

Ancient and Modern Imperialism lecture 2.

2016

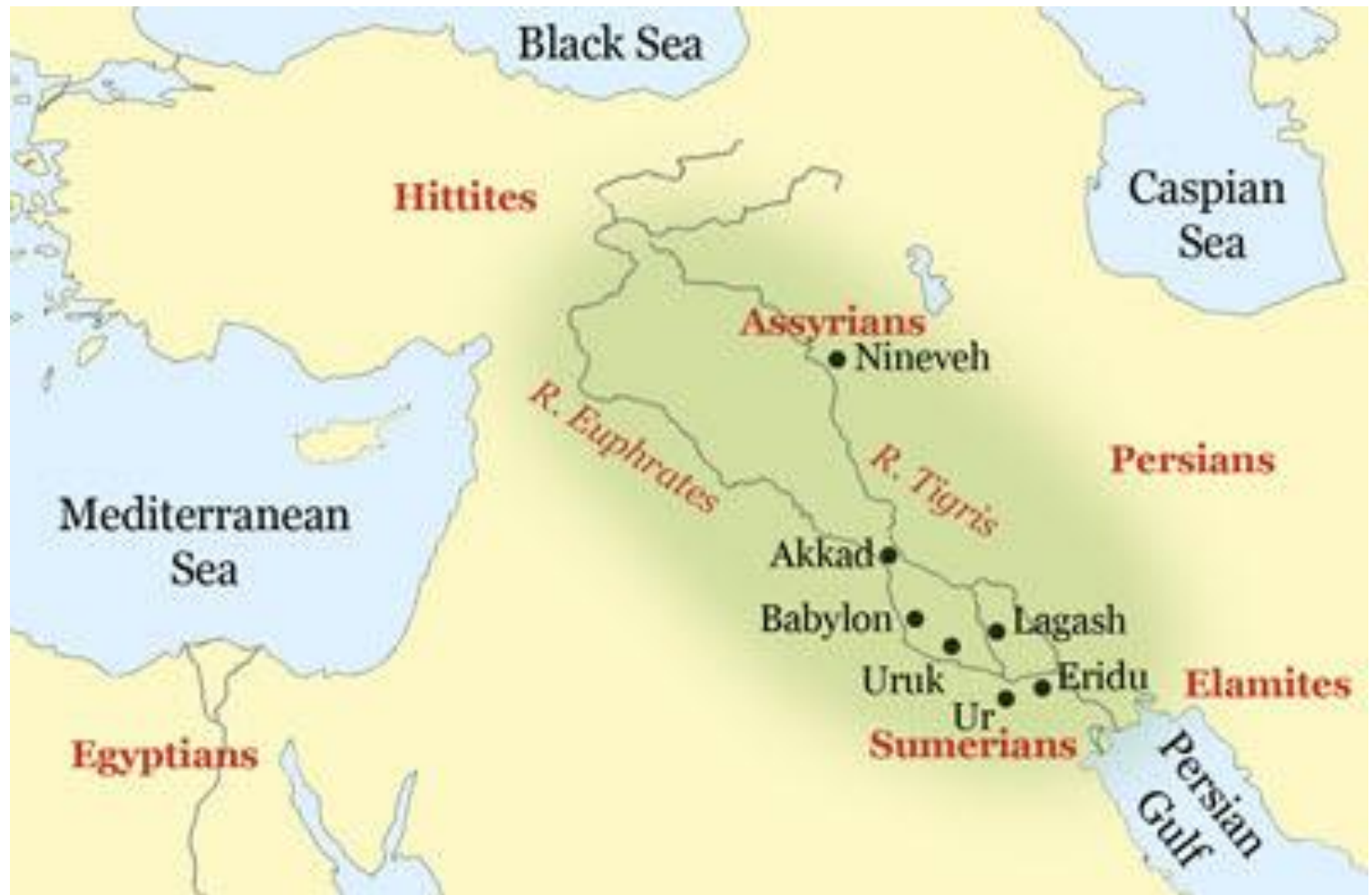
IBSU

- MESOPOTAMIAN
EMPIRES

the first empires in Mesopotamia

- This area is home to some of the earliest human settlements, and saw the origin of agriculture, domestication, urbanization, state formation, social stratification, political centralization, bureaucracy, writing, and the first empires.

Ancient Empires



States and cities



Theoretical studies of state dynamics in Mesopotamia have concentrated on:

- Early writers focused on conquest, emphasizing the coercive role of the state in general (Olmstead 1918; Wittfogel 1957; Liverani 2005)
- * the coercive - relating to or using force or threats.
forced, mandatory, coercive, compulsory.
- * Self-sufficient state

Theoretical studies of state dynamics in Mesopotamia have concentrated

- religious imperialism in particular (Holloway 2002:40-46.).
- Later on, structural typologies of social evolution, world-systems theory, and center-periphery took over as dominant explanatory models (Larsen 1979; Postgate 1992; Lamprichs 1995; Parker 2001; Smith 2003).

And also,

- Focus shifted toward **imperial ideology** and **self-representation** (Liverani ; Winter ; Machinist; Bahrani),
- and recently **the social basis of political and infrastructural power** has received particular attention with prominence given to the study **of social and political networks** (Mann ; Barjamovic ; Fleming ; Adams ; von Dassow ; Radner).

Mesopotamian written history and statecraft

- Mesopotamian history and statecraft survive directly as documentary records

from archives that have remained in the ground since their time of use.

□ Contemporary bureaucratic practice

written media

- Sumerian
- Akkadian
- Aramaic

Mesopotamian city-state as a unifying state

- Two points are of particular relevance for the present study:
 - One is the primacy and flexibility of the city-state as the basic unit of political and social organization; separation
 - the other is that the formation of empires in Mesopotamia always appears to have taken place as a part of—and has been dependent upon—a dynamic interaction between economic centralization, agricultural expansion, and urban transformation. centralization

a unifying state of city-states

- The center of a larger state would usually be a former city-state that rose to supremacy,
- Mesopotamian empires were often shaped by individuals or groups who were not native to the communities they came to rule over (the Akkadian empire, the state of Hammurabi, the Kassite state, Mitanni).

a unifying state of city-states

- In some cases they arose in secondary response to an outside competitor, created under pressure (Urartu),
- or through a revolt against a former overlord (the Babylonian empire).

The age of the city-states

- (1) The age of the city-states circa 2900-2350BC)in southern Mesopotamia
- (e.g., Lagaš , Umma, Kiš , Nippur, Ur, Uruk), Syria (e.g., Ebla, Ur Š u, Mari),
- and probably also Anatolia, Palestine, and Iran. The cities formed leagues and were organized according to an internal political hierarchy.

the first example of an imperial state,

- (2) The dynasty of Akkade brought southern Mesopotamia and parts of Syria and western Iran under direct provincial rule.

Conventionally considered as the first example of an imperial state, it lasted for about a century circa 2350-2215 BC.

Back to a system of independent city-states

- (3) Southern Mesopotamia reverts to a system of independent city-states circa 2215-2100).
*Elam entered a period of political consolidation and territorial expansion.

the Third Dynasty in Ur

- (4.) The rise of the Third Dynasty in Ur (also known as Ur III) circa 2100-2000 BC).
- Southern Iraq was unified under a centralized bureaucratic imperial core that held hegemony over an wide periphery of client states and toward modern Iran, dependencies stretching along the major trade routes Syria, and Turkey.
- After a generation of decline the empire fell to an Elamite invasion that brought about a renewed period of political decentralization.

military and political alliances

- (5) Greater Mesopotamia and Anatolia was divided into hundreds of polities **organized in shifting military and political alliances (ca.2000-1750 BC) that struggle for land and resources.**
- Political and social networks of territorially defined city-states and tribal confederations based on lines of perceived kinship overlap in a complex manner.
- At different times the dominant polities were Larsa and Isin (southern Iraq); E Š nuna, Yamhad, Qatna, Mari, Hazor, and Mamma (northern Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and southern Turkey); and Kane Š , Ku Š Š ara, Puru Š haddum, and Zalpuwa (Anatolia). Toward the end of the period Š am Š i-Adad unified northern Syria into a loose imperial network, parts of which were subsequently taken over by Zimrilim of Mari.

Empire of Babylon

- Southern Mesopotamia unified under Hammurabi of Babylon (1792-1750BC).
- Political dominance in the north was based on a loose system of dependencies and was ephemeral at best.
- The crown in Babylon closely regulated economic policies in the conquered south, and subjugated land was often bound directly to the state administration regardless of prior ownership.
- Local political authority in the south was systematically bypassed while administrators channeled resources directly to the capital.
- The state survived in diminished form for more than a century (1750- 1595BC).

Small Empires

- Following the disintegration of the Hittite empire, central and western Turkey became divided into the kingdoms of Phrygia, Lydia, and the principalities and city-states of Tabal (ca. 1100-550bBC).
- At its peak in the tenth to eighth centuries BCE. , Phrygia formed an empire with a transregional elite culture, a loose provincial system, and a retinue of client states.
- Later on the Lydian state expanded eastward to become a small and relatively short-lived empire (ca. 660-550BC); tradition asserts it established a frontier with the Iranian empire of the Medes (ca. 640-550) along the Halys River.

the Assyrian empire

- The expanding political and military power of the Assyrian empire became increasingly based on
- territorial provinces, client states, centralized taxation, and a standing army.
- The expansion culminated in the conquest of Elam and Egypt in the first half of the 7th century BCE and the political unification of the Near East.

The empire of Urartu

- The empire of Urartu (ca. 830-600BC) rose to cover eastern Turkey, Armenia, and western Iran (Zimansky; Salvini).
- Its administrative system, political structures, and royal ideology were to some extent modeled on Assyria. The king was both the political and religious figure head of the state.
- The imperial territory was divided into a loose system of provinces ruled by military governors who often came out of the royal family, client states, and crown land.
- Ambitious irrigation projects and mass deportations formed the backbone of the state economy. Urartu controlled two important strategic resources of its time: horses and iron.

The new-Babylonian empire (626-539BC).

- Emerged out of the ruins of Assyria.
- Political control was centralized and the state administered through an elaborate system of infrastructure and taxation tied to provincial governors and outlying clients. A parallel administrative hierarchy of temple institutions based on transferrable **prebends (Renta)** and vast tracts of agricultural land and pastures played a key role in society.
- Territories stretched across the Near East from Iran to the Sinai before the empire fell the Persian invasion of Cyrus the Great.

the definition of Ancient Empire

- any type of larger **territorial state** that held **political hegemony** over **several cities and kinship groups or tribes** through **military power**, formed a **supranational elite**, and **developed a sense of state ideology distinct from that of the individual communities it controlled** (cf., e.g., Doyle; Mann ; Bang and Bayly; Runciman)
 - * **a supranational elite**- Beyond the borders or scope of any one nation
- supranational : *supra (above) + national.*

Evidence for the taxation of trade

- Territorial expansion could take place through diplomacy as well as conquest, and some empires were successful in attracting and holding on to clients by structural force alone.
- The importance of taxation as a source of state income appears to have increased through time.
- Evidence for the taxation of trade is fickle, but appears to have existed in all periods.

Evidence for the taxation of trade

- This is the Old Assyrian commercial network of the early second millennium which belongs to a time when Assur was a modestly sized city-state located on the periphery of the great Babylonian zone of production and consumption.
- The network was based on mercantilist principles of geographical monopoly and political protectionism guaranteed by treaty; the Assyrian merchants could do business in Anatolia, but other geographical areas in Syria and the Levant were off limits and presumably belonged to competing networks.

The Assyrian Empire

- It became a prototype for transnational imperialism
- bring the Near East under one rule.
- The city of Assur became the royal capital of a **territorial empire** known as the
- “Land of Assur” centered on a region around the city itself and the ancient urban centers of Nineveh and Arbela further north.
- From the beginning, conquests were divided into imperial provinces headed by governors, and early on the western territories held a special status under the administration of an imperial viceroy.

The Assyrian Empire

- A number of the characteristic elements of Assyrian imperialism were instituted already during the fourteenth to twelfth centuries , including the systematic deportation of populations to concentrate labor resources and weaken local identity.
- Other general elements include the creation of a provincial infrastructure, based on military fortresses and administrative centers, and the creation of a standing army that could operate in addition to larger hosts levied through drafts.

The Assyrian Empire

- The new imperial system of governance took form on the basis of the **oligarchic assembly of the former city-state of Assur**,
- and by the fourteenth century BCE Assyria had turned into **a centralized dominion with an expansionist agenda headed by the king and a landed aristocracy.**

The Assyrian Empire

- Particular to the early empire was a tendency to demolish local political and bureaucratic institutions in the newly conquered areas and insert a local ruling class of ethnic Assyrians.
- in the ninth century BC. onward this practice was discarded, and the Assyrian imperial elite became inclusive, multicultural, and multiethnic.
- This process was tied to a gradual transfer of power from a hereditary landed aristocracy to a nobility whose position was personal, based on royal appointment, and dependent upon personal Loyalty.

The Imperial magnates

- During the late empire period they formed a group of men known collectively as “the magnates”; many were **eunuchs** ('yōonək - castrated men) recruited directly from the imperial bureaucracy who had direct access to the king and would act as royal counselors.
- They occupied the most prominent positions in the **imperial administration**, including posts as **provincial governors, senior military leaders, and court officials.**