

Causation Essay: Imperial Expansion and Consolidation

After the adoption of agriculture, the early complex societies became even more complex. As societies' populations grew they started to extend their societies. As each society started to extend their land they started having problems gaining land from other societies and started forming into empires. The simplest definition of an empire is that it is brought together by conquest, it is large, and it is multi-ethnic and overruled by an emperor. To extend and maintain this empire they needed consolidation and imperial expansion. Consolidation is keeping an empire stable, strong and solid while imperial expansion is expanding land of an empire. What lead to consolidation and imperial expansion may vary. Powerful military, weapons and strategies led to imperial expansion, while establishing laws, reforms and policies and religious tolerance led to a consolidated empire.

Powerful military, weapons and strategies was one component that led to imperial expansion. For instance, several Roman military commanders started recruiting landless rural residents and urban workers promising them land if they won battles. This meant that Romans retrieved soldiers from people who had almost nothing and provided them with land as encouragement of winning battles and expanding the empires. In addition, Macedonians used a tactic similar to the phalanx to conquer lands that involved Macedonian infantry armed with the

sarissa, a sharp 18 feet long spear. This tactic helped imperial expansion because it provided all soldiers to attack instead of leaving some soldiers in the back while charging and helped Alexander conquer many lands with this tactic. Lastly, Han military had iron armor, swords, spears and arrowheads which helped the success of Chinese armies against the Xiongnu and other nomadic peoples. Iron weapons led to imperial expansion of the Han because they had stronger weapons that dealt stronger blows and were sharper making conquests easier. Iron armor also helped protecting the user from spears, arrowheads, and swords which gave the soldier a bigger possibility of living.

The establishment of laws, reforms and policies was one element that caused consolidation of an empire. For example, in the later fourth century, Romans established a policy for people they conquered that exempted taxes and allowed them to govern their internal affairs. This helped consolidate the empire because it reduced riots within the empire and provided the conquered peoples a sense of freedom. Also, Persians allowed kingdoms to keep their kings and elites if they pledged allegiance to the Persian king and paid taxes, while taxes weren't high.. This was good because kingdoms were still allowed to function as kingdoms and it didn't feel like they were bothered.

Religious tolerance was another cause of a consolidated empire giving people a sense of freedom. One example is that even though Ashoka believed in Buddhism, he didn't force the people in the empire to convert Buddhism but rather encouraged it, giving the people in his empire religious freedom. This

helped consolidate an empire by giving the people in his empire some space and lowered chances of rebellions. Another example that is similar is that the Persians were mostly Zoroastrian; Persians weren't too concerned about converting people giving the conquered peoples the freedom of religion. Last of all, Constantine established the Edicts of Milan that gave Christians the freedom to practice their religion. This helped consolidate the empire because Romans often persecuted Christians and were afraid that they might start a rebellion but, with the Edicts of Milan established it stopped the chance of rebellion.

To conclude, powerful military, weapons and strategies led to imperial expansion, while establishing laws, reforms and policies and religious tolerance led to a consolidated empire. With consolidation and imperial expansion, many empires succeeded unless something unexpected happened. This is intriguing because consolidation still goes on today with laws, reforms and policies being passed in countries to maintain it and to keep it stable.