

E. Hammurabi and the Babylonian Empire

1. The reunification of Mesopotamia was accomplished by a ruler named Hammurabi. His capital was the city of Babylon.
2. Hammurabi is the most famous ruler of ancient Mesopotamia, because of his laws.
3. The Code of Hammurabi (c.1700 BC)
 - a) The basic idea of the laws is “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” This is supposed to mean that the punishment is equal to the crime.
 - b) The actual laws reveal that the conquering lords of Babylonia were given lighter punishments, and that commoners and slaves were punished more harshly.
 - c) The Code of Hammurabi is an “anchor fact” of history, because it shows us how unfair archaic laws were, and thus helps us to see how much better our laws are *today*.

F. A Long List of Empires

1. The Babylonian Empire was destroyed by a mysterious people known as the Kassites. Then came yet another “dark age,” and a series of empires that were much the same as each other.
2. The most important empire in this early stage of history was the Assyrian Empire.
3. Because of its connection to the Jewish people, Assyria was the most well known empire of Mesopotamian history. Thus the subject of Mesopotamian history became known as “Assyriology.”
4. Assyria was also the first Mesopotamian empire to conquer Egypt, c. 664 BC.
5. However, Assyria was soon conquered by the Medes (from part of Persia) and the Neo-Babylonians (which means “New Babylonians.”)
6. The Neo-Babylonians became famous for the towering ziggurat of Babylon and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

G. The Greatest Archaic Empire: Persia

1. The Median Empire was mysteriously taken over by the Persians under the leadership of a king known as Cyrus “the Great.”
2. Like all “great” kings, he conquered a lot of territory, from the western edge of India to western Turkey (then called Lydia), and finally, Babylon.
3. The most original feature of Cyrus’s kingship was that he allowed conquered peoples to maintain their local religions. In this way he hoped to prevent rebellions because these people would have one less reason to rebel.
4. Cyrus's son, Cambyses, continued to rule in the same way. In 525, Cambyses conquered Egypt, and he applied Cyrus’s idea of religion toleration in a particular way. He became the Pharaoh of Egypt and thus the leader of the Egyptian religion.

5. The third important Persian emperor was Darius “the Great,” whose accomplishments are listed in the Behistun Inscription.
6. To keep Persia’s conquered territories better organized, Darius divided the empire into provinces known as “satrapies.” Each one was ruled by a Persian nobleman, whose title was “satrap.” It was the satrap’s job to maintain local order.
7. Although satraps were chosen for their loyalty, Darius still assigned them secretaries known as the “King's Ear” to spy on them.
8. Darius also created a network of roads and a postal system of mounted couriers to make sure reports could reach him from the far reaches of his empire as quickly as possible.
9. Because Darius was worried that even his secretaries and satraps might rebel, he also had other agents accompanied by a small army to monitor them all. This “King's Eye” moved from satrapy to satrapy to check up on satraps.
10. Darius’s empire was certainly well organized. It was the greatest of any archaic empire that ruled many different people.
11. Fortunately, it was still not capable of destroying the first spark of human freedom that we turn to next in the story of ancient Greece...