Greetings! I am Seleucus Nicator, the first ruler of the Seleucid Empire, which at its height in 281 BCE primarily included Iran and Mesopotamia, but also at times stretched West to Anatolia and East to the Indus Valley! I was once a top general under Alexander the Great, and in the years after he died in 323 BCE, I started out with my forces from Babylon to successfully conquer the vast majority of the lands held by Alexander, leaving only Egypt, Greece, and the Levant to be divided among other contenders. After my death in 281, my successors continued their conquests, and though we lost some lands, we also gained territory in the Levant.

Since the Achaemenid Empire was so great in so many ways, we kept a lot of things going that worked well, such as the system of government administration, the taxes, the roads, and the postal service. But we also brought in a lot of good ideas from elsewhere, especially our native Greece and Macedonia, but also Egypt and India, which were part of our connected world of lands conquered by Alexander.

Our empire established many new cities and stimulated trade with other parts of the world, improving the economy for the people of the empire. We brought in many Greek colonists to come live in our empire, but they adapted to the Persian ways. Many of them were given top positions in the government administration as bureaucrats.

We weren’t huge fans of Zoroastrianism though. Alexander burned a lot of temples and killed Magi, the Zoroastrian priests, and many teachings were lost because of that.

Over the years, we lost more and more territory, mostly to those annoying barbarians the Parthians, until by 141 BCE we had lost all of Iran, and soon our realm was limited to Syria. In 83 BCE, what was left of our empire was snatched up by the Roman Empire. But all in all, I think we did a great job ruling Persia. It was fun while it lasted!
We, the Parthians, ruled Persia better than any other! Even during Achaemenid times, we, the Parthians, lived in Eastern Iran, in the land of Khorasan, and even MORE than the Achaemenids, we stayed true to the ways of our nomadic Indo-European ancestors of the Steppe, the Eurasian grasslands. We had no need for a centralized government. Instead, we were a nomadic tribal confederation, with leaders who met to decide on policies for our people. And we have a proud tradition of being fierce warriors, as we always had to fight off our enemies, the nomadic peoples from farther east.

But we did not rely only on nomadic ways. We were smart enough to take ideas from agriculturists as well. We began to settle somewhat, and had the genius idea to grow alfalfa to feed our horses. While other nomads had to rely on whatever grass they could find for their weak little horses, ours grew bigger and stronger, and could carry heavily armored soldiers that easily defeated our lightly armed enemies. None could match the power of our cavalry. Not even the Seleucids! We conquered Persia from those Greek fools over the course of the 3rd century BCE! No more illegitimate rule by foreigners from the West! It was we who rightly restored the Persian tradition of rule. We even promoted Zoroastrianism a bit to help us rally support against the Seleucids.

But the Parthian Empire reached the height of its greatness when I, Mithradates, came to the throne in 171 BCE. By 155 BCE I controlled not only Iran but also Mesopotamia! It was there that we built a new capital city, Ctesiphon, along the river Tigris. I ruled in the Achaemenid style, using Achaemenid techniques of administration and taxation and governing through Satraps. However, we Parthians never forgot our nomadic roots! We never liked the overly centralized style of our predecessors, so we gave the satrap positions to our tribal clan leaders, because we stay true to our heritage. Sure, that more decentralized style led those clan leader satraps to try to gain independent power themselves, and maybe we had a rebellion here and there, but don’t worry, we took care of it. Well at least for a little while. We also did lots of good trading with our neighbors along the Silk Road, exchanging goods and ideas along the way!

During the First and Second Centuries CE, we had to deal with the annoying Roman Empire trying to fight us for Mesopotamia! So uncool! They actually captured Ctesiphon three times, but don’t worry, we got it back. The only thing is, we got kind of distracted fighting the Romans and wound up collapsing during the early Third Century CE due to internal rebellion from the native Persians. But hey, we had a pretty good run, right?
Shapur I of the Sasanian Empire

The ONLY empire that can claim to truly be the continuation of the Achaemenids is the Sasanian Empire! That’s us, by the way. What? Never heard of us? Sometimes it’s spelled Sassanian? Or maybe Sasanid? Hah! Yes of course you’ve heard of us! We toppled those Parthian pretenders in 224 CE and ruled all the way until 651 CE! Now THAT’S a reign! And we are more truly Persian than any of these other fake empires. After all, we Sasanians are actually ethnic Persians! Like, from Persia. No, not Iran in general. I’m talking the original region of Persia, aka Pars, in the Southwest of Iran. Ah, good, you know your geography!

Not only that but we did more than any other to copy... I mean, honor... the style and symbolism of Achaemenid rule. Our rulers were even descended from Achaemenid rulers. Just... don't ask for any documentation of that, ok? And our rulers were called Shahanshah, King of Kings, just like the Achaemenids did! We ruled from Ctesiphon as our capital, bringing back the fully centralized bureaucratic administrative system, not like those barbaric Parthians, and we refurbished many cities across our lands. Our merchants helped to revive the economy by trading East and West, and they introduced our people to new crops like rice, sugarcane, eggplant, and cotton!

When it comes to Zoroastrianism, we helped it grow and thrive more than any other rulers! We gave lots of support to the Magi, and the Avesta, the holy book of Zoroastrianism, was put together during our rule. Many people came to the temples to pray to Ahura Mazda!

We even persecuted other faiths that might try to compete, such as Christianity and Manichaeism. I, Shapur, met with the Persian Prophet Mani, the founder of the religion of Manichaeism, and tolerated him and his followers, as it was still small. However, as his faith grew, later emperors of my line took action. Mani was imprisoned, where he died, and emperors clamped down hard on Manichaeism and other competing religious traditions and their followers.

When I, Shapur, reigned over the Sasanian Empire from 239 to 272 CE, we were better than ever! We were much smarter at dealing with the Romans. We created buffer states between ourselves and the Romans, meaning we left it to those
states in between to be the first defense so it was less trouble for us. We even captured some Roman prisoners of war and put them to work using their Roman engineering skills to build us roads and dams!

Now, we didn’t conquer so much new land, but that’s so not our fault! It’s just that the Romans (later known as the Byzantines) ruled to the West, and at the same time the Kushans ruled to East in South Asia, so there wasn’t really anywhere for us to go. They were both pretty powerful, you know? And hey, they didn’t conquer us either, so that’s something, right?

What’s that? Who conquered us? Well... it was actually the Arabs. I know what you’re thinking, they’re just a bunch of unorganized guys from the desert, how did they conquer the great Sasanian Empire?! Well, I mean, we were really worn out from fighting the other big empires, and also they got all united under their new religion of Islam, so I mean that’s not really fair... right?