

Notes on Quiz #7

Civilizations of the Ancient World • Fall 2022

1. What were some of the reasons Alexander's empire did not survive his death intact?

Alexander died unexpectedly and young. He did not make provisions for his succession, and his possible successors were the infant child of his foreign wife and his supposedly mentally deficient half-brother. His protégé, Haephestion, had died a year earlier, and he had no favorites among the generals—indeed, since he was trying to be a more elevated and separate Asian kind of king (like the Persian Great King), he had kept himself apart from his generals and lords. The generals were thus at all the same level, and in rivalry with each other—naturally, they were ready to fight for pieces of the empire after Alexander died.

Alexander's empire also had very little in common. The Aegean world, Mesopotamia, Persia, Bactria, and Egypt all had very different cultures that were only now being brought together through Hellenization. Alexander might have melded them together by building new imperial institutions, but he did not live to do so.

2. In what ways did the Ptolemies act like pharaohs? In what ways did they hold onto their Macedonian-Greek heritage?

The Ptolemies ruled as pharaohs, retaining the dress and rituals of Egyptian kings. Some maintained the Egyptian tradition of incestuous marriage in order to consolidate bloodlines, at least for show. They recorded their deeds in statues, paintings, and hieroglyphics reminiscent of ancient pharaohs.

At the same time, Ptolemaic Egypt was a haven for Hellenistic art and learning, with Alexandria on the Nile delta becoming the preeminent center for scholarship, the library there gaining worldwide fame and drawing learned individuals from all over. Greek culture flourished, including fostering plays, visual art, rhetoric, philosophy, and literature. Ptolemaic Egypt was more heterogeneous than Egypt had been, with significant populations of outsiders in Alexandria and elsewhere. The Egyptian religion was modified by grafting on or merging in gods from Greek mythology, while still retaining much of the shape and ritual of Egyptian religion.

3. What does Strepsiades's son do at the end of *Clouds*? What does Strepsiades then do to the Thinkery, and why?

Pheidippides, thanks to the teachings of the Thinkery, not only rationalizes putting his father in debt but proceeds to beat him, a shocking betrayal of community values both within the play and to the play's audience.

Strepsiades then burns down the school. (Don't get any ideas.) His personal motivation vengeance for the betrayal by "Socrates" that had led his son to beat him and himself to turn his back on the gods, about which he feels guilty.

From the playwright's perspective, Strepsiades burning down the Thinkery was meant to demonstrate not only that sophism and philosophies of moral relativism were corrupting Athens, but that radical action must be taken to purge the corruption already ingrained in the populace.

EC1. The city-state of Pergamum was known for all of the following EXCEPT:

(d) Their diet consisted mostly of onions *[this one was made up; the others are true]*

EC2. In your opinion, what are some of the reasons the Seleucid empire was so warlike?

The Seleucid empire was the most divided, with a small Macedonian Greek population in charge who were foreigners to all their subjects. Waging war was one way to bring the empire together, to demonstrate their strength and generate pride and wealth. The Hebrews saw an opportunity to free themselves that they hadn't had under the Persians, forcing the Seleucids to repress them more forcefully. It was also vulnerable in all directions—the Ptolemies to the southwest, the Antigonids to the northwest, and the Punjab/India to the east. Finally, the Seleucid emperors felt the legacy of Alexander most directly, feeling a need to measure up to the great warrior who had set his throne in Babylon.