Iron Age Empires

- Developed the royal road, which ran sixteen hundred miles through the empire
- Used a system much like the Pony Express to carry messages back and forth
- The completed canal between the Seas supported Persian commercial interests
- Used a standardized coinage system throughout the Near East

**Persian Society and Religion**

- The Persian king was considered the king of kings, and wore elaborate robes and sat on golden thrones in large palaces
- Anyone introduced to the king was expected to grovel on the floor (proskynesis)
- Carved huge murals of themselves in the sides of cliffs to publicize great deeds
- Saw themselves as earthly representatives of the gods
- Persian families were patriarchal
  - The father had absolute authority over the children
  - Men could have several wives to ensure the birth of legitimate heirs
- Persian soldiers were assigned land by the king in exchange for military service
- Saw craftwork as demeaning, so assigned that to the subject peoples
- Scribes were valued for their ability to record things such as tax records
- Most of the population was made of herders and small farmers
- Slaves from was performed menial labor, like serving on building projects
- Dualistic religion
  - Universe in a perpetual conflict between good and evil
  - Sky gods were bad, and abstract moral qualities were good
  - Ahura Mazda was the supreme deity who represented truth and justice
  - Ahriman represented darkness and evil
  - Zoroastrianism
    - Individual responsibility for being good rather than evil
    - Spiritual things were good and material things were evil
    - At the end, everyone would be judged by Ahura Mazda
    - Became the Persian state religion

**Persia and the West**

- Kept being invaded and raided by Scythians
  - Planned to invade central Asia in 513 BCE
  - The Scythians declined to fight, and led the Persians further into the steppes
  - Darius was forced to turn back because they got low on supplies
  - Even though the Scythians weren't defeated, they were demoralized
- Acquired Thrace, which was the first time a Near Eastern empire had European land