

IRAN (Persia)



Cyrus' cylinder

“Persia” derived from “Persis”, the ancient Greek name for Iran, emerged in the 6th century BC under Achaemenian dynasty.

Cyrus, later known as Cyrus The Great, lived from 580-529 BC, and was the first Achaemenian Emperor of Persia, who issued a decree on his aims and policies, later hailed as his charter of the rights of nations. Inscribed on a clay cylinder, this is known to be the first declaration of Human Rights, and is now kept at the British Museum. A replica of this is also at the United Nations in New York. He was King of Persia from 559 BC until 530 BC.

About the text:

In this text, Cyrus describes how he conquers the old city. Nabonidus is considered a tyrant with strange religious ideas, which causes the god Marduk to intervene. That Cyrus thought of himself as chosen by a supreme god, is confirmed by Second Isaiah; his claim that he entered the city without struggle corroborates the same statement in the Chronicle of Nabonidus.

At the end of his story, Cyrus tells that he "returned the images of the sanctuaries to return home". This means that he gave the statues back to the temples of the subject people; the Babylonians had captured these images and kept them as hostages.

This is the first known statement that the inhabitants of a state were free to worship the gods they wanted. Indeed, the Persian Empire was remarkably free of religious persecution, and Cyrus might have said the same as the Prussian ruler Frederick the Great: "In my kingdom, everyone has the right to seek blessing in his own way". With some justification, the section on Cyrus' religious measures has been likened to a human rights charter.

References:

http://www.livius.org/ct-cz/cyrus_I/cyrus.html

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran>