

# Attitudes Towards Mountains

- Prehistoric
- Andes
- Western Tradition
  - biblical period
  - Greeks/Romans
  - Middle Ages
- Far East: Chinese, Japanese, Nepalese



# Settlement

- Stone Age- 100,000 YBP
  - Middle Eastern Mtns, Alps
- Major influx to higher elevations during altithermal. (5,000-9,000 yrs ago)
- Andean Settlement; 3000 BC
  - farming-tubers, grains up to 13,000'
  - ruins on highest peaks, 20,700'
- Himalayan Settlement
  - villages as high as 17,000' extensive hillside terracing and irrigation networks



# Prehistoric Era



- **Volcanoes**

- negative
- eruption a sign of displeasure
- taboos, ceremonies, sacrifices to appease gods
- Earthquake similar

- **Weather**

- Snow
- Storms
- Lightning
- Winds
- Clouds
- Cold

# Prehistoric Era



- **High Altitude Sickness**

- physical symptoms

- Explained as transgressing on hallowed grounds

- revenge of mountain deities

- **Mythical Beasts**

- real; bears, wolves, eagles, snow leopards

- imaginary; yeti, sasquatch, dragons

- Flying serpents

- Most cultures had unique creatures

# Old Testament

- Mountains were objects of veneration and symbols of strength and peace in the OT
    - Moses and ten commandments
    - Abraham sacrifices son Isaac on mountain
    - God met with prophets on mtns, eg David
- “I will light up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help”

# New Testament

- Beauty, strength, and everlasting peace of hills no longer considered worth of comment
- Christ takes center stage, epitomized in Luke (3:5): “ every valley should be exalted and every mountain and hill should be made low.”

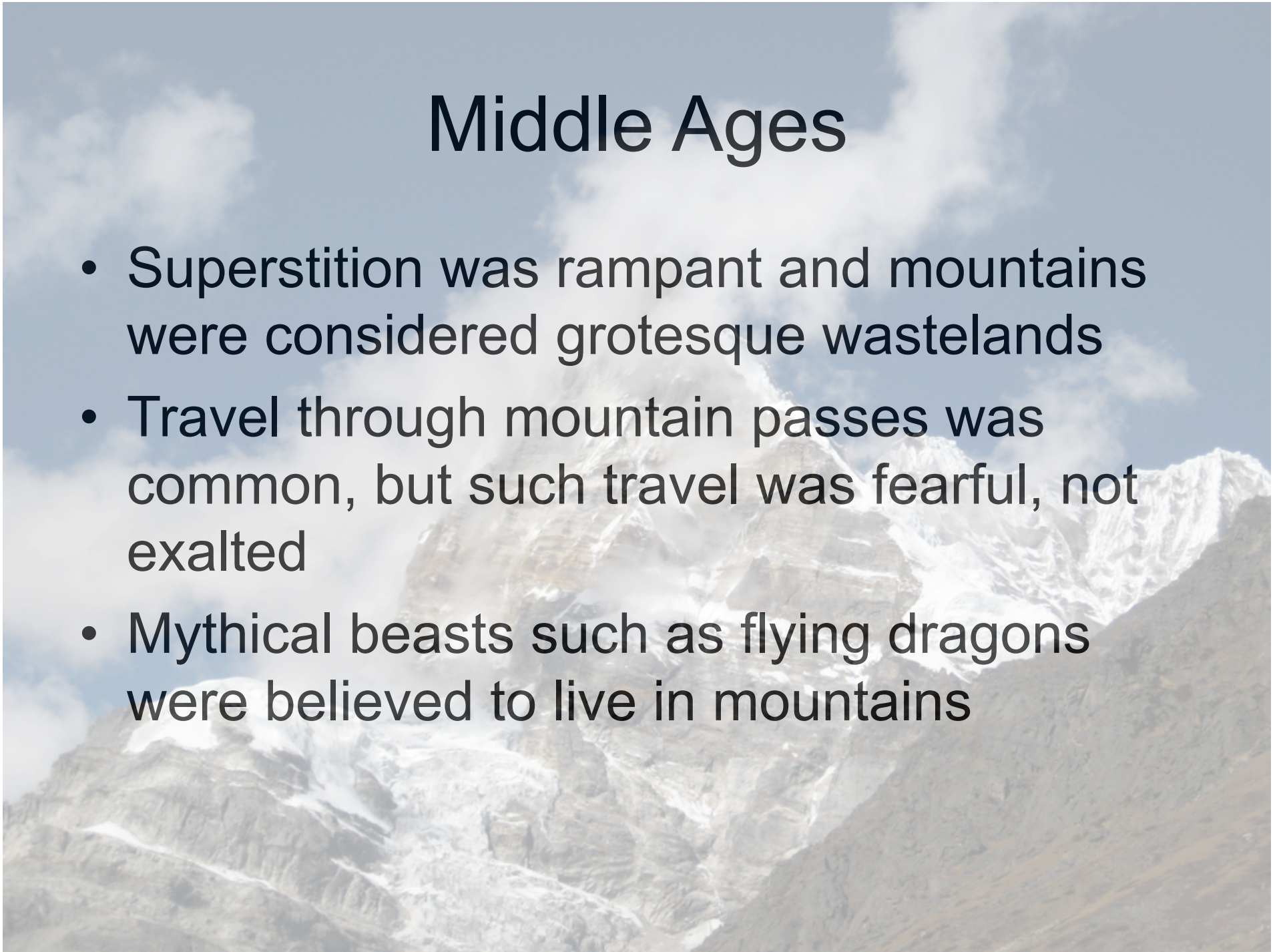
# Greeks

- **Olympus:** generic word for “peak” or “mountain”; home of Zeus, god of storms and weather
- Greeks enjoyed wild and untamed nature of mtn scenery but preferred human culture
- **Aristotle:** believed earthquakes and volcanoes were related and involved in formation of mountains.



# Middle Ages

- Superstition was rampant and mountains were considered grotesque wastelands
- Travel through mountain passes was common, but such travel was fearful, not exalted
- Mythical beasts such as flying dragons were believed to live in mountains



# Far East

- Attitudes in sharp contrast to west
- Mountains adored, venerated, sacred places
  - Mtn worship incorporated into beliefs of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism
  - Everest (Sagarmatha, Chomolungma) sacred, “churning stick of the universe”
  - China; mtns considered sacred 2000 BC

# Andes

- Mountains preferred habitat to lowlands
- Mountains were actually deities
  - *panzaleo* tribe descended from volcano Tungurahura
  - *Puruha* tribe created by union of volcanoes, feminine Tungurahura and masculine Chimboraz
  - Priests lived in man-made mountains to honor and venerate mountain gods
  - villagers make food offerings to appease mtn gods

# Common views of sacred Mtns

- Axis Mundi
- Mountains of Revelation and vision
- Dwelling places of the divine
- Charged with divine power
- Givers of life and abode of the dead
- Persistence of mountains

# Shifts in Cultural views



- Political orders (regimes, ideologies, unrest)
- Philosophical traditions
- Religions, spiritual beliefs
- Influential literature and art
- Utility of mountains
- Science and Technology

# Modern Attitudes



- Adventure and Recreation
- Wilderness concept
- Motives for preservation trend
- Mountaineering as a spiritual encounter
- Scientific intrusion or traditional beliefs?
- Contemporary popular secular culture