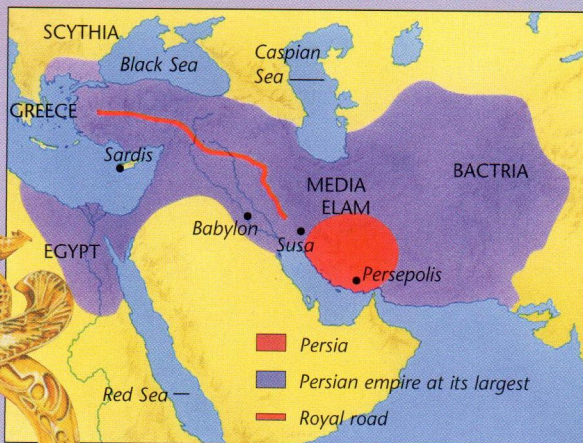


THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

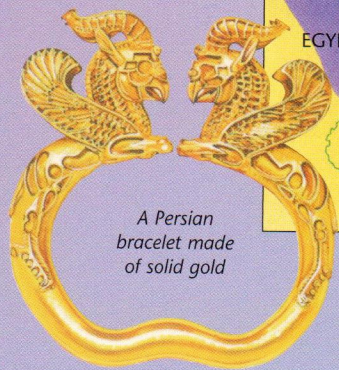
The Medes and the Persians were tribes who spoke Indo-European languages and moved to the Middle East around 2000BC, settling in present-day Iran. At first, the Medes were more powerful, but around 550BC the Persian King Cyrus II defeated the Medes and took control.

THE GREATEST EMPIRE

During the next 60 years, Cyrus II and his successors conquered the greatest empire the Middle East had ever seen. The Persian empire stretched 4,200km (2,600m), from Egypt in the west to Bactria in the east, and even north into Europe.



This map shows the Persian empire at its largest extent.



A Persian bracelet made of solid gold

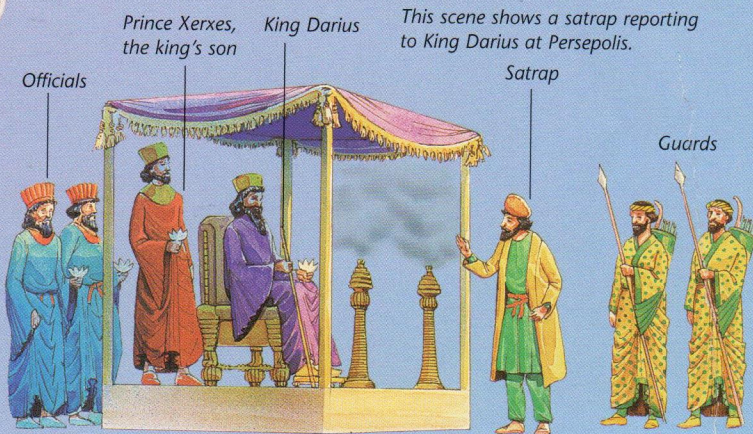
RUNNING THE EMPIRE

To help them run their enormous empire, Persian kings divided it into smaller provinces ruled by local governors, called satraps. It was important for them to keep in touch with the king, so roads were built to enable royal messengers to carry letters swiftly across the empire. The main Royal Road ran for 2,700km (1,680m).

PERSEPOLIS

The Persian king Darius I started building a magnificent palace at Persepolis. His successors completed it, and important ceremonies were held there. Sadly, it was later burned down by Alexander the Great, King of Macedonia.

A statue of a griffin from the ruins of Persepolis



This scene shows a satrap reporting to King Darius at Persepolis.