



IRAN: Geopolitics and Ancient Iran

Chris Schaefer

chris.schaefer@bataandiary.com

832-428-1977

www.bataandiary.com/Iran.html

The Women's Institute of Houston

Continuing Education

Iran: History, Religion, Politics and War

Dates: Thursdays, Jan 30 thru Mar 6, 2025.

Times: 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Instructor: Chris Schaefer, Chris.Schaefer@bataandiary.com

Slides available at: www.bataandiary.com/Iran.html



Course Overview

Iranians today grapple with a historic past that ranges from glorious Empire to near-subjugation, oppressive political realities and a hostile outside world. The proxy "wall of security" their leaders recently built around the country has crumbled in the face of an Israeli onslaught. Iran's new allies, Russia and China, are actually an old enemy and a new opportunist. Iran's religious role as champion of the oppressed Shi'a masses in a Sunni Muslim world is increasingly in question.

We will take an in-depth look at what makes Iran tick, its colorful and fascinating history, and its ill-defined but clearly hostile relationships with Israel and the United States.



Class Subjects:

Part 1 Geopolitics. Iranian geography, natural resources and political neighborhood. Iran's early settlers and first national religion, Zoroastrianism. Aryans, Turks, Kurds and Afghans. Cyrus I, the Jews, and the Persian Empire.

Part 2 Persia. Iran and Islam. The Arab invasion brings Islam. Imam Ali and the Umayyads. The Sunni/Shia split defines the political fault-lines that divide the Middle East today. Discussion of Iranian and Iraqi Shi'a religion.

Part 3 Europe and Iran. The Safavid and Qajar dynasties. British takeover of Iranian oil and assets. Iran in World War I. Reza Shah Pahlavi and the Russians. Iran during World War II. Mohammad Shah Pahlavi. The U.S., the CIA and the Mossadegh affair.

Part 4 The U.S. and Iran. Nuclear ambitions. SAVAK. Ayatollah Khomeini and the hostage crises of 1979. Jimmy Carter's rescue. Exporting the revolution. The Iran-Iraq war. The Iran-Contra affair. Flight 655 and the USS Vincennes. Radical Islam and Hezbollah.

Part 5 Era of Animosity. Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei. 9/11 and the Taliban. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the Green Movement. Hassan Rouhani and the moderates. Iran's nuclear program draws international sanctions. Terrorism—al Qaeda and ISIS. Qassem Soleimani and the wall of proxies—Iraq militias, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, Hamas and the Houthis.

Part 6 Iran Today. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The Trump sanctions. Ebrahim Raisi and the hard-liners. Military confrontation—the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Flight 752. Support for Hamas. Confronting Israel. Iran in the wake of Israeli retaliation.

Suggested reading:

Books:

- Polk, William R. *Understanding Iran: Everything You Need to Know, From Persia to the Islamic Republic, From Cyrus to Ahmadinejad.*
- Xenophon. *Cyropaedia: the Education of Cyrus.* (An early biography of Cyrus the Great.)
- Herodotus. *The Histories.* (Story of the wars between the Greek city-states and Cyrus' Persian Empire. Herodotus is sometimes referred to as the "father of history," but he wrote what he heard about without doing much research related to accuracy. Some of what he says is reflective of the times, but not true.)
- Xenophon. *Anabasis of Cyrus (i.e. The Persian Expedition).* (First-person account of a failed Greek mercenary expedition into Persia in support of Cyrus the Younger, son of Darius II.)

Suggested reading:

Books:

- Polk, William R. *Understanding Iran: Everything You Need to Know, From Persia to the Islamic Republic, From Cyrus to Ahmadinejad.*
- Xenophon. *Cyropaedia: the Education of Cyrus.* (An early biography of Cyrus the Great.)
- Herodotus. *The Histories.* (Story of the wars between the Greek city-states and Cyrus' Persian Empire. Herodotus is sometimes referred to as the "father of history," but he wrote what he heard about without doing much research related to accuracy. Some of what he says is reflective of the times, but not true.)
- Xenophon. *Anabasis of Cyrus* (i.e., *The Persian Expedition*). (First-person account of a failed Greek mercenary expedition into Persia in support of Cyrus the Younger, son of Darius II.)
- Harasta, Jesse. *The History of the Sunni-Shia Split: Understanding the Divisions Within Islam.*
- Shuster, William Morgan, *The Strangling of Persia.*
- Fromkin, David. *A Peace to End All Peace.* (The legacy of World War I)
- Kinzer, Stephen. *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror.* (Excellent analysis of the Mossadegh Affair.)
- Roosevelt, Kermit. *Countercoup: The Struggle for Control of Iran.* (the Mossadegh Affair straight from the horse's mouth)
- United States Army Command and General Staff College. *After the Countercoup: Advising the Imperial Armed Forces of Iran.*
- Ram, Haggai. *Iranophobia: The Logic of an Israeli Obsession.*
- Eltahawy, Mona. *Headscarves & Hymens: Why the Middle East Needs a Sexual Revolution.*

Movies:

- *Coup 53.* Documentary on British involvement in the Mossadegh Affair.
- *Evolution of a Revolution: Live from Tehran.* Peter Jennings covers the Iranian Revolution. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aFnGhr_JD8.
- *Rosewater.* Movie by Jon Stewart, based on the book *Then They Came for Me* by Maziar Bahan. Story of a journalist arrested for covering the 2009 Iranian elections.

News sources:

- Al Monitor. An independent Middle East news service based in Washington, D.C. Go to www.al-monitor.com. Click on the blue box labeled "Sign Up for our Newsletters" to the right of the headlines. Click "Daily Briefing," enter your e-mail address and click "Subscribe." They will send you an e-mail. In the e-mail, click "Yes, subscribe me to this list."
- Press TV. The official Iranian news agency broadcasts on some U.S. cable channels. Good examples of the one-sided news coverage which Iranians are allowed to watch--although somewhat toned-down for U.S. consumption.

Iran, names and terminology:

Zagros Mountains

Alborz (Elburz) Mountains

- Mount Damavand

Lake Urmia

Arvand Rud, Shatt al-Arab

Karun (Karoun) river

Zayandeh river, (Isfahan)

Boodkhaneye Khoshk, (Shiraz)

Tehran, pop 8M + 3.5M in adjacent Karaj

Tabriz, pop 3M

Mashhad (shrine city), pop 2.5M

Isfahan (half the world), pop 1.7M

Shiraz, pop 1.6M

Qom (religious capital), pop 1.4M

Qanats

Shish-khan

Zoroaster

Ahura Mazda, "God Great"

- Vohumanah, archangel of good thoughts
- Asha Vahishta, archangel of truth and righteousness
- Khehathra (Kshathra) Vairya, archangel of good royalty and presiding Lord of metals
- Spenta Armaiti, archangel of modesty and presiding Lord of the Earth
- Haurvatat, archangel of health and presiding Lord of waters
- Ameretat, archangel of immortality, who presides over plants

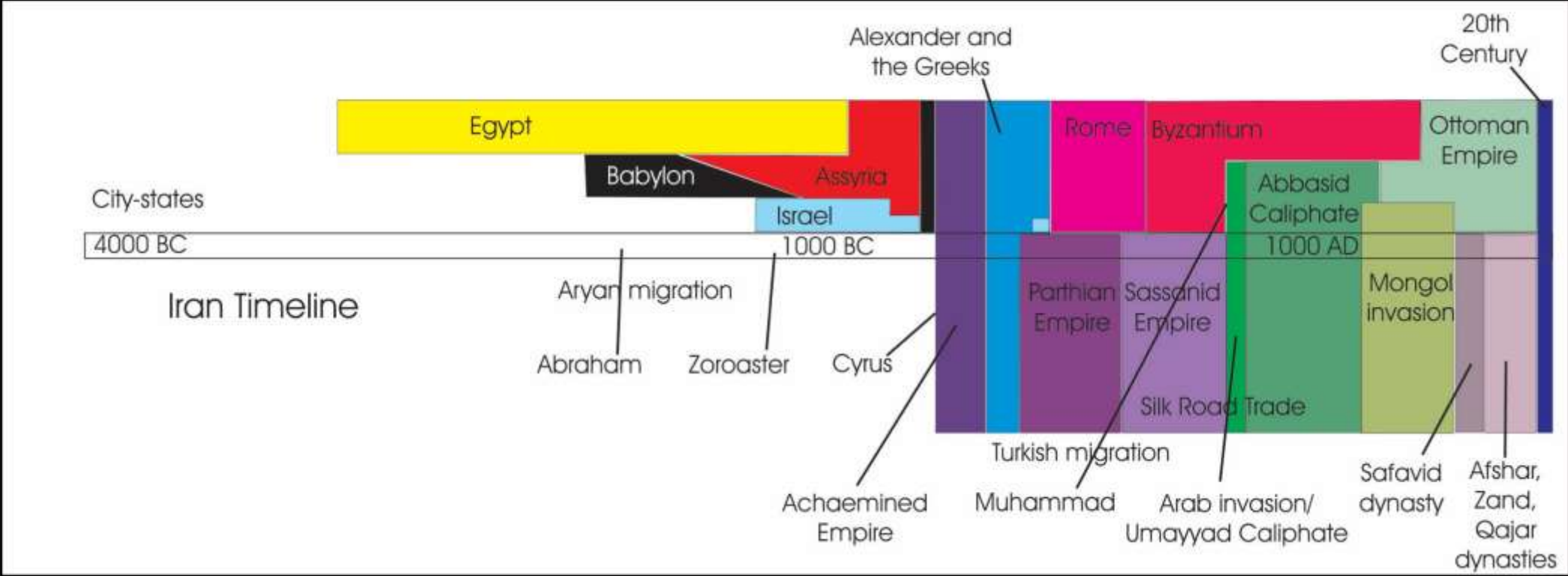
Gathas

Zend Avesta

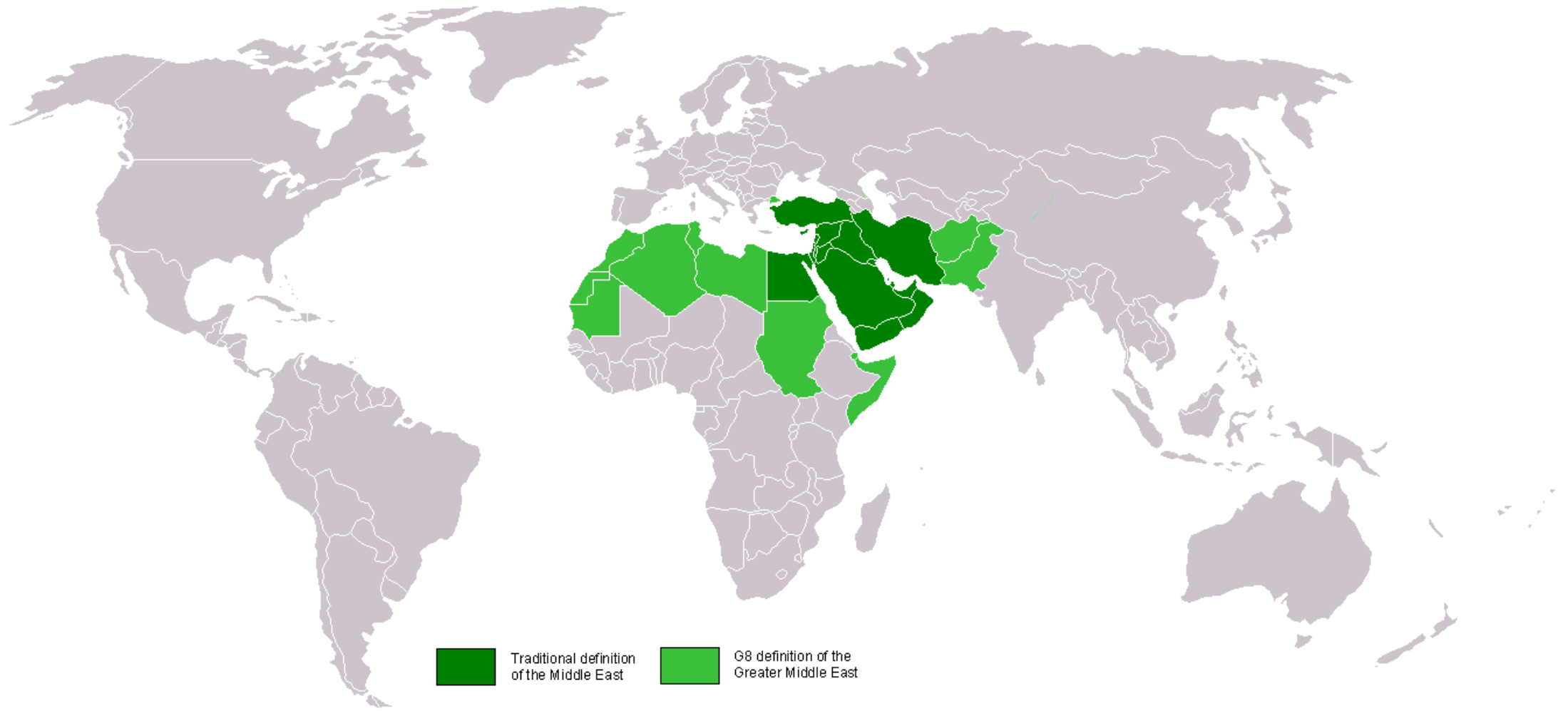
Fravahr (Faravahar)

Achaemenid capitals:

- Pasargadae
- Susa
- Ecbatana



Geopolitics



Greater Middle East

Area:
Iran = 630,000 sq miles
US = 3,800,000 sq miles
US is 6 times larger

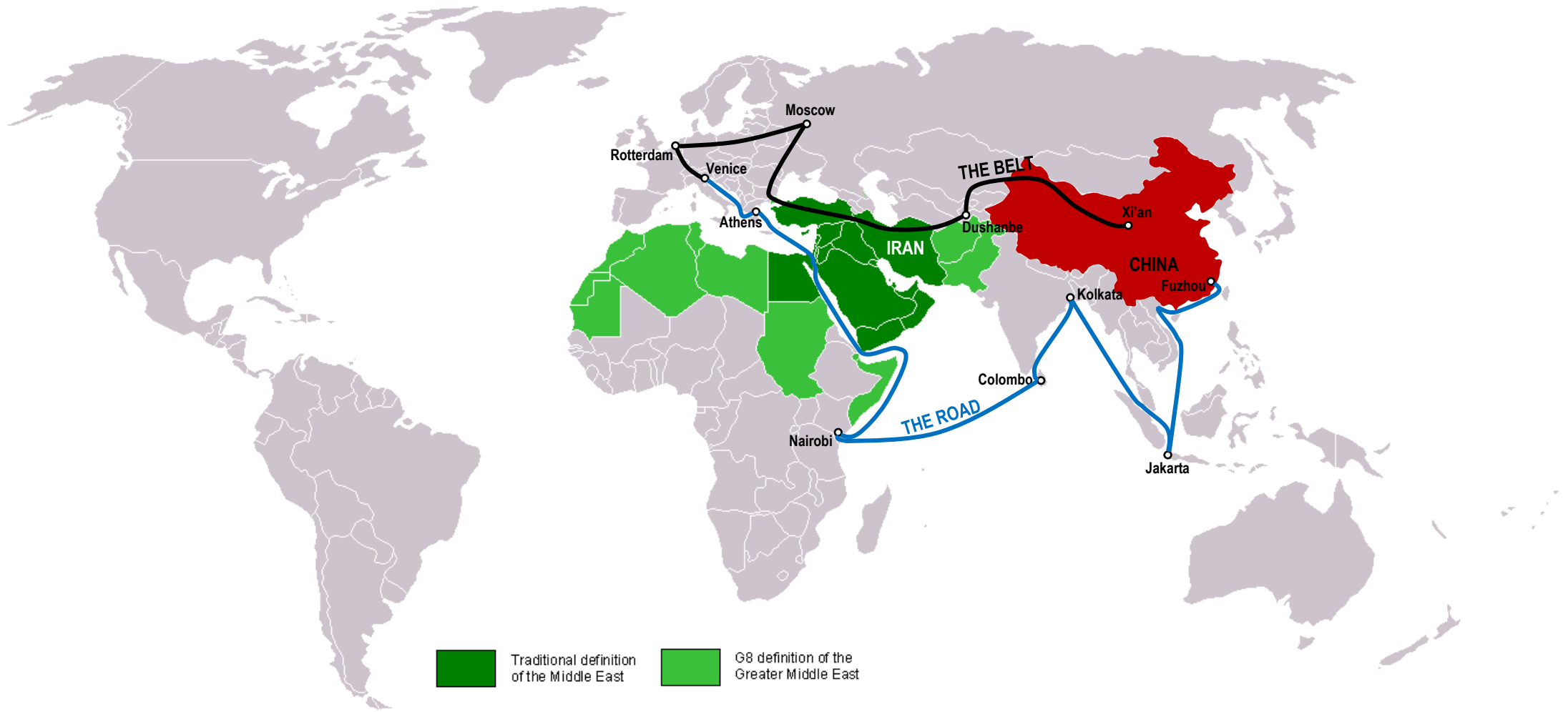


Population:
Iran = 84,000,000
US = 319,000,000
US is 4 times larger

Area:
Iran = 630,000 sq miles
Texas = 270,000 sq miles
Iran is 2.3 times larger



Population:
Iran = 84,000,000
Texas = 29,000,000
Iran is 3 times larger



China's Belt and Road

Exports to:

- China 36%
- Turkey 20%
- Kuwait 6%
- Pakistan 5%
- India 4%
- UAE 1%



Imports from:

- China 28%
- UAE 19%
- Brazil 13%
- Turkey 9%
- India 6%







Political Neighborhood





Friends and Enemies

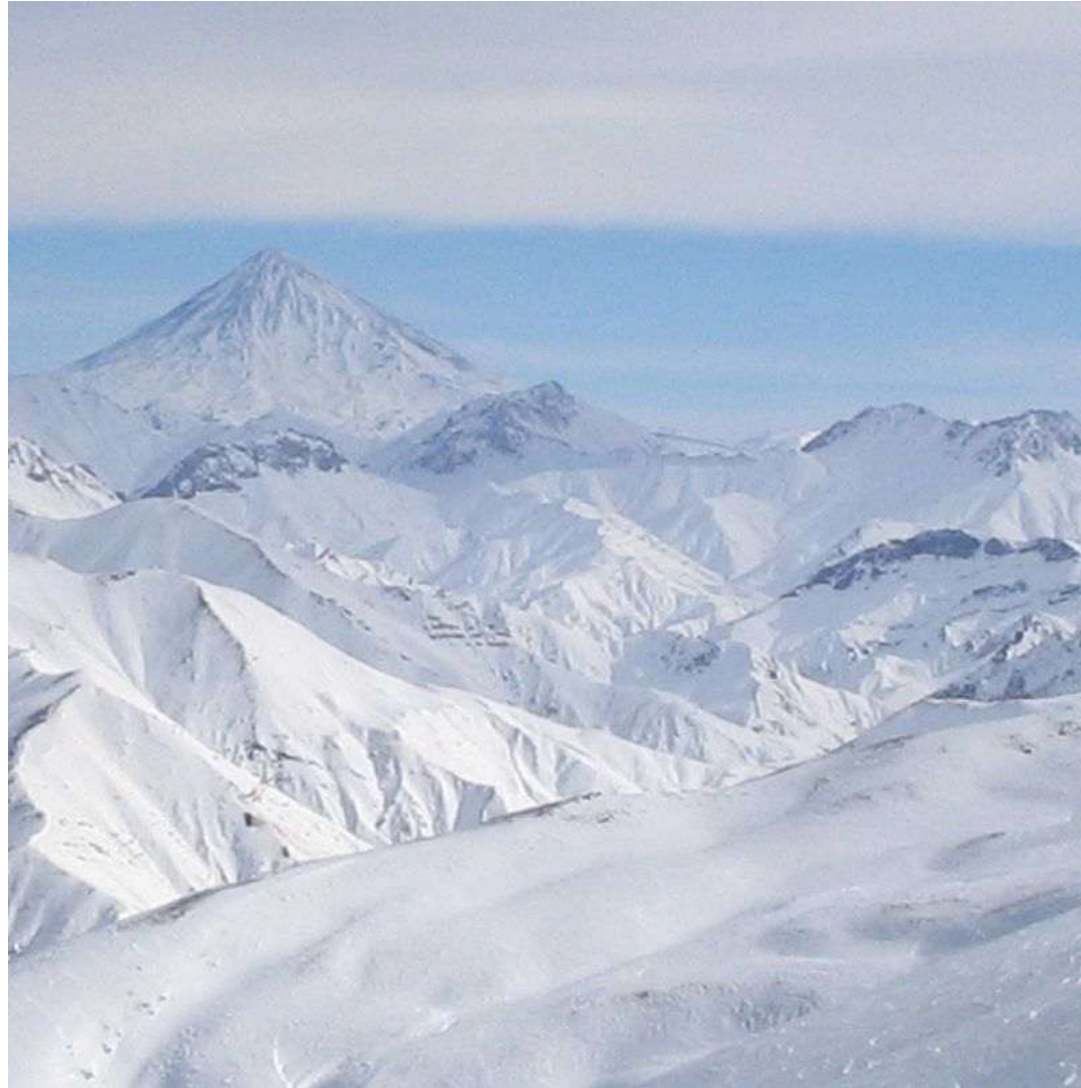


Topography: Mountains



Zagros Mountains





Alborz Mountains



Topography: Water







Topography: Water



Topography: Water





Topography: Water





Topography: Basins

Qanats









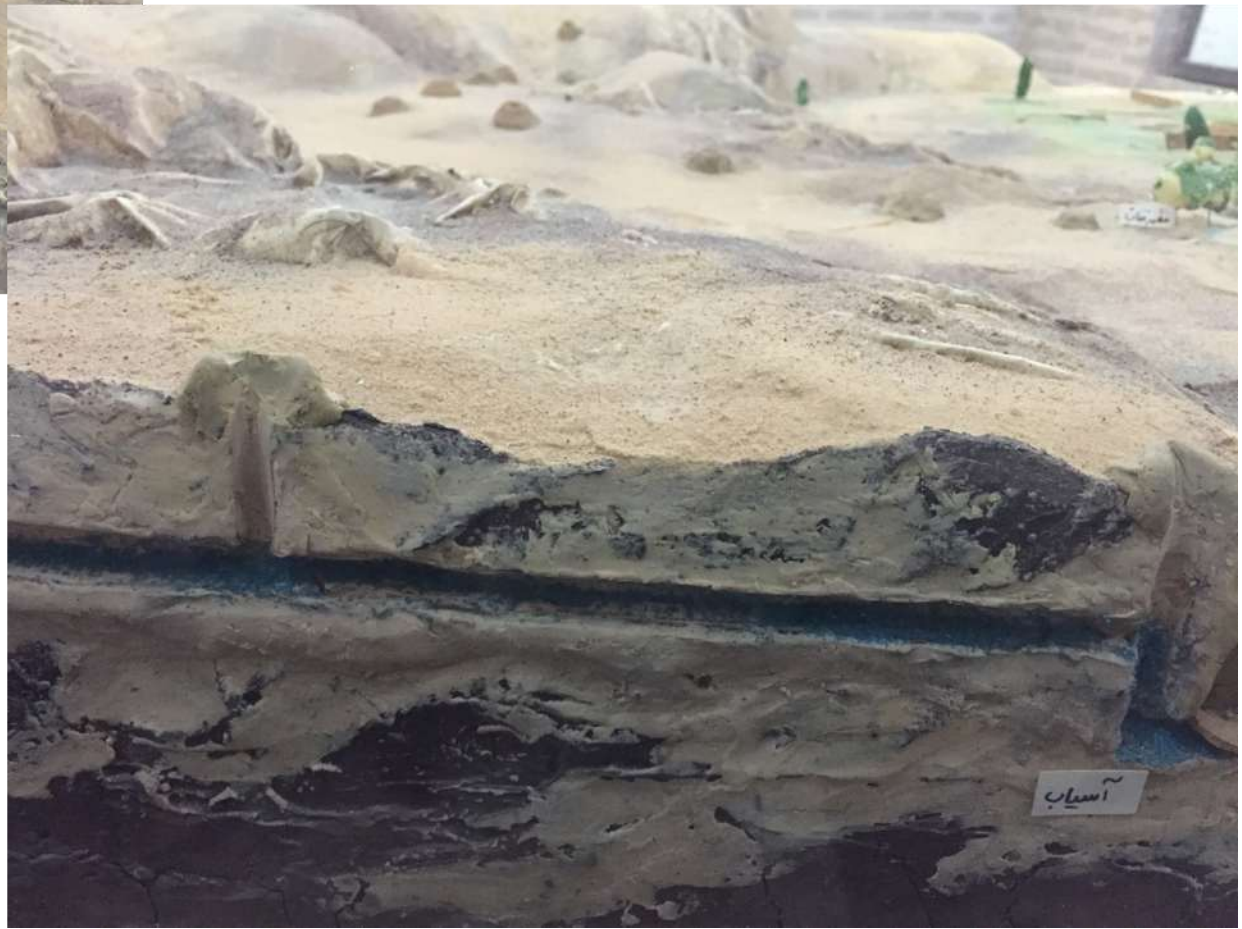




Traditional Qanat water distribution system

The first water clock
این اولین ساعت تقویم است

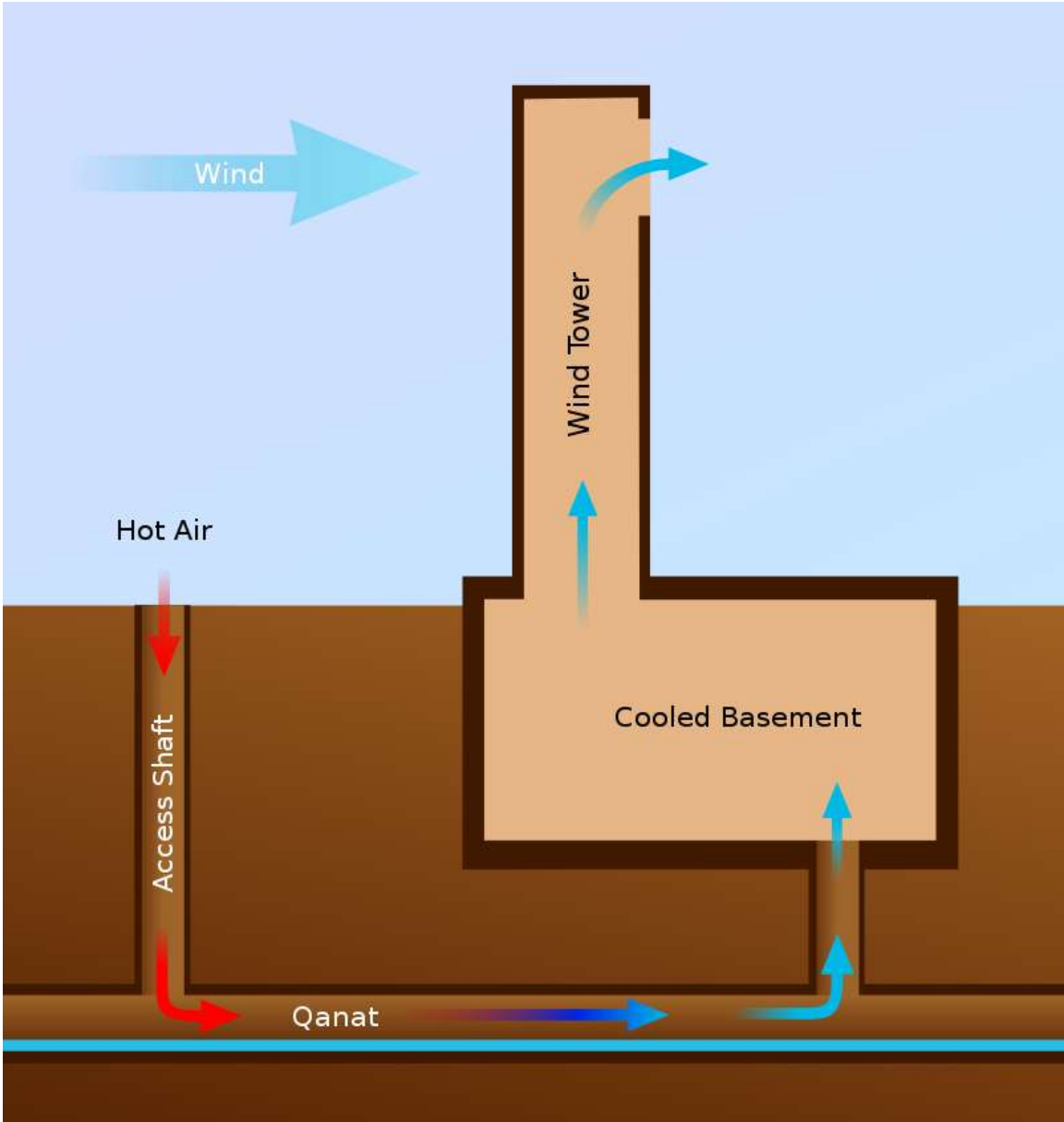
Handwritten text on a scroll, likely a historical record or manual related to the water clock.



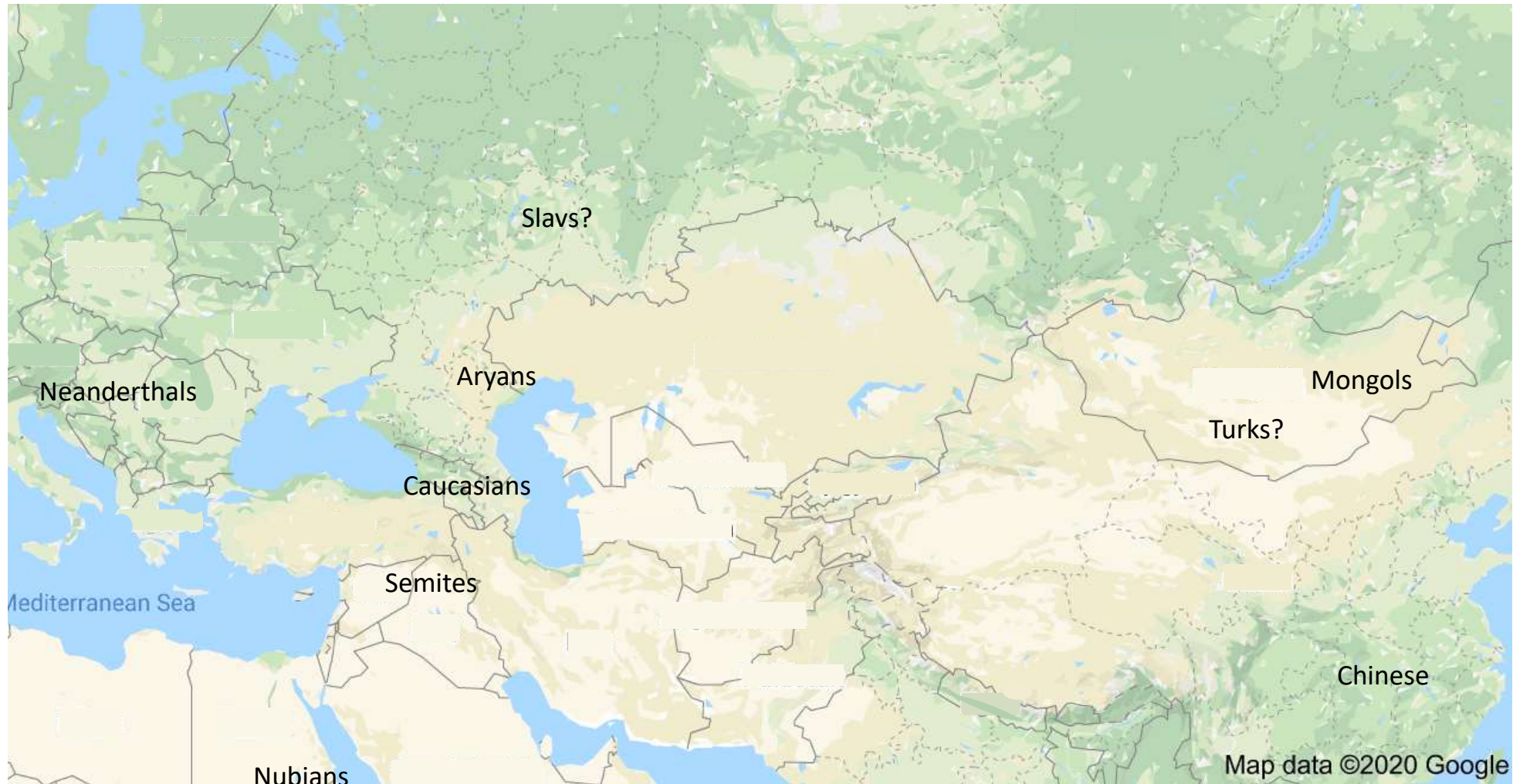
Wind







Early Settlers



the Ice Epoch (30,000 BC - 13,000 BC)



Expansion after the Ice Epoch (13,000 BC)





Holocene pre-historic migration (12,000 – 1,000 BC)





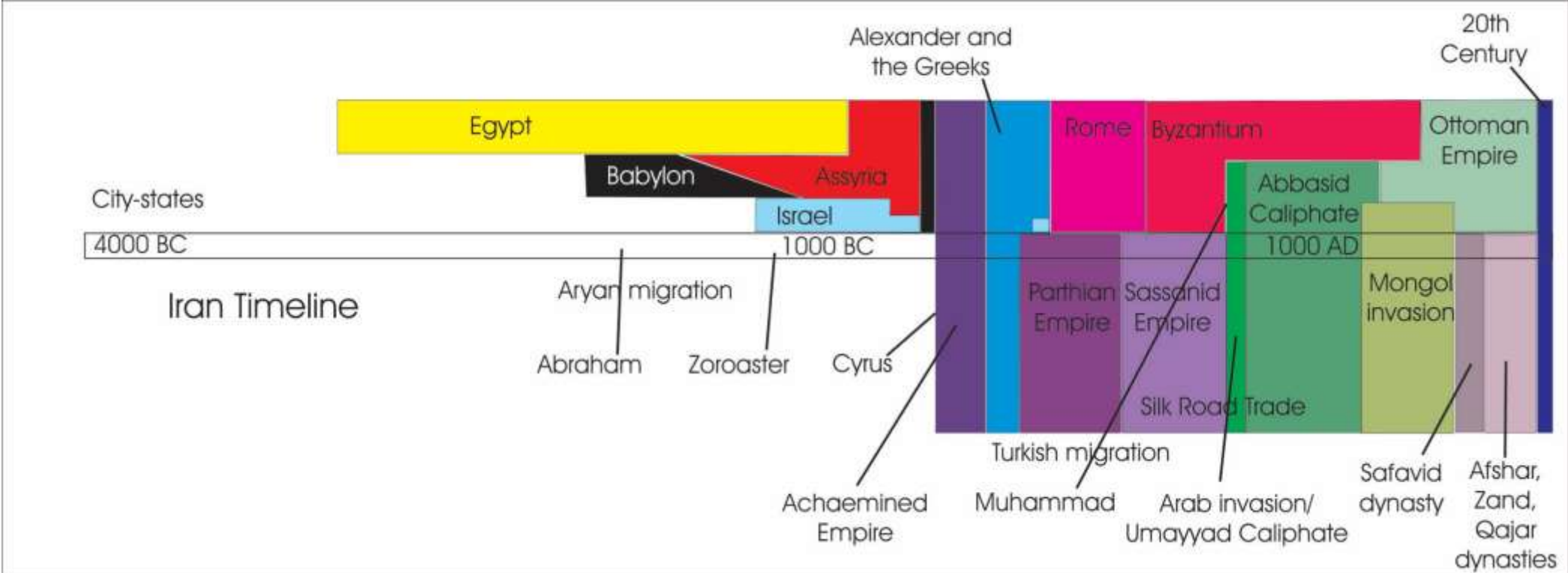




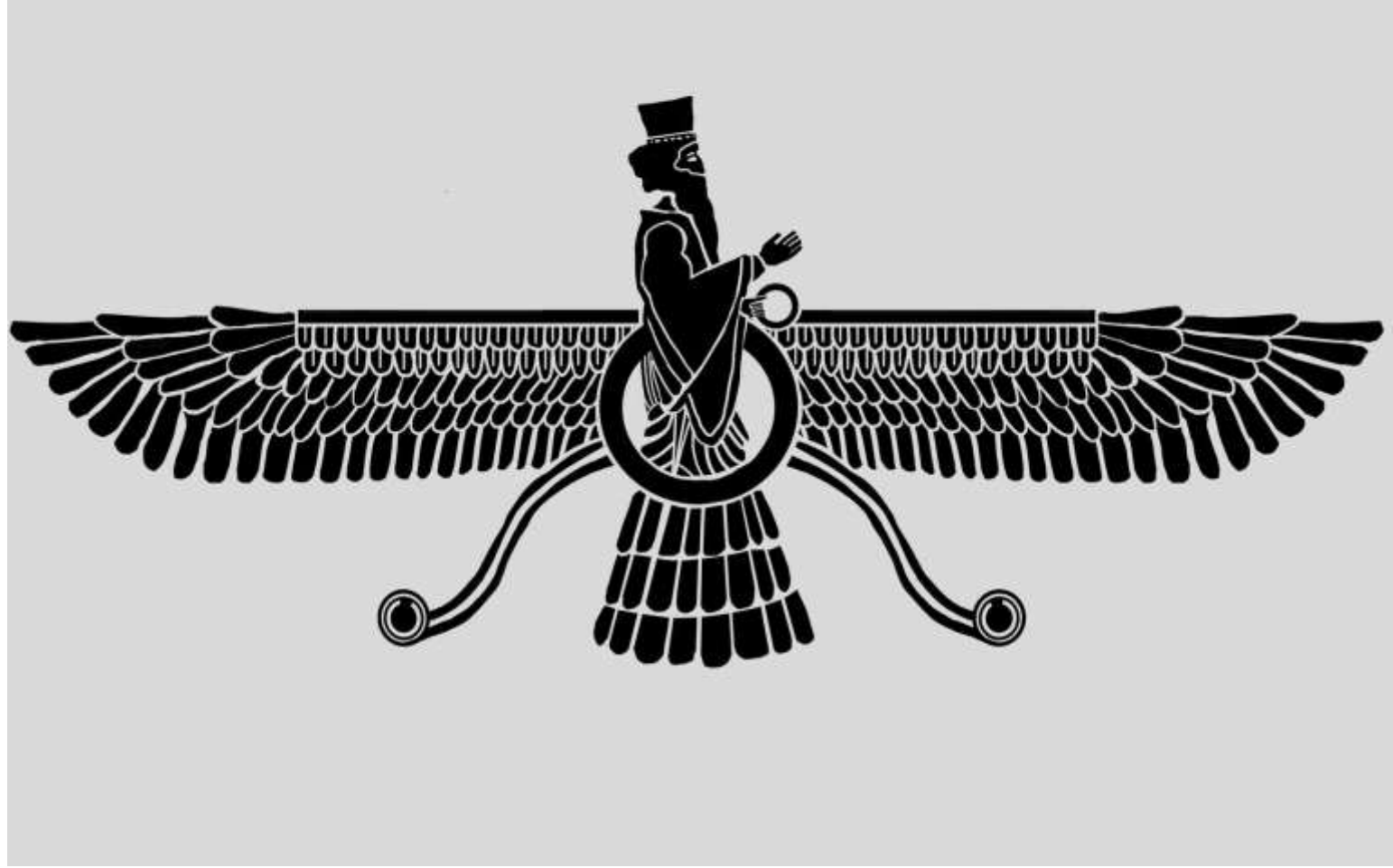
Turkish migration (1,000 BC – 1,000 AD)



Zoroastrian religion















GOOD THOUGHTS

خوبیوں کا خیال

خوبیوں کا عمل

GOOD DEEDS

خوبیوں کا کلام

GOOD WORDS

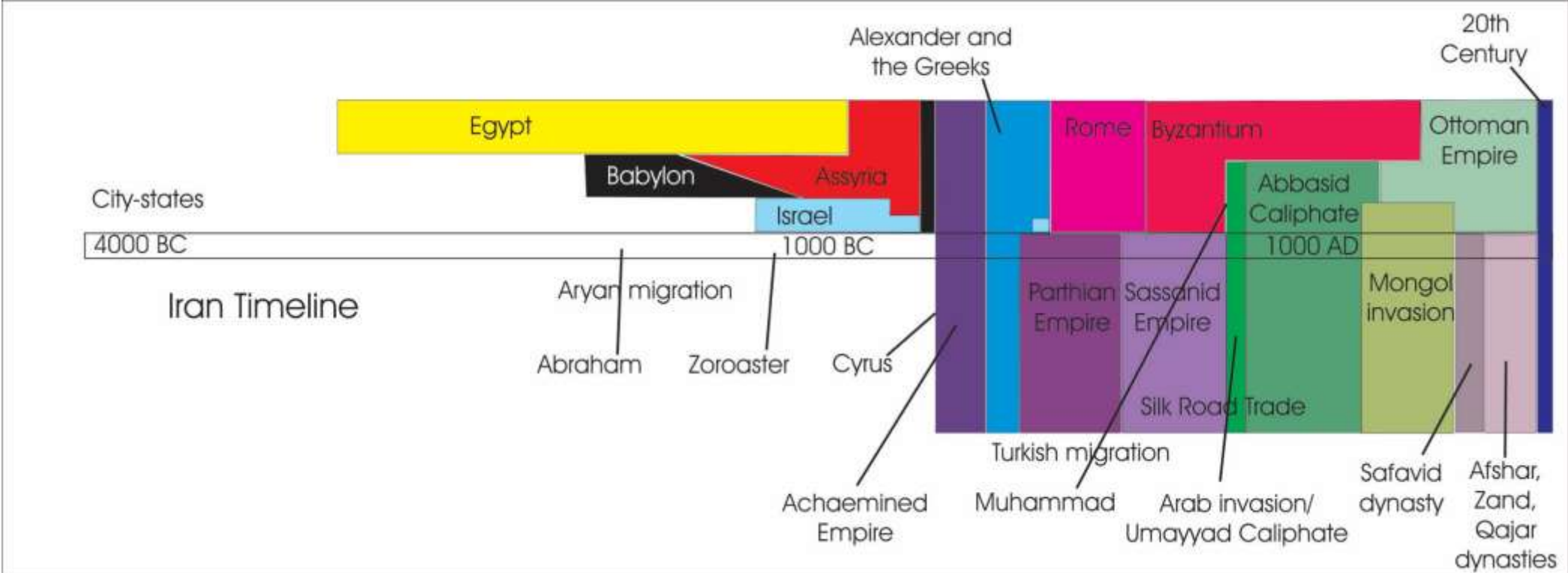








Cyrus the Great





Babylonian Empire

Germans



Germans





Achaemenid Empire









Palace of
100 Columns

Army Street

Great Palace
of Xerxes

Gate of
All Nations

Staircase

Treasury

Small Palace

Propylon

Palace of Xerxes

Palace of Darius





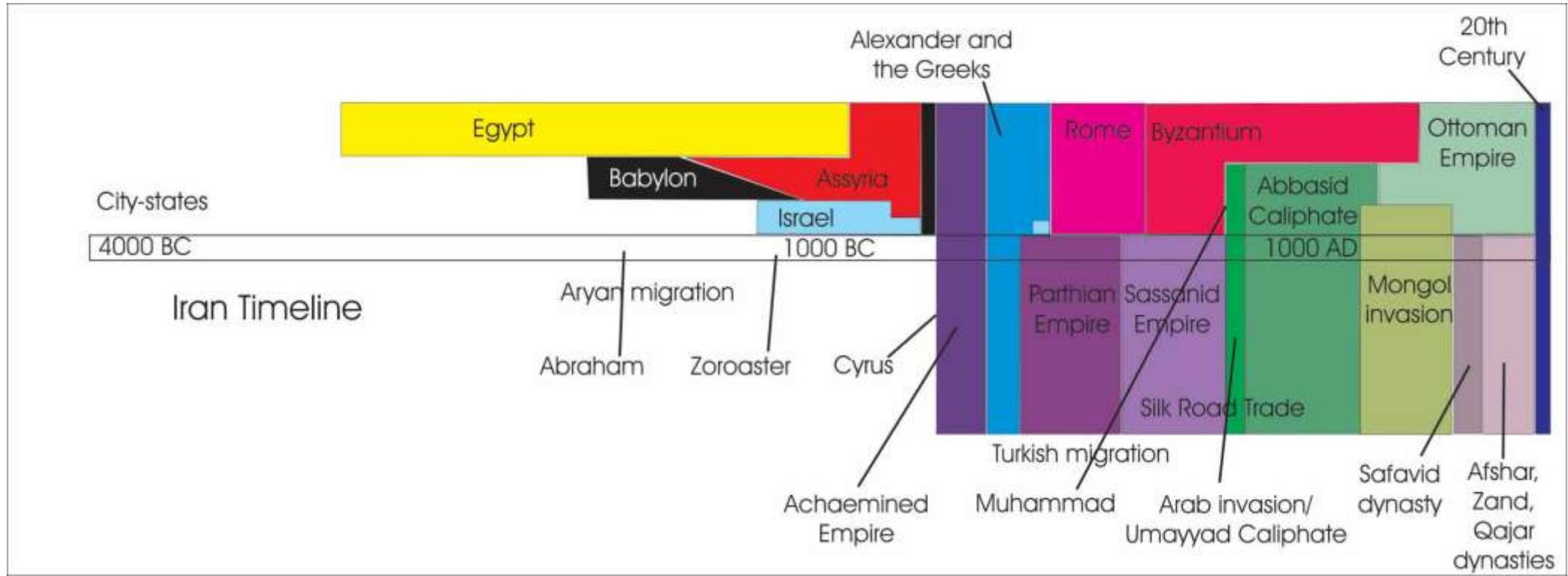








Alexander the Great



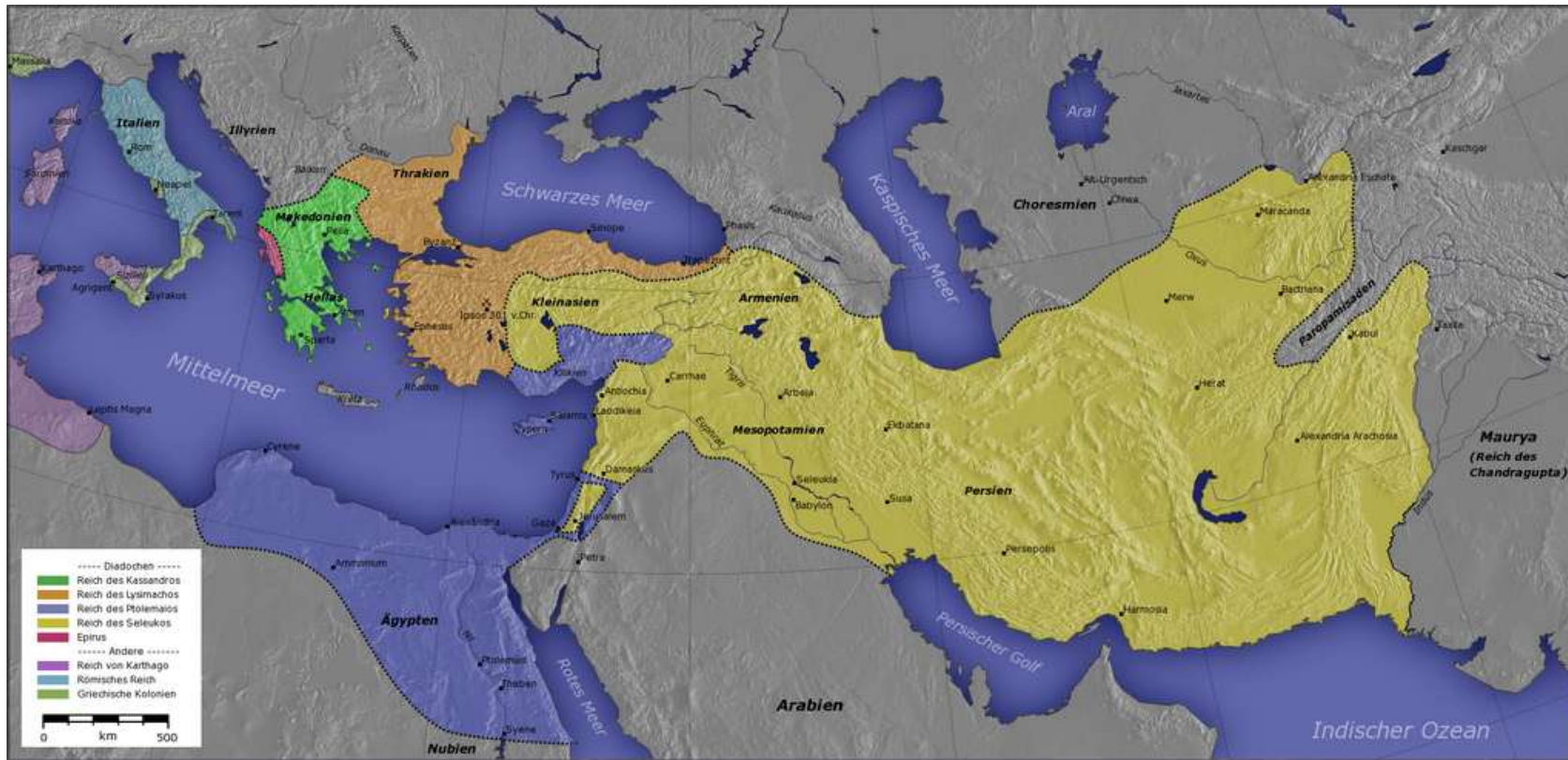








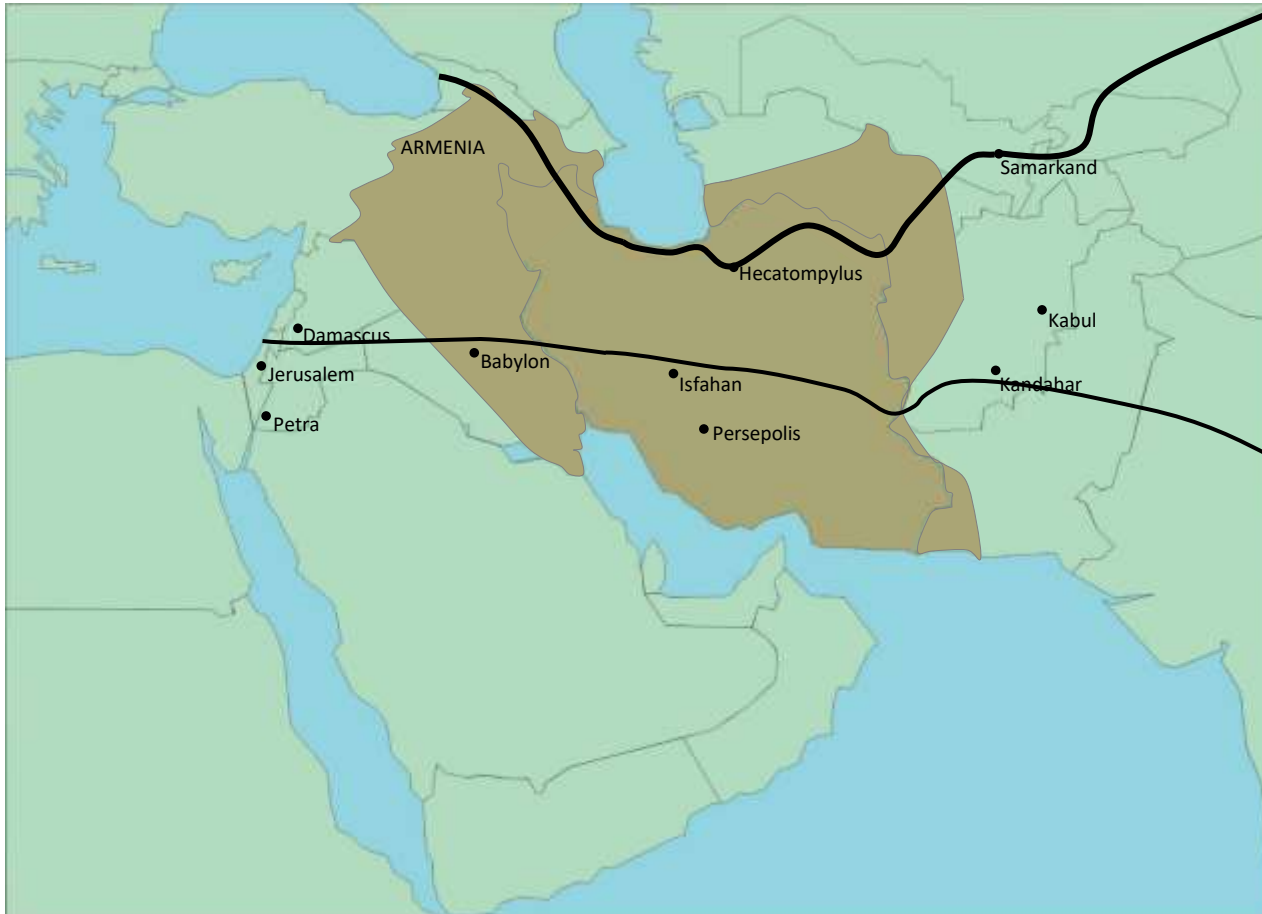
With an effort he turned at last on his side.



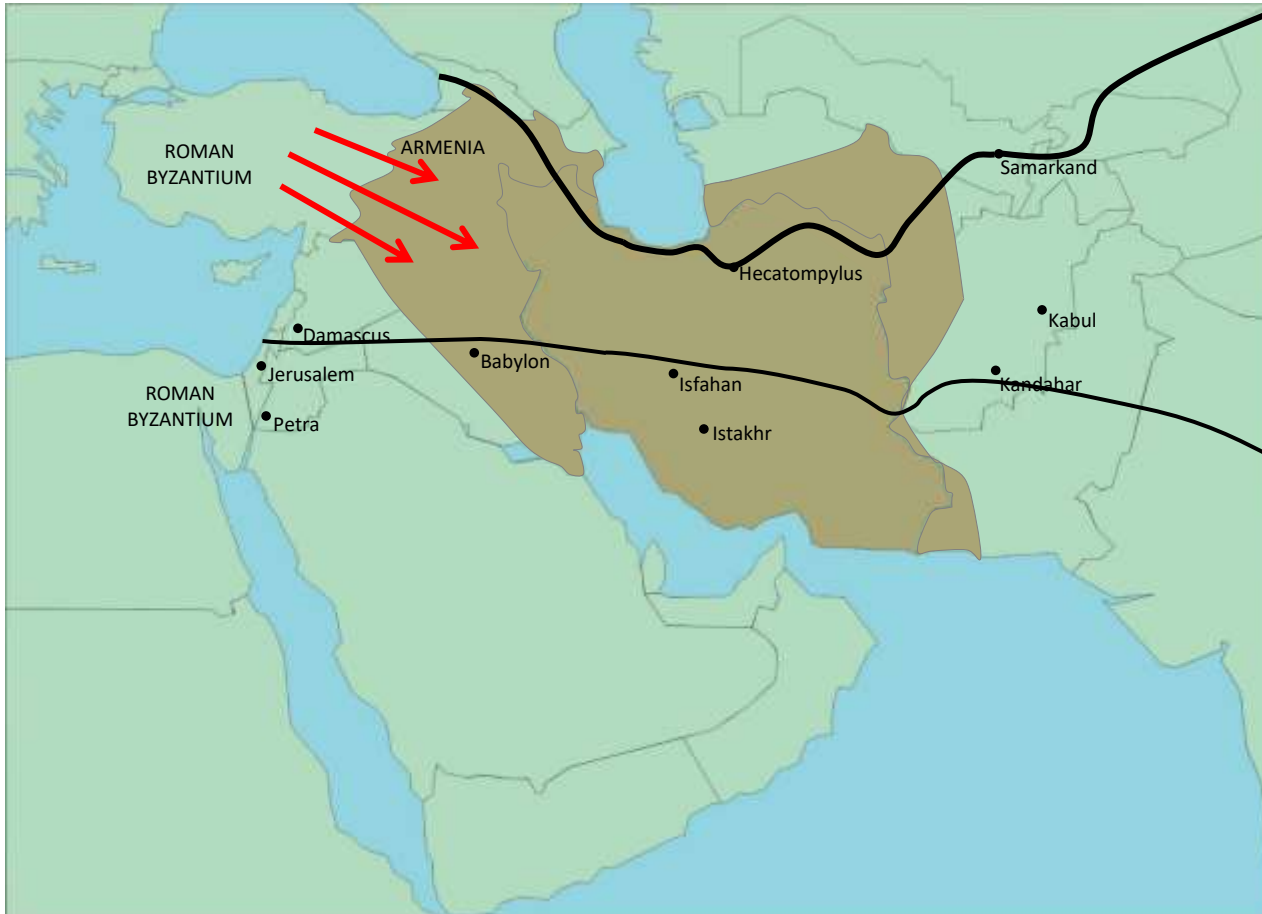
Parthian and Sassanid Empires



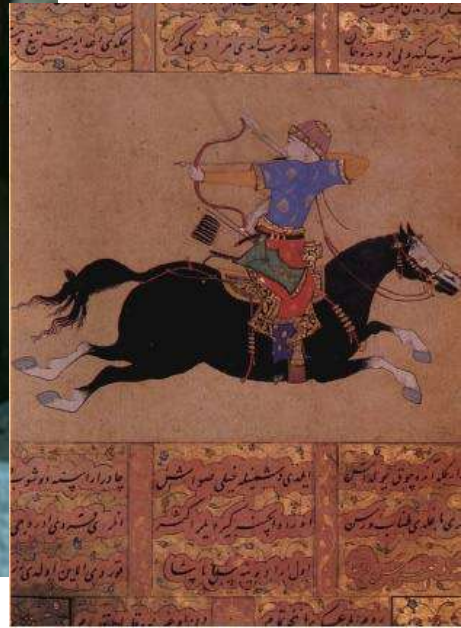
Parthian Empire (247 BC – 224 AD)



The Silk Road through Parthia



Romans fail to defeat Parthian Iran:
53BC, 59AD, 86AD, 164AD, 196AD.





Sassanid Empire (224 AD – 650 AD)





Naqsh-e Rostam





IRAN



Chris Schaefer

chris.schaefer@bataandiary.com

832-428-1977

www.bataandiary.com/Iran