

FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Religion/Ceremony Celebration **History** Prayer
 Gathas Comparative Religion Shahnameh

Age Group (circle one): PreK-K Grades 1-3 Grades 4-5 Grades 6-8 **Grades 9-12**

Lesson # (if applicable): Lesson 3

Subject of the Lesson: The Achaemenids- Cambyses II

Background knowledge for teacher:

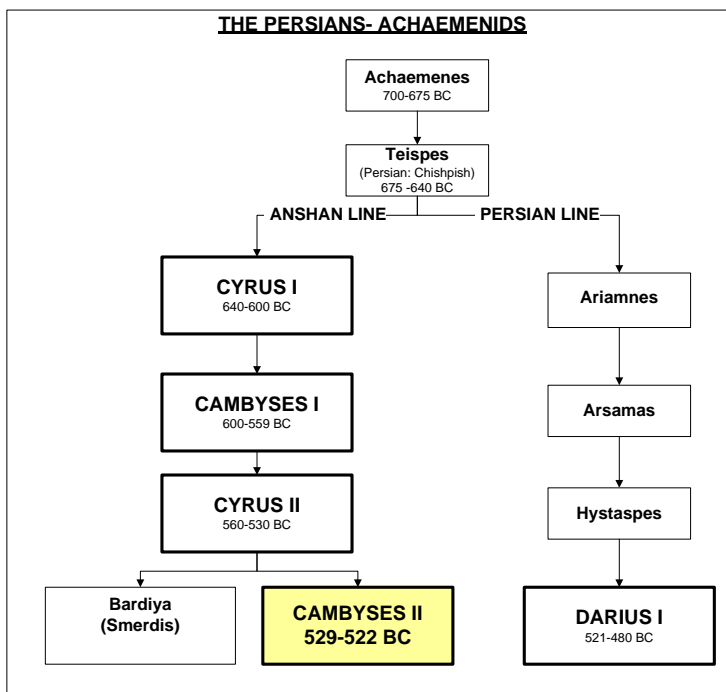
CAMBYSES II – 529–521 BCE

Cambyses II was the eldest son of Cyrus the Great (Cyrus II) and became king after Cyrus' death.

Cambyses' main achievement was the conquest of Egypt in 525 BC, which established Persian rule there for two centuries.



Cambyses II of Persia capturing pharaoh [Psamtik III](#)



Before becoming king in 529 B.C., Cambyses II was appointed coregent over Babylon and officially appointed King of Babylon in 530 B.C. by his father Cyrus II.

As the eldest son, Cambyses was heir to the throne. After Cyrus' death, **Cambyses' younger brother, Bardiya** ("Smerdis" in Greek), **challenged Cambyses' right to the throne.**

Cambyses is reported to have murdered Bardiya, concealing his death order to gain unchallenged rule.

The campaign to conquer Egypt had already been planned by Cyrus II. To conquer Egypt Cambyses created the first Persian naval fleet whose job was to supply his army on the march through the barren and desert lands leading to Egypt. This naval fleet was used later by Darius and Xerxes to march to Europe and Athens. In 525 B.C. Cambyses II executed the plan and laid siege to Memphis (in Egypt) where Psamtik III, ruler of Egypt, and the Egyptians had barricaded themselves. After Cambyses II took Memphis, **Egypt became a satrapy and Cambyses became Pharaoh**. He officially ruled as pharaoh under the Egyptian name Mesutire and he carried on the traditional religious and military activities of Egyptian kingship.

An account by the Egyptian admiral of the royal fleet and priest shows that **Cambyses followed Cyrus' religious policy of tolerance**.

Cambyses II had intended to extend the Persian Empire into Northern Africa, but logistics presented a problem shortly after he annexed the northern part of Ethiopia.



While in Egypt, Cambyses heard that his throne was occupied by a pretender, Gaumâta, who had assumed the name of this younger brother, Bardiya.



This new ruler was accepted by nearly all the provinces of the empire. Gaumata tried to win the favor of the people by remitting (suspending) taxes for three years and attempting religious reform.

Cambyses tried to rush back to Persia, but according to one story, while mounting his horse, the sheath of his sword broke and the blade pierced his thigh. Cambyses died in Syria, childless.

Historical Bias?

Later Greek writers, perhaps following a hostile Egyptian tradition, represent Cambyses as impious and tyrannical. Greek writers (e.g., Herodotus) accused Cambyses of acts of cruelty and madness during his conquest of Egypt, including the murder of the Apis Bull, central to many Egyptians. In fact, Darius, Cambyses and later Xerxes all demonstrated great respect for the practices associated with the Apis bull and its full burial honors.

Today's historians think this report is largely an invention and suspect that the primary sources for the Greeks were Egyptian priest that resented losing power during Persian rule.

<https://egyptianaemporium.wordpress.com/2012/07/11/dispelling-the-myth-herodotus-cambyses-and-egyptian-religion-2/>

Lesson for Students:

➤ Key Concepts:

At the end of the lesson students should understand the following...

- Cambyses was Cyrus's direct heir. NOT DARIUS!
- He was groomed/trained to be king.
- Cyrus made him King of Babylon
- Possibly killed his younger brother to avoid other claims to the throne.
- Executed Cyrus' plan to conquer Egypt
- He built the first Persian navy
- While in Egypt, his throne was occupied by a pretender, Gaumâta, who had assumed the name of this younger brother, Bardiya.
- Died while rushing back from Egypt to deal with Gaumâta/ Bardiya with no Heir.

➤ Use the accompanying PowerPoint to present the lesson to students.



Activity for Students:

- Lesson Prompts: Use the questions for class discussion.
 - 1) Was Cambyses prepared to rule?
 - a) Why is this important?
 - b) Do you think Cambyses really killed his brother? We will revisit this when we talk about Darius.
 - 2) What is the dynamic with Egypt and Persia?
 - a) Explain that Egypt constantly revolted and many of the Persian Kings had to deal with Egypt upon taking the throne.
 - b) Connect back to the Book of Pharaohs and what we know from it about Persian kings.
- Use the “Historical Bias?” chart in “Background Knowledge for Teacher” section as a discussion starter.

Source:

- Information has been provided by Mr. Xerxes Kotval
- <https://co-geeking.com/2018/08/20/the-curious-case-of-cambyses-and-the-apis-bull/>

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