

## Chapter 5 Notes – *An Age of Empires: Rome and Han China, 753 B.C.E. – 600 C.E.*

**Chapter Thesis:** From the years 753 B.C. – 600 C.E., two expansive empires called the Roman Empire and the Han Empire of China extended their control, resulting in a new form of empire emerging, mutually coinciding international trade network links, and a history of tending to interact only a few times.

- I. *Rome's Creation of a Mediterranean Empire, 753 B.C.E. – 600 C.E.:* Rome's significance and development in history owes a large part to its relative location within Italy, its climate, and its natural resources such as forestry or arable land for agricultural activities.
  - Rome's central location allowed it to become the unifying force in Italy and the lands around it
  - Rome is a natural crossroads in Italy, which has a mild Mediterranean climate
  - Italy has arable land in its coastal plains and river valleys, having fertile volcanic soil as a natural resource
- A. A Republic of Farmers, 753 – 31 B.C.E.: According to archaeology, the merging of cultures in central Italy living on hilltops resulted in an urban center that would become the Republic of Rome, which implemented a system of government that relied on a Senate that held much of the central power and an Assembly that voted on issues.
  - Archaeology holds that the formation of an urban center from the collective hilltop civilizations happened sometime before 600 B.C.
  - The basis of wealth in Rome was its land, which also meant that agriculture was the primary economic activity
  - The “**Republic**” period of the Roman empire from 507 B.C. to 31 B.C. was a time in which the form of government was a vote within the Assembly and for the people, although at this point the class system affected the weight of each vote
  - Social class made up of an elite “patrician” group and common “plebeian” group that often conflicted over social inequality
  - The **Senate** of ancient Rome was the center of its power, being a council of advisors to the king controlled by a family or kinship.
  - Social inequity in Rome was accepted and adopted into a part of the life, an example is the **client-patron relationship**
- B. Expansion in Italy and the Mediterranean: As Rome pushed their borders beyond Italy after conquering its local people, they began invading the western Mediterranean, including some Hellenistic civilizations, but had a weak system

for governing these remote provinces, the republic's government being similar to that of the city-state where Rome started.

- Roman expansion began picking up to the climax of its momentum from the second or third centuries B.C.
  - Expansion made under the claim of self-defense; Rome became insecure often and expanded to provide buffer territories to protect from attack (although each invasion only made them more susceptible)
  - Governmental requirement to serve in the military for owning a certain amount of land
  - Rome's conquered peoples were often extended the political and economic benefits of the empire, demanding that they serve the interests of Rome
  - After uniting with other central Italian cities to defeat the remaining hilltop tribes in conflict, Rome began to expand as far as Carthage, where they fought two extensive wars resulting in a Roman victory
  - Rome first held a policy that governance and political rights were not allowed for provinces abroad and sent a senator to govern the province; many senators in this system were corrupt and used extortion
- C. The Failure of the Republic: The Republic system of Rome began to show its weaknesses during territorial expansion while the wealthy classes bought out the farming land for peasants and left them without a job and to live in poverty. Urban masses of people without jobs or land grew and demonstrated that Rome needed change – change that would come, by the army generals from 88 – 31 B.C, among of which is Julius Caesar.
- Wealthy classes of Rome gained money through the takeover of new territories and bought out the farms of Italian farmers during their military service
  - Italy began to need to import wheat since the farms had become ranches for the rich where they cultivated crops that had the highest sale value such as grapes for wine
  - Lower class without jobs lived in poverty but lost the amount of land required to have military service as a requirement
  - Rome was ripe for much political and internal struggle and change
- D. The Roman Principate, 31 B.C.E. – 330 C.E.: Beginning with the reign of Octavian, who among his rivals had emerged as the undisputed emperor, a series of reforms were made to the Roman government that are collectively known as the “Principate” and are characterized by a government led by honesty, efficiency, and consistency.
- Octavian, also called Augustus Caesar, was Julius Caesar's grandnephew and began to reform the Roman government after eliminating his rivals by 31 B.C.
  - Policy of “first among equals” implemented while retaining the principles of a republic – this is translated as “Principate”

- Augustus was well-respected by Roman society and a popular ruler; his reforms shaped the rest of Roman history with the idea that the mechanism of succession should be the most qualified person, adopted by the emperor as his son and trained for his duty
  - Roman Law also changed during this time period and the emperor was able to decree new laws to be studied by legal experts and implemented as law
- E. An Urban Empire: Characteristic of the Roman Empire was urbanization, and an administration that was based in cities; commerce following the late Republic period was accelerated by a policy of “pax romana,” which meant that the Roman Empire would promise stability and peace.
- Rome was an *urban empire*, which means not that most of the people lived in cities (as 80% of the Roman Empire lived in villages and on farms), but that its administration was based in towns and cities
  - Aristocratic wealthy lived in large city townhouses whereas peasants lived in impoverished slum conditions, although they spent much of their day outside
  - Land ownership began to be given to fewer people, and more concentrated in these people (temporarily not the case at the end of the Republic)
  - Commerce was stimulated by “Roman peace,” or *pax romana*, which is the policy of guaranteeing stability and manufacture and trade thrived
  - Romanization spread the Latin language and Roman culture throughout western provinces especially
- F. The Rise of Christianity: Christianity began during a time in Roman history in which Israel was occupied and ruled under Rome, and a man named Jesus, who became the central figure for Christianity, was executed by their authorities.
- With this period of prosperity in Roman history, the nation of Israel came under the rule of the Romans
  - The Jews of this period were waiting for the coming of a Messiah
  - Jesus was a Jewish carpenter from Israel that was executed by the Roman authorities and began Christianity
  - Paul was a Jew from Tarsus who became a strong advocate for the Christian faith, traveling throughout Greece and Anatolia spreading the religion
- G. Technology and Transformation: During the Third-Century Crisis of Rome, the resources of the empire were being drained due to building projects to defend its borders and paying the army to remain loyal, but a ruler named Diocletian who made reforms to prevent further inflation.
- Roman system of roads protected by Roman soldiers made it safe and convenient to travel to trade or for Christians to spread their religion
  - Technology included aqueducts which sourced the water for cities
  - Romans built large walls in points of weakness around their empire, such as in Britain and above North Africa

- After the changes of Augustus, the Roman Empire lasted for more than two centuries, but in 300 A.D., the **Third-Century Crisis** occurred
- This crisis was marked by rulers frequently changing, being overthrown or killed within months of coming to office
- Germanic tribes take advantage of Rome's political instability and begin invading; Romans begin building more protective walls around weak areas; with the expense of convincing their military to remain loyal and the cost of building walls, the treasury is exhausted
- Almost collapsing, Diocletian rises to power and makes reforms to eliminate inflation with set maximum prices for commodities
- Constantine later comes to power and converts the empire to Christianity (although acceptant of other religions) and moves the capital to Byzantium

II. *The Origins of Imperial China, 221 B.C.E. – 220 C.E.*: Following the Warring States Period, the Qin and Han dynasty came to power.

- The first empire of China arose after the Warring States Period, when the Qin state conquered neighboring territories
  - After the death of Shi Huangdi, the power passed to the Han dynasty
- A. The Qin Unification of China, 221 – 206 B.C.E.: During the Qin dynasty in the mid-third century B.C.,
- Methodic conquering of other Chinese states
  - New regime completely eliminated other rival states and their cities or towns
  - Legalism implemented and upheld with a strict code of law and a common system of writing
- B. The Long Reign of the Han, 202 B.C.E. – 220 C.E.: The Han Dynasty created a framework for the government, ideology, and technology that would be prevalent for the next two millennia.
- C. Chinese Society: Chinese society made significant advances after the Qin dynasty of strict legalism, and the Han dynasty introduced new literature and thought types.
- D. New Forms of Thought and Belief: New beliefs also emerged with the literature of the time after the Qin dynasty, including an emphasis on Daoism and advances in science and technology.
- E. Decline of the Han: The Han dynasty later fell and once again entered a period of political fragmentation, similarly to the Zhou dynasty.