Name: _____ Date: _____

Study Guide #6: Empires in Mesopotamia

Migration and Empire. Between 3000 B.C. and 2000 B.C. two major groups of people began to migrate within western Asia. One group spoke Semitic languages, the other Indo-European languages. The first of these were Semitic-speaking pastoral nomads who began migrating into Mesopotamia from Arabia and Syria. Although they settled and adapted the Sumerian style of civilization, life in a harsh desert climate led them to create a society that valued military skill and survival.
By the mid-2300s Semitic-speaking Sargon I had founded his own city-state, Akkad. Sargon The Great, as he became known, used military conquest to establish the first empire, ruling a territory stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. Sargon and his successors helped hold their empire together by adopting several aspects of Sumerian culture and religion. They made use of the Sumerian language for literary and religious purposes and left the Sumerian priesthood intact. Although Sargon's empire was overthrown by internal revolt and external invasion, he had managed to spread the heritage of the Sumerians beyond their original river valleys and established the standard for future empires.

Sumerian Revival and Decline. About 2100 B.C., several city-states in southern Sumeria underwent a revival under the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur, who used military conquest to gain control of much of the former Akkadian empire. The rulers of Ur oversaw an empire that provided its citizens with a variety of different economic opportunities. However, the kings of Ur spread their military forces too thin to keep the empire unified. Their empire ended about 2000 B.C., when individual city-states began to rebel and a new wave of nomadic invasions began.

The Babylonians. About 1800 B.C., the Semitic-speaking Amorites established the city of Babylon in Mesopotamia. Their king, Hammurabi, reunited Mesopotamia into what has become known as the Old Babylonian Empire. Hammurabi collected legal rulings to create the Code of Hammurabi, which became the basis for other Mesopotamian legal codes. This code was based on the principle of "an eye for an eye"— the type of punishment given for committing a crime should be similar to the crime itself. Like the Akkadians, Hammurabi built upon the civilization that had begun in Sumer by maintaining the power of the Sumerian priesthood and continuing to use the Sumerian language. After about 400 years, this empire too fell, this time to peoples speaking Indo-European languages.

Indo-European Migrations. Indo-European-speaking peoples, like Semitic-speaking peoples, were not a single ethnic group, but many groups who shared a number of cultural traits. They were the first group to domesticate the horse, which made them mobile and gave them an advantage in raiding more settled peoples in Southwest Asia. Their societies were male-dominated, or **patriarchal**, and warlike. They migrated from southwestern Russia in two waves of immigration—one around 2000 B.C. and the other around 1200 B.C.—eventually spreading their language from Ireland to India. To improve their abilities in battle, they invented both the horse-drawn **war chariot**, and **compound bows**—bows reinforced with pieces of bone for added power.

The Hittites. The Hittites were one of the most successful Indo-Europeans invaders. In response to further invasions from the north around the 1600s B.C., they united under a powerful king named Hattusilis I. The Hittites excelled at chariot warfare and were among the first peoples to use iron weapons on a large scale. They used these advantages to conquer much of southwest Asia Minor. Hittite society was led by the king, who functioned as both a war chief and as chief priest. He gave the nobles land in return for tribute in horses and soldiers. These ordinary soldiers formed the base of society. The Hittites expanded until they came into conflict with the Egyptian Empire. Unlike the Egyptians, they were conquered by another wave of Semitic and Indo-European invaders around 1200 B.C.

Answer the questions below in your own words and in complete sentence. Highlight your evidence.

1. What two groups invaded Mesopotamia between 3000 and 2000 B.C.?

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2. Describe the techniques the Akkadians used to hold their empire together.

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3. What was the lasting influence of Sargon I's empire?

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4. What principle was the basis of the Code of Hammurabi?

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5. How were Indo-Europeans able to conquer the settled peoples of Southwest Asia?

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6. What technological innovation helped the Hittites conquer much of Southwest Asia?

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7. Describe Hittite social structure.

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