

DAY 6. THE WORLD FROM 600 BCE TO 600 CE

1. SUMMARY

The world during the 1200 years from 600 BCE to 600 CE was tumultuous. As great civilizations began to consolidate their power, civilizations are now forced to attain a degree of sophistication in terms of government, education, and trade. Great leaders arose; and so did great thinkers. Indeed, the world from 600 BCE to 600 CE is distinct from the period of prehistory up to 600 BCE because global leaders can no longer solely rely on conquest. Managing empires, assimilating the different people groups within the empire, and maintaining relations across different empires became the key during this era in time, as different civilizations experimented with ways to exhibit their grandeur and make their mark on the world. As civilizations began to flourish, foundations in culture, science, arts, and religion were also established by each civilization. Some of these cultural roots go so deep that historians now often refer to the societies established during this millennium spanning across the BCE/CE gap as "classical societies."

2. QUESTION OF THE DAY

With such huge empires to govern, how did Romans, Persians, and the Chinese find ways of administering the empire as to prevent revolutions from toppling their mandates?

3. MATERIAL

3.1. **Persia.** -Cyrus (558-530 BCE), first great Persian leader, consolidated Persian control, famous for big tomb.

-Darius (521-486 BCE), expanded Persian empire into Egypt and to the Indus River, biggest empire seen, centralized or established many Persian accomplishments referred to today.

-Xerxes (486-465 BCE), iron-fisted rule caused much discontent, went to war with Greece to enforce Persian sovereignty over Greece (Persian Wars), caused Persian decline.

-Satraps - "Governor system" - Satrap is Persian, administrators are local. Spies enforced loyalty.

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- Royal Road System stretched from Greece to Iran (1600 miles), stations along route allowed courier service (only 2 weeks from one end to the other)

- Bureaucracies, qanat.

- Zoroastrianism - Zarathustra (priest with a vision), Ahura Mazda (the "wise lord"), Avesta (holy book), Gathas (Zarathustra's holy poems), good v. evil (Ahura Mazda v. Angra Mainyu), state religion, Christianity/Islam connections

3.2. China. -Confucianism and its impact. Confucius (Kong Fuzi 551-479 BCE), Analects, junzi ("superior individuals"), ren (courteous, respectful, diligent, loyal), li (decorous behavior), xiao (filial piety).

- Mencius (disciple 372-289 BCE), emphasized ren, humans are naturally good.

- Xunzi (298-238 BCE), emphasized li, humans are naturally bad and selfish.

- Daoism (Dao = way of nature), wuwei (disengagement from competitive exertions)

- Confucianism and Daoism coexist.

- Qin Shihuangdi (right after Zhou, 221-210 BCE) - burning books, killing scholars, standardization of law, currency, weight, measure, script (different dialects, same characters), terra cotta soldiers, legalism

- Liu Bang (founded Former Han - dynasty is 206 BCE to 9 CE), Wudi - Confucian examination system, expansion into Korea and Northern Vietnam

- Silk production, paper, silk road!

- Problems: social wealth disparity, no land for poor tenant farmers, political instability - Later Han (25-220 CE) is a mess.

3.3. India. -Ashoka (Mauryan Kingdom - 268-232 BCE), rock and pillar edicts, capable administrator, agriculture/irrigation, taxes, roads linking India

- Gupta Empire (320-415 CE), plastic surgery, Earth is round, zero invented, place-value (ones-digit, tens-digit) system introduced, $\pi = 3.1416$, origin of "Arabic" numerals

- Guilds and jati

- Buddhism and Jainism - Ashoka made Buddhism state religion

3.4. Europe. -Greek city states, Sparta (used iron bars for money!), Athens (democracy, Pericles)

- Resisted Persia in Persian Wars (won), Delian League (coalition of city-states), Peloponnesian War (Sparta v. Athens - Sparta won, but everyone "lost").

- Alexander the Great (conquered Greece 333 BCE, Mesopotamia 331 BCE, reached India 327 BCE)

- Greek legacies: extensive trade, Olympics, Socrates ("the unexamined life is not worth living"), Plato (the Republic, intellectuals should dominate government), Aristotle (science! taxonomy) - more rational, less philosophical

- Rome (509 BCE) - government with consuls, Senate (nobility), patricians v. plebeians
- Punic Wars (264-146 BCE) v. Carthage, over trade (Rome captured Carthage)
- Julius Caesar, military commander, declared himself dictator, stabbed
- Octavian (Augustus 117 CE), Roman empire stretched from England to Persian Gulf, from Germany to Egypt - Pax Romana (250 years of peace!)
- Romans left their legacy in roads, aqueducts, amphitheaters/stadiums (gladiators)
- Stoicism (reason over senses), Cicero (peace with nature and reason)
- Spread of Christianity (Paul of Tarsus)
- Roman Empire collapsed 235 CE. 235-284 CE (barrack emperors - 26 in all!). Germanic invasions, Huns invasion
- Diocletian (284-305 CE) divided empire into four portions (tetrarchs).
- Constantine (330 CE - established Constantinople as new capital, Edict of Milan (Christianity is now open faith) - beginnings to the Byzantine Empire
- St. Augustine (City of God - Christian philosophies - lays out doctrine)
- Councils at Nicaea (325 CE) and Chalcedon (451 CE) established books in New Testament, helped formulate papacy.
- Silk road!

4. AFTERTHOUGHTS

1. What parallels can you draw between the declines of the Roman Empire and the Han Empire?
2. What role did religion play in the lives of the individuals during this era? Do you think there's a common moral thread in the doctrine of main global religions (eg. Zoroastrianism and Christianity)? If so, why do you think this similarity arose?
3. Compare and contrast the ideas of Chinese philosophers and their Greek counterparts. For example, Socrates/Plato v. Confucius/Mencius (you probably have to do outside research for this).

5. READING FOR NEXT DAY

So far, until we get caught up with where we're supposed to be at on the Course Schedule, I'm not going to assign reading from the main textbook since it would probably require you to read multiple chapters in one night.

You should keep up with Barron's, however. By today, you should have already completed Chapters 1-5 in Barron's.

In addition, I strongly recommend reading the "Sources from the Past" blurbs that's in the textbook (they're in grass green boxes in each chapter of the text). Even if you don't read the main text, I think reading this is really helpful for your

synthesis of history knowledge, since these are primary sources (another reason why I think this text is great).