

# From Hunter-Foragers to Settled Societies

"Civilizations take ages to be born, to settle, and to grow."

—Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*

Achieving an understanding of early human history is difficult. But even though prehistoric peoples did not have a written language, they left evidence of how they lived in their bones and in their *artifacts*, objects made by people in the past. For example, the size and composition of skeletons can suggest how well nourished people were. Chipped stones indicate they made tools with sharp edges. The remains of burnt logs show they used fire. And since prehistoric people often buried their dead with jewelry and religious tokens, they left clues about what they considered valuable. By studying these physical remains, people today can trace the movements of the earliest humans across the globe, understand how they traded with each other, and learn about the new technologies they developed.

## Migrating Across the Globe

Modern humans, the group *Homo sapiens sapiens*, first appeared in East Africa between 200,000 and 100,000 years ago. They survived by hunting animals and foraging for seeds, nuts, fruits, and edible roots, so they are labeled as *hunter-foragers* or hunter-gatherers. Always on the search for food, they migrated from place to place, gradually expanding the region of human settlement. If the population became too dense in one area or if the climate shifted, they might be pushed to move. Other times, they might be pulled to a new region by new sources of food or fresh water. As people encountered new climates and environments, they developed new cultural patterns and new forms of technology.

One force pushing migration was climate change. As the climate warmed and cooled, animal and plant habitats shifted. People adjusted by following the animals and plants. Each time the climate cooled—a dip in the average daily temperature of several degrees—habitats would shift toward the equator and glaciers would grow, covering up land. As the climate warmed, habitats would shift away from the equator and more land would open up for occupation. As the animals and plants moved, so did people.

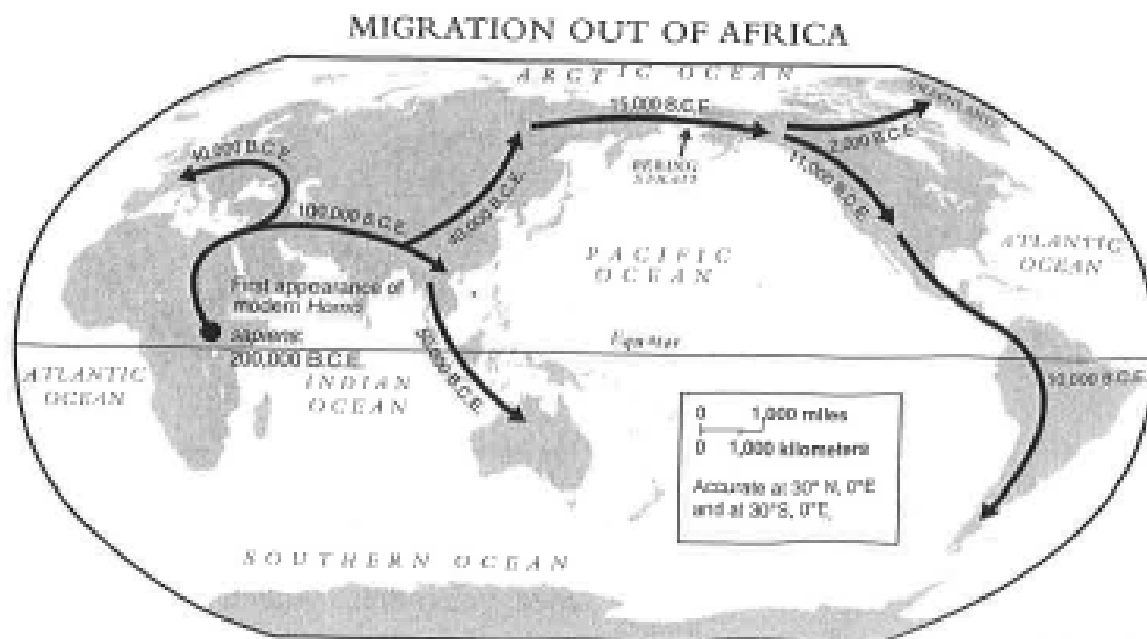
During one cooler period, so much water froze into ice that the ocean levels fell as much as 400 feet below today's level. The level was low enough that land connected northeastern Asia and what is now Alaska. This land, now submerged under the Bering Strait, provided a bridge between Asia and the Americas. Nomadic hunters followed herds of animals that wandered across this land. When temperatures increased and ocean levels rose, these people, the first Americans, were cut off from their Asian ancestors. Over time, they slowly moved farther south along the coast.

By 10,000 B.C.E., possibly far earlier, humans lived on every continent except Antarctica. In each region, people developed distinctive cultures.

## The Paleolithic Period

The early years of human history are part of the *Paleolithic Period*, which began 2.5 million years ago and ended about 10,000 years ago (8000 B.C.E.). Because humans used stone tools and weapons in this period, it is often called the Stone Age. In addition to stone, people made tools from wood, animal bones, and antlers. Many of their tools included a sharp point or blade. For example, they had digging sticks for uncovering roots they could eat, and they had spears, harpoons, and arrows for killing animals.

**Adapting to the Environment** As people migrated in search of animals and edible plants, they found certain tools to be particularly useful in the new environment they encountered. For example, as they moved into cooler climates as far north as the tundra, they needed scrapers for cleaning the flesh off of animals' skins they wore for warmth. In the warmer regions such as the tropics, nets for catching fish were particularly valuable. As they reached the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, they built strong rafts to venture out onto the water. In forested areas, they used axes to cut down trees to make shelters. People adapted technology to new conditions.



**Control of Fire** One of the greatest accomplishments of people in the Paleolithic Period was to learn to control fire. It changed their lives by providing

- light to allow them to see better after the sun went down
- heat so they could live in colder climates than before
- protection against wild animals
- smoke to pacify bees, which made obtaining honey easier
- help in hunting by scaring animals to race to their death over a cliff

Possibly the most influential use of fire was to prepare food. Cooking made protein-rich and starchy foods (both hunted and foraged) easier to digest and, hence, more nutritious.

**Hunter-Forager Society** As early humans developed new technology, they also established more complex social structures. At the center of society was the nuclear family, which then expanded outward to include ties between related families. Several related families that moved together in search of food were called a *kinship group*. A typical group might include 20 to 40 people. Smaller groups might have difficulty finding enough food. Larger groups would use up the food supply of an area more quickly, which would require more frequent moving. Kinship groups were often nearly self-sufficient. They could make most or all of what they needed to survive.

Though kinship groups traveled on their own and were close to self-sufficient, they were not isolated. They were often part of a larger group of relatives called a *clan*. And sometimes multiple clans combined into still larger units called a *tribe*. An individual did not have to be related to other members to be considered part of a tribe. The tribes were formed for purposes of group hunting or mutual defense from enemies and were usually led by chiefs and priests.

Between groups at each level of organization—kinship group, clan, and tribe—people were also tied together by trade. Besides trading goods such as tools and clothing, they also traded people. A person from one group might join another group to help balance out the size of each group. Through these trades in goods and people, ideas spread. People learned new methods for making tools, new thoughts about religion, and new information about the world.

**Roles in Society** Since early people did not leave written records, most modern knowledge of them comes from the study of artifacts. However, in modern times, anthropologists have also studied hunter-forager groups whose way of life probably resembles that of earlier nomads. From these modern studies, scholars have inferred that Paleolithic groups probably were relatively egalitarian. They did not have many layers of leaders, and only small differences separated the poorest and the wealthiest individuals in a kinship group.

Functions in hunter-forager societies were often divided by gender. These societies were *patriarchal*, ones dominated by men. Paleolithic males took charge of hunts, warfare, and heavy labor. Paleolithic women gathered and



Source: iStockphoto

The oldest known paintings were created about 40,000 years ago.

prepared food and looked after the children. Anthropologists believe that the women breast-fed their children for as long as five years, a practice that provided high nutrition for the children as well as a very rudimentary form of family planning. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph connecting early hunter-forager groups with such groups in Russia. Read about the Slavic peoples on page 137)

**Religion and Art** Anthropologists believe that people of the Paleolithic developed a system of religious beliefs centered around the worship of gods that were associated with the forces of nature. Ritual sacrifices to these gods and archeological evidence of burial practices suggest a belief in the afterlife that dates back 100,000 years. Evidence of artistic expression has also been found in the form of cave paintings, which date back to 32,000 years ago, and musical instruments, such as flutes, dating to 30,000 years ago. Artistic expression in the Paleolithic may have been connected to religious ceremonies.

## Neolithic Revolution

Around 10,000 years ago (8000 B.C.E.), as the climate was warming up from an Ice Age, a collection of social and political developments coalesced into what is called the *Neolithic Revolution*, a set of dramatic changes in how people lived based on the development of agriculture. These changes are sometimes called the Agricultural Revolution. This “revolution” did not happen instantaneously, nor did it occur everywhere at the same time, nor did it affect everyone directly. For example, the Neolithic Revolution in China dates to 5000 B.C.E., whereas in the Middle East, it can be dated to around 8000 B.C.E. It can be characterized by several major developments:

1. agriculture
2. pastoralism
3. specialization of labor
4. towns and cities
5. governments
6. religions
7. technological innovations

**Agriculture** Taking advantage of a warmer global climate following the end of the last Ice Age, some hunter-forager cultures learned to grow crops by putting seeds of wild plants into the ground. They gave up their nomadic way of life to stay in one place and take up *agriculture*, the practice of raising crops or livestock on a continual and controlled basis. As they learned to plant, tend, and harvest crops, people found they often had a *surplus*, or more than they needed for themselves. The development of agriculture occurred first in lands just east of the Mediterranean Sea. It also occurred independently at several other places and from these places spread throughout the world.

These early farmers domesticated the crops that were already growing wild in their region: wheat and barley in Southwest Asia, millet in Northern China, rice in Southeast Asia, and maize (corn) in Mesoamerica. As cultivation of these crops spread, the natural diversity of plants in a region decreased. With that change came reductions in the diversity of insects and animals that depended on the other crops.

The availability of these farmed crops also made the diets of people less diversified. Usually people in an area would grow just one or two crops, and they would eat foods prepared with those crops at every meal. People continued to hunt animals and to gather wild fruits and nuts when seasonably available, but overall the farmers’ diets lacked the variety of full-time hunter-foragers. By cultivating just one or two plants, they eliminated other plants that had been part of people’s diets.

**Pastoralism** Even before people settled down as farmers, people in Africa, Europe, and Asia had begun to tame wild animals so they could be brought up to live with humans, a process called *domestication*. The first animal that

people domesticated was the dog. Initially, humans employed dogs to assist with hunting and to provide warnings about the approach of dangerous animals. Goats were domesticated next. They provided both meat and milk. Other animals were domesticated soon after—cattle, horses, sheep, pigs, and chickens—that provided labor or food. As people began to keep larger herds of animals, they began to lead them from one grazing land to another. Their way of life is called *nomadic pastoralism*, or simply pastoralism, because it was based on people moving herds of animals from pasture to pasture. Like hunters and foragers, pastoralists were mobile. Like farmers, pastoralists controlled their food supply. Pastoralism first emerged in grassland regions of Africa and Eurasia.

Domestication of Plants and Animals						
Area	18,000 to 15,000 B.C.E.	15,000 to 12,000 B.C.E.	12,000 to 9,000 B.C.E.	9,000 to 6,000 B.C.E.	6,000 to 3,000 B.C.E.	3,000 to 1 B.C.E.
Europe	• Dogs			• Sheep • Pigs • Goats • Cattle	• Wheat	
Middle East			• Cattle • Barley • Wheat	• Goats • Sheep		
Africa				• Cattle	• Sorghum	• Rice
Asia			• Rice • Pigs	• Millet • Cattle		
Americas				• Maize • Squash	• Beans	

Like farmers, pastoralists made the shift away from hunting-foraging hoping to create a more dependable food supply for themselves. And like farmers, pastoralists affected the environment dramatically. At times, pastoralists would allow their animals to graze an area so heavily that the animals would destroy the grass. When rains came, without grass to hold the soil in place, the soil would wash away and the land became infertile.

However, pastoralists were unlike farmers in one important way: While farmers settled in one place, pastoralists moved regularly. Hence, while farmers accumulated belongings, pastoralists usually owned very little. And while farmers had only a little contact with people in other communities, pastoralists were in contact with new items and new ideas. Over the past

10,000 years, pastoralists have played an important role in spreading ideas and trading goods among people. (Test Prep: Create a chart comparing Paleolithic pastoralists with later pastoralists such as the Mongols. See page 241.)

**Specialization of Labor** The growth of agriculture and pastoralism may have reduced plant and animal diversity, but the surpluses of food they produced brought enormous changes to how people lived. The productivity of the new ways of producing food freed up some people to focus on other roles in society. Some people became *artisans*, people who made objects people needed, or *merchants*, people who buy and sell goods for a living. Others became soldiers, religious leaders, or political leaders. This process of allowing people to focus on limited tasks is called the *specialization of labor*.

The impact of specialization of labor was far-reaching. Freed from work on the farms, artisans made weapons, tools, and jewelry. A merchant class, engaged with trading these objects, emerged. The surplus of food and goods, combined with the needs of religious ceremonies and a rudimentary system of taxation, led to the invention of writing, which was first used to keep records about trades and tax payments. People later began to use writing to communicate with one another, to record descriptions of events, and to write down religious stories. The development of writing marked the transition from prehistory to history.

**Growth of Villages, Towns, and Cities** The food surplus encouraged both a growth in population and an opportunity to do work not related to producing food. Permanent dwellings and villages and towns multiplied as tribes abandoned their nomadic lifestyles and, eventually, some cities emerged. With the change in food production came *social stratification*. This means that some people accumulated wealth in the form of jewelry and other coveted items and by building larger and better decorated houses. The idea of private property became increasingly important. People with more wealth or more power to control the surplus formed an elite. In general, the elites were men.

One of humankind's first cities was *Jericho*, which was built on the west bank of the Jordan River. The oldest evidence of human settlement there dates from about 9000 B.C.E. Another ancient city, *Catal Huyuk*, in present-day Turkey, was founded in 7500 B.C.E. along a river that has since dried up. The city existed for about 2,000 years, but its well-preserved remains have helped modern people understand life long ago. Although both cities were significant population centers, and while Jericho has tremendous significance in the Judeo-Christian tradition, neither city became a major site of an emerging civilization.

**Governments** The surplus of food also led to the creation of governmental institutions. People had to work together to clear land and, in many places, provide irrigation to water the crops. To coordinate these efforts required a government. And if the community produced a surplus, powerful leaders were required to supervise how it was used, and soldiers were needed to protect it from other groups. Priests were needed, not only to supervise religious ceremonies, but also to explain how the behavior and rulings of leaders were based on religious doctrine.

The leaders of farming communities and towns developed the earliest forms of government. Those who owned the most land or livestock became the wealthiest and thus the most powerful. They became the leaders of local governments.

**Religions** Given the unpredictable nature of weather and longer-term climate changes, Neolithic farmers experienced temporary interruptions and problems, just as farmers do today. Moreover, agricultural land could lose its fertility through *overfarming* unless it was left fallow or it was fertilized, usually by the spreading of animal manure. Pastures could erode due to *overgrazing*, or the continual eating of grasses or their roots, without allowing them to regrow. As people tried to persuade the spirits of nature to help with their crops and herds, religious ceremonies became more elaborate. These ceremonies became so important and elaborate, a special class of *priests* and *priestesses* developed to conduct them.

In some regions, new religious beliefs became highly organized before 600 B.C.E. For example, along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, the Hebrews emerged under the leadership of Abraham. They were among the first religious groups to worship only one deity, a practice called *monotheism*. In South Asia, the Vedic religion included a variety of deities and a heavy emphasis on rituals. In what is now Iran, a teacher named Zoroaster inspired the religion of Zoroastrianism, which focused on the eternal battle between two forces, one good and one evil.

**Technological Innovations** Societies advanced as people adopted new tools and skills. In some cases, these advances were probably made in one place. In other cases, they were made in several places independently. Either way, most people learned about new technology through trade, war, or other forms of contact with other societies:

- To store food and carry water, they invented waterproof clay pots. People shaped pots out of wet clay and then hardened them in fire. Sometimes people decorated the pots before firing by etching designs on them. Since these pots are one of the artifacts that has lasted thousands of years, they provide insight into how people lived and what they thought was important.
- People improved on the drilling stick, creating a plow. The plow could be pulled by oxen or other animals, which made cultivating crops much easier. In addition, turning over the soil disrupted the growth of weeds, which enabled crops to grow better and increased their yield.
- The development of the wheel with an axle revolutionized transportation and trade. A wheeled cart could transport a load with about 3 percent of the effort needed to drag it. People could transport everything more easily, from grain for overseas trade to stones for building monumental architecture. Adding wheels to a plow made planting crops easier.



- The production of *textiles*, items made of cloth, included several steps. Weavers, who were usually women, learned to spin hair from animals or fibers from plants into threads and then weave the threads into cloth. Workers would often decorate the textiles by dyeing the threads and making patterns. All of this work was usually done in the home.
- People gradually learned *metallurgy*, the science of the study of metals. They replaced their stone tools and weapons with ones made from metal, a process made easier as they learned to heat metals with fire. They first used *copper*, which they found in a pure state in the ground. Through experimentation, they learned that melting tin and copper together made a stronger metal, *bronze*. This metal marked such an advance that it gave the period a new name: the *Bronze Age*, which began at different locations at different times but generally between 3300 and 2300 B.C.E.

## The First Civilizations

The seven developments of the Neolithic Revolution that began around 8000 B.C.E. created the foundation for a new form of human society to emerge over several thousand years. This new form is *civilization*, a large society with cities and powerful states. In early civilizations, many people continued to hunt and forage, often mixing those activities with farming or herding.

Trends that began to emerge in the Neolithic Revolution became even stronger in the early civilizations. For example, society became more stratified into clearly different socio-economic classes, human impact on the environment became more intense, government and religious and military institutions became larger and more complex, and trade increased. Elites grew more powerful as they became increasingly wealthy. The gap between the rich and the poor grew wider, and the relative power of men and women in society diverged more noticeably. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing the Neolithic Revolution with the Industrial Revolution. See pages 421–433.)

The first four civilizations that grew out of the Neolithic Revolution developed independently in river valleys scattered around the earth. The first one was in Southwest Asia, in the valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates, a region called Mesopotamia. The next three were in the Nile River valley in Egypt, the Huang He (Yellow) River valley in China, and the Indus River valley in India. Two other early civilizations, in Mesoamerica and the Andes Mountains, were not tied closely to a major river valley.

All six of these civilizations developed ways of life, such as language, religious beliefs, and economic practices, that would heavily influence successor civilizations in their regions. Because of their influence, they are examples of *core and foundational* civilizations.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WAS FARMING A MISTAKE?

Scholars of prehistoric life disagree about the benefits and costs of the development of agriculture and pastoralism. Biologist and geographer Jared Diamond called the development of agriculture the “worst mistake in the history of the human race.” He argued that reducing the variety of food in people’s diets increased malnourishment. Relying on fewer food sources made people more susceptible to famine. Living in concentrated settlements increased everyone’s risk for disease. Together, Diamond concluded, these changes reduced the average life span.

In contrast, evolutionary psychologist Steven Pinker argued that agriculture and pastoralism reduced violence. He cited studies that suggest that hunter-forager societies had high murder rates and frequent warfare. These societies were dangerous because they lacked governments strong enough to maintain peace.

Evolutionary anthropologist Jay Stock saw both negatives and positives in the Neolithic Revolution. From a study of 9,000 skeletons from ancient Egypt, he found that hunter-foragers who lived before the agricultural revolution averaged 5 feet, 8 inches tall. However, those who lived in the first several thousand years after the development of farming averaged 4 inches shorter. Still, he noted the long-term benefits of agriculture: “Without the surplus of food you get through farming, we couldn’t have the runaway technological innovation we see today.”

### KEY TERMS BY THEME

ENVIRONMENT	STATE-BUILDING	SOCIAL STRUCTURE
overfarming overgrazing	Jericho Catal Huyuk	kinship group clan tribe
<b>CULTURE</b> artifacts <i>Homo sapiens sapiens</i> Paleolithic Period Neolithic Revolution monotheism Bronze Age civilization core and foundational	<b>ECONOMICS</b> textiles specialization of labor copper bronze hunter-forager agriculture surplus domestication nomadic pastoralism	patriarchal artisans merchants social stratification priests priestesses

# The First Civilizations

*Create Babylon, whose construction you requested! Let its mud bricks  
be molded, and build high the shrine!*

—The Epic of Creation, 1st Millennium B.C.E., a Sumerian  
version of how the world began.

**F**our of the first civilizations emerged in river valleys. In one or more of these, as well as in other early civilizations, people developed large urban areas, extensive trade, formal legal codes, sophisticated writing systems, and other critical developments that have become standard features of civilizations ever since.

## The Sumerians

In Southwest Asia, the *Tigris* and *Euphrates* rivers flow south from modern-day Turkey through what is now Iraq to empty into the Persian Gulf. The area between these two rivers was once known as *Mesopotamia*, which comes from a Greek word meaning “between rivers.” Because so many ancient civilizations arose there, the region is now called “the cradle of civilization.” A larger area, the *Fertile Crescent*, overlaps with Mesopotamia but also includes an area to the west, along the Mediterranean coast.

The geography of Mesopotamia presented numerous agricultural benefits. Frequent flooding from the Tigris and Euphrates would leave deposits of silt, which made the soil very fertile. The water and fertile soil of Mesopotamia, combined with a warm climate, provided the resources the Neolithic people who lived in the region needed to begin farming.

Sometime before 5000 B.C.E., a group of nomadic pastoralists called *Sumerians* migrated into Mesopotamia, settling alongside people already living there. Over time, these new migrants created the civilization of *Sumer*. They built cities, canals to carry river water to fields, and dams to control the rivers’ unpredictable flooding. The first complex governments arose to coordinate these tasks. While Sumer is not a separate country today, the civilization it created provided the core and the foundation of several other civilizations in the Middle East, and its influence is evident throughout the world today.

**Sumerian Government** By 3000 B.C.E., some cities in Sumer were home to between 2,000 and 10,000 people. By 2700 B.C.E., the largest city, *Uruk*, had a population of 50,000. Most city dwellers were farmers, who made daily trips to the countryside to work in the fields.

## SUMERIA AND OTHER CITY-STATES AND EMPIRES



Each Sumerian city and the land it controlled formed a *city-state*, which typically covered several hundred square miles. The city-states were independent, each with its own government. Since the Sumerians believed that land belonged to the gods, the first rulers were the city-states' priests. They assigned fields to the farmers, distributed the harvested crops at the city's temple, and managed all trade.

As the Sumerian city-states grew in size and number, they began to compete with each other for land and water. Wars resulted. To defend themselves, urban governments built massive stone walls around their cities. They also organized armies. Over time, Sumerian military leaders became more important than priests. These military rulers, called *kings*, ruled over a territory known as a *kingdom*. Religion and politics were blended in Sumerian civilization in the sense that kings were also high priests. This practice helped increase social stability, since the king was perceived as being a direct link between the people and the gods.

**Sumerian Religion** The people of Sumer were *polytheistic*, worshiping many gods. They believed that the gods controlled the natural forces around them. The priests explained the gods' will to the people and directed worship at the temple. To win the gods' favor, Sumerians made offerings and prayed that the gods would cause the rivers to flood at the right times for growing crops.

Because the floods were so important—and so uncertain—in Mesopotamia, satisfying the gods was very important to Sumerians. This may explain why they devoted so much effort and wealth to constructing monumental architecture that was religious. They placed temples and altars in large stepped pyramids.

called *ziggurats*. They believed that the gods punished humans in this life for bad behavior, but they did not believe in reward or punishment after death. Instead, they believed that the dead simply turned to dust.

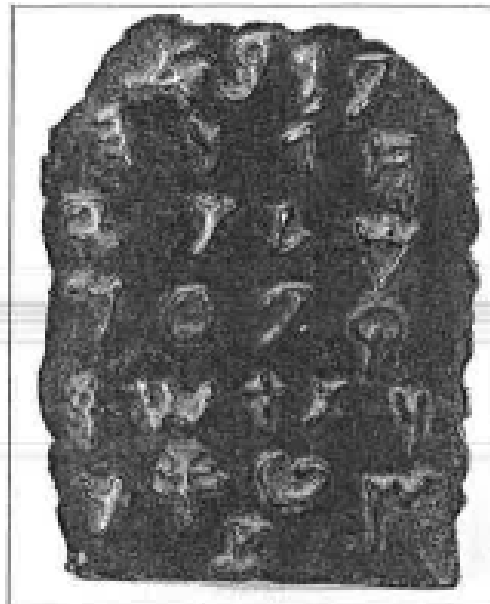
**Sumerian Economy and Trade** Sumerians learned to farm the land intensely. As a result, they were able to produce an agricultural surplus, which had all of the effects described in Chapter 1, particularly a *division of labor*. Many Sumerians engaged in work other than producing food. They made pottery, wove cloth, cast utensils in bronze, and engaged in other crafts.

The agricultural surplus also allowed Sumerians to trade extensively, not only throughout the region of Mesopotamia but transregionally with other civilizations. While some of the trade was over land, they also sailed seven-person canoes into the Mediterranean Sea and through the Persian Gulf and into the Arabian Sea. Major trade goods included gold from Egypt and tin from Persia. Through their trading networks, the Sumerians obtained goods from even farther away. They traded for beads, wood, resin, lapis lazuli, and obsidian that originated in Southeastern Africa, from the region that is the present-day country of Mozambique. From India, they obtained pearls, copper, and ivory. Many of these trade items were used by artists to create impressive and ornate sculptures and jewelry, much of which had religious significance.

**Sumerian Social Structure** As Sumerians became more specialized in their work, distinctions between classes became sharper. And as the society grew wealthier, the gap between the poor and the rich increased. One sign of the increase in social stratification was that a new class of nobles and wealthy landowners joined priests and kings at the top of society. The middle classes comprised merchants, farmers, and professionals such as architects. Hired workers made up the lower class. At the very bottom of society were slaves—foreign prisoners of war or Sumerian families who could not pay their debts. About 40 percent of the people living in Sumerian cities may have been slaves. Many people were needed to build the massive stone structures in cities and to create and maintain the vast irrigation systems in the countryside that formed the basis of Sumer's wealth.

**Women in Sumer** Upper-class Sumerian women enjoyed some freedom. They could own property and have incomes separate from those of their husbands. However, only their boys attended school; their girls were educated at home. Also, all marriages were arranged by men.

**Cultural and Scientific Contributions** To manage their surplus crops, manufacturing, and trade, the Sumerians needed to keep records. To accomplish this, they created the world's first writing system, called *cuneiform*, which consisted of marks carved onto wet clay tablets. (This early writing gives us the modern expression of "set in stone" because once the tablets had been hardened in ovens, the markings were unchangeable.) The development of a complex writing system required the emergence of a separate class of people who were skilled at cuneiform. Called *scribes*, these individuals were charged first with record-keeping and later with the writing of history and myths.



Source: Thinkstock. (left and above)

Cuneiform wedges (left) were the first writing system. Phoenician letters (above) became the basis for the modern alphabet used by writers of English and many other languages.

Sumerians made several advances in thought and technology. They pioneered many important inventions related to farming, including carts and metal plows, as well as sundials and a 12-month calendar with which the Sumerians attempted to predict the flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. A final noteworthy invention was the Sumerian number system, which was based on 60. They used 60 because it could be divided into whole segments by 2, 3, 4, and 5. Today, people still divide an hour into 60 minutes, a minute into 60 seconds, and a circle into 360 degrees.

It was during the time of Sumer's power that *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, perhaps the oldest written story on the earth, was produced. It was originally composed on 12 clay tablets in cuneiform script. The epic concerns the adventures of a real Sumerian king named Gilgamesh who ruled the city-state of Uruk somewhere between 2750 and 2500 B.C.E. From *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, historians know something about the people who lived in the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the 2nd and 3rd millenniums B.C.E. and what they valued in a leader. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing Gilgamesh with the Greek heros in Homer. See page 56.)

**Sumerian Decline** Mesopotamia had supplies of water and fertile land, so it attracted other groups who wanted to control the region. And because there were few natural barriers to prevent invasions, and because of the independent nature of the city-states, the Sumerian city-states fell to invaders around 2300 B.C.E. However, the culture they developed became the core and foundation of later empires in the region.

## The Babylonian Empire

Sometime during the several centuries following the decline of Sumer, a new weapon appeared in Mesopotamia: the compound or composite, bow. This bow combined wood with animal bone or horn to make a stronger, and hence more deadly, bow. It was either developed in Mesopotamia or by nomadic pastoralists in central Asia. The bow gave its first users an advantage over rivals.

Around 1900 B.C.E., a Persian people from what is now Iran invaded and took control of Mesopotamia. The invaders built a new capital city called Babylon, so they became known as the *Babylonians*. They would eventually control a large territory that included diverse cultural groups, called an *empire*.

**King Hammurabi** The Babylonians' most powerful king was *Hammurabi*. He conquered all of Mesopotamia and ruled for more than 40 years, until about 1750 B.C.E. Hammurabi abolished local governments and appointed officials who were responsible only to him. Later, he reorganized the tax structure. These changes made it easier for his representatives to collect the tax and also increased the amounts collected. The taxes were used primarily to maintain irrigation canals to improve agricultural productivity.

Hammurabi is famous for creating a set of laws: the *Code of Hammurabi*. He had the 282 laws carved into stone monuments, one of the first instances of laws being put into writing for everyone to see. Hammurabi's laws dealt with topics such as property rights, wages, contracts, marriage, and various crimes.

The Code's main purpose was to protect people's rights. It was built on the idea of "an eye for an eye." That is, the punishment should fit the crime, often very precisely. For example: "If a builder builds a house for someone, and does not construct it properly, and the house that he built falls in and kills its owner, then that builder shall be put to death. If it kills the son of the owner, then the son of that builder shall be put to death."

Hammurabi's system of justice, though harsh, was not as violent or unpredictable as the retribution people often carried out when they felt injured. By replacing individual vengeance with a well-publicized system administered by government, Hammurabi brought greater stability and justice to society.

**Babylonian Society and Culture** Babylonian culture resembled that of Sumer in several ways. For example, Babylonians adopted many of the Sumerians' religious beliefs and was a *patriarchal society*, one dominated by men. However, under Babylonian rule, women enjoyed more rights than the women in Sumer had. Babylonian women could be merchants, traders, and even scribes. Marriages were arranged by parents. A Babylonian woman could leave her husband if he was cruel, although she could not divorce him. However, if she did leave him, she could take her property with her.

Some Babylonians were skilled astronomers. They could accurately predict the movement of planets and eclipses of the moon. From this knowledge, they devised a lunar calendar. In Babylonia, *astronomy*, the study of objects outside Earth's atmosphere, was linked to the Babylonians' religious practices of fortune-telling and *astrology*, predicting the future by studying movements of stars and planets.

## The Phoenicians

The *Phoenicians* occupied parts of present-day Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan around 3000 B.C.E. With strong sailing ships, the Phoenicians developed a wide trade network across the Mediterranean Sea, even venturing into the eastern Atlantic Ocean. The Phoenicians exported cedar logs, colorful textiles, glass, and pottery, among other items. The Phoenicians were at their peak from 1200 to 1100 B.C.E., during which time they expanded their empire around the Mediterranean. *Carthage*, a Phoenician colony on the coast of North Africa, became a significant outpost in the region.

The Phoenicians are remembered for developing an *alphabetic script*, a system of symbols (letters) that represent the sounds of speech, as an alternative to cuneiform around 1000 B.C.E. The Phoenician 22-letter alphabet was a great help to increased trade, and it was later modified by the Greeks and Romans, who spread the alphabet across their empires. It is now used by much of the Western world. The Arabic and Hebrew alphabets also evolved from the basic system pioneered by the Phoenicians. (Test Prep: Create a chart comparing the Phoenician alphabet with the Chinese writing system. See page 35.)

## The Hebrews

The *Hebrews*, whose descendants became known as *Israelites* and later as *Jews*, lived in the region of Canaan—present-day Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon. What historians know of Hebrew civilization comes partly from their sacred writings, the Hebrew scriptures, which Christians have traditionally referred to as the Old Testament. In addition, archeologists have unearthed a great deal of information about the Hebrews. According to Hebrew scriptures, Canaan was founded by *Abraham* who left Mesopotamia to settle there in approximately 2000 B.C.E. Today, Jews, Christians, and Muslims all trace their religious heritage to him.

A severe drought in Canaan forced some Hebrews to migrate to Egypt where they were later enslaved for several centuries. According to Hebrew scriptures, about 1300 B.C.E., the Hebrews were led out of Egypt by *Moses* and eventually returned to Canaan. Moses also introduced the *Ten Commandments*, a code of conduct that became very influential in areas dominated by Christianity.

**Monotheism** Like most other groups, the early Hebrews were polytheistic. However, they were one of the first groups to adopt *monotheism*, a belief in only one deity.

**Division and Diaspora** Over the following centuries, the Hebrews divided into two separate kingdoms, which weakened their power. The two kingdoms were conquered by the Assyrians and the Babylonians, and the descendants of Abraham were enslaved for the second time in their history. Now known as Israelites, many fled or were driven out of their homes. This movement was the beginning of the *Jewish Diaspora*, the spreading of Jews throughout the Mediterranean world and the Middle East. Jews were able to



return to Jerusalem only after the Persians, who were more tolerant of religious diversity, conquered the region in 539 B.C.E.

However, Persian rule did not last. As less tolerant rulers controlled the region, Jews again suffered discrimination. Many migrated to North Africa, southern Europe, and elsewhere, continuing the Jewish Diaspora. Because of this movement of people, Jewish ideas and culture spread and would eventually spread throughout the world. While the Jews did not have their own country, they did maintain a strong sense of identity.

## The Geography of Africa

Geographers have divided Africa into four major climate zones:

1. A Mediterranean climate zone, with its mild seasons and temperate weather, consists of a strip of land along the northern edge of Africa—the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.
2. A desert zone consists of the continent's two deserts—the *Sahara* in northern Africa and the *Kalahari* in southern Africa.
3. The rain forest zone stretches east to west and lies on both sides of the equator. Though many people think of rain forest as typical of Africa, this zone makes up only about 10 percent of the continent.
4. The final climate zone is the savanna, made up of broad grasslands with small trees and shrubs. Two major bands of savanna are located just north and south of the tropical rain forest zone. Ten thousand years ago, the northern savanna band was much larger, covering much of the area that is now the Sahara.

## Ancient Egypt

The *Nile River* begins in the interior of Africa and flows north to empty into the Mediterranean Sea. In ancient times, rich black soil covered the banks and delta of the river, making the length of the Nile ideal for agriculture, especially wheat, barley, and the papyrus plant, which was used for writing material and also for making baskets, sandals, and other items. Annual floods would deposit silt, replenishing the soil. (Since the building of the Aswan Dam in 1968, the Nile River no longer experiences annual flooding.)

**Introduction of Agriculture and Pastoralism** In the Nile River Valley, people began to practice agriculture and pastoralism around 6000 B.C.E. or 5000 B.C.E. From people in Mesopotamia, Egyptians learned to grow wheat and barley. From people living in the grassy savanna land to the south, Egyptians learned to grow gourds, watermelons, and sorghum and to raise donkeys and cattle. Over the span of two thousand years, Egyptians domesticated animals, began mining copper to make jewelry and tools, and had enough agricultural surplus for towns to emerge. Just as the Sumerian civilization influenced later

## AFRICA CLIMATE ZONES



people in Mesopotamia, so the earliest Egyptian civilization became the core and foundation of later ways of life in the Mediterranean world.

However, Egypt was making these advances as the climate was changing. Beginning around 5000 B.C.E., declining rainfall across North Africa was causing *desertification*, the creation of desert-like conditions. The Sahara was growing larger and dryer, and the savanna region was growing smaller.

Like the Sumerians, the Egyptians dug irrigation canals to spread the floodwaters and increase the amount of land they could farm. Indeed, some scholars think that the Egyptians may have learned this technology from trading with the Sumerians. The Egyptians may also have learned from the Sumerians about the wheel, the plow, bronze-making, and writing.

**Transportation and Trade** The wind blows south through the Nile Valley from the Mediterranean Sea. This geographic feature allowed early Egyptians to use the Nile River for transportation and trade. They could move south against the Nile's current by putting sails on their boats. To travel north, all they had to do was let the current carry them. As a result, Egyptians not only traded locally, but traded through the region of northeast Africa. From the mouth of the Nile, traders engaged in transregional trade with Mesopotamia.

Another feature of the Nile that promoted Egypt's prosperity was that it flowed through a vast desert. The dry lands to the west and east provided natural barriers against attacks. While invaders attacked Mesopotamia many times, Egypt developed for more than 1,300 years before its first major invasion.

**Early Governments** Desertification brought more people to settle near the Nile River. The need to work together to feed this larger population caused local chiefs to emerge. Strong leaders gradually united the towns into two kingdoms. One was Lower Egypt, in the north, where the Nile flows into the Mediterranean. The other, Upper Egypt, was farther south and more upstream. Around 3100 B.C.E., *King Menes* united the two kingdoms, a turning point in Egyptian history. Menes also established his capital at the city of Memphis, located at the southern end of the Nile Delta.

Historians have divided much of subsequent ancient Egyptian history into three long periods of stability: the *Old Kingdom*, *Middle Kingdom*, and *New Kingdom*. Separating these periods were shorter ones of turmoil.

**The Old Kingdom (2660–2160 B.C.E.)** Unlike Mesopotamia, which remained divided into city-states during the third century B.C.E., Egypt began developing a strong central government. The king or queen leading this government is now known as a *pharaoh*, although the term did not come into use until the New Kingdom. From Memphis, the kings and queens ruled as *theocrats*, rulers holding both religious and political power. Egypt's kings wielded their considerable authority to undertake extensive building projects, including the famous pyramids.

Since Egyptians believed that the pharaohs were descended from the gods and were immortal, they supported great efforts to preserve and honor their bodies after death. Most of Egypt's large pyramids were built during the Old Kingdom as tombs for its early rulers. Each pharaoh's body was preserved as a mummy and placed in a pyramid with jewelry and other items for use in the afterlife.

At first, all land belonged to the pharaoh, who appointed the governors and other government officials in each of the kingdom's provinces. Some pharaohs rewarded their officials with land as payment for their services. Over time, these lands and positions began to be passed from father to son. A class of nobles eventually developed as a result.

As the noble class grew stronger, some of them began to challenge the authority of the pharaohs. The pharaohs' power was further weakened by a period of drought, which resulted in famine and starvation. This all led to civil unrest, rivalries among the provinces, and the collapse of the Old Kingdom. The kingdom again split into Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. For more than 100 years, civil wars swept Egypt as nobles competed for power and the throne.

**The Middle Kingdom (2040–1786 B.C.E.)** In 2040 B.C.E., Mentuhotep II took power. He moved the capital to Thebes, farther south on the Nile, and reunited Egypt under a central government, reducing the power of the provincial governors and eventually gaining control over all of Egypt. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing Mentuhotep II's takeover of Egypt to similar takeovers in history. See chart on page 73.)

The pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom had a different approach to governing than had their predecessors. To encourage loyalty, they had statues and other art created that pictured them as wise and caring protectors of the people. These images, along with writings that gave the same message, were part of a great renewal in art, religion, and literature. Many temples to the gods were built during this period.

Pharaohs used their power to construct huge irrigation projects that increased the size of Egypt's farmland. In addition, they expanded their country's borders. Their armies pushed east to control the Sinai Peninsula and south into Nubia, which was rich in gold and other resources.

The Middle Kingdom ended after an invasion by a pastoral nomadic people called the *Hyksos* from modern Syria. The Hyksos used their superior technology—horse-drawn chariots and greatly improved bows and arrows—to defeat the Egyptians.

**The New Kingdom (1570–1070 B.C.E.)** The Hyksos occupied Egypt for a short period of time. As Egyptians learned to use the same battle technology, they were able to defeat the Hyksos, beginning the era known as the New Kingdom. Using the newly powerful army, pharaohs expanded southward into Nubia and north into Mesopotamia. Through negotiation and conquest, Egypt gained access to highly prized resources such as bronze and wood.

Around 1350 B.C.E., the pharaoh *Akhenaton* tried to change Egypt's religion. He called for the worship of one god, a sun god called *Aten*. Such a change would have dramatically changed the role of priests in Egyptian society. Many priests opposed worshiping just one god, and Akhenaton's struggle with them disrupted Egypt and weakened his power. After his death, Egypt's old religion was restored. Moreover, the priests became more powerful than ever.

A powerful pharaoh, *Ramses the Great*, took the throne around 1290 B.C.E. He remained in power for a remarkably long time—nearly 67 years—during which he successfully expanded the empire into Southwest Asia. Ramses built more temples and erected more statues than any other pharaoh. However, Egypt's empire had become a tempting target for invaders. One of these were the *Hittites*, who had a military advantage over the Egyptians because they were beginning to use iron tools and weapons. Although Ramses made peace with the attacking Hittites, his successors lacked his power and skills.

After Ramses' death, Egypt began a long period of decline. Besides carrying out expensive but failed wars against neighbors, Egypt suffered from repeated invasions from Libyans, Kushites, Assyrians, the Persians, the Macedonians, and the Romans, among others. Combined with internal revolts, these dismantled the once-mighty Egyptian Empire. Egypt did not regain its independence until modern times.

**Egyptian Society** The social hierarchy in Egypt was complex, with royal families, nobles, and priests at the top. Artisans worked in shops attached to temples and were paid by the government. Below this class was a large lower class, predominantly of farmers. Farmers' crops belonged to the owner of the land—the government, a temple, or a noble family. In addition to doing their own farming, farmers were required to work on irrigation and other government

construction projects. Below the farmers—at the lowest level—were the slaves, who usually hailed from lands conquered by Egypt. Except for slaves, all classes of people were equal under the law, but Egypt's class system was very rigid. It was difficult to advance from one class to a higher one. (Test Prep: Create a chart comparing Egyptian society with Indus Valley society. See page 30.)

Egyptian women had more rights and freedoms than most ancient women. They could own property, make contracts, divorce, and pursue legal disputes in court. Two women, Hatshepsut and Cleopatra, even became pharaohs. A few women held posts at temples. However, most women were not educated. They usually did not take part in government and had little political power.

**Religion** Like the Mesopotamians, the ancient Egyptians were polytheistic, worshiping many gods. Among these were Ra, the sun god; Osiris, the god of life and death; and Isis, wife of Osiris, who was the goddess of nature. The gods were represented by statues and small idols. People believed that the god was present in these objects. They prayed and made offerings to the god to win the god's favor and protection.

The Egyptians believed in life after death. At first, this belief applied only to pharaohs. Later, it was extended to all people and even animals. But the Egyptians believed the body must be preserved for the dead to have an afterlife. Some people were mummified and buried in tombs. *Mummification* involved removing the body's internal organs, drying the body with salts, and packing its insides and wrapping it with chemically treated cloth. The body was then put in a sealed coffin. Only the rich could afford mummification. Poor people were buried in the desert, where the dry environment preserved their bodies.

**Continuous Egyptian Culture** The long periods of unity under the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms allowed a stable Egyptian culture to develop. This culture remained largely intact, even when Egypt was ruled by outsiders. In fact, invaders often adopted aspects of Egyptian culture.

**Egyptian Writing** By about 3000 B.C.E., people in the Nile Valley were using a form of picture-writing known as *hieroglyphics*. This writing system was much like the Sumerians' cuneiform, with the addition of symbols that represented ideas and sounds. Instead of writing on clay tablets, however, the Egyptians found a better material. They mashed *papyrus*, a type of plant that grew along the Nile River, using its fibers to create a type of paper; indeed, the English word "paper" comes from this plant's name. The *Book of the Dead* was a paper book that Egyptians put in the coffins of dead pharaohs and some nobles; each version of the book was different since it told the story of the dead person. The Egyptians also wrote hieroglyphs on the inside walls of tombs of the mummified dead to tell stories of the dead.

**Scientific Contributions** Ancient Egypt's pyramids and temples were engineering marvels, built with great accuracy using simple tools and surveying instruments. Egyptians cut the massive stone blocks used in their construction in distant quarries in the desert and transported them to a construction site. They then moved these heavy blocks up ramps to their place on the pyramid. Egyptians developed math and engineering skills to build the various pyramids.



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Monumental architecture such as pyramids in Egypt (upper) and ziggurats in Mesopotamia (lower) reflected the power of early governments to organize workers to build large structures.

The ancient Egyptians developed a number system based on 10 that was very much like the system we use today. They had knowledge of the concept of fractions as well as whole numbers. Their knowledge of geometry helped them to build the pyramids and to restore the boundaries of fields after a flooding of the Nile. They also developed a calendar based on a year that contained 365 days. The calendar was created to track the stars for religious purposes and to monitor the flooding of the Nile.

The practice of mummification gave the ancient Egyptians much knowledge about the human body—knowledge that many future civilizations would draw upon and benefit from. Egyptian physicians were able to set broken bones, amputate limbs, and stitch up wounds. They soaked cloth bandages in honey to prevent infection. They used plants and herbs to relieve pain and to treat conditions like asthma. Nevertheless, adult life expectancy was only about 35 years, and about one-third of ancient Egyptians died in infancy.

## Nubia, Kush, and Axum

Just south of Egypt, three other ancient kingdoms developed. Though none were as wealthy as Egypt was at its peak, each prospered through regional trade along the Nile River, and carried on transregional trade across the Red Sea.

**Nubia** Nubia emerged in the Upper Nile Valley around 3500 B.C.E. Egyptian traders went to Nubia in search of gold, ivory, incense, cattle, animal skins, and slaves. Nubians were recruited to serve as mercenaries in Egyptian forces. Nubia was basically an agricultural country, growing most of the same crops and raising the same domesticated animals as Egypt. Unlike Egypt, though, the flood plain was not as wide. Therefore, Nubian farmers had to make more use of irrigation networks to water their fields.

The Nubians were heavily influenced by Egyptian culture, in part because of their close proximity to the land of the pharaohs. For example, the Nubians built Egyptian-type pyramids and palaces. They also worshiped some of the Egyptian gods and adopted Egyptian burial practices. However, the Nubians retained some of their gods as well. Likewise, the Nubians used Egyptian hieroglyphics in writing, but they also developed their own script, which was alphabetic.

Nubia lasted for nearly a thousand years before falling into decline, only to reemerge as the kingdom of *Kush*, around 2500 B.C.E.

**Kush** Kush remained dependent on Egypt, only establishing some political and cultural independence by about 1000 B.C.E. Kush even conquered Egypt briefly before they themselves were overthrown by the Assyrians in 663 B.C.E. Even without control of Egypt, however, Kush became an important kingdom economically, trading with the Roman Empire, India, and Arabia. Kushites exported slaves as well as ivory, gold, and cattle. The Kushites mined iron ore from which they made tools and weapons in furnaces fueled by timber. The city of Meröe was a particularly important trade center.

Kush enjoyed its greatest power from about 300 B.C.E. to 100 C.E. Afterward, their power and influence declined, partly because of *deforestation*. Kushites cut down trees in order to make the charcoal used in smelting iron. In the 340s C.E., Kush was conquered by the civilization of *Axum*.

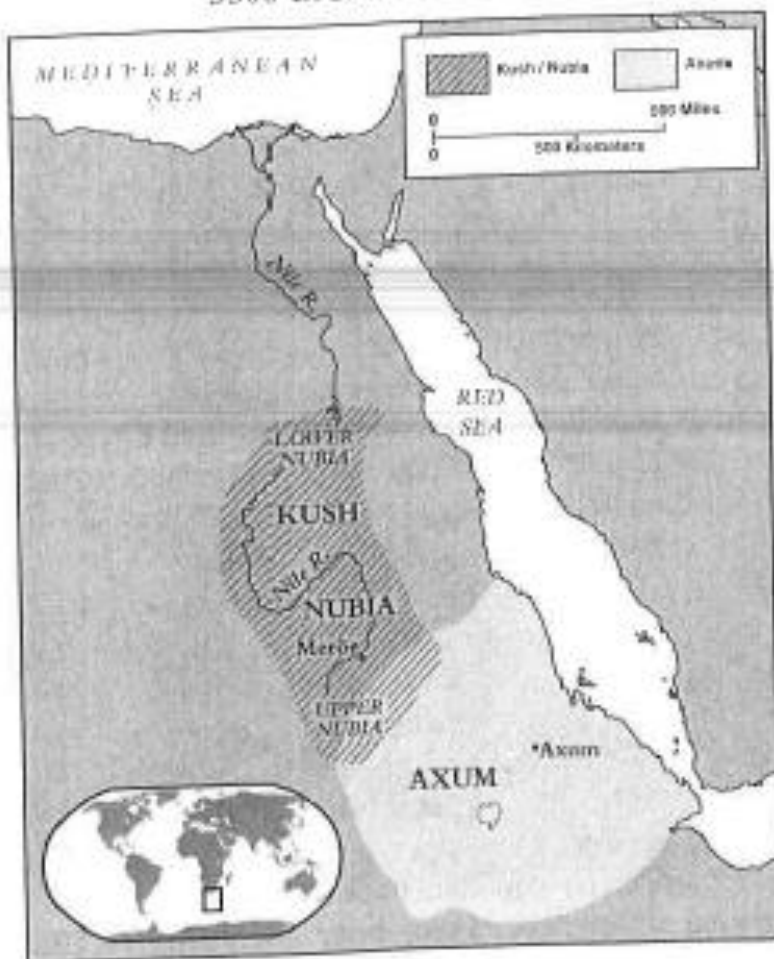
**Axum** The civilization of Axum was founded on the plateau of present-day Ethiopia in the first century C.E. Its capital city was also called Axum. The state had an agricultural economy, with farmers using plows to cultivate wheat, barley, and millet. Axumites also established a successful trading colony on the Red Sea called Adulis, where traders sold products from the African interior (such as hides, ivory, and slaves) in exchange for money or products from India, Arabia, and the Roman Empire. Adulis and Axum as a whole grew rich by taxing foreign trade and by requiring conquered lands to pay tribute.

Because of their trading connections with the Roman Empire, some Axum people converted to Christianity. The religion's popularity continued to increase, helping to create a more cohesive society. In 330 C.E., Christianity was decreed the official religion of Axum by then-king King Ezana.

The Axumites defeated the Kushites in Meröe in the 340s C.E. In the 500s, Axum expanded its territories to include modern Yemen, on the Arabian Peninsula. From Arabia, Axum borrowed a script for its written language.

Axum began to decline around 600 C.E. However, Axum remained strong enough to counter efforts by Muslims to convert Axumites to Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries. Christianity continues to be the dominant religion in the area (Ethiopia)—about two-thirds of Ethiopians are Christians today.

## NUBIA, KUSH, AND AXUM, 3500 B.C.E. TO 600 C.E.



### Indus Valley Civilizations

Like civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt, the *Indus River Valley* civilizations developed near water and became the core and foundation of later civilizations in the region. Between 2500 and 2000 B.C.E., indigenous peoples of the Indian subcontinent, known as *Dravidians*, established two sophisticated urban centers in the Indus River Valley: *Harappa* and *Mohenjo-Daro*. Their written language, mainly in the form of pictographs, has not yet been deciphered, but it seems to be loosely connected to the Dravidian languages still existing in contemporary southern and central India. Archaeologists came to know about Harappan society's existence only in the 1920s.

Much of the archaeological evidence from Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro sites comes from a collection of artifacts as well as the remains of city walls and numerous buildings. Archaeological remains reveal evidence of an advanced civilization with division of labor. Jewelers, potters, architects, and artists all resided within these cities. Archeologists can infer that a social hierarchy existed in the Indus Valley because the foundations of homes in the Harappa's center were found to be of varying sizes. And since most residents, rich and poor, had private toilets that drained into a municipal sewage system, the cities must have had sophisticated technology and urban planning.



**Agriculture and the Environment** Because so few residents of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa were farmers, archeologists conclude that rural areas were providing ample amounts of food to these urban areas. Evidence also shows that Harappans traded by sea and land with Sumer and Egypt and by land with the societies in eastern India. If civilization can be defined by the existence of an agricultural surplus and a resulting division of labor among a society's residents, then the Indus Valley societies should be considered civilized.

*Environmental degradation* probably caused the gradual decline and eventual disappearance of the Harappan and Mohenjo-Daro civilizations. Their people removed so many trees from their lands that this deforestation caused the soil to erode. Another possible reason for the disappearance of the Harappan and Mohenjo-Daro societies is the ferocious and temperamental Indus River, which often flooded. Floods could have destroyed their cities as well as the cities' remains. Earthquakes are considered to be another possibility.

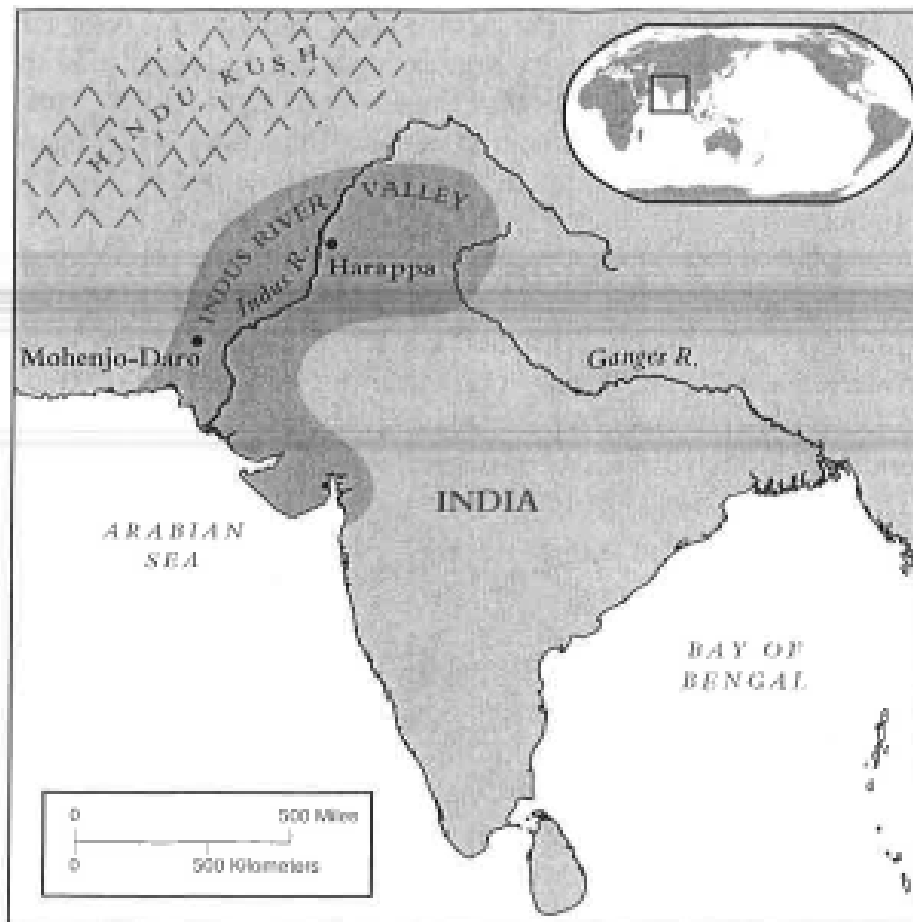
**Aryan Migrations and Interactions** Very few, if any, features of Harappan society are found today in South Asia. The group that arrived 500 years after its decline left a more lasting mark on South Asian culture. *Aryans*, Indo-European-speaking peoples originally from Central Asia, traveled from Persia through the Hindu Kush Mountains over a period of several centuries, beginning in 1500 B.C.E. The nomadic, pastoral Aryans brought the first horses into India. Native Indian peoples were no match for Aryan warriors on horseback and in horse-drawn chariots. Over time, Aryan settlements and culture spread east along the Ganges River and its surrounding plains.

**Importance of Clans** Each Aryan tribe was divided into *clans*, each with its own territory and each headed by a male chief who ruled with advice from a committee of clan members. Unlike Egypt, the people had no central government, and at times, the clans fought each other. The first Aryans continued their herding lifestyle, raising horses, cattle, goats, and sheep. Eventually, though, most of them settled in villages and began to farm, intermingling with the native peoples. Wheat and barley were their main crops, but they also grew sugar cane, gourds, peas, beans, and other vegetables.

Although poor transportation made trade difficult, other types of goods gradually appeared in their villages. Early trade was by *barter*—a system by which one thing is exchanged for another. By 500 B.C.E., though, their use of silver and copper coins led to an increase in trade and in the number of craftspeople and merchants.

**Aryan Language** Aryans brought their sacred language, *Sanskrit*, with them to South Asia. At first, stories were passed orally from generation to generation, but sometime between 1200 and 1000 B.C.E., the Aryans developed a writing system. While most literary and religious works were recorded in this language, they also had a commonly used tongue which would eventually evolve into *Hindi*. Due to the Aryans' Indo-European origins, Sanskrit shares similarities to Latin, another *Indo-European language*. For example, the word for *king* in Latin is *rex*, and the word for *king* in Sanskrit is *raja*. Sanskrit continues to be studied by religious scholars, while Hindi is still spoken widely among many northern Indian societies.

## INDUS RIVER VALLEY



**Aryan Religious Traditions** The *Vedas*, Sanskrit for “knowledge,” are a collection of Aryan religious hymns, poems, and songs. The *Rig-Veda* is the most famous; it sheds light on ancient Indian society, particularly the conflicts that occurred between the Dravidian and the Aryan peoples. The *Rig-Veda* outlined proper priestly (*brahmin*) behavior, which included performing several daily rituals honoring the gods. These responsibilities placed brahmins in a position of authority in Indian society. The importance of the Vedas in Indian spiritual life had waned a bit by 500 B.C.E. as Vedic knowledge began to meld with the spiritual contributions made by Dravidians.

**Aryan and Dravidian Beliefs** Many aspects of the Aryans’ language, religious traditions, and social organization continue today in South Asia. Their interactions with indigenous peoples of India, particularly the Dravidians, also had a lasting impact on Indian society.

The late *Vedic Age* (800–400 B.C.E.) was marked by the Aryans’ growing awareness of Dravidian beliefs. The interaction of both traditions came to fruition in the *Upanishads*, a collection of religious thought that illuminated several new religious concepts: *brahma*, *dharma*, *karma*, and *moksha*.

Brahma is an overarching, universal soul that connects all creatures on Earth. Each individual human being is not a separate entity; his or her individual soul is not the essence of truth or reality. An individual soul is not terribly important; one must try to escape a cycle of life and death and join

the universal soul, brahma. In order to escape the seemingly endless cycle of birth and rebirth, one must perform righteous duties and deeds, known as one's dharma. This dharma then determines one's karma, or fate, in the next life. If someone's soul carries a heavy karmic burden, then one could perhaps be reborn as a lower-class person or even in a lower life form.

Conversely, a person who performs good deeds throughout life is believed to have good karma, which in turn may help his or her soul in a future life. A soul's ultimate goal should be to attain *moksha*, or eternal peace and unity with brahma. Believers can attain moksha through intense meditation and the casting off of worldly pleasures.

The *Upanishads* is a foundational text for the set of religious beliefs that later became known as Hinduism. It is historically significant because it reflects the blending of Aryan and Dravidian religious values, and also because it reflects the social structures of Ancient India.

## China's First Civilization

The fourth core and foundational river civilization developed in eastern China. China includes two major rivers, the *Huang He* (Yellow) and the *Chiang Jiang* (Yangtze). The Chiang Jiang stretches almost 4,000 miles across central China. The Huang He, while shorter at 2,400 miles, connects China's northern interior to the Yellow Sea. The river takes its name from the deposits of *loess*, a type of fertile soil that is yellow in color. For thousands of years, the flooding of the Huang He has deposited this silt across a wide area.

In addition to the advantage of the two rivers, much of eastern China experiences a reliable, moderate climate. Meanwhile, two geographical features protected China from invasion: the Gobi Desert in the west and the world's tallest mountain range, the Himalayas, in the southwest.

As early as 6500 B.C.E., Neolithic people of the Yangtze Valley were growing rice. Then around 5800 B.C.E., people began farming near the Huang He. Their main crops were soybeans and a grain called millet. By 3000 B.C.E., groups along the Huang He had taken up rice farming, too. Meanwhile, both groups had begun domesticating chickens and pigs.

According to Chinese tradition, the first silk production also began around 3000 B.C.E. People wove fine silk cloth from the threads of silkworms, which fed on the leaves of the region's mulberry trees. They also made items from copper and carvings from a precious stone called jade.

**China's First Rulers** Although ancient Chinese civilization faced no outside threats, villages along the Huang He were sometimes attacked by nomadic peoples who lived in the nearby hills. According to Chinese legend, a man named Yu brought order to the region around 2100 B.C.E. He organized projects to build roads to encourage trade, create ditches to control flooding, and drain swamps to create farmland. He also organized the region's villages into zones for defense and placed each zone under a local leader who reported to him.

Yu passed his power to his son Qi, and with his rule what is known as the *Xia Dynasty* began. (A *dynasty* is a series of rulers who all belong to the same family.) The Xia Dynasty lasted for about 400 years. Little is known about the

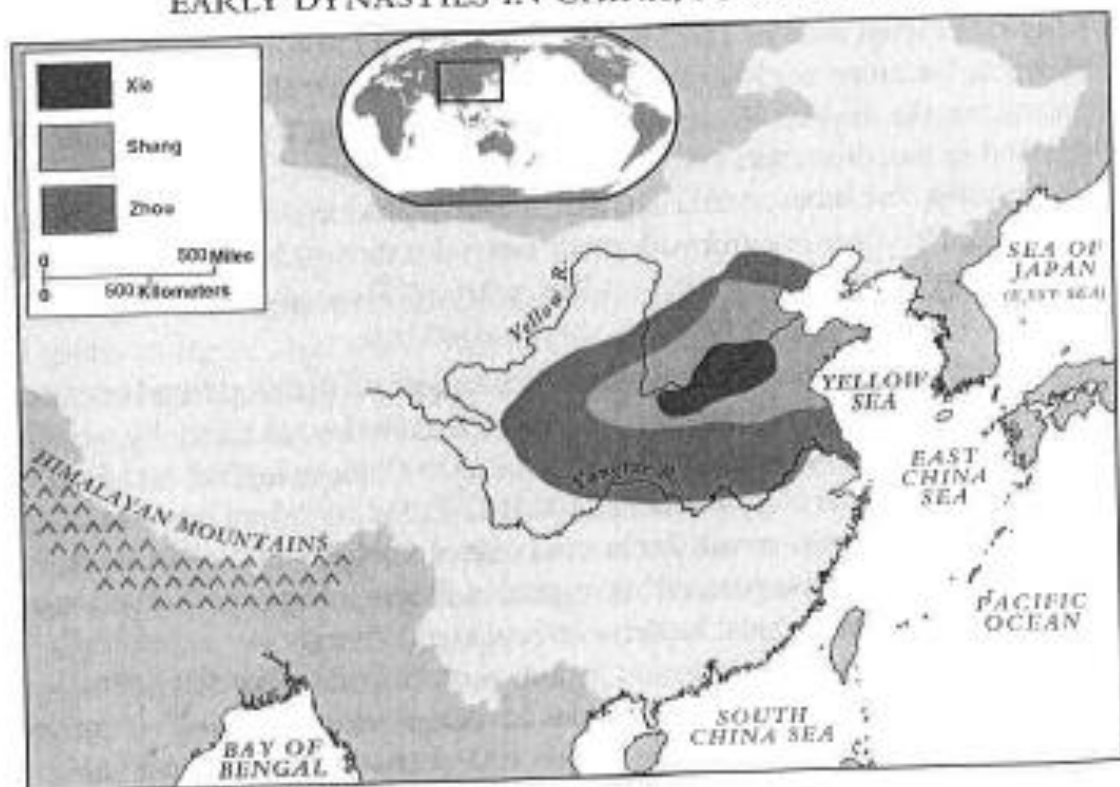
Xia Dynasty, since the early Chinese had no writing system. The only written information about the Xia kings was recorded more than a thousand years later. In recent times, though, archeologists have unearthed evidence that a Xia kingdom did indeed exist.

**The Shang Dynasty** Around 1750 B.C.E., a local leader named Tang overthrew the Xia king and took power. This event marked the beginning of the *Shang Dynasty*, which ruled for the next 600 years. During this time, Shang rulers conquered neighboring peoples, establishing an empire. From a succession of capital cities, the Shang kings wielded tremendous economic and religious power. (Test Prep: Create a chart comparing the Shang with other empires of its time, such as the New Kingdom in Egypt (page 26), Mohenjo-Daro in India (page 30), and the Sumerians in Mesopotamia (page 17).)

**Economy, Technology, and Trade** The Shang economy was primarily based on agriculture. Most people were peasants, but others worked at skilled crafts, making pottery, carving jewelry from ivory and jade, and crafting weapons, tools, wheels, and other items from bronze. Artisans and merchants lived in the capital and in towns across the empire. The bronze technology came from Southwest Asia via migrating Indo-European peoples who settled in what is now western China. Traders also brought tin from Southeast Asia and jade from Central Asia.

The Shang rulers controlled the copper and tin mines in China, and they kept a monopoly over the production of bronze in the country. Their bronze weapons and armor and their horse-drawn chariots made them stronger than anyone who dared to oppose them. The Shang kings and their nobles waged frequent wars on enemies inside and outside the empire, capturing prisoners who were then enslaved or slaughtered as sacrifices to the gods.

#### EARLY DYNASTIES IN CHINA, TO C. 400 B.C.E.



**Religion** Like other early river civilizations, the Shang were polytheistic. They believed that several different gods controlled the forces of nature. The gods worshiped during the Shang Dynasty included gods of the sun, moon, clouds, and wind. Efforts to communicate with the gods produced the earliest known examples of writing from the Shang period. People would inscribe questions for the gods on oracle bones, which were turtle shells, oxen bones, or the bones of other animals. Then they would insert heated pins into the oracle bones. The heat would cause cracks to form, and the cracks could be interpreted to gain an answer to the question. Shang kings relied on the bones to tell them such things as whether to attack an enemy and if the crops would be successful.

China's long tradition of *ancestor veneration* also began during the Shang Dynasty. The ancient Chinese believed that the spirits of their ancestors could speak to the gods for them. They made offerings to their ancestors, hoping to win their favor. The Shang kings made almost daily sacrifices to the ancestors, seeking the gods' help in making their rule a success. There was no organized priesthood in ancient China.

Historians know that ancient Chinese believed in life after death because objects were buried with the dead for their use in the afterlife. When a king or noble died, some of his servants and pets were killed so that they could travel with him to the next world.

**Cultural and Scientific Contributions** The Shang developed a written script of *pictographs*, or graphic symbols, each of which represented an idea, concept, or object, rather than representing a single sound, as letter systems do. Like other early writing systems, the Chinese one was very complicated, and as in Mesopotamia and Egypt, usually only scribes could read and write. The written script invented during the Shang Dynasty is the forerunner of the script used by Chinese today.

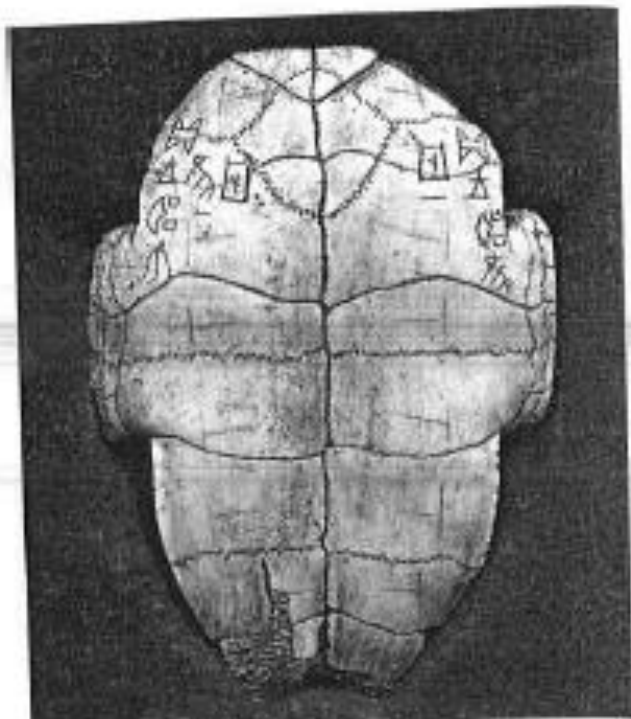
Standard systems of measurement helped the Shang rule the empire. Their calendar had 12 alternating months of 29 and 30 days. Royal astronomers added extra days as needed to get to a 365-day year.

The Shang made contributions in the arts as well. Shang artisans created bronze castings, ivory carvings, silk garments, and white clay pottery. The first Chinese musical instruments also appeared during the Shang Dynasty. Drums, bells, stone chimes, and a simple wind instrument called an ocarina played melodies that have long been lost to time.

**The End of the Shang Dynasty** Like all civilizations, the Shang Dynasty experienced a rise and fall. Over time, the Shang kings had become weaker, and in 1045 B.C.E., a military man named Wu raised his own army and challenged Shang rule. The king was killed, the Shang Dynasty ended, and Wu established the *Zhou Dynasty* in its place.

**The Zhou Dynasty** Zhou kings ruled for about 900 years, making their dynasty the longest in Chinese history. The first 200 years of Zhou rule has become known as China's first *Golden Age*, a period in a society of relative peace, prosperity, and innovation.

The success of the Zhou Dynasty resulted from the kings' abilities to centralize and hold power, bringing stability to the region. They also expanded the territory under their control, making the reach of the Zhou Dynasty much larger than what the Shang's had been. Another key element in the Zhou leaders' success was the introduction of a concept called the *Mandate of Heaven*, which was the idea that a just ruler's power was bestowed by the gods. Zhou kings were thus referred to as "sons of heaven." However, invasions or natural events such as a severe earthquake were often taken as signs that a ruler no longer had



Source: Shutterstock

During the Shang Dynasty, people wrote on tortoise shells.

The Zhou had used the concept to justify overthrowing the Shang. This became a precedent. Throughout China's history, the overthrow of rulers has been justified by the charge that a particular ruler had lost the Mandate of Heaven. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing the Mandate from Heaven with the "divine right of kings." See page 284.)

**Government** The Zhou kings expanded their territory to such an extent that eventually they could not control it directly. Instead, the kingdom divided into many regions, each under the control of relatives or loyal friends who owed allegiance to the king. These regions functioned much like city-states. The local rulers governed as they wished, paying taxes to the king and providing soldiers for his army. From time to time, the regional leaders had to visit the king's court to proclaim their loyalty. The Zhou kings also made alliances with kings who ruled territory along their borders. These alliances protected the Zhou kingdom by helping to shield it from invasion by nomadic peoples from the north and west. The network of regional rulers, with relationships based on mutual defense agreements, created the basics of *feudalism*, which would reappear in many cultures later in history.

The Zhou governmental system broke down over time as regional authorities began to assert themselves. Some stopped sending the collected taxes to the king, keeping the money for their own use. Some stopped sending soldiers to serve under the king and instead formed their own armies.

Developments in metals also affected the central-regional power balance. Bronze weapons continued to be important, but the Chinese began using iron weapons during the Zhou Dynasty. Regional rulers grabbed centers that produced iron and bronze weapons, which were sometimes then used against the Zhou rulers and each other.

**Trade and Agriculture** China experienced great changes during the long Zhou rule. Internal trade expanded and there was some foreign trade. The first Chinese money came into use in the form of copper coins, with different ones minted in different regions.

The development of iron technology around the sixth century B.C.E. (the Iron Age) changed Chinese agriculture. Using iron tools, Chinese peasants built dikes, reservoirs, and irrigation canals to better control their water supply. Iron plows drawn by oxen allowed more land to be farmed and more food produced than ever before. This resulted in a steady population growth.

Most Chinese were peasant farmers who did not own the land they lived on. They lived in small villages and farmed the village fields together. They also had to devote a number of days of labor each year to work on roads, canals, and other local projects. (Test Prep: Create a chart comparing China's work requirement with the Incan mit'a system in the fifteenth century C.E., see page 261; and the French *corvée* system in the nineteenth century C.E., see page 417.)

**Urbanization** The trade among the regions led to the growth of towns and some cities. These urban areas needed artisans and metal production workers, although this class of people remained small. Merchants set up shops in towns and cities, selling goods from around China. Those cities that were seats of national or regional power attracted administrators, soldiers, scribes, and others.

**Zhou Achievements** Another reason why the Zhou Dynasty is considered a "golden age" is the large number of technological achievements attributed to it. The Zhou military benefited from the invention of the crossbow and the iron sword, and armies also began using mounted cavalry in this period. Meanwhile, Zhou farmers developed plows and improved irrigation systems in order to better exploit the waters of the Huang He and Yangtze rivers. Last but not least, roads were improved, which bolstered trade and brought increased contact with outsiders.

**The Decline of the Zhou Dynasty** By the 800s B.C.E., the Zhou kings had begun to lose control. Uprisings by local leaders combined with invasions from the west combined to weaken the central government. By the 400s B.C.E., the Zhou kings had little power outside their own city-state. The other states of the Zhou kingdom fought among themselves for control.

## The First American Civilizations

In response to the varied climates and geographic regions in the Americas, people evolved into distinctive cultures as they moved from place to place. By 3000 B.C.E., some of the indigenous peoples, possibly first in Mexico, discovered that food could be grown and harvested, not simply gathered from wild plants. One of the first important plants to be grown by the indigenous Americans was *maize* (corn). This plant, native to the Western Hemisphere, was domesticated from wild types into several different varieties. Other important native crops were beans, potatoes, peppers, pumpkins, cotton, and tobacco.

**The Chavin** About the same time human settlements developed in *Mesoamerica* (Central America and what is now Mexico), settlements began near the Andes Mountains. For example, along the coast of what is now Peru, the *Chavin civilization* existed from around 1000 to 200 B.C.E. The center of the Chavin civilization was Chavín de Huántar, a ceremonial center north of Peru's current capital of Lima. Chavín de Huántar was home to an elaborate temple made of white granite and black limestone. Since these materials are not native to the region, they had to be obtained by trade. Drainage ditches were built under the temple to prevent flooding during rainy seasons. Shamans interpreted the temple's many sculptures and carvings.

Most of the Chavin people lived in the valleys, growing cotton, maize, potatoes, and quinoa, a grain used for food. In addition to growing crops, the Chavin relied heavily on llamas. These animals provided meat, often eaten in a dried form known as jerky; wool, woven into clothes; and transport, for carrying goods. Like earlier river valley civilizations in Afro-Eurasia, they developed irrigation systems. Because of their agricultural surpluses, the Chavin population increased, and the Chavin developed three urban centers, each with more than 10,000 people.

The Chavin developed impressive techniques in gold, silver, and copper metallurgy. They learned how to solder pieces together by melting metal. The Chavin are also remembered for the artistry of their pottery and cotton textiles, including making fishnets out of cotton thread.

Although the Chavin people were closely tied to each other by religion, their political structure was weak. Once the religious authority went into decline, there was little to hold the Chavin together, and their civilization dissolved into various regional groups.

**The Olmec** Mesoamerica would become home to several advanced civilizations. The foundation, or core, of all of these was the *Olmec*. Their language, beliefs, art, and athletics influenced the later civilizations such as the Maya and the Aztec. The Olmec flourished in east and central Mexico from around 1200 to 400 B.C.E. The climate was warm and humid, so crops grew well. Like other early civilizations, the Olmec were primarily agricultural, growing corn, beans, squash, and avocados.

And like many early civilizations, the Olmec developed near water. Several small rivers crossed their land, so fresh water was plentiful and transportation was easy. They carried on a flourishing trade with regions as far as 250 miles away, obtaining jade and obsidian, out of which they made jewelry, sculptures, and religious symbols. The Olmec produced small carvings of jaguars, snakes, feathered serpents, and figures that were half human and half animal. But the Olmec are most famous for carving enormous basalt monuments of human heads. About 17 of these have been found, with the largest about 10 feet tall and weighing many thousands of pounds. Thousands of slaves were used to drag and float the heavy basalt blocks from sites 50 miles away.

The Olmec also built large structures. They created large earthen pyramids, under which they buried jewelry, sculptures, mirrors, and mosaics. They built



arenas for playing a kind of ball game that may have had religious significance—and may have been deadly for the losers.

The Olmec developed a calendar, a numbering system that included a zero (rare among early number systems), and the first writing system in the Americas. The system used *glyphs*, pictures and symbols of real objects. While many traits of Olmec culture, including their language, their use of feathered serpents, and their ritual ball game, provide the core and foundation of later cultures in Mesoamerica, later writing systems in Mesoamerica do not seem to be based on the one of the Olmec.

## The Pacific Peoples

The first people arrived in *Oceania*, the vast region in the Pacific Ocean that includes New Guinea, Australia, and more than a thousand other islands, about 60,000 years ago. They were hunter-foragers. Because of an Ice Age, sea levels were lower and distances between islands were less. Thus, these migrants would have needed little more than a raft to go from island to island.

**The Austronesian Speakers** The *Austronesian-speaking people* probably originated in southern China and later moved to Taiwan and the Philippines. Around 5000 to 2500 B.C.E., they began to migrate to New Guinea also. They already were farmers and herders and introduced agriculture to the people of New Guinea. The Austronesians assimilated with the existing population. Agriculture, however, did not spread to Australia's *aboriginals*, who remained hunter-foragers.

During the next 1,000 years, the Austronesian people migrated by boat across a distance of over 10,000 miles. To the east, they went from one Pacific Island after another. By then, they had developed double-hull canoes that could go vast distances, reaching the islands of *Polynesia*, including Samoa, Hawaii, Easter Island, and New Zealand. Another group of Austronesians migrated west all the way to the African island of Madagascar. Wherever they went, they took along pigs, chickens, yams, and taro so they could maintain their agricultural way of life. They supplemented this food by hunting and fishing.

**Easter Island** The people who settled on *Easter Island* divided into clans, with a chief for each clan. One chief ruled over all of the clans. They constructed large stone statues that represented ancestor-gods. For a long time, the Easter Islanders carried on trade with other islands, even though distances to these islands were vast. They cultivated sweet potatoes, which they probably first obtained from the coast of South America. From Easter Island, the growing of sweet potatoes spread to other Pacific islands, including New Zealand.

Gradually, the population of Easter Island grew until the island became overpopulated, lacking enough resources to support the people. Easter Island suffered deforestation. This environmental crisis, coupled with civil unrest and wars between island factions, caused the population size to plummet sometime before Europeans first visited the island in 1722 C.E.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WHY DO CIVILIZATIONS RISE AND FALL?

One of the ongoing questions that historians ask is why certain cultures at certain times become innovative and prosperous and then seem to lose their ability to develop new ideas, to improve the lives of their citizens, and to influence other countries. For example, why did the Sumerians develop the first writing system? Today, why has China, in less than a century, risen from crushing poverty to become a world power?

Among the first and most influential Europeans to write about why civilizations develop was a German, Oswald Spengler (1880–1936). In his *Decline of the West* (1917), Spengler viewed civilizations as the expression of an idea, often seen most clearly in its art or architecture. He theorized that civilizations go through a cycle akin to the four seasons: during the “spring” of a civilization, it develops agriculturally; during the “summer,” towns and cities emerge; in the “autumn,” the civilization develops large cities and centralized governments; finally, in the “winter,” the civilization declines as it becomes involved in materialism, imperialism, and its resulting cynicism or *nihilism*, the rejection of moral or ethical principles. Since the process is cyclical, cultures go through it repeatedly.

French historian Fernand Braudel (1902–1985) saw the development of civilization as the building of a web of relationships between people through trade and communication. His perspective heavily influenced later approaches to world history. In contrast to Braudel’s emphasis on physical objects, British historian Christopher Dawson (1889–1970) argued that religion is the bond that builds these relationships and civilization. According to Dawson, “religion is key to history.” Both of these world historians rejected the cyclical view of history suggested by Spengler and others. Recent world historians have emphasized the role of geography and environment. For example, British historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto, in *Civilizations* (2000), viewed the development of civilization as a response to its immediate environment.

# PERIOD 2: Organization and Reorganization of Human Societies, c. 600 B.C.E. to c. 600 C.E.

*Chapter 3 Classical Civilizations in Greece and Persia*

*Chapter 4 The Roman World*

*Chapter 5 Classical Civilizations in India and China*

*Chapter 6 Early American Civilizations*

## Period Overview

The 1,200 years between 600 B.C.E. and 600 C.E. saw the rise of great empires that became the core foundations of later civilizations in much of the world. The Roman and Byzantine and Persian in western Eurasia, the Maurya and Gupta in South Asia, the Qin and Han in East Asia, the Maya in Mesoamerica, and the Moche in the Andes provided security for merchants and several built roads so trade flourished, linking people across regions. Goods and ideas flowed along land routes, such as the Silk Roads crossing Eurasia and the Trans-Saharan routes in Africa, and across sea routes in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. Trade fostered the growth of great cities, such as Rome and Alexandria on the Mediterranean, Chang'an in China, and Teotihuacan in Mesoamerica.

However, the strength of these empires brought challenges. Empires grew so large that governing distant lands became difficult and defending long borders became expensive. Trade provided pathways for devastating diseases to move from one region to another. Population growth increased demand for food, and the resulting expansion of agricultural land caused soil erosion and deforestation. Prosperity produced intense concentrations of wealth. Each great empire eventually declined, suffering from decentralization of political power, reductions in trade, and lower urban populations.

No other period in history had such influential developments in belief systems. Judaism and Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire. In India, the evolution of the Vedic beliefs that would eventually form Hinduism also included the development of a caste system. In China, three systems of thought became widespread and continue to this day: Buddhism, with its emphasis on understanding human suffering; Confucianism, with its emphasis on social harmony and rituals; and Daoism, with its emphasis on the interplay between humans and nature. In Greece, philosophers emphasized logic and observation rather than faith as ways to understand the world.

## Key Concepts

### 2.1 The Development and Codification of Religious and Cultural Traditions

- I. Codifications and further developments of existing religious traditions provided a bond among the people and an ethical code to live by.
- II. New belief systems and cultural traditions emerged and spread, often asserting universal truths.
- III. Belief systems affected gender roles. Buddhism and Christianity encouraged monastic life and Confucianism emphasized filial piety.
- IV. Other religious and cultural traditions continued parallel to the codified, written belief systems in core civilizations.
- V. Artistic expressions, including literature and drama, architecture, and sculpture, show distinctive cultural developments.

### 2.2 The Development of States and Empires

- I. The number and size of key states and empires grew dramatically by imposing political unity on areas where previously there had been competing states.
- II. Empires and states developed new techniques of imperial administration based, in part, on the success of earlier political forms.
- III. Unique social and economic dimensions developed in imperial societies in Afro-Eurasia and the Americas.
- IV. The Roman, Han, Persian, Mauryan, and Gupta empires created political, cultural, and administrative difficulties that they could not manage, which eventually led to their decline, collapse, and transformation into successor empires or states.

### 2.3 Emergence of Transregional Networks of Communication and Exchange

- I. Land and water routes became the basis for transregional trade, communication, and exchange networks in the Eastern Hemisphere.
- II. New technologies facilitated long-distance communication and exchange.
- III. Alongside the trade in goods, the exchange of people, technology, religious and cultural beliefs, food crops, domesticated animals, and disease pathogens developed across far-flung networks of communication and exchange.

Source: AP<sup>®</sup> World History Course and Exam Description

## Classical Civilizations in Greece and Persia

*The purpose of [my research] is to prevent the traces of human events from being erased by time, and to preserve the fame of the important and remarkable achievements produced by both Greeks and non-Greeks. . . .*

—Herodotus, *The Histories*, Trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt (New York: Penguin Group, 1972).

While Egypt was in its Middle Kingdom, Babylon was rising in Southwest Asia; the Harappans were giving way to the Aryans in India, and the Shang dynasty was on the horizon in China. At the same time a distinctive Greek culture was developing at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. The origins of this culture were in the Minoan and Mycenaean kingdoms. Many centuries later, as the Greek historian Herodotus wrote in his *Histories*, Greek culture would flourish in several city-states, giving rise to a Golden Age of innovative ideas in philosophy, literature, and art. After the Golden Age ended, two powerful military leaders emerged: Philip II and then Alexander the Great. Each spread Greek culture as they conquered lands in and around the Mediterranean and Southwest Asia. These areas, influenced by classical Greek culture, became known as the Hellenistic kingdoms.

### Early Mediterranean Civilizations

Two cultures that emerged on the islands and along the northern coast of the eastern Mediterranean Sea had long-term impact. They provided a foundation for later developments in Greece.

**Crete** The Minoans lived on an island in the Aegean Sea called *Crete*. Because they had many harbors but little fertile soil, they relied on trade, and grew rich through trade with Greece, Phoenicia, Egypt, and Asia Minor. They decorated their homes with paintings and other decorations. The Minoans built a beautiful city on Crete called *Knossos*—for a while, the wealthiest city on the Aegean. No writing from the *Minoan civilization* in Crete has been deciphered, but the existence of artifacts all around the Mediterranean testifies to Cretan influence in the period around 2000 B.C.E. The wealth of the Minoans, their skill as builders, and their experience as seafarers gave rise to stories of a legendary King Minos in Knossos and of Daedalus and the maze.

**Mycenae** The city of *Mycenae*, on the mainland of Greece, was probably never conquered by the Minoans, yet it contained artifacts revealing a number of Minoan cultural influences. In addition, the presence of amber from the north and ivory from Syria are testimony to Mycenae's widespread trade in the area. Both the Minoan and the Mycenaean civilizations declined in what is sometimes called a "dark age" starting around 1100 B.C.E. and lasting until about 750 B.C.E. However, their arts and culture, as exemplified in frescoes, statuettes, jewelry, and even the presence of indoor plumbing at the *Knossos Palace* complex, continued to spread to the Greek mainland, Southwest Asia, and North Africa. This spread of culture would become an ongoing example of continuity, not only in the Mediterranean area and Southwest Asia, but also throughout emerging Europe.

#### CRETE, MYCENAE, AND GREEK CITY-STATES



## Rise of the Greek City-States

Geography's influence on Greece is easy to see. The Greek mainland is a giant peninsula that juts into the Mediterranean, and the surrounding waters include many small islands. These islands and the mainland's long, irregular coastline made seafaring and trade important. Traveling on Mediterranean sea lanes, Greeks transported grain, timber, gold, and other metals from one point to another, growing prosperous and connecting cultures as they did. Like sea-faring cultures throughout history, the Greeks became open to new ideas and technology from their trading partners. For example, when Phoenicians developed an alphabet that made writing and reading easier, the Greeks quickly adopted it with all the benefits of more efficient communication.

Geography also shaped Greek politics. Numerous islands, mountainous terrain, and lack of rivers separated one Greek tribe from another. The disconnected terrain long prevented the Greek people from uniting under one government. Instead, they usually had independent local governments. Greece was separated into *poleis* (city-states; singular—*polis*). Over the course of Greece's history, these *poleis* would at times be allies and at times be enemies. Access to the sea also helps to explain how Greece developed in competition with an expanded Persian empire, a competition that resulted in the great *Persian Wars* of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. These wars were described in *The Histories* by the first great Greek historian, *Herodotus*.

**Social and Political Systems** Citizenship of a *polis* was confined to males—Greece was a patriarchy—and only free ones. Slaves and foreigners could not be citizens. A *polis* could call upon its citizens to defend their lands as *hoplites* (infantry members), sometimes fighting against other *poleis*. Different *poleis* in Greece had different types of government. In a *monarchy*, a king ruled the state. In an *aristocracy*, nobles ruled. In an *oligarchy*, a few wealthy landowners and *merchants* ruled. In a *democracy*, all citizens participated.

## Sparta's Military Society

Two of the most powerful *poleis* were *Sparta* and *Athens*. While both were city-states, they differed greatly from each other. Sparta remains famous for developing a society organized around producing a powerful military.

Sparta's focus on developing soldiers began with child-rearing. Boys were taken away from their mothers beginning at age seven and raised with extensive training and endurance lessons to make them solid soldiers. To prepare them for the harsh life of a soldier, boys suffered physical abuse, went without food, and were ridiculed for showing any sign of weakness. When grown, men served in the active military or in the reserve until age 60.

With Spartan men serving in the military, *Spartan women* ran their households with greater freedom than did other Greek women. Free Spartan women received an education, could own property, and were not secluded in their homes. They won praise for staying fit and participating in athletics so they would bear healthy sons to increase the size of the army. A significant responsibility for women was the inculcation of Spartan values in their children.

For example, children learned the values of the state religion, which developed around the kings, who also served as the supreme priests.

To enable men to serve in the military and women to focus on bearing children and raising them to be soldiers, Spartan society relied on *helots*, or slaves, to do agricultural labor needed to feed everyone. Helots were generally captives resulting from Spartan raids on their neighboring inland.

Keeping helots under control and supporting the military were key functions of the Spartan government. The government was run by an oligarchy that shared power between two kings. Ideas originating from outside the polis were discouraged as destabilizing, and social life was tightly controlled. Spartans believed that top-down government power was necessary for a stable and prosperous society.

## Athenian Democracy

Today, Sparta is remembered for creating a military society and *Athens* for its political and intellectual achievements. Early governments of Athens were *monarchies*, followed by a period of aristocracy. *Solon*, a reform-minded aristocrat who lived in the sixth century B.C.E., became known as a wise ruler who improved life in Athens. He is credited with setting free many Athenians enslaved for debt and limiting the amount of land any one man could own.

**Politics** As Athens and other Greek city-states increased their trade with one another, they developed prosperous merchant classes. However, the merchants resented those who held a monopoly on political power. As men of wealth and property, merchants thought that they should have more of a voice in government. When the *aristocrats* refused these demands, the merchants joined small farmers to support *tyrants*—leaders who seized power with the people's support. By 650 B.C.E., tyrants had overthrown the aristocrats in most city-states.

At first, the tyrants were popular. They lowered taxes and ended the practice of enslaving people who could not pay their debts. They also gave citizens a greater voice in matters that affected their lives. Over time, though, some tyrants alienated their supporters by abusing their power.

**Democracy** During the 500s B.C.E., most Greek city-states overthrew their tyrants. Some poleis returned to governments ruled by aristocrats or kings, but Athens and others turned to democracy. For a while, Athens was a *direct democracy*, a government in which all citizens could vote directly on laws and other issues in a large assembly. By contrast, in a *representative democracy*, citizens elect leaders to represent them and give those leaders powers to make laws and govern. The democratic Athenian government was comprised of nine top officials called *archons*, a council of nobles, and a citizen assembly.

**Pericles** Perhaps the most famous name of all in the Greek government was that of *Pericles*, whose period of rule in Athens is sometimes called the Golden Age (461–429 B.C.E.) During his reign, the *Parthenon*, a great temple in Athens that had been destroyed in war with Persia, was rebuilt. Pericles is credited with reforms to government such as transfer of power to an assembly.



He created the Council of 500, which served as an ongoing government of Athens, and he developed the People's Courts, which ruled on charges of legal violations.

**Women** For women and slaves in Athens, life was hard. They were excluded from government service and from voting. Women could not own any property beyond personal items. They did not receive an education. If women had matters to settle in court, they had to employ a male guardian. Upper-class women always had to be accompanied by a man when they left home. Early marriages and exclusion from most of public life kept women isolated. Women were believed to be intellectually inferior to men and thus incapable of being satisfying relationship partners. (Test Prep: Create a chart comparing the treatment of women in Greece with their treatment in Egypt and China. For Egypt see page 27; for China see page 101.)

## Athenian Philosophy

Perhaps as a result of having seaports and welcoming trade connections with the outside world, new ideas flourished in Athens. The arts, mathematics, and literature created by Athenians formed the basis of academic disciplines still studied in schools worldwide. Two epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, have been recited, read, and studied every since they were presumably composed by a Greek poet named Homer around the ninth century B.C.E. .

**Socrates** One influential Greek thinker was *Socrates*. His emphasis on continually asking questions to systematically clarify another person's ideas and to identify the core of them became known as the *Socratic Method*. Socrates was eventually put to death by the Athenian government for questioning the state religion.

**Plato** A student of Socrates, *Plato*, kept his teacher's ideas alive. Plato opened a school called the *Academy*, where he taught students to question the nature of ideas such as good, evil, justice, and beauty. Departing from the oral tradition of philosophy, Plato wrote *dialogues*, teachings presented as discussions between Socrates and his pupils. In the dialogue known as *The Republic*, Plato described an ideal society ruled by a government that rested upon a concept of justice and ethical values. While many Athenians advocated democracy, Plato did not. Instead, in *The Republic*, Plato envisioned a society composed of workers, warriors, and "philosopher kings." This last group would be intelligent and rational enough to make decisions for the good of the whole state.

**Aristotle** One of Plato's students, *Aristotle*, also became a famous Athenian philosopher. Aristotle wrote on a range of topics, from how to organize government to the qualities of good literature. He might be best known for his ideas about ethics. Aristotle believed in avoiding extremes in behavior. For example, moderate courage was a virtue. Too little courage made one a coward; too much made one fool-hardy. Aristotle called this emphasis on moderation the *Golden Mean*.

Aristotle emphasized gaining knowledge through *empiricism*, trusting what one learned from observation and evidence of the senses, rather than emphasizing intuition or religious beliefs. Aristotle also focused on *logic*, the science of the formal principles of reasoning. However, unlike modern scientists, Aristotle and other Greeks did not emphasize experiments. An additional contribution by Aristotle was his work *Poetics*, which for the first time set down definitions of tragedy and comedy in the theater, as well as definitions of epic and lyric poetry. Such systematic writings about philosophy, literature, and the arts constituted a new development in the Mediterranean world. The ideas of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek thinkers provided the foundation for European thought for centuries. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing Greek philosophers with influential thinkers in other cultures. See page 100 for Confucius and page 9 for Zoroaster.)

## Athenian Religion and Culture

Greek religion was based on an influential set of myths. Through these stories, rather than through specific teachings about ethics, most Greeks expressed their ideas about right and wrong behavior and the role of gods in their lives. Books and movies about Zeus, Hercules, Odysseus, and other Greek mythological figures remain popular today. Over time, as contact increased between Greeks and other groups, such as Persians and Egyptians, Greek religion became more *syncretic*, combining ideas from different sources. For example, the deity Serapis combined elements of the Greek Zeus, the Egyptian Osiris, and other deities into one.

Greek religion and literature were closely connected. Attendance at religious functions, of which theater was often a part, was considered a civic duty. Some Greek playwrights, including *Euripides* and *Sophocles*, used the myths of the gods as convenient literary devices for their plays. Although the term “satire” comes from a later Roman form of drama, there were certainly satirical sections in the Greek *comedies*, plays in which a character triumphs over hardship. The most prolific author of comedies was *Aristophanes*, who wrote 40 plays, including *Lysistrata* and *The Birds*.

*Aeschylus* and Euripides wrote *tragedies*, dramas that deal with death, war, justice, and the relationships between gods and ordinary people. For example, *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus tells the tale of how Prometheus steals fire from Zeus, gives it to humans, and then suffers eternal punishment. *The Trojan Women* by Euripides describes how Athenians slaughtered people they captured in the Trojan War. Greek tragedies and comedies influenced William Shakespeare of the sixteenth century and continue to influence modern playwrights today.

**Architecture and Art** Religion was also connected to the distinctive Greek architectural style, a style exemplified by the *Parthenon* in Athens. This massive stone building, rectangular but elegant, featured rows of tall columns on all sides and was topped by a slanted roof. In a panel sitting along the top of the columns, artists carved friezes illustrating Greek myths.

The Olympic Games Religion also provided the context for athletic competitions. Unlike modern sports, which emphasize keeping records of who ran the fastest and who jumped the farthest, Greek sports emphasized rituals. For example, before competing, athletes would provide offerings to show their respect for the gods. Beginning around 776 B.C.E., the Greeks held Olympic games every four years. Athletes from all the city-states gathered in one spot, Olympia, to compete in various sports. Wars among the city-states commonly would be suspended for the duration of the games so that athletes and spectators could assemble. Thus, even though there was not a centralized state of Greece, the Olympic Games helped create a common feeling of "Greekness." The games continued for over one thousand years, ending around 400 C.E. The games were restarted in 1896.

## Greek Colonies

Starting around the eighth century B.C.E., the Greek city-states began establishing colonies around the Mediterranean, partly because the Greeks' population growth was outstripping the food supply. Some Greeks moved willingly to the colonies, others less willingly. The reluctant ones drew lots to see who would emigrate.

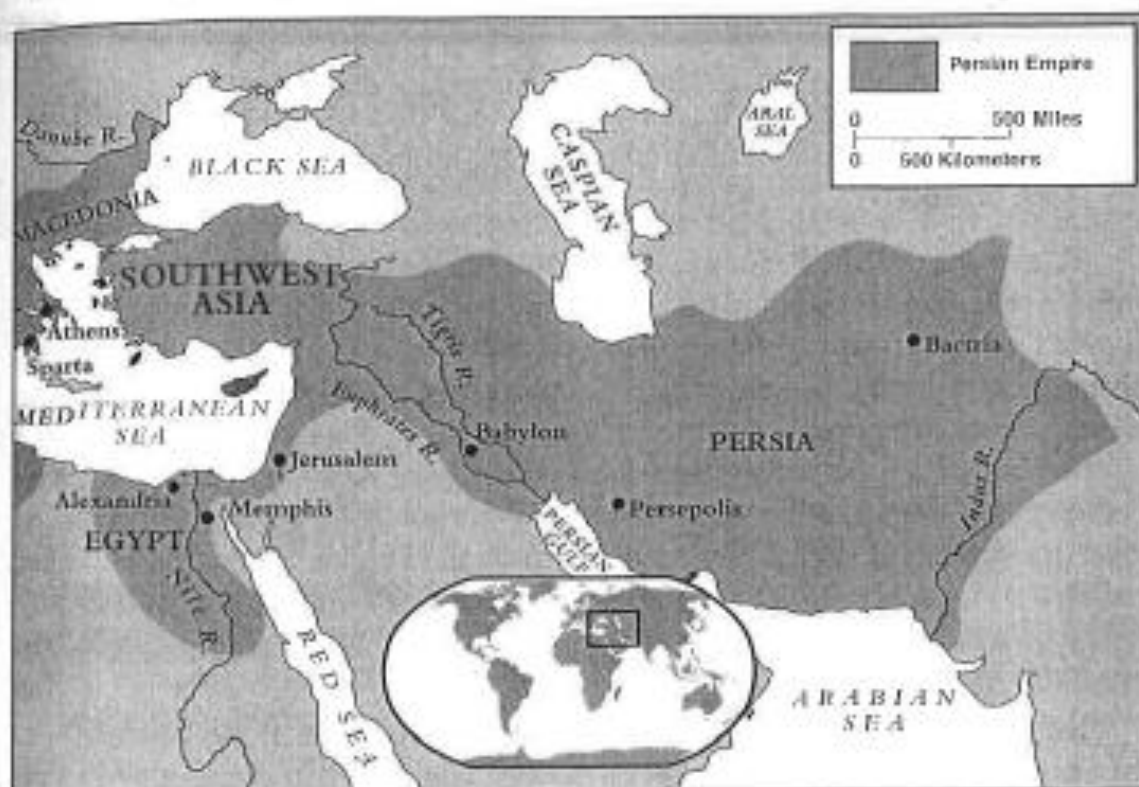
In a typically Greek spirit of independence, the colonies were allowed a large measure of autonomy, but each maintained a shared culture with its home city-state. Some of the largest of these colonies were located on the island of Sicily at *Syracuse* and *Agrigentum*, on the Italian Peninsula at Naples, on the coast of France at Marseilles, and on the western coast of Asia Minor.

Geography had a decided impact on the Greek city-states, as it has on every state. French historian Fernand Braudel wrote that "the poor, precarious soils along the Mediterranean, combined with an uncertain, drought-afflicted climate, spurred ancient Greek and Roman conquest." Additionally, the arid and temperate climate of Greece allowed for outdoor teaching in the schools of philosophy such as Plato's Academy. Further, the climate provided an ideal setting for outdoor theater competitions where highly developed literary genres such as tragedy and comedy appeared. Access to the sea encouraged colonization and trade, interactions that exposed the Greeks to new ideas that brought change while maintaining elements of Pan-Hellenic continuity.

## Persian Empire

Beginning in 559 B.C.E., under the leadership of *Cyrus the Great* (ruled 559–529 B.C.E.) the *Persians* conquered most of the lands from the Aegean Sea (west of Turkey) to the borders of India. After 30 years of rule, Cyrus was succeeded by his son *Cambyses*, who conquered Egypt and parts of Southeast Europe. Their empire became known as the *Achaemenid Empire*, sometimes called the First Persian Empire. It united three of the earliest centers of civilization—Mesopotamia, Egypt, and India—into one powerful empire, covering a territory almost the size of the United States. It was the largest, most diverse empire the world had yet seen, including more than 70 distinct ethnic groups.

## THE PERSIAN EMPIRE UNDER THE ACHAEMENIDS



**The Reign of Darius** Like rulers in Egypt and China and other places, Persian rulers supported their legitimacy with claims that they ruled by divine right. However, their power rested upon their own abilities to build and hold an empire. Ruling such a large empire in an era when transportation and communication were so slow required new ways of thinking about power. Under *Darius I* (ruled 522–486 B.C.E.), Persia divided lands it conquered into provinces so that the king's policies announced in the capital of Persepolis could be administered throughout the empire. Then, rather than simply demand the loyalty of rulers who were selected locally, Darius created a new position—*satrap*, a ruler of a province who was responsible to the emperor, not to local leaders. Finally, inspectors, called “The Eyes and Ears of the King,” traveled to each province and reported to the king on the behavior of the satraps. The provincial structure, with satraps and inspectors, created an efficient administrative bureaucracy.

To pay for this bureaucracy, Darius instituted regular tax payments. The flow of tax dollars into the government enabled the Persians to fund several magnificent projects under Darius.

- The capital city, *Persepolis*, which was located in what is now Iran, became a celebrated city, featuring an impressive royal palace and celebrating the artistic traditions of several groups in the empire.
- The *Royal Road*, which spanned some 1,500 miles across the empire, was the most famous of the network of roads built to encourage trade. Darius added an efficient courier service with postal stations along this road.

- Darius also instituted the construction of *caravanserais*, which were combination inns and markets for people traveling the Royal Road by camel caravan.
- The empire instituted a *common currency* that was accepted across the empire. This made trade simpler thereby uniting the empire and promoting prosperity.

**Toleration** While Persians centralized political power, they did not try to enforce religious and cultural uniformity in their empire. Darius I, in particular, allowed ethnic groups to retain their cultural identity and tolerated religious diversity as long as people paid their taxes and contributed soldiers to the military force to maintain the empire. His successor, *Xerxes* (519–465 B.C.E.) built a Gate of All Nations (also called Gateway of Xerxes) at an entrance to Persepolis to show that he was honoring all his subjects. Persian toleration of diversity was an unusual policy, one that made the Persian Empire unlike other empires of its time. (Test prep: Write a paragraph comparing and contrasting religious toleration under the Persians with later examples of the policy. See page 152 for Islamic rule in Spain.)

**Religious Beliefs** One of the most important legacies of the Persians was the spread of *monotheism*, the belief in only one god. Although monotheism also appeared in other cultures, most people in Southwest Asia were polytheistic before the Persian prophet *Zarathustra* (c. 660 B.C.E.–583 B.C.E.) began teaching a new faith, *Zoroastrianism*. This faith was based on belief in only one god, Ahura Mazda, or the “wise lord.” The religion also believed in a god of darkness and other lesser gods, none of which were to be worshipped. Zoroastrianism also taught the concepts of *heaven and hell*. After death, good people would be rewarded in heaven, while the evil ones would be punished in hell. Originally, priests called *magi* had passed Zarathustra’s teachings orally from generation to generation. Then later, a collection of written texts based on Zarathustra’s beliefs, the *Avestas*, was produced, which helped spread the religion. Zoroastrianism’s monotheistic principle and other teachings may have shaped the development of Judaism and Christianity.

**Society** Persian society had much the same social stratification as earlier empires of the region. However, because of its size, it had a larger class of educated, well-paid government workers. This bureaucracy included accountants, administrators, tax collectors, and translators.

Similarly, the number of slaves in Persia was much greater than in other empires. Farmers owned slaves, using them as agricultural laborers, and their numbers increased as agricultural production increased. Other slaves were servants to city-dwellers, and still others were owned by the government and used to build roads, large buildings, and irrigation systems throughout Persia.

Even though Persian society was patriarchal, women were allowed to own and manage property, and if they worked in a shop, they were allowed to keep their wages. Common Persian women engaged in economic activities.

including weaving textiles and trading them for food for their families. Divorce was possible. Some aristocratic Persian women wore veils, mainly to advertise their social status.

**Environment and Technology** The Persians irrigated their fields, as did other civilizations in Southwest Asia. The Persian method, however, was innovative: underground canals, called *qanat*, were used to reduce the evaporation of the water as it traveled to the fields. *Qanat* were especially common in the arid Iranian Plateau of central Persia.

**Trade** The Persians conducted much trade along the Persian Road and other land routes. They also conducted trade by sea. For example, ivory and gold came from Turkey; cedar and woolen fabrics from Phoenicia; wine and oil from Greece; and grain, textiles, and papyrus from Egypt.

## Persia vs. Greece

As the Greek city-states expanded east and the vast Persian empire expanded west, the two clashed over territory. The conflict began in Asia Minor. In Asia Minor, Persians occupied several Greek colonies. Around 499 B.C.E., some of these conquered Greek areas rebelled in campaigns known as the *Persian Wars*. Athens and Sparta formed an alliance to help the rebel colonies. In 490 B.C.E., at the city of *Marathon* in mainland Greece, an outnumbered Athenian army defeated the Persian forces of Darius, who then withdrew from Greece.

Xerxes again tried to push westward. He organized a force of thousands and attacked Greece, defeating a few hundred Spartans and their allies at the *Battle of Thermopylae*. After their victory, the Persians captured and burned Athens. In reaction, the Athenians and their allies formed the *Delian League*. When the Persians later met the Athenians at sea, the Athenians won the naval *Battle of Salamis*. Soon, the Greeks won other sea and land battles, forcing the Persians to retreat to their homeland.

**Decline of Persia** The cost of the battles with the Greeks severely damaged the Persian Empire. Further, Xerxes began to take a less tolerant attitude toward non-Persians in the empire. Together, these forces began to undermine the strength of the Persian Empire.

**Athens-Sparta Rivalry** The alliance among Greek city-states did not last. Athens expected other city-states to pay taxes to it, which the latter resented. Chief among these was Sparta, which revolted against Athens, beginning the *Peloponnesian War* (431–404 B.C.E.). With the help of its Greek allies in the *Peloponnesian League*, Sparta defeated Athens and became the dominant power in Greece.

## The Rise of Macedonia

As Persia weakened and the Greeks divided, a new power arose in Macedonia, a region on the northern edge of the Greek world. *Philip II* resolved to conquer and unite the Greek city-states and then conquer Asia Minor. He quickly

conquered all of the Greek city-states except Sparta. However, Philip II's further plans were cut short when he was assassinated in 336 B.C.E. He was succeeded by his son Alexander, who immediately began the conquests that would earn him the name *Alexander the Great* and extend Greek influence all the way to India.

**Alexander and the Hellenistic World** During Alexander's 13-year campaign, he governed his far-flung conquests by picking native residents to help him rule. For example, in present-day Iran he allowed local Persian administrators to run that part of the empire. Alexander cemented his relations with leaders in the area by marrying several Persian women and urging his leading generals to do the same. In Egypt, he founded the great city of *Alexandria*, which would become a center of Hellenistic culture and a major seaport. (The historical *Hellenistic Period* takes its name from the Greek word *Hellenes*, meaning "Greeks.")x The *Ptolemy dynasty* eventually built a library at Alexandria, the largest library of the ancient world, as well as the Alexandrian Museum, a place where scholars did research.

As a result of Alexander's conquests, Greek language, architecture, mythology, and philosophy became widespread. Small colonies of Greeks were established all over the Hellenistic world, even as far as Bactria, a region in what is now Afghanistan. The continuity of Greek culture held strong even as Greek governmental unity declined. An example of such continuity can be seen in the Greco-Buddhist art from the areas in South Asia, another region visited by Alexander's forces. Temples show influences in Greek columns and some statues show the Buddha in Greek clothing.

**Formation and Fall of the Kingdoms** Alexander's death in 323 B.C.E. at the age of 32 ushered in a time of chaos. The central administration of the empire collapsed. Alexander had failed to designate an heir, so his generals battled with one another to establish their own kingdoms. Instead of one powerful empire, the Greek-influenced lands became divided into several. Chief among the generals/rulers were the *Seleucids* in Asia and the *Ptolemies* in Egypt. Smaller monarchies controlled Pergamum in Asia Minor, the area around Sparta, and the area around Athens. These regions would eventually fall to the Roman Empire. For example, Athens and other city-states fell to the Romans in the first century B.C.E. The break-up of the Greek empire did not mean the end of Greek culture. Much of it was adopted by the Romans. Greek teachers and doctors were highly prized as slaves in Rome because they transmitted a culture admired by the Roman upper classes. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing and contrasting Alexander Darius. See page 59.)

## Other Empires in Persia

Though the great Achaemenid empire of Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes ended, their ideas lived on. The later rulers of Persian lands kept many of their innovations in administration.



Source: Walters Art Museum / Wikimedia Commons



Source: Thinkstock

Greece, along with India, developed some of the first forms of drama. Greek plays (upper) were often simple productions that taught that people had to suffer to learn. In contrast, Indian drama (lower) often used dance and frequently had happy endings.

**Seleucids** The *Seleucids* who ruled Persia from 305 to 83 B.C.E. encouraged Greeks and Macedonians to settle there as colonists. They kept Achaemenid's bureaucratic system, but the satraps often revolted against their Macedonian rulers. The Seleucids governed Persia, but they lost control of Iran and northern India to the Parthians and were finally replaced by the Romans.



**Parthians** Originally nomadic peoples from Central Asia, the *Parthians* ruled over what is now Iraq, Iran, and much of the land bordering western India, beginning in 247 B.C.E. Their capital city was Ctesiphon. They kept the Achaemenid's satrap system of governing. In the first century C.E., they prevented the Roman Empire's army from marching east beyond Syria. Neither side could conquer the other. Border towns and surrounding areas would change hands as victories were won by one side or the other. In 224 C.E., the Parthians were defeated by the *Sassanids*.

**Sassanids** During the Sassanid dynasty (224–651 C.E.), the government promoted Zoroastrianism and persecuted Christians, whom it suspected as being sympathetic toward the Christian Roman Empire. The Sassanid Empire was large but not as large as the Parthian Empire had been. For example, it did not control Armenia (to the north) nor Bactria (to the east).

## Comparing the Greek and Persian Empires

Persia and Greece established the two great empires of the eastern Mediterranean area. They shared many similarities. Both empires covered large territories. They had wide cultural influence. They allowed most women few rights, although some women did become influential in Achaemenid court.

The two empires had very different religious traditions. Darius of Persia had the following inscription carved in three languages on a monument: "I am Darius, the great king . . . from antiquity . . . by the grace of Ahuramazda." Note that he attributed his reign to Ahuramazda, the one deity of the Zoroastrians. In contrast to the Persians' monotheism, the Greeks had a pantheon of gods. They had gods and goddesses for each aspect of life.

Greeks and Persians also viewed unity within their empires differently. The Persians showed high tolerance for diverse customs and traditions throughout their empire. They had one emperor in control, though they allowed for local autonomy. In contrast, the Greeks were more united culturally through language, religion, and traditions such as the Olympic games. However, the Greeks were less united politically. The city-states fought one another and joined together only when threatened with invasion.

The two empires demonstrate the power of syncretism. They became more alike during the Hellenistic period. For example, when Alexander the Great conquered territories from the Persians, he adopted their system of local administration. In addition, the excellent postal system of the Persians, combined with the use of coins that developed around the Mediterranean, facilitated trade that made the entire region more prosperous. Trade helped form a cultural synthesis of Persian astronomy and Zoroastrianism with Greek language, literature, gods, mystery cults, and various styles of government. The blending of these elements shaped the context for the next great empire of the Mediterranean world: the Roman Empire.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WAS ALEXANDER GREAT?

Whether historians consider Alexander great or not depends on which aspects of his life strike them as most important. Victor David Hanson, reviewing several recent books on Alexander, described the range of views from “drunken . . . psychopath” to “the Aristotelian who tamed Asia . . . with gentle firmness and romantic élan.” One of the first historians to write about Alexander was the Roman historian Arrian Flavius Arrianus, who was impressed by the Macedonian’s conquests. Arrian lived about four centuries after Alexander in an empire that inherited much of its culture from the Greeks. To Arrian, Alexander was a great leader who united people under his rule, created a large area where trade could flourish, and brought peace between long-time rivals Greece and Persia. Like many Romans, Arrian seemed little bothered by the costs of creating a large empire.

But these costs did bother English historian George Grote. Writing in the late 1800s, Grote was appalled by the bloodshed that resulted from Alexander’s drive to win personal glory. Alexander executed thousands of conquered soldiers or villagers at a time. Maybe hundreds of thousands of people died in the wars Alexander carried out. To Grote, Alexander and his father, Phillip, were simply “brutalized adventurers.”

More recently, Paul Cartledge combined aspects of both Grote and Cartledge in his evaluation of Alexander. Alexander was certainly brutal, but his brutality was common for his times. And his conquests, once completed, offered the possibility, according to Cartledge, of a “peaceful, multi-ethnic coexistence.”

Two other British historians were less forgiving than Cartledge. Peter Green pointed out that many of the benefits brought by Alexander vanished upon his death. “The empire he built collapsed the moment he was gone; he came as a conqueror and the work he wrought was destruction.” Alexander brought peace and unity, but only briefly. After his death, his generals fought one another and broke up his empire. Whatever the benefits that Alexander brought, they did not survive long enough to be worth the costs. And John Keegan, the preeminent military historian of the past century, concluded that Alexander’s “dreadful legacy was to enoble savagery—to which all who opposed his will were subject—in the name of glory.”

## The Roman World

*tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento  
(hae erunt artes), pacique imponere morem,  
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos. . . .*

*You, Roman, remember to rule the peoples with power  
(these will be your arts), to graft custom onto peace, to spare the conquered,  
and to subdue the proud. . . .*

—Anchises to Aeneas, Virgil's *The Aeneid*, 6.851–3, Translated by Sue Gilmore

**A**lthough the quotation above appears in Latin and English, its source, *The Aeneid*, combines a Greek story from Homer with settings in Southwest Asia, North Africa, Sicily, and, finally, the Italian Peninsula. This epic by the Roman poet Virgil thus brings together in one work many of the cultural combinations presented in the previous chapter. Additionally, the epic accurately forecasts the cultural, political, and military legacies of the Roman Empire, continuities still apparent in much of the world. *The Aeneid* displays for the reader Virgil's ideal of leadership, an ideal he was anxious to pass on to his patron, Augustus Caesar. Virgil's lessons might have helped the Roman Empire survive had it been followed by *all* the Roman emperors.

### Rome as a Monarchy (c. 753–509 B.C.E.)

Like the earlier Greek civilization, Roman civilization developed on a giant peninsula. But while geography hindered Greek unity, it did not prevent Italian unity. For example, the *Apennine Mountains*, which run the length of that peninsula, are less rugged than the mountains of Greece. The Apennines did not prevent trade or travel in ancient times.

**Etruscans and Latins** The city of Rome owes much of its early history to the combining of three groups, often warring but sometimes collaborating: *Etruscans*, *Latins*, and Greeks. The Etruscans were settled in the northern Italian Peninsula when Rome was yet a village on seven hills. They later mingled with the less advanced Latins of central Italy. They gained an alphabet from the Greek colonists of southern Italy, with whom they traded.

As shown by the remarkable tombs still existing in Italy, Etruscan skills included building with stone. The Etruscans mined iron, copper, and tin and made metal weapons and tools. Similarly, Etruscans were probably responsible for the roads and temples of this early Roman period, as well as for military tactics displayed in battles.

**Political Traditions** According to tradition or myth, the village on seven hills that would become *Rome* was always welcoming to outcasts and outsiders, and it grew accordingly. Tradition also suggests that local tribes agreed to have a rotating kingship, which began with Romulus (the supposed son of the war god Mars). According to legend, Romulus killed his twin brother Remus after an argument about where to locate the new city, and gave his name to the city in 753 B.C.E.

More certain than these stories are the accomplishments of the early Romans. They drained swamps, which gave them a large amount of fertile land, significantly more than the Greek city-states had. They found nearby sources of drinking water and metal ores. The site that became Rome, 15 miles up the *Tiber River* from the *Tyrrhenian Sea*, was good for trade and yet far enough from the ocean to be easily defended against sea-borne attackers. It would soon become the central point for interaction with other settlements in Italy.

Comparing Early Forms of Government				
Civilization	Form of Government	Leading Individual or Body	Characteristics	Relationship Between Government and Religion
<b>Egypt: Middle Kingdom</b>	Dynasty, highly centralized	Pharaoh	Hierarchy of appointed officials under the pharaoh	Pharaoh was seen as both a ruler and a god
<b>Greece: Athens City-State</b>	Direct democracy, highly decentralized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Assembly (all citizens)</li> <li>• Council of 500 (chosen by lottery)</li> <li>• Courts (magistrates chosen by lottery)</li> </ul>	Males over 18 were considered citizens, and they could participate in government	Religion was separate from government but influential
<b>China: Han Dynasty</b>	Dynasty, centralized	Emperor with advice from officials	Officials chosen by Emperor based on skill and knowledge following Confucian ideas	Religion was mostly separate from functions of government
<b>Rome: Republic</b>	Republic, centralized	Emperor and Senate	Citizens elect senators	Religion was separate from government but influential



## From Monarchy to Republic

Government in Rome evolved as a practical response to both improvements and domestic pressure for protection. By the early 500s, when Tarquinius Superbus (Tarquin the Proud), ruled the city, he was a tyrant. He was also the final monarch of early Rome. Opposition to his rule arose among the *patricians*, or wealthy landowners. In 509 B.C.E., they overthrew him. But instead of creating another monarchy, they established a government of elected officials—a *republic*. It was a representative government, not a direct democracy like Athens had for a while. At first, only the wealthiest and the most prestigious Roman citizens were represented in the *Senate*. Holding tenure for life, senators increased in number to about 300 during the fourth century B.C.E.

**Plebeians and Magistrates** Most Romans were *plebeians*—small farmers, tradespeople, craftsmen, and common soldiers. Gradually, they began to call for political reforms so they could have a say in government. In 287 B.C.E., they won the right to be full citizens. They got their own assemblies—the Assembly of Tribes and the Assembly of Centuries—where plebeians could pass laws and select *magistrates*, officials who carried out the day-to-day operations of government. The Senate and the assemblies also acted as courts, deciding disputes between people and trying accused lawbreakers.

**Tribunes** Additionally, new officials called *tribunes* were elected to represent the plebeians. They could exercise veto power in the Senate, although the ever-practical senatorial politicians often included these representatives of the “plebs” in their leadership circles in order to keep favor. These patron-client relationships became an important part of political as well as social life. A senator used his lower-class clients to bolster his prestige, to serve as “extras” who would cheer him through the streets or mourn at family funerals and greet arriving banquet guests. In return for these duties, the clients were granted a measure of protection and, sometimes, rations of bread and wine.

**Consuls** The most important magistrates were two *consuls*. They were elected by Roman citizens to preside over the government and to serve as commanders of armies in military campaigns. One consul could block the acts of the other by saying “*veto*,” which is Latin for “I forbid it.” This is one of the earliest examples of *checks and balances*—a way of dividing power to keep any part of government from becoming excessively powerful. (To read about how checks and balances are used in the government of the United States, see a government textbook.)

**Rule of Law** Inequities in the unwritten system of laws brought about unrest and strikes from the plebeians and their leadership. One government response was to display the *Laws of the Twelve Tables* publicly (c. 450 B.C.E.). Putting written laws in the full view of the public provided a check on the injustices of the judiciary system, an important concept built into numerous later constitutions. The Laws of the Twelve Tables dealt with almost every aspect of life—including business transactions, property boundaries and

penalties for crimes. More laws and political institutions evolved as the need for them arose. (Test Prep: Create a table comparing the Laws of the Twelve Tables with the Code of Hammurabi. See page 21.)

Rule of law created a career path for lawyers. Rich and powerful senators and merchants brought legal cases, often against corrupt officials. One of the greatest members of the legal profession was *Cicero*, trained in writing and oratory by Greek teachers as well as Roman ones. His elegant writing is still studied today for its clarity, preciseness, and persuasiveness. The existence of courts, references to legal terms, and entire orations given in the course of lawsuits testify to the significance of the rule of law in the Republic.

## Roman Expansion

After overthrowing its own king, Rome encouraged central Italy's other city-states to revolt against the Etruscans. After the city-states were free of Etruscan rule, the Romans conquered them. By 275 B.C.E., Rome controlled the entire Italian Peninsula.

Adept leaders and smoothly organized armies became the Roman trademark. Equally helpful in running the large area they had conquered was the extension of privileges to the conquered peoples. Citizenship was often the reward for supplying troops and tribute to Rome. Later, small Italian cities demanded the privilege of providing soldiers and money so their residents could become Roman citizens.

**Greece and Gaul** As Rome extended its power into southern Italy, it developed conflicts with Greeks over control of Greek colonies. In 275 B.C.E., the Romans defeated a Greek army that had invaded Italy to protect the Greek colonies there. Then, in a series of four wars between 215 and 148 B.C.E., Rome defeated Macedonia, in northern Greece. The Romans went on to take control of what remained of the empire created by Alexander the Great. In addition, the Romans moved north and west to conquer parts of Gaul, a territory that is part of what is now France.

**Carthage and Beyond** One of Rome's largest conflicts was with *Carthage*, a city-state across the Mediterranean on the north coast of Africa. Carthage had once belonged to the Phoenician Empire but had since created its own empire by conquering parts of Spain. Rome and Carthage both wanted to control the Mediterranean trade. They fought a series of three wars between 264 and 146 B.C.E., the *Punic Wars*. When the Romans finally captured Carthage in 146 B.C.E., they destroyed the city, enslaved its population, and, according to legend, salted the land to make it infertile, thereby condemning Carthage to poverty for years to come. Today, ending a war with the complete destruction of an enemy is known as a *Carthaginian peace*.

The victory over Carthage gave Rome control of a large empire, including North Africa, Spain, and Sicily. The Romans later rebuilt Carthage and maintained a colony there. It became the empire's fourth-largest city. Roman armies also conquered swaths of modern Syria, Egypt, Britain, and Germany by the middle of the first century C.E.

However, conquest was not permanent. For example, centuries later, in 439 C.E., the nomadic *Vandals*—who had invaded North Africa from Spain—took Carthage, and in 455 they conquered Rome itself.

**Soldiers** All citizens between ages 17 and 46 who owned land were required to serve in the Roman *legions*. These large armies were needed to fight wars and to guard the expanding empire. Most soldiers were poor farmers. When they entered the army, many sold their small farms to wealthy patricians. The patricians combined their purchases to create huge estates, known as *latifundia*. While some soldiers settled elsewhere in the empire once their services were complete, many others came to Rome. Around the time of Julius Caesar, Rome's population was probably more than one million people and growing.

## Roman Society

Patricians and plebeians were influential in Roman society. Less powerful were two other groups: slaves and women.

**Slaves** Most slaves were foreigners captured during Rome's wars. They were brought to Italy to work in homes and on the large farms of wealthy Romans. The *latifundia* of the patricians required an ever-increasing number of slaves. Except in poor families, raising and educating Roman children was carried out by slaves, often Greek ones. Among wealthy Romans, some slaves even ran the households.

With conquests increasing, the number of captives available for slavery grew. Conditions of slavery became harsher, especially after the *Spartacus Rebellion* in 73 B.C.E. when a slave named Spartacus led one of the largest slave revolts in history. Roman soldiers killed thousands of rebels before the revolt was crushed, and another 6,000 slaves were captured and executed by crucifixion.

The existence of so many slaves slowed down growth and innovation in the Roman economy. Slave labor was so cheap that landowners had little incentive to develop new technology.

**Decline of Small Landholders** The low cost of slave labor was one of two factors that caused a decline in the number of small landowners. Independent farmers and tenants could not compete successfully against production by slaves. In addition, the years many small farmers spent in the military cost many of them their land. As time passed, large estates absorbed more and more of the holdings that had previously been farmed by the small landowners.

**Women** In early Roman society, women faced many forms of discrimination. Only men could be citizens. Women could not vote. In married couples, men owned all the family property and headed the households. However, young women of high social position usually received some level of education. Further, women could inherit property and other forms of wealth



from their fathers, which gave them influence with their husbands. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing the role of women in Roman society with the role of women in classical India. See page 95.)

## Civil Wars

Strong Roman military leaders completed numerous conquests in the last two centuries B.C.E. Each leader raised armies through promises of land; these promises lead to the existence of personal armies more loyal to individual leaders than to Rome. For example, *Gaius Marius*, *Lucius Pompey Magnus*, and *Julius Caesar* were all popular and successful generals whose troops were devoted to them. In the following generation, the same would be true for *Marc Antony* and *Octavian* (later known as *Augustus*). Clashes between vying groups of Romans thus became civil wars in which generals opposed one another for leadership of the state.

The conflict between generals for power in Rome reached a decisive point in the first century B.C.E. One general, Marius, was a “new man” not born to the senatorial class. He was elected six times to the consulship. The other consul, Sulla, came from a more patrician family. Sulla was successful over Marius during their lifetime. However, Marius’ nephew Julius Caesar would prevail and drive Sulla from the city. Caesar was a *popularis*, an aristocrat whose strength was based on his support from the common people of Rome, such as the plebeians, rather than just other elites. His armies had finally become too powerful for the representative government of the Republic to prevail.

**End of the Republic** Julius Caesar, after vanquishing his major foe, Pompey, and becoming sole consul, became dictator for life in 46 B.C.E. He accomplished major reforms such as revising the calendar, increasing the size of the Senate, extending citizenship, and granting land to some poor veterans. Caesar also added conquests for Rome as far away as the German forests and Egypt. However, frightened by his power and influence, a group of conspirators attacked and killed him on the famous “Ides of March” (March 15, 44 B.C.E.). Competition between the two remaining generals—Octavian and Marc Antony—led to the downfall of the Republic and the establishment of the Roman Empire.

Having defeated conspirators at Philippi (in Macedonia), Antony and Octavian turned on each other, first temporarily dividing the Roman lands between them, east and west. However, at the *Battle of Actium* on the Ionian Sea in 31 B.C.E., Octavian defeated Antony and proclaimed himself sole ruler of Rome.

## The Roman Empire (27 B.C.E.–476 C.E.)

With the help of a Senate grateful for an end to the civil war, Octavian began to mold Rome into the image he wanted. His goals were to strengthen family values, keep the peace, and promote prosperity. The result was a hugely

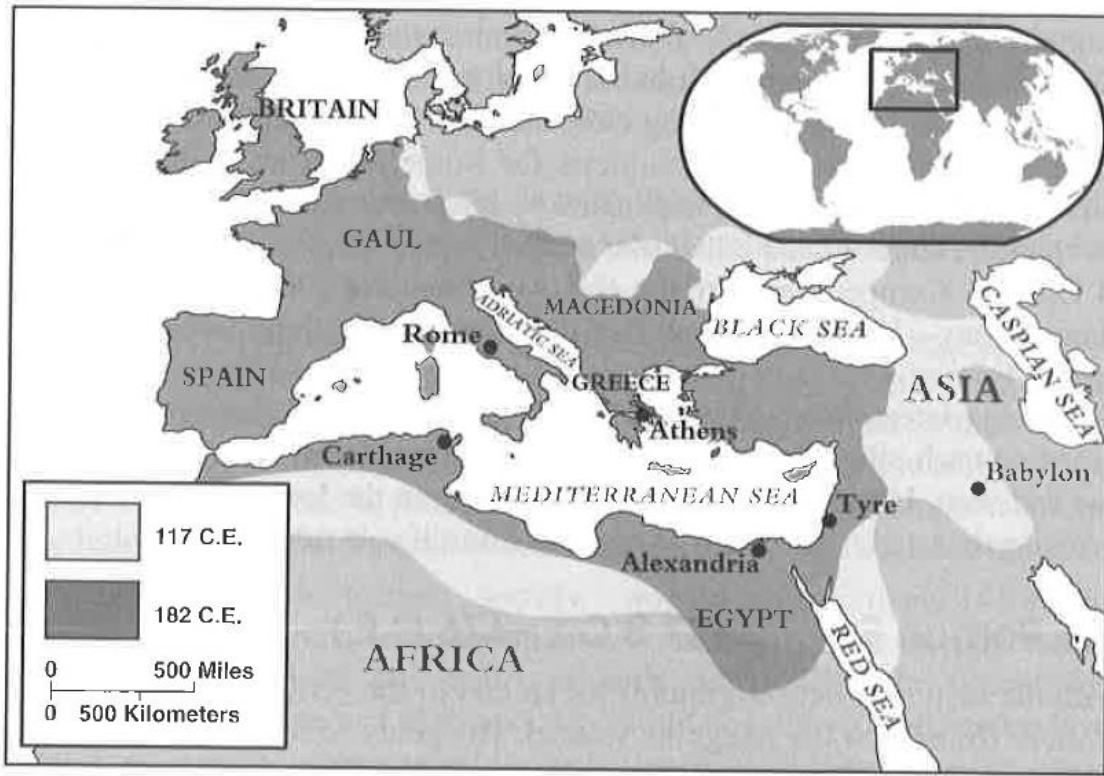
successful, well-governed empire that extended throughout the Mediterranean. One Roman historian quoted Octavian as saying, "I found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble." Octavian was proclaimed "Augustus Caesar," and the next 200 years became known as *Pax Romana*, or Roman peacetime. (Test Prep: List the similarities and differences between the Pax Romana with the Pax Mongolica (Mongolian peace). See page 243.)

**Roads and Defenses** Rome built a network of roads that made movement of trade goods, written orders, and soldiers and their provisions easier. In addition, Rome built fortresses and walls to protect strategic cities and transportation points.

**Social Classes** The social and political hierarchy established in the days of the Republic continued into the Empire Period. Some upward mobility was possible: a new *equestrian class* was available to male Roman citizens whose property was valued at 400,000 sesterces (at a time when Roman legionaries were making about 900 sesterces per year). Equestrians could hold positions of authority in government but not ones as influential as those occupied by senators and their families.

The senatorial class became the instrument of Augustus and later rulers by which they directed the affairs of the empire. However, Augustus and his successors made clear that their will was absolute. Augustus offered a tax bonus to members of this class who had more than two children because he wished to see the numbers of the aristocracy increase.

## THE ROMAN EMPIRE



Lower classes, no longer as ably represented in their popular assemblies, were nevertheless pacified by free games and grain and the possibility, however unlikely, of advancing in the social order. Slavery continued to increase as both businesses and large estates increased. Greek slaves were in high demand as physicians and teachers, maintaining the continuity of Greek culture. Slaves could sometimes buy their freedom, becoming newly rich “freedmen,” but slaves who ran away and were caught received the brand “F” for *fugitivus* on their foreheads.

**Women** During the Empire Period, the rights of women expanded over what existed in early centuries. For example, women could divorce—many upper class women did so in the tumultuous times preceding the takeover by Augustus. They also began to exercise more property rights as new inheritance laws allowed them to gain and keep control of property. Typical of their increasing influence was their presence as near-equals in social events, something made clear by the art and literature of the period. Even without political rights, the economic worth of women who ran businesses gave them some political influence.

Roman histories and literature abound with frequent references to strong, educated women. This shows that Roman women had more influence than their counterparts to the east in the Hellenistic world, in India, or in China. One avenue to independence opened for widows whose husbands and fathers had both died, leaving the women to start handling their own affairs.

**Law** Not least of the accomplishments of the Augustan era were those in law. Although Cicero had been killed in the purges undertaken by Antony, Roman law continued to spread to all parts of the empire. For example, it was Roman law that allowed the Christian apostle Paul to insist on being taken to Rome for trial as a citizen—a journey that would aid in the establishment of the early Christian Church in Rome.

**Literature and Philosophy** As well as operating under the rule of law, Augustus saw himself also as a patron of literature. Famous writers such as *Virgil* and *Horace* were recipients of his generosity, as was *Ovid* until Augustus banished him to the far edge of the Black Sea (perhaps because *Ovid* wrote love poetry). Historians such as *Livy* and *Tacitus* carried on the tradition of Roman literature in the first century C.E. Philosophers such as *Seneca* did as well. *Seneca* would become the tutor of the infamous *Nero*, an emperor symbolic of decadent rulers during the long and gradual decline of the Roman Empire.

Roman writers were heavily influenced by Greek traditions. For example, writers of the early Empire continued to use Greek forms for poetry. Further, Greek ideas lay behind such Roman philosophies as *Epicureanism*, which promoted living simply, enjoying the pleasures of life, and not focusing on appealing to the gods. Another Roman philosophy based on Greek ideas was *Stoicism*, which emphasized that people should learn to accept the will of the gods and remained detached from pleasure and pain. Romans attempted to find the answers to questions about all aspects of life—from the existence of gods to the meaning of life to how to live ethically.

## Roman Religion

*Syncretism* played a key part in many aspects of Roman culture, including religion. For example, they frequently fused local Latin deities with the Greek pantheon of gods. Roman homes had an altar for the local divinities, but the family also went to temples and state celebrations carried out under the auspices of the chief priest, or *pontifex maximus*. Romans required everyone to practice the state religion. However, like the Persians, they tolerated the practice of additional religions as well. Unlike the Persians, many of whom were monotheistic Zoroastrians, the Romans were polytheistic.

**State Religion** Polytheistic and tolerant, Roman leaders praised their state gods such as Jupiter and Minerva for showing favor as they built their empire. The temple to Vesta, for example, had a group of priestesses who guarded the sacred flame of Rome. Such priestesses grew wealthy and influential in the city. An additional aspect of state religion that would grow more apparent after the death of Augustus was worship of the emperor.

**Personal Religion** Lares and Penates, old gods believed to protect the household, were still worshipped in the years of the Roman Empire. These gods were the objects of various household rituals. But Romans who yearned for more spiritual beliefs also joined *mystery cults*, religious groups whose followers were promised an afterlife if they underwent secret rituals and purification rites. Some Romans joined in the rites called Eleusinian mysteries (originating in Greece) and the cult of Isis (from Egypt).

**Jews Under Roman Rule** The Jewish religion consolidated in Jerusalem in what is known as the Second Temple period (530 B.C.E. to 79 C.E.). Jewish scholars codified the Hebrew scriptures, which included Mesopotamian cultural and legal influences brought back to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile.

The Romans captured Jerusalem in 37 B.C.E. Cicero and other Roman writers of the late Republic and early empire were interested in the religion of the Jews. While Romans might have added the Jewish deity to their pantheon, they were not willing to give any deity exclusive worship. Conflicts between Jews and Romans resulted in three Jewish rebellions in the first two centuries C.E. Roman victories, and resulting persecution of the Jews, caused many Jews to flee their homes in the region around Jerusalem, continuing the diaspora begun in earlier centuries.

The situation of Jewish citizens was complicated by the Roman tendency to treat educated Jews with more deference than other “barbarian” groups in the empire. These circumstances positioned Jews to become scapegoats and objects of prejudice, a situation that would be repeated centuries later in history.

## Christianity

Into this Jewish community emerged the figure of *Jesus*, who challenged traditional religious leaders and was regarded as a troublemaker by Roman officials. Followers of Jesus spread his teachings throughout the Roman world. By the end of the first century C.E., *Christianity* was emerging as a

distinct form of Judaism and was on its way to becoming a separate religion altogether. Christianity was most popular among the urban poor, slaves, and women throughout the empire. Like the mystery cults and the philosophies of Epicureanism and Stoicism, Christianity appealed to people hungry for answers about the harshness of life and hopeful of an afterlife. The intellectual, political, and religious ferment of the first century C.E. was fertile ground for Christian teachings.



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While Christianity emphasized worship of God and Buddhism focused more inwardly, people in both traditions constructed large, solid-looking buildings that reflected the strength of their members' commitment to their beliefs.

**Peter and Paul** One of the people particularly important in spreading the ideas of Jesus and shaping Christianity was *Peter* (died in 64 C.E.) He knew Jesus and was one of his first followers. Peter eventually came to Rome and is today regarded by the Roman Catholic Church as the first pope.

According to the Bible, *Paul* was a Jew who had a sudden, dramatic conversion to Christianity while traveling on a road leading into Damascus.

Though born during the lifetime of Jesus, Paul probably never met him. Paul spread the gospel according to Jesus around the Mediterranean by preaching at many of the great Hellenistic cities such as Ephesus and Corinth. Educated in the Hellenistic tradition of argument and teaching, Paul inspired other preachers as well before he died around 65 C.E.

**Features of Emergent Christianity** One trait of early Christianity was a focus on living simple lives isolated from society. This allowed members to concentrate on worship and reflection. Over time, some of these people joined together to form *monasteries*, buildings or collections of buildings where people devote their lives to the practice of a religion.

A second trait was *martyrdom*, a willingness to die rather than give up one's beliefs. Romans allowed people to worship their own gods, but they required people to respect the deities of the official state religion. Christians refused to do this, and thousands were imprisoned, tortured, and killed. Despite persecution, Christianity grew stronger. In 313 C.E., the Roman Emperor *Constantine* declared the religion to be legal in the *Edict of Milan*. Constantine became the first Christian emperor. In 330 C.E., he moved the seat of government to Constantinople. Under subsequent Roman emperors, the Christian religion became the official religion of the empire. (Test Prep: Outline the developments of Christianity up to the Byzantine Empire. See pages 131–134.)

A third trait of early Christianity was the appearance of written accounts about the development of the religion. These included four documents describing the life of Jesus, now known as the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They also included several letters written mostly by Paul to early fellowships, advising the members and commenting on the teachings of Jesus. Together, the Gospels and the letters form the core of what is now called the New Testament, a significant part of the Christian Bible.

**St. Augustine** As Rome entered its darker days, corruption, poor leadership, and encroaching barbarian hordes were common themes. In the fifth century C.E., a monk in Roman North Africa who would come to be known as *St. Augustine of Hippo* (354–430 C.E.) began to write the book *City of God*. Although many written works of St. Augustine survive, this one is particularly important because it points out the existence of a duality: even though the city of God on earth (Rome) might fall to “the barbarians,” the city of God in heaven would remain. Tensions that would later culminate in the *separation of church and state* are also present in this work.

## Transregional Trade Networks

St. Augustine's work in Roman North Africa illustrates the spread of Christianity to all parts of the Roman Empire and beyond. Christians also brought their religion to Mesopotamia, Persia, and India and even into Central Asia by way of the trade route connecting communities in Europe and Asia called the *Silk Roads*. The overland roads were *transregional* in that they connected regions

of various civilizations over long distances. They took several different routes, depending upon the climate, the friendliness of the territories being crossed, and the number of bandit attacks in a given period. Most of the traders took routes through Central Asian cities such as Samarkand and Tashkent. Some went through Indian cities such as Pataliputra and into the city of Kathmandu in Nepal. Traders often paid a portion of the goods as tribute to local lords to allow safe passage through their territories. Overland routes from China separated at the desert town of Dunhuang, one going north, one straight west, and one to the south. The routes overland generally converged at Constantinople, and from there goods went to Rome either overland or by sea. (Test Prep: Create a chart comparing the spread of Christianity with the spread of Zoroastrianism and the spread of Buddhism. See pages 60 and 99.)

**Sea Routes** Rome also conducted extensive trade to the east across water. Maritime commerce continued across the Indian Ocean as monsoons permitted. Up the Red Sea, after touching at Africa, goods at last reached the port of Rome at Ostia.

Although pirates were a constant problem, the waters of the Mediterranean were more easily navigated than those of an ocean because of smaller distances and numerous island stopping places. The Romans lacked sophisticated navigational equipment, but they still made truly amazing trips as far north as the Scilly Islands (the British islands most southerly from the coast of Wales), from which Roman ships brought back tin.

**New Technology and New Goods** A major advancement that made its way westward from Central Asia was the *stirrup* for mounted warriors. Stirrups provided greater stability for riders, which made horses easier to ride and control and, hence, more useful. Other goods—silks and spices and especially gold—were much prized by the upper classes of the Roman Empire. Not only did China grow wealthy from trade with Rome, but other cities along the Silk Roads (and increasingly on the trans-Saharan routes across northern Africa) also benefited from that trade. The markets of Samarkand, for example, introduced new fruits and vegetables, as well as rice and citrus products from Southwest Asia, to Europe. In East Africa, a large variety of imports and exports overlapped, suggesting a healthy trading economy. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing the effects on trade of the stirrup and the camel saddle. See pages 165–166.)

## Decline of the Empire

From its peak in size and strength, Rome began a slow, uneven decline that began after the third century C.E. For example, the population of Rome declined from over one million to under 100,000.

**Population Decline** One cause of the waning population was directly related to the empire's expansion. The Silk Road brought trade and wealth, but it also introduced devastating epidemics. In the second century C.E., Rome experienced a marked decline in population caused by plagues of smallpox,



and measles. Epidemics killed as many as one-quarter of the population in some cities. Diseases spread again in the third and fourth centuries, and yet again in the sixth century. With the decline in population came a decline in trade, which led to slower economic activity and fewer taxes for the Roman state. As tax revenues dipped, Roman roads and aqueducts were not repaired as often and armies were not paid as regularly. Armies mutinied and trading became less safe, which continued the downward spiral of the empire's wealth and power.

**Environmental Problems** The success of Roman culture led to population growth around the Mediterranean region. Increasing demand for lumber, for buildings, and for fuel led to deforestation. Increasing demand for food led to overgrazing and farming marginal lands, resulting in soil erosion.

**Challenges from Non-Romans** The growth of the empire resulted in a larger area to defend. The empire had traditionally been able to absorb non-Romans, such as the Germanic Visigoths who settled in the empire and adopted an agricultural lifestyle in the second century. However, in the fifth century, the Huns led by Attila moved into Gaul from farther east. Their westward progression forced other peoples—the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Franks—ahead of them into the empire. These additional groups settled around Western Europe and North Africa.

The turmoil from so much movement proved too widespread for Roman soldiers to handle. The Visigoths even sacked Rome in 410 C.E. The last Roman emperor was replaced by a Germanic ruler—Odovacer—in 476. From that period on, the remains of the empire were governed from Constantinople. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing the breakup of the Roman Empire with the breakup of the Han Empire. See page 105.)

## Legacies of the Romans

The decline of the Roman Empire did not mean the end of their influence. The empire divided into two parts under *Diocletian* (ruled 284–305), with Rome remaining the capital of the western portion and Byzantium remaining the capital of the east. The eastern portion flourished for many more centuries. Only the western portion continued to decline. However, Roman influence can be seen throughout the world today but most strongly in Europe, Southwest Asia, and the United States.

**Law and Government** One clear inheritance from the Romans in the United States is the system of representative government with a Senate and House of Representatives as provided for by the U.S. Constitution. The writers of that document, such as James Madison, were students of Roman history, and they consciously adopted Rome as a model. Other institutions, such as checks on the legislators provided by the judiciary and independent courts abiding by the rule of law, can also be traced to the Romans.

**Architecture** The architectural feature known as the dome and paved roads are contributions of the Romans. Roman columns, temples, and amphitheaters can still be seen today throughout the world. Magnificent examples of aqueducts are scattered throughout Southern Europe and the Mediterranean area. Other practical innovations include large urban sewers as well as under-floor heating in urban homes. Excavations at two Roman cities, Pompeii and Herculaneum, attest to Roman building skills. The Romans put their considerable expertise in engineering to work in both public and private buildings. What remains of Roman structures reflects a solid style obviously built for permanence.

**Military** When Caesar declared to the Roman Senate in his report on the success of war in Asia Minor, “*Veni, vidi, vici*” (“I came, I saw, I conquered”), it was both a statement of fact and an apt description of his military tactics. Roman armies were efficient and organized, and they have served as models for militaries all the way to modern times. Legionnaires were disciplined to fight in small, flexible units as well as large troops of armored infantry. Army engineers developed extensive *catapults*, devices used to hurl stones a great distance, and *siege devices* such as battering rams, along with bridges and military camps that were laid out efficiently and established with great speed.

**Literature** Poets, playwrights, historians, and philosophers from classical Rome are still read today. The epic of Virgil, the comedies of Plautus (such as *Miles Gloriosus*, on which the modern comedy *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* is based), and the historical works of Seneca are but a few examples. Roman mythology can be seen in literature, movies, and advertising.

**Language** Last, and maybe most importantly, the Latin language provided the basis for the family of the European languages called the Romance languages, which include Italian, Romanian, Spanish, Portuguese, and French. English, though not a Romance language, traces over half of its words to Latin or one of the Romance languages.

Rome’s influence remains strongly evident today. Similarly, the legacies of two other classical empires in Asia have left powerful legacies: Han China and the Gupta Empire.

#### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WHY DID ROME COLLAPSE?

Historians have come up with many explanations for Rome’s decline. Why did a region of prosperity and innovation become one in which people had less wealth and less ability to overcome new problems? One Internet site listed 210 reasons. Some historians argue that the empire grew too large to be governed with the technology of the time. Others argue that the empire’s wealth was wasted by too many wars of conquest. Or that too many leaders became too corrupt. Or that too many common citizens became too lazy.

One of the most provocative theories comes from the eighteenth-century English historian Edward Gibbon. He partially blames Christianity, with its emphasis on peace, forgiveness, and devotion to God, for undermining the Roman values that built the empire: military conquest, ruthless destruction of opponents, and intense loyalty to the Roman leaders.

Canadian historian Arthur Boak, in his 1921 book *A History of Rome to 565 A.D.*, saw a wide-ranging “transformation in society.” “Private industry languished, commerce declined, the fields lay untilled; a general feeling of hopelessness paralyzed all initiative.” To Boak, the main culprit in the decline of Rome was the “change from a regime which encouraged individual initiative to a regime of status.” In other words, people became less honored for what they actually did, such as running a farm or a business successfully, and more impressed by the wealth or titles their ancestors had accumulated.

One of the more innovative theories in recent years is that Rome collapsed because of health problems caused by the heavy use of lead in aqueducts and dishes. This is an example of historical interpretation that has been made possible by new techniques for gathering information from artifacts.

#### KEY TERMS BY THEME

<p><b>STATE-BUILDING</b>            republic            Senate            magistrates            tribunes            consuls            checks and balances            Laws of the Twelve Tables            Cicero            Carthage            Punic Wars            Vandals            legions            latifundia            Spartacus Rebellion            Marius            Sulla            Pompey Magnus            Julius Caesar            Marc Antony</p>	<p>Octavian            Battle of Actium  <i>Pax Romana</i>            Constantine  <i>Edict of Milan</i>            St. Augustine            separation of church and state</p> <p><b>ENVIRONMENT</b>            Apennine Mountains            Etruscans            Latins            Rome            Tiber River            Tyrrhenian Sea            catapults            siege devices            stirrup</p>	<p><b>SOCIAL STRUCTURE</b>            patricians            plebeians            equestrian class</p> <p><b>CULTURE</b>            Virgil  <i>The Aeneid</i>            Ovid            Epicureanism            Stoicism            Syncretism  <i>pontifex maximus</i>            mystery cults            Jesus            Peter            Paul            Christianity            martyrdom</p>
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## Classical Civilizations in India and China

*Your business is with action alone, not by any means with the fruit of the action. . . . Having recourse to devotion, perform actions, casting off all attachment, and being equable in success or ill success.*

—*The Bhagavad Gita*, c. 400 C.E.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is part of one of the most important writings in the Hindu tradition, *The Mahabharata*. It emphasizes carrying out one's duty as determined by one's birth and on separating oneself from any "attachment" to the effects of one's actions or any other worldly concerns. These emphases became vital themes not only in Hinduism but also in Buddhism, one of several new religions to emerge in India and China between 600 B.C.E. and 600 C.E. In addition to these new religions, new social and governmental structures, such as India's caste system and China's civil service system, emerged that still influence life in those countries today.

### Social Organization: The Caste System

The Aryan people who began to settle throughout the Indian subcontinent around 1500 B.C.E. developed a very well-defined social hierarchy that is now known as the *caste system*. Westerners typically use the word "caste" to describe India's social order because the Portuguese used the word *casta* (class) when they first noticed a distinct social hierarchy during their sixteenth-century travels to India. Aryans originally used the word *varna*, meaning "color," to distinguish between themselves (who had "wheat-colored complexions") and the darker-skinned Dravidians. Intermarriage between the two groups occurred often enough that now most physical distinctions are undetectable.

The Caste System in India		
Caste Name	Function	Occupations
Brahmins	The priestly and learned class	Spiritual leaders, teachers
Kshatriyas	The warrior and ruling class	Rulers, military elite, nobility, property owners
Vaishyas	The merchant and artisan class	Traders, agriculturalists, money-lenders, smiths
Shudras	The peasant and serf class	Unskilled servants for upper three classes, serfs

**The Four Castes** Caste identities formed around the kinds of occupations and social roles people held in ancient India. A distinct social hierarchy developed, leading to four basic castes: *brahmins*, or people of the priestly class; *kshatriyas*, or the warrior class; *vaishyas*, or merchants and artisans; and *shudras*, or peasants and serfs.

**Dalits** The lowest rung in the hierarchy consisted of people outside of all the varnas. People once called *untouchables*, now known as *dalits*, performed the most unpleasant work in society, such as disposing of dead bodies and cleaning sewer systems. Their work was so dirty that touching them would supposedly pollute members of the castes.

**Evolution of the Caste System** Over hundreds of years, the caste system expanded to include the groups that formed around new occupations and groups of people that migrated into the subcontinent. Hundreds of *jatis*, or subcasts, developed within each original caste to accommodate a more complex society.

India long ago outlawed discrimination against dalits, or any caste. However, signs of the caste system are still present. For instance, a last name can reveal a person's social position or his or her family's ancestral occupation. In rural areas, dalits still carry out the least hygienic work. Among the educated urban elite, some people consider caste when considering marriage choices.

## New Religions Emerge in India

Individual reflection and meditation became the focal points of two new religions, *Jainism* and *Buddhism*, which emerged in northern India during the late sixth century and the fifth century B.C.E.

**Jainism** Founded by *Mahavir Jain*, who was born in the 500s B.C.E., Jainism drew on ideas first expressed in the traditional Hindu texts known as the *Upanishads*. The *Upanishads* stated that all creatures on Earth were part of a larger soul, or *Brahma*. Mahavir Jain reasoned that because each living creature was part of Brahma and thus possessed a godly soul, individuals should show mercy to all animals. Thus, Jainism's followers took steps to do no harm. They adhered to strict vegetarian diets; they wore masks over their mouths to avoid swallowing insects; and only a few engaged in farming because it involved killing pests.

As a result of its demanding lifestyle, Jainism gained few followers. However, Jainism's ethical standards, including its doctrine of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, influenced later generations. For example, Mahatma Gandhi's steadfast commitment to nonviolence stemmed from his belief in *ahimsa*. Today, followers of Jainism make up a small percentage of India's religious population, but many Hindus identify Jainist ethics within their own beliefs.

**Buddhism** During Jain's lifetime, a young member of the warrior class, a *kshatriya*, sought a different path toward salvation. *Siddhartha Gautama* was unfulfilled with the life he led among the pampered young elite. In about 530 B.C.E., he became aware that suffering plagued the human race, and he set out on a quest to discover why. Gautama left his family and became an *ascetic*, someone who rejects worldly pleasures and lives a life of self-denial. According to legend, as he meditated for days underneath a bodhi tree, he came to several realizations that he called *enlightenment*. Afterwards, Gautama called himself Buddha, or "the enlightened one," and his disciples came to be known as Buddhists.

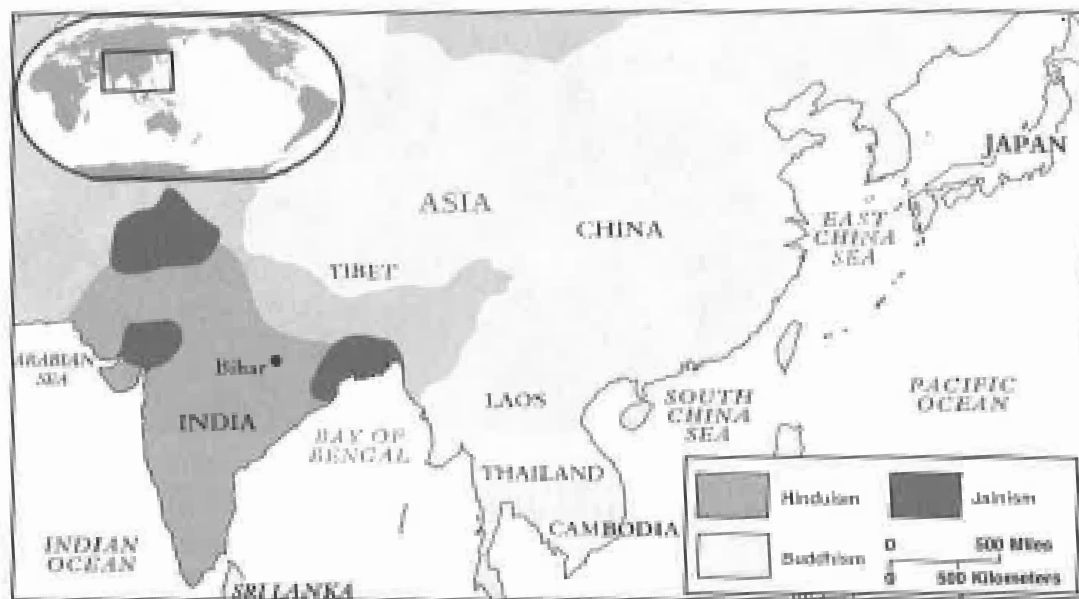
Buddhist doctrines are summarized in the *Four Noble Truths*: (1) all life involves great suffering; (2) all suffering stems from desires for worldly pleasures and material things; (3) suffering can end when one eliminates all of one's earthly desires; and (4) desire can be eliminated by following Buddhism's eight-fold path. This path requires an individual to meditate, reflect, and refrain from the pursuit of earthly pleasures. The goal is, over time, to detach oneself from worldly affairs. Detachment leads to enlightenment, which leads to a peaceful state in the afterlife known as *nirvana*. Reaching nirvana would mean ending the cycle of birth and rebirth, and the pain that goes with it.

**Comparing Indian Spiritual Traditions** While Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism all were built on a belief in inward reflection and a hope to end the cycle of *reincarnation*, only Hindus believed that one's caste has anything to do with one's *karma*. Buddhists and Jains rejected the rigid social hierarchy of the caste system. They believed that it was inconsistent with the ideals of showing mercy to all people and detaching oneself from worldly matters.

Buddhism spread quickly throughout India. It was more accessible to most people than either Hinduism or Jainism. Buddhism became quite popular with members of lower castes because of its rejection of the caste system. Buddhist teachings were not in Sanskrit, the ancient language of educated elites, but in local dialects that stemmed either from Hindi or Dravidian languages. By the fifth century B.C.E., as would Christians 500 years later, Buddhists established *monasteries*.

**Duty in Hinduism** In the same era that Jainism and Buddhism developed, the late sixth century and the fifth century B.C.E., Hinduism was also spreading. Epic poems such as the *Mahabharata* (an excerpt of which opens the chapter) and the *Ramayana* were transmitted orally, which made them widely accessible in an era when few people could read. These poems communicated Vedic lessons through epic tales of heroism, romance, and adventure.

## RELIGIONS OF EAST AND SOUTH ASIA



For example, the quotation from the *Mahabharata* that opens this chapter instructs Arjuna to fulfill his caste duties without worrying about the fruits of his actions on Earth. The message sent to listeners was simple: Do not worry about meditating or practicing asceticism in a quest for eternal peace. Performing one's *dharma* should be the goal if one wants to end the birth/rebirth cycle.

**Gender Roles** The epic poems also taught lessons about gender roles. In the *Ramayana*, the female protagonist, Sita, follows her husband, Ram, dutifully as he is unfairly exiled to the forest for 14 years. Even during a long separation from her husband, Sita is an obedient and faithful wife. Sita's unselfishness and devotion provided a model for how wives should subordinate themselves to their husbands. Inequality in gender relations, while common in religions throughout the Classical period, remained a prominent feature of India's social history even in the Modern Era. For example, only men could become monks; women typically did not get educated.

The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* remain widely read among Hindus today. They are still part of India's cultural fabric.

## Mauryan Empire

Of all the continuities in Indian history, spirituality and social organization stand out the most. Strong political centralization does not. Rarely has the entire region of South Asia been unified under one government.

For example, Persian armies invaded the Indus Valley from the west and made it part of their empire about 520 B.C.E. Almost 200 years later, the Greek ruler Alexander the Great defeated the Persians and took over their empire. In 327 B.C.E., he led his army into the Indus Valley and added it to his conquests. Alexander left India two years later, after his troops mutinied.



Source: Thinkstock

Hinduism includes many religious rituals performed by priests leading a community of people (above). In contrast, Buddhism focuses more on individual reflection (below).



Source: Thinkstock

However, two dynasties did manage to wield centralized authority over most of the subcontinent at times: the Mauryans and the Guptas.

The *Mauryan Dynasty* emerged in the fourth century B.C.E. The kingdom of Magadha had grown in prominence, for there were no other comparable competitors in Northern India. Then, under a conqueror named *Chandragupta Maurya*, the kingdom began consolidating and seizing control of additional territory. At its height, during the third century B.C.E., the Mauryan Empire established a centralized government throughout most of the subcontinent. With the exception of the land south of the *Deccan Plateau* (in central India), all of India and modern-day Pakistan was under Mauryan control.

**Mauryan Government** The Mauryan Empire was divided into segments called *provinces*. Each province had a capital city and was ruled by a prince who governed as representative of the emperor. Each prince was assisted by a *council of ministers*, while another council advised the emperor.



The provinces were divided into *districts* governed by a minister. Each minister was in charge of the district's bureaucrats, whose jobs ranged from maintaining public health to regulating trade. These local officials were usually hired from among the people of each district.

The army kept peace in the empire, and a large spy system kept the government informed of any unrest that was brewing. The high costs of Mauryan government were paid for by heavy taxes on landowners and the value of the crops that farmers raised.

**Ashoka Maurya** Chandragupta's grandson is undoubtedly the most celebrated of all Mauryan rulers. In the beginning of his career, *Ashoka Maurya*, who ruled 268–232 B.C.E. and is often called *Ashoka the Great*, was a ferocious warrior. He brought large regions of east-central India under Mauryan control. His attack on the eastern Indian kingdom of *Kalinga* was especially brutal, with as many as 100,000 people killed on each side.

As Ashoka gained dominion over this and other lands, the military experiences he had affected him spiritually. The destructive battles against Kalinga prompted him to reconsider his responsibility for causing so many deaths. After that campaign, he converted to Buddhism and ended his violent ways. Ashoka became a strong advocate for Buddhism, building monasteries and sending missionaries to far-flung regions of the empire, even to neighboring kingdoms such as *Ceylon* (modern-day Sri Lanka) and *Bactria* (a kingdom west of the Indus River established by Alexander the Great's Greek descendants). Ashoka's support of Buddhism encouraged his subjects to convert, another factor for Buddhism's surge in popularity.

**Ashoka's Achievements** Ashoka became well known after this point as an effective governor, instead of as a conqueror. He established an efficient tax-collecting system, which provided a steady revenue stream for the government based in the capital city *Pataliputra* (today known as Patna), near the *Ganges River*. The tax revenue allowed the government to build roads that connected commercial centers, which encouraged trade and travel within the vast empire. One long road connected cities in the northeast with cities in the northwest. Ashoka also ended slavery and required that servants be treated fairly.

One of Ashoka's most famous actions was to inscribe his administration's policies and philosophies on rocks and pillars throughout the kingdom. Like Hammurabi's Code, the *Rock and Pillar Edicts* kept the public informed of the law. This united the empire under a central power.

Instead of making war on neighboring regions, Ashoka promoted peace through diplomacy by sending out ambassadors and Buddhist missionaries. Some of his ambassadors travelled as far as Greece and Egypt. One result of Ashoka's foreign policy was an increase in foreign trade. Taxes on trade within the empire provided additional income for the government.

**Decline of the Mauryan Dynasty** Despite Ashoka's accomplishments, the Mauryan Dynasty fell apart about 50 years after his death in 232 B.C.E. No Mauryan leader that followed showed the same talent for governance nor

the ability to control an expanding government. Over time, the army became ineffective and government officials became idle. In this power vacuum, two invading empires from the northwest briefly attempted to rule the subcontinent: first Bactria and then the *Kushan Empire* ruled from around 180 B.C.E. to 180 C.E. Both the Bactrian and the Kushan empires stretched from Central Asia into northern India.

**Trade in Goods and Ideas** Despite the invasions and foreign control, India became an important trading crossroads during this period. Silk and other goods from China passed overland through northern India to the Mediterranean Sea. Indian merchants obtained spices and gemstones from kingdoms in Southeast Asia. They traded these items, plus Indian textiles and other merchandise, with the Romans and other peoples along the Mediterranean Sea.

In addition to overland routes, goods were carried in ships from ports along India's west coast to ports on the Red Sea and along the Persian Gulf. From there, traders went overland to Egypt or to the Mediterranean Sea. These *Indian Ocean sea lanes* also connected Indian ports with East Africa and Indonesia. Mauryans even had regular trading relations with the Romans.

Conquest and trade brought new cultures and ideas into India. For example, Indian art styles were influenced by Greek and Roman art. The statues called *Gandhara Buddhas* uniquely combined Greek and Roman artistic traditions with native Indian art.

## Gupta Dynasty

The second (and last) major Indian dynasty of the Classical Era was the *Gupta Dynasty*. Though the size of the empire was smaller than the Mauryans' had been, the Gupta Era, which began in the late third century C.E. and ended in 550 C.E., was a Golden Age for India. During the peak of the dynasty's power, trade increased with foreign merchants. Perhaps because their predecessors—the Kushans—had come from foreign lands to the west, the Gupta Dynasty had extensive contact with European merchants as far west as Rome. India thus became an important destination on the *Silk Roads*. (See the map on page 135.)

**Governing the Empire** Like the Mauryan rulers, the Guptas divided their empire into provinces. In some cases, they kept former kings as provincial rulers. Other provinces were ruled by Gupta princes. All of these officials were responsible to the emperor in the Gupta capital city, Pataliputra. The city became the intellectual and cultural center of the empire.

**Scientific and Mathematics Achievements** Like the Mauryan ruler Ashoka, the Guptas helped improve health care in their empire. They built free hospitals and encouraged advances in medicine. Indian physicians pioneered surgical procedures to set broken bones and transplant skin grafts. They performed the first *inoculations*—infecting a person with a mild form of a disease so that immunity would develop. Doctors in Southwest Asia and Europe eventually adopted these and other Indian medical practices.

Other Indian advances shaped the modern world. For example, Indian mathematicians developed the numerical symbols 0 through 9 that we use today. They are called *Arabic numerals* rather than Indian because they were introduced into Europe by Arab peoples, who had learned about them through trade with India.

**Gupta Religion** As in other Classical cultures, religion was a dominant force. In India, it was particularly noticeable in education, art, and literature. Hindu children from upper castes studied the *Vedas* and other great works of literature in school. Entire universities were devoted to the study of specific subjects, including government, astronomy, math, art, painting, and architecture. One of the most ancient universities in the world was in *Nalanda*, located in northeastern India. In *Sarnath*, in north central India, Buddhist scholars established a university devoted entirely to the study of Buddhist teachings. With strong support from the Gupta government, painting, sculpture, and literature flourished.

While religion was important, unified practice of it was not. Both the Mauryan Empire and the Gupta Empire allowed religious freedom. With the Guptas' support, Hinduism spread to become India's major religion, which it remains today.

**Spread of Buddhism** Contacts increased with China, not only because of the Silk Roads trade, but but also because many Chinese were curious to learn about Buddhism. Monasticism had spread throughout South Asia, encouraging the intense study of the religion. Buddhist shrines became popular pilgrimage locations for the religion's followers. Chinese missionaries visited Buddhist sites as early as the fifth century C.E., thus paving the way for Buddhism to spread in China. Buddhism ended up gaining many more followers in East Asia and Southeast Asia than in South Asia.

**Decline of the Gupta Dynasty** Regionalism forms one of South Asia's historical continuities. As a result of the subcontinent's ethnic diversity and vast number of languages, any administrative power had to make deliberate efforts to unify the country. Though the Guptas presided over an economically



Source: Paul Trafford / Wikimedia Commons

Statues of Buddha are common, although Buddhists do not worship him as Christians worship Jesus.

vibrant dynasty, they were unable to organize a highly centralized bureaucracy. Unlike Ashoka Maurya, who traveled constantly within the empire to keep close watch over its affairs, the Gupta emperors took a hands-off approach to governing. This led to growing disunity among the far-flung regions of the empire.

Invasions by nomads from the northwest, the *White Huns*, brought the final downfall of the Gupta Dynasty. The Gupta Dynasty had begun to shrink by the end of the fifth century, when the White Huns conquered Northern India. By 500, these Huns had taken over western India, which destroyed the Gupta Empire's trade with Rome. Around 550 C.E., the Gupta Dynasty became the last of the great Eurasian empires of the first century C.E. to collapse. (Test Prep: Create a chart comparing the impact of the nomadic invasions of India with similar invasions of Rome and China. See page 84 for Rome and pages 242–245 for the Mongolian invasion of China.)

### Three Great Philosophical Traditions

While India was only rarely united by a centralized government, China often was. However, during the declining centuries of the Zhou, China suffered a period of instability. During this period, most Chinese followed a simple animistic belief in natural objects and forces and veneration of the souls of the dead. This animism was coupled with shamanism, in which a shaman, or spirit guide, mediated the connection between the everyday world and the spirit world. Over time, however, three significant new schools of thought evolved: Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism.

**Confucius** The philosopher K'ung Fu-tzu, known today as *Confucius*, was born around 551 B.C.E., while the Zhou dynasty was in decline. Historians have sorted through the many stories about his early life and have reached the following conclusions. Confucius was probably born into poverty. He might have had a number of different jobs as part of the Chinese bureaucracy, all the while developing his own thoughts about the individual's relationship to the state. A falling-out with local powers in his home state led Confucius to travel across China, speaking to people and gaining disciples as he went.

The ideas of Confucius became the foundation of the belief system of *Confucianism*. After Confucius died, his disciples compiled his teachings, and probably added some of their own thoughts, in a complex work called the *Analects (Selected Sayings)*. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing the *Analects* with the Christian Bible. See page 82.)

**The Teachings of Confucius** During this very turbulent time in China's history, the ideas of Confucius appealed to many people because he argued for respecting social hierarchies and traditions. "Good government consists in the ruler being a ruler, the minister being a minister, the father being a father, and the son being a son." (*Lunyu* 12.11) He focused on behavior in everyday life, not on beliefs about any deity. For example, he taught the importance of family, respect for one's elders, and reverence for one's ancestors. He believed that conducting the proper rituals would lead to social harmony.

Confucius also believed in what is called the Golden Rule—“do unto others as you would have them do unto you”—a tenet important in many other moral and philosophical traditions, including Christianity and Judaism. Confucius preached humility and the importance of virtue, which he defined as treating others properly. He even applied this principle to China’s government and kings. The teachings of Confucius affected Chinese beliefs and values more than any other philosophy and continue to be important in twenty-first century China.

**Confucianism and the Family** Largely because of Confucianism, the family became the most important unit in Chinese society. The status of a man’s family, not his wealth or accomplishments, determined his place in society. A family typically included the mother and father, their sons and sons’ wives, and any unmarried daughters. All family members lived in the same house and shared household duties.

The father was the head of the household. The older he was, the more respect and authority he had. Fathers arranged the marriages of their children and grandchildren. Upper-class fathers also decided on their sons’ education and careers. This all fell under the concept of *filial piety*, which can be defined as the duty of family members to subordinate their needs and desires to those of the male head of the family, or its ruler.

Women had few rights and were not usually educated. They were expected to remain subservient to men and boys, regardless of age. Although mothers and mothers-in-law were greatly respected, married daughters tended to be treated like servants in the husband’s households.

**Daoism** *Daoism* (also spelled Taoism) dates back to the late 500s B.C.E., at the time of the Zhou Dynasty. The origins of Daoism are shrouded in mystery, but its founder is usually said to be *Laozi*, also called the Old Master. As happened with Confucius, Laozi had many disciples who collected his teachings. The followers gathered the Old Master’s ideas together in the *Dao De Jing* (*The Classic Way and the Virtue*).

In Daoism, followers seek happiness and wisdom by way of the path, or *dao*. To follow the *dao* is to renounce worldly ambitions and society and instead to seek harmony with nature. A key symbol of Daoist philosophy is the Yin and Yang, in which two sides come together in harmony: the Yin, or humanity’s submissive and “feminine” side, and the Yang, or humanity’s aggressive and “masculine” side. The goal, as understood in Daoism, is to keep the two sides in balance. Daoism appealed to China’s peasants because of their connection to natural forces and the land. These ideas had wide influence in China. Medical doctors focused on restoring the natural balance among the forces in a person’s body. Poets wrote about nature and human involvement with it. Scholars tried to understand the natural properties of metals and how one might be transformed into another. Architects attempted to create structures that integrated well with their natural surroundings.

Comparing Daoism and Greek Mythology			
Topic	Taoism Only	Both Taoism and Greek Mythology	Greek Mythology Only
Nature of Deities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent abstract ideas</li> <li>• Are benevolent</li> <li>• Are detached from human affairs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pantheon of separate deities that oversee every aspect of society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have human characteristics</li> <li>• Can be petty, jealous, and vengeful</li> <li>• Can intervene in human affairs</li> </ul>
Hierarchy among Deities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Great High God has abstract deities above him</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One head deity who rules over other gods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The head deity, Zeus, has no deities above him</li> </ul>
Relationship Between People and Deities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People can become deities</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deities can procreate with humans, producing demigods</li> </ul>
Common Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inner peace</li> <li>• Balance between opposites (yin/yang)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War and love</li> <li>• Heroic action</li> </ul>
Afterlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A state of non-being</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tangible place, Hades</li> </ul>

**Legalism** Creating a sharp contrast to Confucianism and Daoism was the third philosophical tradition of China's Classical period, Legalism. As the name suggests, the philosophy of Legalism was less concerned with questions of the meaning of life, and more with how people behaved. Since human nature was understood to be essentially bad, Legalists believed that society needed a system of strict laws and punishments to control people. Because most citizens, according to Legalism, should live their lives as either farmers or soldiers, education was not considered to be especially necessary. Legalists argued that society should discourage people from becoming teachers, merchants, poets, or artists. Another tenet of legalism was collective responsibility of a family or community for every member. One should observe one's relatives and neighbors and turn them into authorities if they break the law.

Legalism was led by two philosophers, *Han Fei Zu* and *Li Si*. Their ideas struck a chord with many people during the often-violent Qin Dynasty (see below). However, after that dynasty ended and the following dynasty brought greater stability, Legalism faded. It failed to have the long-term impact of either Confucianism or Daoism.

## The Qin Dynasty in China

The instability of the Zhou ended when, in 221 B.C.E., an ambitious leader named Qin Shihuangdi raised his own army and defeated what remained of the Zhou leaders. One by one, he also conquered the nearby regional authorities,

taking control of all of China and establishing his own dynasty. The Qin (or Ch'in) dynasty was brief, lasting only until 207 B.C.E., but memorable—in part due to the cruelty of its leader.

Not content to just be king, the title claimed by Qin, *Shihuangdi*, means “first emperor.” He created a very centralized state with all of the government under his personal control. In particular, he abolished local laws and appointed magistrates to replace local leaders. Books that were not in keeping with Qin’s own beliefs were burned, and hundreds of scholars were buried alive. Anyone who resisted his authority could be executed or sent into exile. Many dissenters were sent north, to work on building a network of walls to keep out invaders—workers who died while building these walls were buried within the walls themselves. Hundreds of thousands of people were conscripted to construct the northern walls and to toil on other infrastructure projects. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph connecting the Qin walls with the Great Wall of China. See pages 181 and 373.)

**Achievements of Qin Dynasty** Despite his despotism, Qin did much to change China in ways that won him praise.

- He expanded the size of the Chinese empire, mostly to the south and the west.
- He gave peasants the right to own land.
- He standardized the Chinese script, which had developed many local variations during the Shang dynasty, thereby making communication and trade easier.
- He standardized coinage as well as weights and measures. These steps greatly aided commerce.
- He ordered the building of canals and roads, which improved trade.

Qin’s most remarkable legacy was not discovered until 1974 when his tomb was unearthed. Inside Qin’s tomb, which had gone untouched for 2000 years, were more than 7,000 life-sized soldiers made out of terra-cotta—an army for the afterlife. Each soldier was unique, demonstrating a level of realism that had not been seen in Chinese art to this point. (Test Prep: List the differences and similarities between Qin’s royal burial with the burial of the pharaohs of Egypt. See page 27.)

In 210 B.C.E., Qin died, and his son took the throne. However, four years later, in 206 B.C.E., a Qin general led a revolt. The rebels killed the emperor and the entire royal family, and the rebel general seized power. He and his family began the *Han Dynasty*, which lasted for more than 400 years.

## The Han Dynasty

*Han Wudi* (who ruled 141–87 B.C.E.) was the Han Dynasty’s most significant emperor. He oversaw a vast expansion of the empire, as China invaded and took over Korea and northern Vietnam. Wudi also sent Chinese forces into Central Asia, almost all the way west to Bactria, to defeat the nomadic *Xiongnu*



Source: Shutterstock



Source: LACMA

While Confucians honor early generations by keeping ancestor tablets in their homes (left), Daoists honor nature through painting (right).

peoples, who had been raiding Chinese villages for years. To maintain control of the new western lands, Wudi relocated landless Chinese farmers into Central Asia to establish agricultural colonies.

**Central Government** Meanwhile, at home, Wudi expanded the efficient, centralized government started by the Qin. One of his most important accomplishments was the introduction of a *civil service examination*. Under this system, people were hired based on their test-taking abilities instead of their personal or family connections. Because at first not many young men were qualified for government positions, Wudi created a national university to prepare them for employment. The combination of the exams and the university began China's tradition of having a well-trained and highly respected bureaucracy to administer government policies. As a result, China prospered for many years.



Wudi's rule—and the period immediately following—is sometimes referred to as the *Pax Sinica*, Chinese Peace. During this period, the country enjoyed peace, the economy grew, and the population increased. As the common people prospered, so did the rich, who created a thriving market for luxury goods.

**Silk Roads Trade** Traders moved Chinese products west along a series of routes that became known as the *Silk Roads*. This trade brought China into contact with the Roman Empire. The Silk Roads would also eventually bring Buddhism into China from Central Asia.

Silk production increased greatly during Emperor Wudi's rule. Because Chinese silk was of such high quality, silk and silk garments could be sold as far away as the Roman Empire, Mesopotamia, Persia, and India.

**Paper, Calendar, and Farming** Chinese science and technology prospered under Han rule. The Chinese invented paper around 100 C.E. and calculated the current calendar year of 365.25 days. Improvements to the iron plow and developing a yoke that did not put pressure on an animal's windpipe made farming more productive.

**Capital Cities** The city of *Chang'an* was the capital of the Han Empire as well as its cultural center. Surrounded by a wall, the city had parks, many homes, and some palaces. Chang'an served as the eastern end of the Silk Roads. Many of its residents were bureaucrats and people who served bureaucrats. Later in the Han dynasty, because of civil unrest in Chang'an, the capital city was moved to Luoyang in eastern China.

**Disease, Inequality, and Unrest** The Pax Sinica did not last. One problem for the late Han dynasty was the spread of diseases, which came to China along the Silk Roads with the movement of traders and other migrants. Smallpox, measles, and bubonic plague were the most destructive of these epidemic diseases, which reduced the population of China by as much as one-fourth. (Test Prep: Create a Venn Diagram based on the impact of epidemic diseases in the Han and Roman Empires. See pages 83–84.)

Another problem was economic. Many small farmers had to give up their lands to large landowners to satisfy their debts. Inequality increased as a small number of landholders came to own more and more of the land. One non-Han emperor, Wang Mang (who ruled 9–23 C.E.), attempted to redistribute land from large landowners to landless peasants. However, this land reform was not well received, creating more unrest and leading to his replacement by a member of the Han family. In 126 C.E., peasants began what became a series of revolts, which further weakened Han rule.

Subsequent Han emperors also failed to address the land distribution problem and the associated famines. This inspired more peasant uprisings, most notably the *Yellow Turban Rebellion*—so named because of the scarves worn by the peasants involved. The death toll probably reached several million, making it one of the bloodiest conflicts in the world before the 1900s. The dynasty came to an end when the emperor was overthrown in 220 C.E. and China was divided into three kingdoms.

## India and China Trade

While the Himalayas separated the centers of civilization in South and East Asia, the eastern Indian Ocean and the South China Sea connected them. These routes were part of a vast trading network linking most of Afro-Eurasia. Sailors in Indian Ocean made several technological advances that facilitated trade. The astrolabe and improvements to the compass allowed sailors to navigate more precisely. The sternpost rudder enabled them to control the direction of a ship more accurately. Determining monsoon patterns helped them to plan their trips more safely and use winds more effectively. This network would make possible the spread of religion, technology, and goods to shape the next period in human history.

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WHY DID SO MANY BELIEF SYSTEMS DEVELOP IN ONE PERIOD?

The years from 800 B.C.E. to 200 B.C.E. were a fertile time for new religions and ways of thought. Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Jainism, Greek philosophy, and Jewish monotheism all emerge from this period. Historians have debated how to explain the rise of so many systems of belief and thought in a 600-year period. In a 1949 book, German philosopher Karl Jaspers called these years the “axial age” because they formed the foundation for later thought in several major civilizations. Jaspers noted most of these systems developed on their own—they were not all offshoots of one development in one place. They all emerged in small states, often in the period when one great empire was declining and a new elite was arising. In 2006, Karen Armstrong, a British author who has written several widely read books on religion, published *The Great Transformation*. She expanded on the idea of an axial age, arguing that the violence and suffering of the times spurred people to be more reflective, which led to new systems of thinking.

Another British scholar, Diarmaid McCulloch, called the idea of an axial age “an optical illusion.” He suggested that people became no more reflective at a certain time in history, but that humans’ ability to write had developed to the point that they could write down their thoughts.

Others have suggested that any clustering of new belief systems in this period is insignificant. Several of the world’s most influential religions developed outside of this period. Two major traditions, Hinduism and Judaism, came earlier. Three others, Sikhism and the two largest faiths in the world, Christianity and Islam, came later. In addition, several new faiths have arisen in the last two centuries, including Baha’ism in the Middle East and Falon Gong in China.

## KEY TERMS BY THEME

### STATE-BUILDING

provinces  
council of ministers  
districts  
Ashoka Maurya  
Kalinga  
Ceylon  
Bactria  
Pataliputra  
Ganges River  
Rock and Pillar Edicts  
Kushan Empire  
Gupta Dynasty  
Mauryan Dynasty  
Chandragupta Maurya  
White Huns  
Han Dynasty  
Pax Sinica  
Shihuangdi  
Xiongnu  
civil service  
    examination  
Yellow Turban  
    Rebellion

### CULTURE

Vedas *Upanishads*  
Brahma  
dharma  
karma  
Mahavir Jain  
Jainism  
Buddhism  
ahimsa  
Siddhartha Gautama  
ascetic  
enlightenment  
Four Noble Truths  
*Bhagavad Gita*  
*Mahabharata*  
nirvana  
reincarnation  
monasteries  
*Ramayana*  
Gandhara Buddhas  
inoculations  
Arabic numerals  
Nalanda  
Sarnath

Confucius  
Confucianism  
Daoism  
Dao De Jing  
dao

### SOCIAL STRUCTURE

caste system  
varna  
brahmins  
kshatriyas  
vaishyas  
shudras  
untouchables  
dalits  
jatis

### GEOGRAPHY

Deccan Plateau

### ECONOMICS

Indian Ocean sea lanes  
Silk Roads

## Early American Civilizations

*It was from within the places called Paxil and Cayala that the yellow ears of ripe maize and the white ears of ripe maize come from. . . . Thus was found the food that would become the flesh of the newly framed and shaped people.*

Popol Vuh, "The Discovery of Maize"

The early centers of civilization in the Americas, in the Andes Mountains and in *Mesoamerica*, produced several great civilizations. Two of the most significant ones in the Andes were the *Chavin* and later the *Moche*. In Mesoamerica, the *Olmecs* were a foundational civilization that heavily influenced two later groups, the *Mayan* and *Aztec* civilizations.

### The Moche

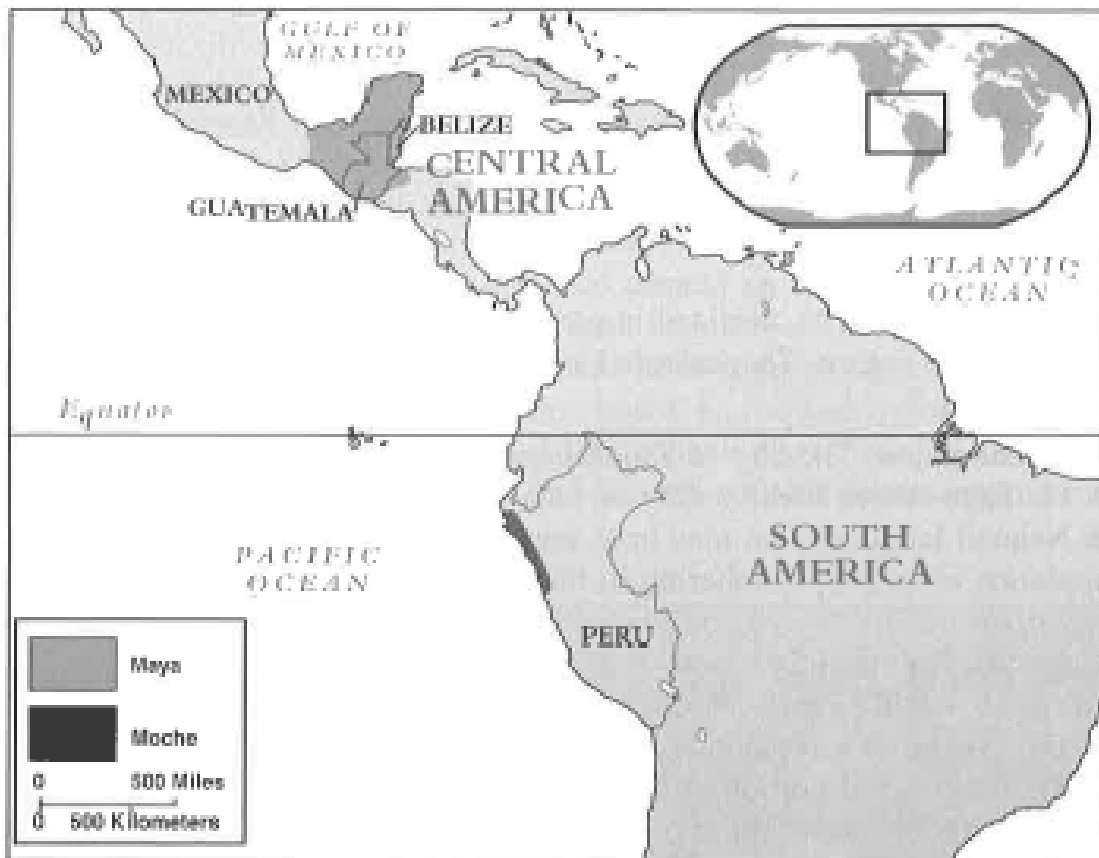
After the Chavin, described in Chapter 2 the next major civilization to develop in the Andes was the Moche, which arose around 200 B.C.E. and lasted until 700 C.E. Developing in the Moche and Chicham river valleys in what is today northern Peru, the Moche expanded outward into the valleys through both population increase and conquest.

**Architecture** Moche rulers supervised the building of a number of monumental structures centered around two temples. One was the *Huaca del Sol* (Temple of the Sun), a stepped pyramid. The other was the *Huaca de la Lana* (Temple of the Moon), a terraced platform. Both were made out of unfired adobe bricks. The Moche built a fortified city around these two temples. To assist in agriculture, the Moche built extensive irrigation networks, bringing water from rivers to fields via ditches. This was necessary since the civilization experienced fluctuations in rainfall from year to year. (Test Prep: Create a table that compares Moche architecture and agriculture with developments in Egypt. See page 23.)

**Economy and Trade** The Moche grew a variety of crops, including corn and beans, often in irrigated fields. Among the animals they kept were llamas. Llamas provided transport up and down the steep mountains, fibers to produce textiles, and dung to fertilize crops.

As in Mesopotamia and other places where agriculture developed, an agricultural surplus in most years allowed the culture to develop an artisan class. Artifacts created by the Moche included ceramic water jars, which

## MAYA AND MOCHE CIVILIZATIONS, 200 B.C.E. TO 900 C.E.



were painted with images of rulers, slaves, warriors, priests, healers, gods, plants, and animals. Moche artisans also made beautiful jewelry and other objects from gold, silver, and copper. Their textiles were made from the wool of the alpaca and vicuña and from cotton.

Trade was mostly local, between Moche communities. Without large boats or wheeled vehicles, long-distance trade would have been difficult.

**Society and Religion** The complex Moche social structure was organized around *ayllus*, which were small communities based on the idea of communal work. Members of an *ayllu* believed they all shared the same mythical ancestor. This meant that even people who were biologically unrelated could still be considered part of the extended family of the *ayllu* through this shared ancestor. When a woman married, she would join her husband's *ayllu*, while still maintaining membership in her own. Like many people in cultures around the world in this era, the Moche venerated their ancestors.

Like the Maya in Mesoamerica (see following pages) and other early cultures, the Moche had important ceremonial centers where they conducted religious rituals. Some of the Moche rituals included human sacrifice at times. And like other early cultures, religion and government were closely linked. Like the Greeks, they believed in many gods, gods who often acted with the same emotions and passions as humans, but at times with greater powers.

**Disappearance of the Moche** Strong social cohesion kept the Moche civilization vibrant for nine centuries. However, it eventually vanished as a distinctive culture, perhaps because of climate changes—the region experienced



30 years of unusually heavy rains followed by 30 years of drought. These weather events might have seriously weakened the Moche civilization because Moche leaders gained some of their authority by claiming to be able to predict the weather. Whatever the cause, scholars believe that Moche civilization probably ended in violence and civil war.

## Mesoamerica

The Olmec civilization declined in power, but it left a strong legacy on later cultures in the region. They adopted aspects of the Olmec language, religion, and economy.

**Teotihuacan** The city of *Teotihuacan* was founded around 150 B.C.E. not far from where Mexico City is today. Its name comes from a word in the Nahuatl language that may have meant “birthplace of the gods.” With a population eventually numbering in the hundreds of thousands, Teotihuacan grew to be not only the largest city in the Western Hemisphere, but one of the largest cities in the entire world of its time. The city’s orderly growth—it was laid out in a grid pattern and had multistory apartment buildings—suggests that the expansion was planned and regulated by a strong government.

The ceremonial portion of the city featured many important monuments, including the Pyramid of the Sun, the Pyramid of the Moon, and the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, named for a prominent god who was portrayed as a feathered serpent. A long road called the Avenue of the Dead connected these monuments. Priests and nobles, who were at the top of the social hierarchy, lived in extravagant homes. Peasants and artisans, who occupied the lower rungs of the social structure, dwelt in apartments within multiunit dwellings. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing Teotihuacan with another city with orderly growth, read about Mohenjo-Daro on page 30.)

The city itself was surrounded by fields, which supported intensive agriculture; many of Teotihuacan’s people were farmers and peasants, although there was also considerable regional trade. One of the city’s main exports was *obsidian* (hard glass rock) deposits that were found in the area. Teotihuacan also thrived because of its many artisan workshops. Artisans tanned animal hides into leather and made pottery, obsidian tools, and weapons.

**Decline** Teotihuacan reached its peak around 500 C.E. and then began to decline, for reasons historians have not agreed upon. Sometime between 600 and 650 C.E., a large fire burned much of the city. Some of Teotihuacan’s people settled in the Mayan lowlands and may have been incorporated into the Mayan civilization.

## The Mayans

Around 1500 B.C., the Mayan people began to establish small settlements. Over time, the villages grew as the Mayans developed an advanced civilization. Mayan civilization reached its height between 250 and 900 C.E. That is sometimes called its *Classic Period*. At its peak, as many as 2 million Mayans

populated the region. They stretched over the southern part of Mexico in much of what is now Belize, Honduras, and Guatemala. Most lived in or near one of the approximately 40 cities that ranged in size from 5,000 to 50,000 people.

**Agriculture** To provide for the large population of city dwellers, the Mayans practiced what is called *slash-and-burn agriculture*. They created fields by cutting down trees and plants in a patch of forest and then burning them. The resulting ashes fertilized the soil. The *Maya* also terraced fields to limit erosion of the land that they had cleared on hillsides. They drained swamps and built irrigation systems to water their crops. For meat, the Mayans hunted deer. Eventually, the Mayans would learn to raise deer.

The Mayans' chief crops were corn, beans, and squash, referred to as the Three Sisters. Since the Mayans lacked draft animals, they seeded and harvested by hand. It was men's work to seed and harvest, while women prepared food and, if needed, raised deer.



Source: Thinkstock

Mayan pyramids, with steps going up the side, were similar to Mesopotamian ziggurats. Similarly shaped architecture can be found from Spain and Algeria to China and Indonesia.

**Cities** The Mayans, using only stone tools, cut and shaped limestone blocks to build religious centers. By 200 C.E., these centers grew into cities with temples, palaces, and plazas for public gatherings. The most important temples were located on top of pyramids, to be closer to the heavens. The pyramids were up to 200 feet high—as tall as a 20-story building. They also served as observatories for Mayan astronomers.

**Mayan Government** The main form of Mayan government was the *city-state*, each one ruled by a king and consisting of a city and its surrounding territory. Most rulers were men. However, when no male heir was available or old enough to govern, Mayan women ruled. Wars between city-states were common, and sometimes the winner absorbed the loser. However, people rarely fought to control territory. More often they fought to gain *tribute*—payments from the conquered to the conqueror—and captives to be used as human sacrifices during religious ceremonies.



Each Mayan king claimed to be descended from a god. The Mayans believed that when the king died, he would become one with his ancestor-god. The king directed the activities of the elite scribes and priests who administered the affairs of the state. Royal rule usually passed from father to son, but kings who lost the support of the people were sometimes overthrown. The common people were required to pay taxes, usually in the form of crops, and to provide labor to the government. City-states had no standing armies, so when war erupted, governments required citizens to provide military service. No central government ruled all Mayan lands, although often one city-state was the strongest in a region and would dominate its neighbors.

**Mayan Religion** The Mayans worshiped many deities. Among the most important were those of the sun, rain, and corn. Priests held great power in Mayan society, a sign that religion had a major role in Mayan life. Women could be priests, and at least one god (the goddess of the Moon) was female. Priests led religious ceremonies and festivals at regular times based on the Mayan calendar. They made offerings to the deities so that prayers might be answered. As mentioned above, these offerings sometimes involved human sacrifice. War captives were killed in temple ceremonies as offerings to the gods.

The Mayans participated in a ball game—with features similar to today’s basketball and soccer—as part of the religious ritual. Players used their feet, hips, and legs, but not their hands, to move a ball through a hoop. Losers may have been sacrificed to the gods. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph tracing connections between the Olmec and Mayan religions and sports. See pages 38–39.)

**Science and Culture** The Mayan people have sometimes been called the “Greeks of the New World” because of their cultural achievements. Mayan science and religion were closely linked. Priests studied the heavens and calendars to predict the future and to decide if a time was right for war.

Although they had no telescopes, the Mayans were among the best astronomers of early times. An observatory, the *Caracol*, located in the city of *Chichén Itzá*, was built around 1000 C.E. Priests predicted eclipses of the sun and calculated the phases of the moon accurately. Indeed, their understanding of mathematics and astronomy, especially their observations of Venus from the *Caracol*, enabled Mayan priests to design a calendar more accurate than one used in Europe at the time. The Mayans’ advanced study of mathematics included the concept of zero and calculations that totaled in the hundreds of millions.

The Mayans also had the most advanced writing system of all the early American civilizations. Their writing used pictures and symbols akin to the *hieroglyphics* of the Egyptians, but with more than 850 different characters. The symbols were carved into a type of paper made from tree bark, which was sometimes bound together into books.

They decorated buildings, clay pots, and monuments with their history and other messages. Public buildings often had carved stone reliefs. The Mayans carved wood, although little of it has survived, and jade, when they could get it. Since the Mayans lacked metal tools, they carved using flint. In addition to carvings, the Mayans created vivid paintings on walls, as well as on pottery used as grave offerings.

<b>Early Writing Systems</b>				
<b>Culture</b>	<b>Time Developed</b>	<b>What Symbols Represent</b>	<b>Approximate Number of Symbols</b>	<b>Direction of Reading Symbols</b>
<b>Sumeria (cuneiform)</b>	c. 3500 B.C.E.	<b>Pictures</b>	1,500	Originally top to bottom, but changed to left to right
<b>Egypt (hieroglyphics)</b>	c. 3400 B.C.E.	Pictures and sounds	700	Varied from text to text
<b>China</b>	c. 1500 B.C.E.	<b>Pictures and words</b>	varied	<b>Right to left and top to bottom</b>
<b>Phoenecia (alphabet)</b>	c. 1500 B.C.E.	Sounds	22	<b>Right to left</b>
<b>Maya</b>	c. 250 B.C.E.	Pictures and words	<b>850</b>	Left to right in 2-symbol columns

**Decline of Mayan Cities** Around 900 C.E., a variety of related changes came together to cause rapid changes in Mayan culture. Population growth had made cities crowded. The destruction of forests caused environmental damage. Stresses between cities led to increasing wars. The climate shifted, which resulted in many years of drought. The combination of these changes made living in cities difficult, and the urban population began to decline rapidly. Mayans began to abandon their cities and resume a rural life. The descendants of this culture still live in the region today, and more than 7 million people speak a variety of Mayan languages. Their religion combines two traditions: Mayan beliefs and Roman Catholicism. (Test Prop: Write an outline comparing the early Mayans with their descendants. See page 262.)

<b>Environmental Problems Facing the Mayans and Romans</b>		
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Mayans</b>	<b>Romans</b>
<b>Wetlands</b>	Desertification reduced wetland areas	Wetlands spread
<b>Forests</b>	Biodiversity of forests reduced	Overuse of trees for manufacturing
<b>Soil</b>	Silt clogged rivers	Soil became poor from excessive farming
<b>Weather</b>	Prolonged droughts	
<b>Crop Production</b>	Crop output decreased	Crop failures
<b>Grazing</b>	Did not graze animals significantly	Overgrazing of domesticated animals

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WERE THE MAYANS VIOLENT?

After the Mayans began moving out of cities around 900 C.E., the surrounding jungle quickly reclaimed the area. So when Spaniards began exploring southern Mexico and central America in the 1500s and 1600s, the great buildings and pyramids had been swallowed up by plants. The Spaniards heard stories about great ruins in the jungles, but not until the 1800s did scholars begin to uncover and study them. For example, the greatest known Mayan site, at Tikal, was unknown to people from outside the region until 1848.

As scholars began to uncover Mayan sites, they struggled to decipher the Mayan writing system. The first breaks came as they understood numbers and references to stars and planets. Hence, the first interpretations of Mayan culture focused on their great achievements in math, astronomy, and art. In addition, as more and more buildings and carvings were uncovered, people focused on the Mayans' achievements in art. The publication of *A Study of Mayan Art* by Herbert Spinden in 1913 brought wider public attention to all that the Mayan had accomplished.

During the mid-1900s, archeologists began to fill in their interpretation of what they saw. The great interpreter of Mayan culture during this period was a British archeologist, Eric Thompson. His 1954 book, *Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization*, portrayed a fairly peaceful and successful culture.

However, as linguists slowly made headway into deciphering more and more Mayan writing, the interpretation of Mayan culture changed. Instead of reading about only astronomical observations, scholars began to read about wars between cities, deadly struggles for political power, and sacrifices for religious purposes. In 1986, Linda Schele and Mary Miller organized an art exhibit, "The Blood of Kings: A New Interpretation of Maya Art." The Mayan, once viewed as so peaceful, were now understood to have a strain of violence in their culture as well.

Then, in 2006, the release of a Hollywood movie, *Apocalypto*, carried this understanding to a wildly inaccurate extreme. The Mayan were portrayed as bloodthirsty, evil savages enthralled with torture and mass executions. This unhistorical depiction led scholars of the Mayan to speak out in an effort to correct the public perception. If the Mayan were not as peaceful as scholars once thought they were, they were not as brutal as the people portrayed in the movie.