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WHITE INK



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Persia From a Historical Perspective

Ancient Greek and Roman historians called the East “The Near East”. This title has remained in place up to date in the historical periodization with the addition of “the ancient”, and if there are historians who have not adhered to it, we may agree or disagree with them in that. In general, the ancient Near East, the “common term”, included many ancient civilizations, nations and different human races, which in turn participated in the civilizational, intellectual and cultural formation of man, as each nation contributed through its civilization, intellectual and cultural heritage, its religious rituals and its architectural monuments.

Among those nations are the Persians, whose ethnic Origins goes back to the Aryan group. There are those who consider them among the oldest Indo-European migrations who migrated to the Iranian plateau during the end of the second millennium BC, perhaps from the Caucasus or Central Asia. They were originally herders who roamed the steppes with their livestock and were ethnically related to the Bactrians, Medes and Parthians in the 5th century BC.

The Greek historian Herodotus described them as being divided into several different tribes, the most powerful of which was Pasargadae, of which the Achaemenid clan was a part. In the territory of Persia, the first Persian state was established, the Achaemenid Empire, which the Medes prepared the ground for its emergence. The Achaemenids inherited their systems, legislation, laws, religions, and even their social patterns, and their kings claimed that they were descended from a semi-legendary king called “Achaemenes”, after whom the empire was named later. This is almost present in most ancient civilizations in which myths were a major obsession in their formation and their intellectual and authoritarian structure in the management and empowerment of the state through those stories, legends and myths.

Persia was not far from that obsession, as it was ruled by several empires throughout history, the first of which was the Medes state referred to, then the Achaemenid state, which was led by its founder King Cyrus II. He conquered the capital of the Medes known as “Ecbatana”, present-day Hamadan, and completely controlled matters in the Medes Empire. His conquest of it was the first step towards his founding of Greater Persia. He fought a number of other wars in which he relied on creating alliances with many rulers and kings. After the end of the reign of King Cyrus, his son Cambyses II ruled Persia and annexed Egypt, but the outbreak of some problems and conflicts led to his killing. After that, Darius I took power. He was able to regain control of the Persian Empire again, and was keen to divide it into about twenty provinces.

For some historians, the Achaemenid Empire was something very different from the previous empire, as it was the first global empire, so to speak. It was an Afro-Eurasian empire because it included parts of Africa, Asia, and Europe. That empire expanded from the eastern Mediterranean to the western borders with India and included a variety of cultures and ethnic groups until Alexander the Great conquered it in the fourth century BC. These peoples speak Persian as an indigenous language, and it is an Indo-European language.

In his book “The Story of Civilization”, Will Durant says of the Persians: “The Medes are the ones who gave Persia their Aryan language, and they gave it their thirty-six letters of the alphabet, and they taught them to use pillars a lot in buildings. They were the ones who taught them their moral laws, instructed them to depend on agriculture during peace, and taught them the religion of Zoroaster. The Persian element was not distinguished from other races in anything except that it benefited from the civilizations that preceded it and tried to adapt them to its advantage after it had the dominant and controlling power over the destinies of peoples. It is historically known that the mixing of a number of peoples and ethnicities contributed to the formation of a mixed identity of the Persians, as it absorbed a number of ethnicities such as the Turks, Greeks, Arabs and others who had a great role in its civilizational advancement”.