

**Lesson 1*****Student Handout 1—The Persian Press***

# The Persian Press

1 shekel

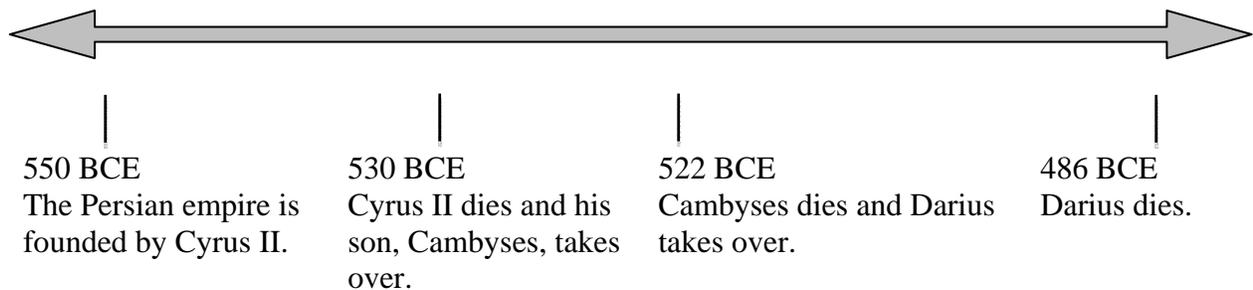
November 486 BCE

## King Darius Dies

King Darius died last night at his palace in Susa, the capital. He will be remembered as a man who brought wealth to the empire through his reforms and his influence on trade. King Darius introduced coinage, the daric and the shekel, which has greatly aided in the administration of the empire. He also made the empire more efficient with the construction of the Royal Road and the canal between the Nile and the Red Sea. The Royal Road's paved surface has made trade between Susa and Sardis effortless and has greatly increased the wealth of those here in Persia. The canal had also made trade with Africa much simpler. Due to these feats of engineering, the empire has expanded to the largest it has ever been. The Persian empire now stretches from North Africa to India in the east and the Aral Sea in the north to the Persian Gulf. People from our diverse empire (made up of Medes, Egyptians, Greeks, Babylonians, Bactrians, as well as Persians) have come to pay their respects to Darius. In his imperial bureaucracy, satraps enabled him to control his empire as well as aid in the administration of so many provinces. "We are devastated to learn that King Darius is dead. However, we will continue to do our duty for Persia and collect tribute for the next king," stated one satrap. Who will the next king be? King Darius' son Xerxes is likely to claim the throne, yet his brother may be willing to fight him for it.



Add any important dates as you read The Persian Press.



King Darius' Royal Road begins in Susa and ends in Sardis. If King Xerxes remains in power, he will lengthen the road to Persepolis. Trace the road as it travels through eight cities and add other cities along the route. Mark where the silk road intersects the Royal Road.



## Persia's Past Remembered

In 550 BCE, King Cyrus founded the great Persian empire after conquering the Median kingdom and uniting the Medes and the Persians. Founding the Achaemenid dynasty, he went on to defeat

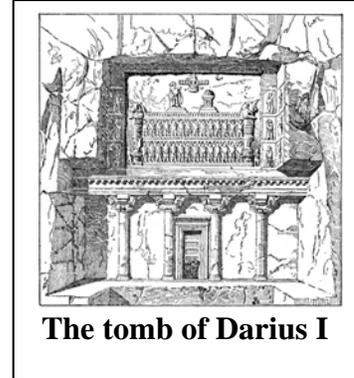


and conquer Lydia and Babylon. King Cyrus was able to manage his empire through a policy of tolerance. When he conquered the Medes, he allowed them to serve in the government. When he conquered Babylon, the imprisoned Hebrews welcomed him as a liberator and were allowed to return to their homeland of Jerusalem. He allowed every people he conquered to keep its religious beliefs and cultural traditions. This earned him respect throughout the empire. His wisdom led him to be tolerant of others and, as a result, he developed the first Charter of Human Rights. This charter outlined the rights all humans had within his empire. He refused to make anyone a slave.

He also condemned terrorism and aided those he conquered in restoring their cities. Once he had captured an empire, few rebelled. They admired Cyrus for his benevolence and did not wish to cause problems. However, Cyrus did face problems when warlike tribes attacked the eastern part of the empire. The Persian emperor, Cyrus the Great, lost his life in the east in 530 BCE fighting the tribes near the Oxus and Jaxartes rivers.

## Persia Mourns the Loss of a Great Leader

King Darius will always be remembered as one of the most persistent leaders of the Persian empire. Throughout his reign, he continuously tried to expand the empire for the glory of Persia. He attacked Naxos in 499 BCE because the inhabitants rebelled (the Ionian revolt), but after four months the Persians were forced to withdraw. The Ionians became over-confident and revolted against Persia, setting up a new government. The Ionian leader, however, knew Persia was strong and asked Sparta and Athens for help. Sparta declined but Athens sent 20 ships. The Ionians were able to conquer Sardis but were eventually defeated by the Persians. King Darius showed mercy towards the Ionians and did not punish them; however, the Athenians needed to be taught a lesson not to interfere. King Darius attacked Athens in 490 BCE at the Battle of Marathon. Persia was beaten and King Darius died before he could enact his revenge. In spite of this, plans are being made even now to attack Greece once more and finally show Athens which is the more powerful civilization. Will there be another Persian War?



**The tomb of Darius I**

### Wanted: Soldiers

Soldiers are needed for the new king's bodyguards (the Immortals). Soldiers will use a new training system implemented by King Darius. Unlike in Cyrus' time, soldier positions are paid and full-time. Inquire at the citadel.

### Questions for Review

1. How was the Persian empire founded?
2. How did Darius' accomplishments as king help Persia unite and expand?
3. What political policies helped Cyrus and Darius control the Persian empire?
4. What events led to the first Persian War and how did it end?

### Picture sources:

Darius: Rock relief, Behistun, Iran, Wikimedia Commons, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Darius\\_I\\_of\\_Persia](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Darius_I_of_Persia)

Royal Road map: Livius: Articles on Ancient History, [http://www.livius.org/ro-rz/royal\\_road/royal\\_road.htm](http://www.livius.org/ro-rz/royal_road/royal_road.htm)

Darius's tomb near Persepolis: Karen Whimsy, <http://karenswhimsy.com/ancient-persia.shtml>

Cyrus The Great: Karen Whimsy, <http://karenswhimsy.com/cyrus-the-great.shtml>