The Meaning of Empire

- Empire is the extension of political rule by one people over other, different peoples.
- Popular images of empire focus on monuments, opulence, power, and wealth.
- Actual tasks of empire include:
  - Effective communication and administration.
  - Awareness of place of conquered peoples in empire, unified monetary system.
The Meaning of Empire [cont.]

Modern Concepts of Empire

- **Hegemony** = promotion of benefits of empire that make it acceptable to subject peoples
- **Dominance** = the exercise of sheer force by military power
- Resistance to imperial rule based on techniques of the empire—rebels can use technology introduced by their conquerors
The Meaning of Empire

Reasons for Decline and Fall of Empires

- Failure of leadership
- Overextension of administration
- Collapse of the economy
- Doubt over ideology
- Military defeat
The Ancient Middle East
The Earliest Empires

Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent

- Major combatants in Mesopotamia were cities of Lagash and Umma
- Victory in one generation often followed by revenge in the next
- Cities fought constantly over land, irrigation rights, and prestige
Sargon of Akkad [r. 2334-2279 B.C.E.]
- Akkadians migrated into region from Arabia
- Sargon defeated Mesopotamian cities and created empire of Akkad
- Conquered widely, razed city walls, wrote in Akkadian language, standardized weights and measures, created ideology based on Sargon’s image; lasted about one hundred years
The Earliest Empires

Waves of Invaders: Babylonians and Hittites

Amorites, speakers of a Semitic language, invaded from south around 1900 B.C.E.

Hammurabi created noted legal code but was also a skilled military leader

Empire lasted 250 years
The Earliest Empires

Invaders: Babylonians and Hittites [cont.]

- Hittites from north spoke Indo-European language
- Developed maneuverable two-wheeled war chariot carrying three warriors
- Advanced technology of ironworking
- Hittite empire dominant from 1400 to 1200 B.C.E.
The Persian Empire
Achaemenid Persia. The Medes and the Persians were united under Cyrus the Great in 550 B.C.E. to form the Achaemenid or Persian Empire. Cyrus and his successors, notably Darius and Xerxes, extended the empire to the Indus in the east and to Egypt and Libya in the west, and twice invaded Greece.
Cyrus the Great

- A tolerant ruler → he allowed different cultures within his empire to keep their own institutions.
- Merciful toward defeated foes.
- The Greeks called him a “Law-Giver.”
- Supported Babylonian Gods
- The Jews called him “the anointed of the Lord.” (In 537 BCE, he allowed over 40,000 to return to Palestine).
Darius the Great

(526 – 485 B. C. E.)

- Built Persepolis.
- He extended the Persian Empire to the Indus River in northern India. (2 mil. s.q. mi.)
- Built a canal in Egypt.
Darius the Great
(526 – 485 B.C.E.)

- Established a tax-collecting system.
- Divided the empire into districts called SATRAPIES.
- Built the great Royal Road system.
- Established a complex postal system.
- Created a network of spies called “the King’s eyes and ears.”
Ancient Persepolis
Persepolis
The People of Persepolis
Persian Archers & Soldiers
Zarathustra [Zoroaster], 6c BCE:
Good Thoughts, Good Deed, Good Words

“Tree of Life”
Extent of Zoroastrianism
Dualistic Battle of Good vs. Evil

Ahura Mazda
“Holy Spirit”

Ahriman
“Destructive Spirit”
Zend-Avesta
(The “Book of Law”)

The “Sacred Fire” → the force to fight evil.
The Earliest Empires

The Assyrians

- Present in region from 20th century B.C.E.
- Rise to dominance began 900 B.C.E.
- Ruled by terror and forced migration
- Esarhaddon [r. 680-669 B.C.E.] conquest of Egypt made Assyria greatest power of the time
- Ebb and flow of empires in Mesopotamia made possible by war among city-states
The Earliest Empires

Egypt and International Conquest

- Egyptian power based on unified state
- Armies ranged up and down Nile River valley
- Invaders included the Semitic Hyksos who introduced bronze, horses, and chariots
- Hyksos expelled approximately 1550 B.C.E.
- Egyptian power in Middle East during New Kingdom extended to Euphrates River
The Earliest Empires

The Art of Palace and Temple

- Pharaohs gain power and wealth in New Kingdom
- Greatest new temple built by Ramses II
- Hatshepsut was woman who held royal power from 1473-1458 B.C.E.
- Akhenaten promoted monotheism in challenge to Egyptian traditions; the idea died with him
The Earliest Empires

The End of Empire

- Resistance high to Egyptian rule
- Military defeat in Levant caused Egypt to abandon empire outside Nile Valley
- Maintained control of Nubia to 1050 B.C.E.
- Nubian empire included Egypt [712-657 B.C.E.]
- Assyrians, Persians, and Alexander the Great controlled Egypt in turn [671-332 B.C.E.]
The Persian Empire

- Medes and Persians broke Assyrian power under Cyarxes of Media [625-585 B.C.E.]
- Persian expansion leads to empire under Cyrus [r. 558-529 B.C.E.] and successors that control Middle East
- Darius I extended power to India [r. 522-486 B.C.E.]
- Scythian and Greek resistance restricted growth
The Persian Empire

Imperial Policies

- Tried to balance needs of empire with desire for local autonomy

Cyrus I [r. 558-529 B.C.E.]
- Merciful toward defeated foes
- Used bureaucracies of conquered administrations
- Supported Babylonian gods
- Allowed exiles of Babylonian government to return home [included Jewish return to Judea]
The Persian Empire

Imperial Policies [cont.]

Cambyses II [r. 529-522 B.C.E.]

- Did not practice restraint in conquest or administration
- Tried to attack Carthage (N. Africa) but Phoenician sailors rebelled against attack on homeland
- Launched failed invasion of Nubia in search of gold
- Committed suicide (?) while returning to Persia to put down rebellion
The Persian Empire

Imperial Policies

Darius I [r. 522-486 B.C.E.]

- Continued moderate practices of Cyrus II
- Local loyalty insured by presence of army
- Developed written version of Persian language
- Legal codes reflected local custom
- Built extensive road system for military
- Promoted irrigation
- Construction of four regional capitals showed wealth
The Persian Empire

Symbols of Power

- Little artwork outside of architecture survives
- Reliefs on walls reflect imperial power and support of subject peoples
- Rejected personal deification; was probably a follower of Zoroastrianism
- Moderate policies brought local support except at western Greek borders of the empire
The Greek City-States

Early City-States of the Aegean

- Minoans settled Crete by 6000 B.C.E.
- Produced pottery, written script and bronze tools
- Palaces destroyed for unknown reasons in 1450 (three palaces) and 1370 B.C.E. (remaining one)
- Development of new script (Linear B) shows rising influence of Greeks over Minoans
The Greek City-States

Early City-States of the Aegean [cont.]
- Mycenaean dominated relationship with Crete after 1450 B.C.E.
- Wealth reflected in rule of Agamemnon
- Power failed by 1200 B.C.E. for unknown reasons at start of Greek “Dark Ages”
- Additional migration into Greece in Dark Ages
- Reemergence of Greek culture in 850 B.C.E.
The Greek City-States

The Greek Polis: Image and Reality

- Small, locally organized government
- Size restricted by geography
- Overpopulation addressed by colonization
- Built for defense and to accommodate mountains
  - Poorest lived at lower levels
  - Agora (open meeting space) on higher ground
  - Acropolis (temple) on highest ground
The Greek City-States

Athens and the Development of Democracy

- Developed modern concept of political democracy
- It was a leader among city-states
- It left the most historical records
- It moved farthest from kings and oligarchies to rule by the people
The Greek City-States

Athens and the Development of Democracy [cont.]

Reforms of Solon moved toward democracy [600-560 B.C.E.]

- All free men could participate in decisions
- Wealthy represented in Council of 400
- Canceled all public and private debt
- Ended enslavement for debt payment
- Reforms ended with class conflict and clan rivalries
The Greek City-States

Athens and the Development of Democracy [cont.]

- New reforms under Pisistratus [d. 527 B.C.E.] included loans to farmers, road construction, and public works
- Death of Pisistratus saw end of reform and invasion of Athens by Sparta (510 B.C.E.) at invitation of Athenian elite
The Greek City-States

Athens and the Development of Democracy [cont.]

- Lasting reform by Cleisthenes [d. 508 B.C.E.]
- Athenian governing power rotated among ten political units based on deme [place], not clan
- Open meetings every ten days to make decisions
- Agenda set by Council of 500 selected by lottery from each deme
- Political identity now based on place not wealth
The Greek City-States

Athens and the Development of Democracy [cont.]

- Athens now a more open society
- Intellect and learning highly valued as basis of public participation
- Identity based on participation contrasted starkly with Persian model of top-down control
- War with Persia saw highly motivated Greeks facing imperial army without personal stake
The Greek City-States

War with Persia

- Revolt of Greek colonists in Asia Minor prompted Persian attack on Athens
- 10,000 man Greek army defeats 48,000 man Persian army at Marathon (490 B.C.E.)
- Greek key was hoplite soldiers organized into tightly-knit phalanxes, symbolic of citizen unity of city-state
The Greek City-States

War with Persia [cont.]

- Xerxes, son of Darius, tried to defeat Greeks
- Decisive victories at Thermopylae and Salamis plus persistence in face of Persian pressure insured victory
- Greek motivation offset power of Persians who were overextending their powers
The Greek City-States

- Athens: From Mini-State to Mini-Empire
  - Transformed Delian League into empire
  - Sparta led Greek effort to break Athenian domination in first Peloponnesian War (461-451 B.C.E.)
  - Athenians confiscated treasury of Delian League for enrichment of Athens
  - More war would follow this golden era
The Greek City-States

- The Golden Age of Athenian Culture
  - Athens replaced war-damaged buildings with Delian money and created elegant structures
  - Pericles [c. 495-429 B.C.E.] also directed subsequent Athenian flowering of arts and thought
  - Also created colonies in southern Italy and waged war to promote democracy
The Greek City-States

The Golden Age of Athenian Culture [cont.]

Historians

-Began “modern history” with effort to understand and explain changes in Athenian politics and power
-Herodotos wrote *The Persian Wars*
-Thucydides wrote *History of the Peloponnesian War*
The Greek City-States

The Golden Age of Athenian Culture [cont.]

Philosophers

- Socrates [d. 399 B.C.E.] argued for the supremacy of the state over the individual and against Sophists who taught students to argue any side of an issue
- Plato [d. 348 B.C.E.] promoted the study of ideals as the way to understand truth
- Aristotle [d. 322 B.C.E.] studied ethics and politics and served as tutor for Alexander the Great
The Greek City-States

The Golden Age of Athenian Culture [cont.]

Dramatists

- Key themes were justice, morality, and equity
- *Oresteia* trilogy of Aeschylus suggested divinely ordained revenge will be replaced by human justice
- Sophocles pitted family loyalty against loyalty to city-state in *Antigone*
- Euripides criticized Athenian imperialism in *Lysistrata* in which women protest war with Sparta
The Greek City-States

Limits of City-State Democracy

- Women had no right to political participation and were not seen as the equals of men
- Many men thought true friendship could only exist between equals and sought male friendship outside the home
- Aristotle: men command, women obey
- Citizenship restricted to native born males
The Greek City-States

The Peloponnesian War

- Pericles’ imperialism alienated Greek world
- Fear prompted long war with Sparta
- Athenian *realpolitik* seen in treatment of Delos
- War ends in 404 B.C.E. with Persian-funded Spartan victory
- Greek world reduced to constant warfare
Empire of Alexander the Great

Conquests of Philip

- Consolidated power in Macedonia and pursued two goals: unify Greece and liberate Greeks in Asia Minor from Persian control
- Campaigns into Asia Minor went well
- Greek resistance was high based on fear of loss of political autonomy as result of unity
Empire of Alexander the Great

- The Reign of Alexander the Great
  - Followed policy of benevolent despotism after display of power
  - Created largest empire ever known to that point
  - Successful conquests were followed by attempts to gain control of India
  - Empire did not last long after the end of his life [323 B.C.E.]
Empire of Alexander the Great

The Legacy of Alexander: the Hellenistic Ecumene

- Spread Greek language, culture, and people across Asia Minor
- Built roads and cities such as Alexandria, Egypt
- Created ecumene across region; unified urban culture of diverse people and vast lands
- Added Greek ideas to local administrations
Empire-Building: What Difference Does it Make?

- Empires started as unified states
- Each then built capital, central government, uniformity of language, coinage, etc., and articulated ideology of empire
- All reached point of limiting ambition or over-reaching and failing