**Another Voice Podcast with Eric Nelson**

**to accompany Strayer/Nelson, *Ways of the World*, Third Edition**

**Rulers and Ruled: Two Imperial Styles (Chapter 3)**

**SLIDE 3.1**

Empires have different styles when it comes to the relationship between ruler and ruled. In the empires of the second wave era, we can distinguish two broad approaches to that relationship.

**SLIDE 3.2 [Image: Qin Shihuangdi Funerary Complex]**

One imperial tradition places a strong emphasis on fostering a sense of a shared cultural identity between sovereign and subjects. From early in its history, China pursued this model of empire. The Mandate from Heaven and later Legalist and Confucian thought associated Chinese identity with a single state. In the Chinese imperial tradition, conquest of peoples who were not ethnically or culturally Chinese potentially undermined the unity of the state if they could not be assimilated. As the Chinese empire solidified and expanded after the Warring States Period, it was underpinned by a shared cultural identity built in part on ethno-linguistic commonalities, a shared Confucian education for elites and the standing and prestige of China in the region. Thus the reemergence after the Warring States Period of strong centralized rule over a theoretically unified Chinese society represented what many viewed as the natural state of affairs. As we will see in coming chapters, this imperial model proved enduring through at least the thirteenth century. Only when the Chinese state incorporated much of what is now western China, where Chinese forms of settled agriculture were impossible, did this approach to empire change.

**SLIDE 3.3 [Image: Behistun Inscription]**

In Southwest Asia and later the Mediterranean, a very different imperial tradition took shape. Between the establishment of the first empire in the region under Sargon the Great in 2334 BCE and the height of Rome in the first centuries CE, the history of empire in these regions was the story of ever larger and more ethnically diverse states. The pattern for two and a half millennia was for a group—Akkadians, Assyrians, Hittites, Persians, Greeks, Romans amongst others—to settle on the fringes of the region’s established civilizations and then conquer and incorporate much of the region into an empire larger than any which had preceded it. Each time this occurred the ethnic diversity of the new empire surpassed the previous one.

**SLIDE 3.4 [Map: The Persian Empire]**

The Persian Empire, for instance, possessed dozens of officially recognized ethnic groups and the emperor’s official title recognized him as “King of countries containing all kinds of men.” There was no sense that the ruler had to share a language, religion or ethnic identity with his subjects, even if promotion of official languages and religious cults was an integral part of imperial rule. By the time of the Greeks and Romans this Southwest Asian imperial tradition had come to encompass the Mediterranean and much of Europe as well.

**SLIDE 3.5 [Map: The Growing World of Islam]**

Interestingly, with the final collapse of the western portion of the Roman state in the fifth century CE this tradition of empire came to an end in the region. The eastern portion of the Roman Empire, known as the Byzantine Empire, came to express its identity through a close association with Christianity. Similarly, the next great empire to emerge, that of the Arabs, was defined by the largely voluntary conversion of its subjects to Islam. Both of these empires were tied together by a shared faith in a manner very different from their predecessors, and much more in line with the imperial model in China during the Second Wave Era.

**SLIDE 3.6 [Map: Colonial Asia in the Early Twentieth Century]**

Nonetheless, empires where rulers possessed a distinct language, religion or ethnic identity from most of their subjects emerged in other contexts over the centuries. The Mongol Empire of the thirteenth century fits this model as did the British Empire in Africa and Asia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Indeed, both models of empire persisted into the modern era, reflecting their enduring importance in world history.