THE FORMATION OF CLASSICAL SOCIETIES

Setting the Stage

Key Concept 2.2
Between 500 BCE – 500 CE

- High degrees of internal organization
- Extended authority over extremely large regions
- Especially influenced cultural traditions
- Legacies have endured and influenced billions of people
Common Challenge

- Administering vast territories without advanced technologies in transportation and communication
  - Standardized government, law, and taxation
  - Built roads and transportation networks
  - Encouraged trade and communication
  - Promoted unity through religious, social, or cultural beliefs
Expansion

- Powerful armies
- Challenge of creating loyalty out of unwanted rule
- Heavy taxation and labor requirements often led to rebellion and civil war
Trade

- Vast system of roads and ports
- Economic integration within and between societies
- The Silk Roads
  - Also contributed to the spread of disease
Cultural and Religious Traditions

- Offered moral, religious, political, and social guidance
- Trade routes increased cultural diffusion
THE EMPIRES OF PERSIA

Chapter 7
The Rise and Fall of the Persian Empires

Beginnings

- Arose out of southwestern Iran
- Under the shadow of Mesopotamia
- Absorbed migrations and invasions coming out of central Asia
- Four ruling dynasties created an enormous empire for more than a millennium
The Achaemenids

- 558–330 BCE
- Indo-Europeans (the Medes and the Persians) migrated from central Asia to Persia
- Mostly pastoralists with limited agriculture
- Considerable military power
- Skilled equestrians and expert archers
- Organized in clans but had leaders who collected taxes and paid tribute to Mesopotamia
The Achaemenids

- Cyrus the Achaemenid
  - Outstanding military strategist
  - 558 BCE became king of the Persian tribes
  - 553 BCE led a rebellion against his Median overlord
  - 548 BCE all of Iran under his control as he looked to expand
  - Within 20 years the empire stretched from India to Egypt's border
  - Mortally wounded in 530 BCE
The Achaemenids

- Cyrus’ son conquered Egypt in 525 BCE
- Darius (a younger relative) extended the empire further
  - To the Indus River in the east
  - To the Aegean Sea in the west
  - From Armenia in the north to the first cataract of the Nile river in the South
- Population of 35 million
The Achaemenids

• Darius as a leader
  – Centralized his administration
  – Built a magnificent new capital at Perseopolis
  – Balanced central control and local administration
    • Satraps (governors) oversaw 23 administrative and tax districts (satrapies)
    • Almost all other administrative posts were filled by local officials, not necessarily Persians
    • Military officers maintained control over satraps
    • Imperial spies (“the eyes and ears of the king”) traveled the empire collecting intelligence and checking records
The Achaemenids

Darius (continued)

- Regular, formal tax levies
- Issued standardized coins for tax payments and trade
- Standardized laws; blended local laws with the legal principles of the empire
- Persian Royal Road (90 days to travel)
- Courier service and postal stations
The Achaemenids

- Political stability made large public works projects possible
  - Underground canals (*qanat*) for enhanced agricultural production
  - Iron metallurgy became common
- Cyrus and Darius had practiced tolerance and respect for the values and culture of those they ruled
The Achaemenids

• Xerxes (Darius’s successor)
  – Imposed his own values on conquered lands
  – Caused resentment
• The Persian Wars
  – 500-479 BCE
  – Ionian Greeks (living in Anatolia) rebelled against Persian rule
  – Rebellion was put down but efforts to extend control into Greece failed miserably
The Achaemenids

- Alexander of Macedon (Alexander the Great)
  - Invaded Persia in 334 BCE
  - Celebrated his success in Persepolis but a fire destroyed the city
  - Alexander portrayed himself as a legitimate Achaemenid successor
  - Died before making a huge impact
The Seleucids

- 323–83 BCE
- When Alexander died, his chief generals divided his land into three large realms
- Seleucus was given the choicest realm
- Founded new cities
- Attracted Greek colonists
The Seleucids

- Faced opposition from native Persians
  - Satraps often revolted
  - Lost their holdings in northern India
  - Parthians took over Iran during the 3rd century BCE
  - Roman empire conquered the rest by 83 BCE
The Parthians

- 247 BCE – 224 CE
- Retained many of the customs and traditions of nomadic peoples from the steppes of central Asia
- Organized in clans instead of a central government
- Skillful warriors
  - Stronger horses and metal armor
The Parthians

- Portrayed themselves as enemies of the Seleucids and restorers of Persian rule
  - Governed through satraps
  - Employed Achaemenid techniques of administration and taxation
  - Lavish capital
- Not as centralized (satraps/clan leaders often rebelled)
- Roman pressure weakened the empire until internal rebellion brought it down
The Sasanids

- 224–651 CE
- Claimed direct descent from the Achaemenids
- Provided strong rule
- Traded actively (brought crops from Indian and China)
- Constant conflict with the Kushan empire in the east and the Roman and Byzantine empires in the west
- Arab warriors killed the last Sasanid ruler in 651 CE and incorporated it into the Islamic empire (adopted many Persian administrative and cultural traditions)
PERSIAN SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

Chapter 7
Public life and social structure became more complicated
An educated class of bureaucrats emerged
More individuals engaged in trade and other specialized labor
Increased tension between rich and poor
Slavery became more common
Social Development

- Early days of Achaemenid empire
  - Warriors, priests, and peasants
  - Family and clan relationships were extremely important
  - Male warriors headed the clans
Social Development

☐ Imperial Bureaucrats

- Undermined the old warrior elite because of their crucial role in running the empire
- Administrators, tax collectors, record keepers, translators
- Literate professionals who shared the power and influence
Social Development

- Free Classes
  - Artisans, craftspeople, farmers, merchants, and low-ranking civil servants
  - Priests and priestesses
  - Participated in religious observances at local temples
  - Had the right to a share of the income from agriculture and craft industries (weaving of textiles by women)
  - Free residents in rural areas
    - Right to marry and move as they wished
    - Could seek better opportunities in the cities or military
    - Provided labor to maintain irrigation systems (qanat)
Social Development

- Slaves
  - Prisoners of war or free subjects who had accumulated debts they could not meet (means of intimidation)
    - Often sold their children and spouses into slavery first to repay debts
    - Property of an individual, the state, or an institution such as a temple community
Economic Foundations

- Agriculture surpluses from fertile lands that they mobilized using roads and ports
- Agricultural production
  - Barley and wheat
  - Beer and wine – most common beverages
  - Surpluses often headed to the imperial court
    - Darius often organized enormous banquets for thousands of guests
Trade

- Gold and ivory in India
- Semiprecious stones in Iran
- Metals in Anatolia
- Textiles and grains in Egypt
- Markets were common in large cities and ports with some having banks and companies that invested in commercial ventures
- Led to the mixing of religious faiths, art styles, and philosophical speculations
Zoroastrianism  *(add to the back of your bubble map)*

- It is the founding faith of Judaism, Christianity and Islam
- Tenets that influenced those religions...
  - An omnipotent and beneficent deity was responsible for all creation
  - A purely evil being worked against the creator god
  - The forces of good will ultimately prevail over the forces of evil after a climactic struggle
  - Human beings must strive to observe the highest moral standards and that their actions will determine their spiritual destiny
  - Individuals will undergo judgment, after which the morally upright will experience rewards in paradise while evildoers will suffer punishments in hell