Centers of Power Workbook, Part 2

Tower near the end of the excavation. Located in Naqsh-i-Rustam, Iran.
Sasanian period (AD 224–651)

In AD 224, the Sasanians defeated the Parthians, with Ardashir I—who ruled from AD 224–241—as their leader. This started the Sasanian dynasty which lasted until the death of its last ruler Yazdegerd III in AD 651. The Sasanian dynasty ruled from the ancient city of Ctesiphon, which is located outside of present-day Baghdad. Due to contact and conflict with neighboring peoples (like the Romans and later the Byzantines, Kushans, and Hephthalites) the area under Sasanian rule was often changing.

Shapur I

Shapur I was the son of Ardashir I and ruled from AD 241–272. He began as a co-ruler with his father, and joined him on his military campaigns. During his reign, Shapur went to war with Rome many times, which allowed the Sasanians to expand the size of their empire and become a rival to the Roman state. Shapur’s campaigns also increased the wealth of the Sasanian empire!
This tower-like stone structure at the site of Naqsh-i Rustam was excavated by Erich Schmidt, director of the OI’s Iranian expedition from 1935 to 1939. The tower was built in the Achaemenid period. The inscription was added much later—in Middle Persian, Parthian, and Greek—and records the achievements of Shapur I, the second king of the Sasanian empire. The inscription being added to this Achaemenid structure shows that the Sasanians interacted with earlier monuments. This is also seen in the Sasanian rock reliefs that were carved near the Achaemenid tombs facing this tower.

Excavation of the tower, showing the Middle Persian inscription of Shapur I on the east wall. Located in Naqsh-i-Rustam, Iran.

Tower after the excavation, facing south east. Located in Naqsh-i-Rustam, Iran.

Part of the Parthian inscription of Shapur I on the west wall of the tower. Located in Naqsh-i-Rustam, Iran.

What do you think?

Why do you think this tower was built?

Why is there writing in multiple languages?

Where else do you see writing in multiple languages?
Create a Map of an Imaginary Empire

Empires in the ancient world stretched across vast areas, encompassing thousands of square miles, different types of geography, and many different cultures. One way we can learn about empires is by studying maps that show their boundaries, cities, roads, and important natural features like mountains, deserts, and rivers.

The geography of an area often determined how empires expanded their borders.

Mountains, forests, oceans, and plains all provided important natural resources for empires.

Cities were often located along rivers, which provided water and transportation.

Cities were also found in mountainous areas, which were well-protected from invading armies!

Deserts rarely had cities, and often formed the borders of empires.

Trade routes often avoided mountains and deserts, which were difficult to cross.
How to Create An Imaginary Empire Map

Materials:
- Paper
- Pencil
- Coloring supplies

Start your map by drawing in parts of the geography of the land, such as mountains, hills, rivers, and coasts.

Tips:
- Make the geography varied and random to look natural.
- Use organic shapes, like rounded, squiggley, or jagged lines to make the geography look natural.
- Rivers usually start at higher land and flow towards lower land.

Add in cities based on the geography, and begin to fill in more details like forests, plains, and marshes, smaller tributary rivers, deltas, oceans, and trade routes. As you fill in your map, feel free to add in more details and make changes. If the empire doesn’t fill the entire map, draw borders to show the area it controls.

Create a key for your map that shows what your icons symbolize.

When your map is finished, create a name for your empire. Which city is its capital? Based on the geography, what does it import and export? Are there neighboring empires that might invade your empire, or that your empire might invade?
Colossal bull head A24065, on display in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery.

This stone bull head belonged to one of two guardian bulls that flanked the portico of the Hundred-Column Hall at Persepolis, a capital of the Achaemenid Empire. The Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BCE) was larger than any previous empire in history and served as a model for many later empires. While the bull is shown in a style particular to the Achaemenid court, the practice of setting up colossal guardian figures at the entrances of important buildings as protection from “evil spirits” was inspired by earlier empires, in particular the Assyrian Empire. The Achaemenid Empire, a capital of the Achaemenid Empire, was larger than any previous empire in history and served as a model for many later empires. While the bull is shown in a style particular to the Achaemenid court, the practice of setting up colossal guardian figures at the entrances of important buildings as protection from “evil spirits” was inspired by earlier empires, in particular the Assyrian Empire.