cyrus's tomb in Pasargadae, Iran UNESCO World Heritage Site (2006).

---

---

---

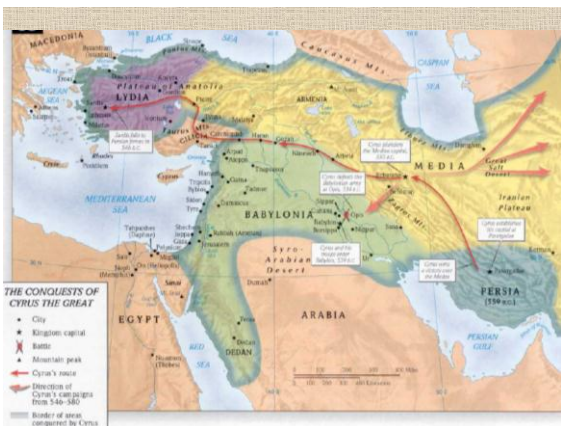
---

---

---

---

---




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Persian Empire

- Persia ruled by coalition of 7 Royal Families
  - Cyrus (Achaemenid family) strongest (but not only)
- Vast Empire:
  - from Aegean to Indus River (2500 mi.)
  - Aral Sea to Ethiopia
- Benevolent (compared to Assyrians and Chaldeans)
  - allowed locals to retain their governmental systems
  - enforced a new currency system
  - Darius builds FABULOUS capital at Persepolis

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Persian Military Power

- Assyrian cavalry and siege experience
  - Medes and road building
- Cyrus' Army
- "The Immortals" kept at 10,000 strength
    - 2000 foot
    - 6000 cavalry
  - Universal military training (10 years for youths)
  - Could raise fighting force of 300,000
  - also draw on levied national forces (not as good)




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Darius (c. 522– 486 BCE)



Behistun Inscription, near Kermanshah, Iran

---

---

---

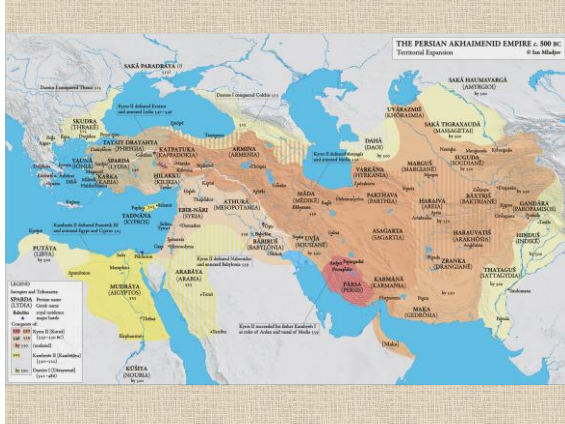
---

---

---

---

---




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Persian Logistical Excellence under Darius

- 47 different nationes (28 Satraps - provinces)
- Logistical ability would not be duplicated until Napoleonic Era

Series of roads

- Sardis-Susa 1500 mi. in 15 days (horse relays)
  - postal system
- move large military units quickly to anywhere in Empire
- Royal “inspectors” would check up on Satraps

Supply scouts sent ahead to help logistics  
Central command carried all needed supplies

- arrows, bows armor, naphtha, water
- Corps dedicated to pack animals

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Army Organization

#### Infantry

- 6-man section (corporal)
- 2 sections = 12 man squad (sergeant)
- 2 squads = 24 man platoon (lieutenant)
- 4 platoon = 100 man company (captain)
- 10 companies = 1000 man regiment (colonel)
  - [main unit]
- 10 regiments = 10,000 man brigade called *myriad* (general)

Persian infantry occupied center of the line: cavalry in rear  
– more reliable

- 80/20 (infantry/cavalry)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Economics of Army Supply

- Armies had to wage war “on a budget”
  - no longer take from the people while marching through
- Quartermasters paid in hard currency
  - gold Daric
- Supplying the military became big business
- Towns usually welcomed the Persian army as economic boom



gold Daric

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### How Art Made the World (BBC 2006)

Presented by Dr. Nigel Spivey

- Classical Art and Archaeology at Cambridge University

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Satrap (governor) Satrapy (province)




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---