



Darius I (521-486 BC) inherited, then expanded, his empire. Stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus Valley, it covered an area of nearly 2.9 million square miles (7.5 million square kilometers) and included around ten million people.

This image depicts Darius, the Great King, enthroned in the magnificent city which he built - Persepolis. In his right hand, he holds the royal scepter. In his left, he holds the symbol of royalty - a lotus blossom with two buds.

Much of what we know about Darius I (his name, in Old Persian, means "He Who Holds Firm the Good") comes from his own words which are found in various inscriptions. The most notable, the Behistun Inscription, is located at his tomb. Translated into English, it says (in part):

(Thus) saith Darius, the king : These are the provinces which are subject unto me, and by the grace of Auramazda [the supreme god of the ancient Persians] became I king of them : Persia, Susiana, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, the (Islands) of the Sea, Sparda, Ionia, [Media], Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactria, Sogdiana, Gandara, Scythia, Sattagydia, Arachosia and Maka; twenty-three lands in all.

A story, from the time the Suez Canal was created, helps to shed light on the extent of his accomplishments. In 1866, workers digging twenty miles north of Suez found fragments of a red-granite stele. It was about seven feet wide and ten feet tall. The stele had an inscription, in four languages (Old Persian, Babylonian, Elamite, and Egyptian) which was really a message from Darius, the Great King of Persia, about the Nile-Red Sea Canal:

I ordered this canal to be dug from the Nile, which flows in Egypt, to the sea that goes to Persia. This canal was dug out as I commanded and ships went from Egypt through this canal into Persia as was my desire.

Herodotus, the historian, tells us the canal was so wide that two war galleys (under oar) could pass each other and so long that it took ships four days to travel from one end to the other.

Darius the Great was the father of Xerxes I, also known as Xerxes the Great.

Credits:

First quoted passage, from the Behistun Inscription.

Second quoted passage, from *The Antiquities of Ancient Egypt*, by Diodorus Siculus, page 42 - see, especially, footnote 71.

Image online, courtesy [Livius](#).

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Darius-the-Great-Father-of-Xerxes1>

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