EARLY WORLD CIVILIZATIONS

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Licensing

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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1.1: Splitting History

Learning Objectives

- Analyze the complications inherent to splitting history for the purpose of academic study

Key Points

- The question of what kind of inquiries historians pose, what knowledge they seek, and how they interpret the evidence that they find remains controversial. Historians draw conclusions from the past approaches to history but in the end, they always write in the context of their own time, current dominant ideas of how to interpret the past, and even subjective viewpoints.
- All events that are remembered and preserved in some original form constitute the historical record. The task of historians is to identify the sources that can most usefully contribute to the production of accurate accounts of the past. These sources, known are primary sources or evidence, were produced at the time under study and constitute the foundation of historical inquiry.
- Periodization is the process of categorizing the past into discrete, quantified named blocks of time in order to facilitate the study and analysis of history. This results in descriptive abstractions that provide convenient terms for periods of time with relatively stable characteristics. All systems of periodization are arbitrary.
- The common general split between prehistory, ancient history, Middle Ages, modern history, and contemporary history is a Western division of the largest blocks of time agreed upon by Western historians. However, even within this largely accepted division the perspective of specific national developments and experiences often divides Western historians, as some periodizing labels will be applicable only to particular regions.
- The study of world history emerged as a distinct academic field in order to examine history from a global perspective rather than a solely national perspective of investigation. However, the field still struggles with an inherently Western periodization.
- World historians use a thematic approach to look for common patterns that emerge across all cultures. World history's periodization, as imperfect and biased as it is, serves as a way to organize and systematize knowledge.

Terms

periodization

The process or study of categorizing the past into discrete, quantified named blocks of time in order to facilitate the study and analysis of history. This results in descriptive abstractions that provide convenient terms for periods of time with relatively stable characteristics. However, determining the precise beginning and ending to any period is usually arbitrary.

primary sources

Original sources of information about a topic. In the study of history as an academic discipline, primary sources include artifact, document, diary, manuscript, autobiography, recording, or other source of information that was created at the time under study.

How Do We Write History?

The word *history* comes ultimately from Ancient Greek *historía*, meaning "inquiry," "knowledge from inquiry," or "judge." However, the question of what kind of inquiries historians pose, what knowledge they seek, and how they interpret the evidence that they find remains controversial. Historians
draw conclusions from past approaches to history, but in the end, they always write in the context of their own time, current dominant ideas of how to interpret the past, and even subjective viewpoints. Furthermore, current events and developments often trigger which past events, historical periods, or geographical regions are seen as critical and thus should be investigated. Finally, historical studies are designed to provide specific lessons for societies today. In the words of Benedetto Croce, Italian philosopher and historian, "All history is contemporary history."

All events that are remembered and preserved in some original form constitute the historical record. The task of historians is to identify the sources that can most usefully contribute to the production of accurate accounts of the past. These sources, known are primary sources or evidence, were produced at the time under study and constitute the foundation of historical inquiry. Ideally, a

historian will use as many available primary sources as can be accessed, but in practice, sources may have been destroyed or may not be available for research. In some cases, the only eyewitness reports of an event may be memoirs, autobiographies, or oral interviews taken years later. Sometimes, the only evidence relating to an event or person in the distant past was written or copied decades or centuries later. Historians remain cautious when working with evidence recorded years, or even decades or centuries, after an event; this kind of evidence poses the question of to what extent witnesses remember events accurately. However, historians also point out that hardly any historical evidence can be seen as objective, as it is always a product of particular individuals, times, and dominant ideas. This is also why researchers try to find as many records of an event under investigation as possible, and it is not unusual that they find evidence that may present contradictory accounts of the same events.

In general, the sources of historical knowledge can be separated into three categories: what is written, what is said, and what is physically preserved. Historians often consult all three.

Periodization

Periodization is the process of categorizing the past into discrete, quantified, named blocks of time in order to facilitate the study and analysis of history. This results in descriptive abstractions that provide convenient terms for periods of time with relatively stable characteristics.

To the extent that history is continuous and cannot be generalized, all systems of periodization are arbitrary. Moreover, determining the precise beginning and ending to any period is also a matter of arbitrary decisions. Eventually, periodizing labels are a reflection of very particular cultural and geographical perspectives, as well as specific subfields or themes of history (e.g., military history, social history, political history, intellectual history, cultural history, etc.).

Consequently, not only do periodizing blocks inevitably overlap, but they also often seemingly conflict with or contradict one another. Some have a cultural usage (the Gilded Age), others refer to prominent historical events (the inter-war years: 1918–1939), yet others are defined by decimal numbering systems (the 1960s, the 17th century). Other periods are named after influential individuals whose impact may or may not have reached beyond certain geographic regions (the Victorian Era, the Edwardian Era, the Napoleonic Era).

Western Historical Periods

The common general split between prehistory (before written history), ancient history, Middle Ages, modern history, and contemporary history (history within the living memory) is a Western division of the largest blocks of time agreed upon by Western historians and representing the Western point of view. For example, the history of Asia or Africa cannot be neatly categorized following these periods.

However, even within this largely accepted division, the perspective of specific national developments and experiences often divides Western historians, as some periodizing labels will be applicable only to particular regions.

This is especially true of labels derived from individuals or ruling dynasties, such as the Jacksonian Era in the United States, or the Merovingian Period in France. Cultural terms may also have a limited, even if larger, reach. For example, the concept of the Romantic period is largely meaningless outside of Europe and European-influenced cultures; even within those areas, different European regions may mark the beginning and the ending points of Romanticism differently. Likewise, the 1960s, although technically applicable to anywhere in the world according to Common Era numbering, has a certain set of specific cultural connotations in certain countries, including sexual revolution, counterculture, or youth rebellion. However, those never emerged in certain regions (e.g., in Spain under Francisco Franco's authoritarian regime). Some historians have also noted that the 1960s, as a descriptive historical period, actually began in the late 1950s and ended in the early 1970s, because the cultural and economic conditions that define the meaning of the period dominated longer than the actual decade of the 1960s.

Petrarch by Andrea del Castagno. Petrarch, Italian poet and thinker, conceived of the idea of a European “Dark Age,” which later evolved into the tripartite periodization of Western history into Ancient, Middle Ages and Modern.

While world history (also referred to as global history or transnational history) emerged as a distinct academic field of historical study in the 1980s in order to examine history from a global perspective rather than a solely national perspective of investigation, it still struggles with an inherently Western periodization. The common splits used when designing comprehensive college-level world history courses (and thus also used in history textbooks that are usually divided into volumes covering pre-modern and modern eras) are still a result of certain historical developments presented from the perspective of the Western world and particular national experiences. However, even the split between pre-modern and modern eras is problematic because it is complicated by the question of how history educators, textbook authors, and publishers decide to categorize what is known as the early modern era, which is traditionally a period between Renaissance and the end of the Age of Enlightenment. In the end, whether the early modern era is included in the first or the second part of a world history course frequently offered in U.S. colleges is a subjective decision of history educators. As a result, the same questions and choices apply to history textbooks written and published for the U.S. audience.

World historians use a thematic approach to identify common patterns that emerge across all cultures, with two major focal points: integration (how processes of world history have drawn people of the world together) and difference (how patterns of world history reveal the diversity of the human experiences). The periodization of world history, as imperfect and biased as it is, serves as a way to organize and systematize knowledge.
Without it, history would be nothing more than scattered events without a framework designed to help us understand the past.

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1.2: Dates and Calendars

Learning Objectives

- Compare and contrast different calendars and how they affect our understanding of history

Key Points

- The first recorded calendars date to the Bronze Age, including the Egyptian and Sumerian calendars. A larger number of calendar systems of the Ancient Near East became accessible in the Iron Age and were based on the Babylonian calendar. A great number of Hellenic calendars also developed in Classical Greece and influenced calendars outside of the immediate sphere of Greek influence, giving rise to the various Hindu calendars, as well as to the ancient Roman calendar.
- Despite various calendars used across millennia, cultures, and geographical regions, Western historical scholarship has unified the standards of determining dates based on the dominant Gregorian calendar.
- Julius Caesar effected drastic changes in the existing timekeeping system. The New Year in 709 AUC began on January first and ran over 365 days until December 31. Further adjustments were made under Augustus, who introduced the concept of the leap year in 737 AUC (4 CE). The resultant Julian calendar remained in almost universal use in Europe until 1582.
- The Gregorian calendar, also called the Western calendar and the Christian calendar, is internationally the most widely used civil calendar today. It is named after Pope Gregory XIII, who introduced it in October, 1582. The calendar was a refinement to the Julian calendar, amounting to a 0.002% correction in the length of the year.
- While the European Gregorian calendar eventually dominated the world and historiography, a number of other calendars have shaped timekeeping systems that are still influential in some regions of the world. These include the Islamic calendar, various Hindu calendars, and the Mayan calendar.
- A calendar era that is often used as an alternative naming of the long-accepted *anno Domini*/before Christ system is Common Era or Current Era, abbreviated CE. While both systems are an accepted standard, the Common Era system is more neutral and inclusive of a non-Christian perspective.

Terms

Mayan calendar

A system of calendars used in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, and in many modern communities in the Guatemalan highlands, Veracruz, Oaxaca and Chiapas, Mexico. The essentials of it are based upon a system that was in common use throughout the region, dating back to at least the fifth century BCE. It shares many aspects with calendars employed by other earlier Mesoamerican civilizations, such as the Zapotec and Olmec, and with contemporary or later calendars, such as the Mixtec and Aztec calendars.

anno Domini

The Medieval Latin term, which means *in the year of the Lord* but is often translated as *in the year of our Lord*. Dionysius Exiguus, of Scythia Minor, introduced the system based on this concept in 525, counting the years since the birth of Christ.

Calendars and Writing History

Methods of timekeeping can be reconstructed for the prehistoric period from at least the Neolithic period. The natural units for timekeeping used by most historical societies are the day, the solar year, and the lunation. The first recorded calendars date to the Bronze Age, and include the Egyptian and Sumerian calendars. A larger number of calendar systems of the Ancient Near East became accessible in the Iron Age and were based on the Babylonian calendar. One of these was calendar of the Persian Empire, which in turn gave rise to the Zoroastrian calendar, as well as the Hebrew calendar.

A great number of Hellenic calendars were developed in Classical Greece and influenced calendars outside of the immediate sphere of Greek influence. These gave rise to the various Hindu calendars, as well as to the ancient Roman calendar, which contained very ancient remnants of a pre-Etruscan ten-month solar year. The Roman calendar was reformed by Julius Caesar in 45 BCE. The Julian calendar was no longer dependent on the observation of the new moon, but simply followed an algorithm of introducing a

leap day every four years. This created a dissociation of the calendar month from the lunation. The Gregorian calendar was introduced as a refinement of the Julian calendar in 1582 and is today in worldwide use as the *de facto* calendar for secular purposes.

Despite various calendars used across millennia, cultures, and geographical regions, Western historical scholarship has unified the standards of determining dates based on the dominant Gregorian calendar. Regardless of what historical period or geographical areas Western historians investigate and write about, they adjust dates from the original timekeeping system to the Gregorian calendar. Occasionally, some historians decide to use both dates: the dates recorded under the original calendar used, and the date adjusted to the Gregorian calendar, easily recognizable to the Western student of history.

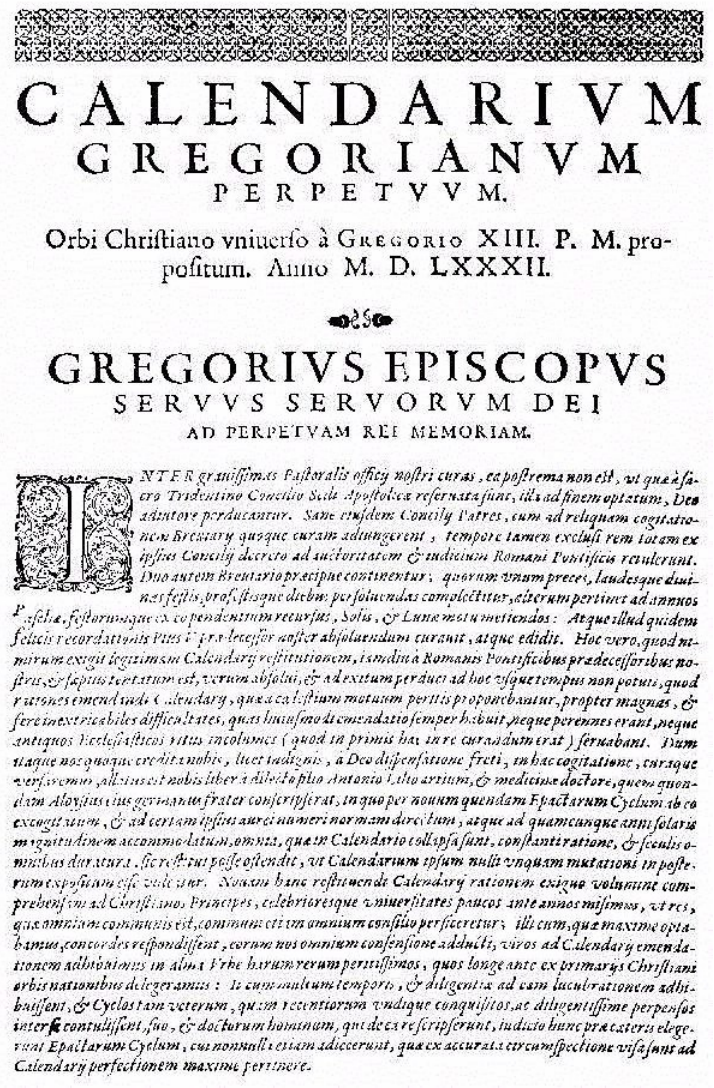
Julian Calendar

The old Roman year had 304 days divided into ten months, beginning with March. However, the ancient historian, Livy, gave credit to the second ancient Roman king, Numa Pompilious, for devising a calendar of twelve months. The extra months *Ianuarius* and *Februarius* had been invented, supposedly by Numa Pompilious, as stop-gaps. Julius Caesar realized that the system had become inoperable, so he effected drastic changes in the year of his third consulship. The New Year in 709 AUC (*ab urbe condita* —

year from the founding of the City of Rome) began on January first and ran over 365 days until December 31. Further adjustments were made under Augustus, who introduced the concept of the leap year in 737 AUC (4 CE). The resultant Julian calendar remained in almost universal use in Europe until 1582. Marcus Terentius Varro introduced the *Ab urbe condita* epoch, assuming a foundation of Rome in 753 BCE. The system remained in use during the early medieval period until the widespread adoption of the Dionysian era in the Carolingian period. The seven-day week has a tradition reaching back to the Ancient Near East, but the introduction of the planetary week, which remains in modern use, dates to the Roman Empire period.

Gregorian Calendar

The Gregorian calendar, also called the Western calendar and the Christian calendar, is internationally the most widely used civil calendar today. It is named after Pope Gregory XIII, who introduced it in October, 1582. The calendar was a refinement to the Julian calendar, amounting to a 0.002% correction in the length of the year. The motivation for the reform was to stop the drift of the calendar with respect to the equinoxes and solstices—particularly the vernal equinox, which set the date for Easter celebrations. Transition to the Gregorian calendar would restore the holiday to the time of the year in which it was celebrated when introduced by the early Church. The reform was adopted initially by the Catholic countries of Europe. Protestants and Eastern Orthodox countries continued to use the traditional Julian calendar, and eventually adopted the Gregorian reform for the sake of convenience in international trade. The last European country to adopt the reform was Greece in 1923.



CALENDARIVM
GREGORIANVM
PERPETVVM.

Orbi Christiano vniuerso à GREGORIO XIII. P. M. propositum. Anno M. D. LXXXII.

GREGORIVS EPISCOPVS
SERVVS SERVORVM DEI
AD PERPETVAM REI MEMORIAM.

INTER gravissimas Pastoralis officij nostri curas, ea postrema non est, ut quæ à sacro Tridentino Concilio Sedi Apostolicæ reservata sunt, illa ad finem optatum, Deo adjutore perducantur. Sane eiusdem Concilij Patres, cum ad reliquam cogitationem Breviarij quoque curam adjungerent, tempore tamen exclusi rem totam ex ipsius Concilij decreto ad auctoritatem & judicium Romani Pontificis retulerunt. Duo autem Breviario præcipue continentur, quorum unum preces, laudesque diuinas festis, profestisque diebus persoluendas complectitur, alterum pertinet ad annos Paschæ, festorumque ex eo pendentium recursus, Solis, & Lunæ motus metiendos: Atque illud quidem felicis recordationis Pius V. prædecessor noster absoluendum curauit, atque edidit. Hoc vero, quod maximum exigit legitimam Calendarij restitutionem, iamdiu à Romanis Pontificibus prædecessoribus nostris, & sæpius tentatum est, verum absolui, & ad exitum perduci ad hoc usque tempus non potuit, quod rationes emendandi Calendarij, quæ cælestium motuum peritis proponebantur, propter magnas, & fere inextricabiles difficultates, quas huiusmodi emendatio semper habuit, neque perennes erant, neque antiquos Ecclesiasticos ritus incolumes (quod in primis hac in re curandum erat) seruabant. Dum itaque nos quoque credita nobis, licet indigni, à Deo dispensatione freti, in hac cogitatione, curaque versaremur, allatus est nobis liber à dilecto filio Antonio Lilio artium, & medicinæ doctore, quem quondam Aloysius eius germanus frater conscripserat, in quo per nouum quendam Epactarum Cyclum ab eo excogitatum, & ad certam ipsius aurei numeri normam directum, atque ad quamcunque anni solaris magnitudinem accommodatum, omnia, quæ in Calendario collapsa sunt, constanti ratione, & seculis omnibus duratura, sic restituì posse ostendit, ut Calendarium ipsum nulli vnquam mutationi in posterum expositum esse videatur. Nonam hanc restituendæ Calendarij rationem exiguo volumine comprehensam ad Christianos Principes, celebriosque vniuersitates paucos ante annos misimus, vt res, quæ omnium communis est, communi etiam omnium consilio perficeretur; illi cum, quæ maxime optabamus, concorditer respondissent, eorum nos omnium consensione adducti, viros ad Calendarij emendationem adhibuimus in alma Vrbe harum rerum peritissimos, quos longe ante ex primarijs Christiani orbis nationibus delegeramus: Et cum multum temporis, & diligentiæ ad eam lucubrationem adhibuissent, & Cyclos tam veterum, quàm recentiorum vndique conquisitos, ac diligentissime perpensos inter se contulissent, suo, & doctorum hominum, qui de ea rescripserant, iudicio hunc præ cæteris elegerunt Epactarum Cyclum, cui nonnulla etiam adiecerunt, quæ ex accurata circumspectione visa sunt ad Calendarij perfectionem maxime pertinere.

The first page of the papal bull "Inter Gravissimas" by which Pope Gregory XIII introduced his calendar. During the period between 1582, when the first countries adopted the Gregorian calendar, and 1923, when the last European country adopted it, it was often necessary to indicate the date of some event in both the Julian calendar and in the Gregorian calendar. Even before 1582, the year sometimes had to be double dated because of the different beginnings of the year in various countries.

Calendars Outside of Europe

While the European Gregorian calendar eventually dominated the world and historiography, a number of other calendars have shaped timekeeping systems that are still influential in some regions of the world.

The Islamic calendar determines the first year in 622 CE, during which the emigration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, known as the Hijra, occurred. It is used to date events in many Muslim countries (concurrently with the Gregorian calendar), and is used by Muslims everywhere to determine the proper days on which to observe and celebrate Islamic religious practices (e.g., fasting), holidays, and festivals.

Various Hindu calendars developed in the medieval period with Gupta era astronomy as their common basis. Some of the more prominent regional Hindu calendars include the Nepali calendar, Assamese calendar, Bengali calendar, Malayalam calendar, Tamil calendar, the Vikrama Samvat (used in Northern India), and Shalivahana calendar. The common feature of all regional Hindu calendars is that the names of the twelve months are the same (because the names are based in Sanskrit) although the spelling and pronunciation have come to vary slightly from region to region over thousands of years. The month that starts the year also varies from region to region. The Buddhist calendar and the traditional lunisolar calendars of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand are also based on an older version of the Hindu calendar.

Of all the ancient calendar systems, the Mayan and other Mesoamerican systems are the most complex. The Mayan calendar had two years, the 260-day Sacred Round, or *tzolkin*, and the 365-day Vague Year, or *haab*.

The essentials of the Mayan calendar are based upon a system that was in common use throughout the region, dating back to at least the fifth century BCE. It shares many aspects with calendars employed by other earlier Mesoamerican civilizations, such as the Zapotec and Olmec, and contemporary or later ones, such as the Mixtec and Aztec calendars. The Mayan calendar is still used in many modern communities in the Guatemalan highlands, Veracruz, Oaxaca and Chiapas, Mexico.

Islamic Calendar stamp issued at King Khaled airport (10 Rajab 1428 / 24 July 2007). The first year was the Islamic year beginning in AD 622, during which the emigration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, known as the Hijra, occurred. Each numbered year is designated either "H" for Hijra or "AH" for the Latin Anno Hegirae ("in the year of the Hijra"). Hence, Muslims typically call their calendar the Hijri calendar.

Anno Domini v. Common Era

The terms *anno Domini* (AD) and before Christ (BC) are used to label or number years in the Julian and Gregorian calendars. The term *anno Domini* is Medieval Latin, which means *in the year of the Lord*, but is often translated as *in the year of our Lord*. It is occasionally set out more fully as *anno Domini nostri Iesu* (or *Jesu Christi* ("in the year of Our Lord Jesus Christ"). Dionysius Exiguus of Scythia Minor introduced the AD system in AD 525, counting the years since the birth of Christ. This calendar era is based on the traditionally recognized year of the conception or birth of Jesus of Nazareth, with AD counting years after the start of this epoch and BC denoting years before the start of the era. There is no year zero in this scheme, so the year AD 1 immediately follows the year 1 BC. This dating system was devised in 525, but was not widely used until after 800.

A calendar era that is often used as an alternative naming of the a*nno Domini*
is Common Era or Current Era, abbreviated CE. The system uses BCE as an abbreviation for "before the Common (or Current) Era." The CE/BCE designation uses the same numeric values as the AD/BC system so the two notations (CE/BCE and AD/BC) are numerically equivalent. The expression "Common Era" can be found as early as 1708 in English and traced back to Latin usage among European Christians to 1615, as *vulgaris aerae*, and to 1635 in English as *Vulgar Era*.

Since the later 20th century, the use of CE and BCE have been popularized in academic and scientific publications, and more generally by authors and publishers wishing to emphasize secularism or sensitivity to non-Christians, because the system does not explicitly make use of religious titles for Jesus, such as "Christ" and *Dominus* ("Lord"), which are used in the BC/AD notation, nor does it give implicit expression to the Christian creed that Jesus is the Christ. While both systems are thus an accepted standard, the CE/BCE system is more neutral and inclusive of a non-Christian perspective.

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1.3: The Imperfect Historical Record

Learning Objectives

- Explain the consequences of the imperfect historical record

Key Points

- In the study of history as an academic discipline, a primary source is an artifact, document, diary, manuscript, autobiography, recording, or other source of information that was created at the time under study.
- History as an academic discipline is based on primary sources, as evaluated by the community of scholars for whom primary sources are absolutely fundamental to reconstructing the past. Ideally, a historian will use as many primary sources that were created during the time under study as can be accessed. In practice however, some sources have been destroyed, while others are not available for research.
- While some sources are considered more reliable or trustworthy than others, historians point out that hardly any historical evidence can be seen as fully objective since it is always a product of particular individuals, times, and dominant ideas.
- Historical method comprises the techniques and guidelines by which historians use primary sources and other evidence (including the evidence of archaeology) to research and write historical accounts of the past.
- Primary sources may remain in private hands or are located in archives, libraries, museums, historical societies, and special collections. Traditionally, historians attempt to answer historical questions through the study of written documents and oral accounts. They also use such sources as monuments, inscriptions, and pictures. In general, the sources of historical knowledge can be separated into three categories: what is written, what is said, and what is physically preserved. Historians often consult all three.
- Historians use various strategies to reconstruct the past when facing a lack of sources, including collaborating with experts from other academic disciplines, most notably archaeology.

Terms

historical method

A scholarly method that comprises the techniques and guidelines by which historians use primary sources and other evidence (including the evidence of archaeology) to research and write historical accounts of the past.

primary source

In the study of history as an academic discipline, an artifact, document, diary, manuscript, autobiography, recording, or other source of information that was created at the time under study. It serves as an original source of information about the topic.

secondary source

A document or recording that relates or discusses information originally found in a primary source. It contrasts with a primary source, which is an original source of the information being discussed; a primary source can be a person with direct knowledge of a situation, or a document created by such a person. A secondary source involves generalization, analysis, synthesis, interpretation, or evaluation of the original information.

Primary Sources

In the study of history as an academic discipline, a primary source (also called original source or evidence) is an artifact, document, diary, manuscript, autobiography, recording, or other source of information that was created at the time under study. It serves as an original source of information about the topic. Primary sources are distinguished from secondary sources, which cite, comment on, or build upon primary sources. In some cases, a secondary source may also be a primary source, depending on how it is used. For example, a memoir would be considered a primary source in research concerning its author or about his or her friends characterized within it, but the same memoir would be a secondary source if it were used to examine the culture in which its author lived. “Primary” and “secondary” should be understood as relative terms, with sources categorized according to specific historical contexts and what is being studied.

Using Primary Sources: Historical Method

History as an academic discipline is based on primary sources, as evaluated by the community of scholars for whom primary sources are absolutely fundamental to reconstructing the past. Ideally, a historian will use as many primary sources that were created by the people involved at the time under study as can be accessed. In practice however, some sources have been destroyed, while others are not available for research. In some cases, the only eyewitness reports of an event may be memoirs, autobiographies, or oral interviews taken years later. Sometimes, the only evidence relating to an event or person in the distant past was written or copied decades or centuries later. Manuscripts that are sources for classical texts can be copies or fragments of documents. This is a common problem in classical studies, where sometimes only a summary of a book or letter, but not the actual book or letter, has survived. While some sources are considered more reliable or trustworthy than others (e.g., an original government document containing information about an event vs. a recording of a witness recalling the same event years later), historians point out that hardly any historical evidence can be seen as fully objective as it is always a product of particular individuals, times, and dominant ideas. This is also why researchers try to find as many records of an event under investigation as possible, and attempt to resolve evidence that may present contradictory accounts of the same events.

This wall painting (known as The portrait of Paquius Proculo and currently preserved at the Naples National Archaeological Museum) was found in the Roman city of Pompeii and serves as a complex example of a primary source.The fresco would not tell much to historians without corresponding textual and archaeological evidence that helps to establish who the portrayed couple might have been. The man wears a toga, the mark of a Roman citizen, and holds a rotulus, suggesting he is involved in public and/or cultural affairs. The woman holds a stylus and wax tablet, emphasizing that she is educated and literate. It is suspected, based on the physical features of the couple, that they are Samnites, which may explain the desire to show off the status they have reached in Roman society.

Historical method comprises the techniques and guidelines by which historians use primary sources and other evidence (including the evidence of archaeology) to research and write historical accounts of the past. Historians continue to debate what aspects and practices of investigating primary sources should be considered, and what constitutes a primary source when developing the most

effective historical method. The question of the nature, and even the possibility, of a sound historical method is so central that it has been continuously raised in the philosophy of history as a question of epistemology.

Finding Primary Sources

Primary sources may remain in private hands or are located in archives, libraries, museums, historical societies, and special collections. These can be public or private. Some are affiliated with universities and colleges, while others are government entities. Materials relating to one area might be spread over a large number of different institutions. These can be distant from the original source of the document. For example, the Huntington Library in California houses a large number of documents from the United Kingdom. While the development of technology has resulted in an increasing number of digitized sources, most primary source materials are not digitized and may only be represented online with a record or finding aid.

Traditionally, historians attempt to answer historical questions through the study of written documents and oral accounts. They also use such sources as monuments, inscriptions, and pictures. In general, the sources of historical knowledge can be separated into three categories: what is written, what is said, and what is physically preserved. Historians often consult all three. However, writing is the marker that separates history from what comes before.

Archaeology is one discipline that is especially helpful to historians. By dealing with buried sites and objects, it contributes to the reconstruction of the past. However, archaeology is constituted by a range of methodologies and approaches that are independent from history. In other words, archaeology does not “fill the gaps” within textual sources but often contrasts its conclusions against those of contemporary textual sources.

Archaeology also provides an illustrative example of how historians can be helped when written records are missing. Unearthing artifacts and working with archaeologists to interpret them based on the expertise of a particular historical era and cultural or geographical area is one effective way to reconstruct the past. If written records are missing, historians often attempt to collect oral accounts of particular events, preferably by eyewitnesses, but sometimes, because of the passage of time, they are forced to work with the following generations. Thus, the question of the reliability of oral history has been widely debated.

When dealing with many government records, historians usually have to wait for a specific period of time before documents are declassified and available to researchers. For political reasons, many sensitive records may be destroyed, withdrawn from collections, or hidden, which may also encourage researchers to rely on oral histories. Missing records of events, or processes that historians believe took place based on very fragmentary evidence, forces historians to seek information in records that may not be a likely sources of information. As archival research is always time-consuming and labor-intensive, this approach poses the risk of never producing desired results, despite the time and effort invested in finding informative and reliable resources. In some cases, historians are forced to speculate (this should be explicitly noted) or simply admit that we do not have sufficient information to reconstruct particular past events or processes.

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1.4: Historical Bias

Learning Objectives

- Identify some examples of historical bias

Key Points

- Regardless of whether they are conscious or learned implicitly within cultural contexts, biases have been part of historical investigation since the ancient beginnings of the discipline. As such, history provides an excellent example of how biases change, evolve, and even disappear.
- Early attempts to make history an empirical, objective discipline (most notably by Voltaire) did not find many followers. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, European historians only strengthened their biases. As Europe gradually dominated the world through the self-imposed mission to colonize nearly all the other continents, Eurocentrism prevailed in history.
- Even within the Eurocentric perspective, not all Europeans were equal; Western historians largely ignored aspects of history, such as class, gender, or ethnicity. Until the rapid development of social history in the 1960s and 1970s, mainstream Western historical narratives focused on political and military history, while cultural or social history was written mostly from the perspective of the elites.
- The biased approach to history-writing transferred also to history-teaching. From the origins of national mass schooling systems in the 19th century, the teaching of history to promote national sentiment has been a high priority. History textbooks in most countries have been tools to foster nationalism and patriotism and to promote the most favorable version of national history.
- Germany attempts to be an example of how to remove nationalistic narratives from history education. The history curriculum in Germany is characterized by a transnational perspective that emphasizes the all-European heritage, minimizes the idea of national pride, and fosters the notion of civil society centered on democracy, human rights, and peace.
- Despite progress and increased focus on groups that have been traditionally excluded from mainstream historical narratives (people of color, women, the working class, the poor, the disabled, LGBTQI-identified people, etc.), bias remains a component of historical investigation.

Terms

Eurocentrism

The practice of viewing the world from a European or generally Western perspective with an implied belief in the pre-eminence of Western culture. It may also be used to describe a view centered on the history or eminence of white people. The term was coined in the 1980s, referring to the notion of European exceptionalism and other Western equivalents, such as American exceptionalism.

Bias in Historical Writing

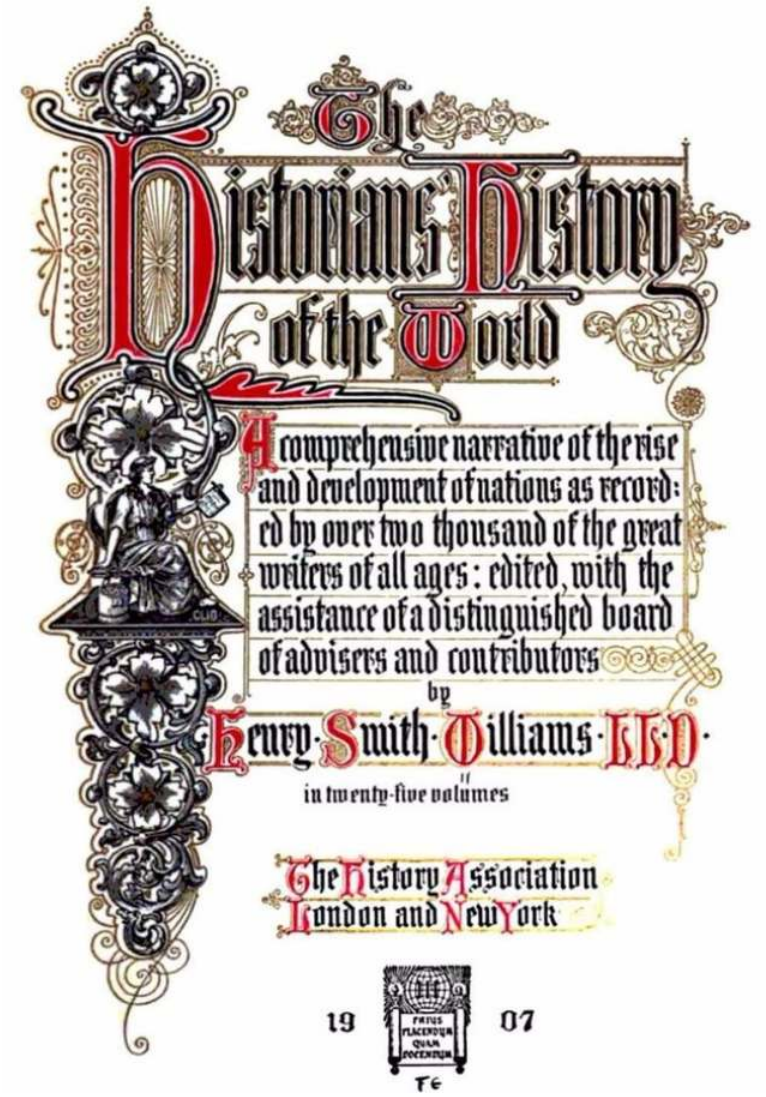
Bias is an inclination or outlook to present or hold a partial perspective, often accompanied by a refusal to consider the possible merits of alternative points of view. Regardless of whether conscious or learned implicitly within cultural contexts, biases have been part of historical investigation since the ancient beginnings of the discipline. As such, history provides an excellent example of how biases change, evolve, and even disappear.

History as a modern academic discipline based on empirical methods (in this case, studying primary sources in order to reconstruct the past based on available evidence), rose to prominence during the Age of Enlightenment. Voltaire, a French author and thinker, is credited to have developed a fresh outlook on history that broke from the tradition of narrating diplomatic and military events and emphasized customs, social history (the history of ordinary people) and achievements in the arts and sciences. His *Essay on Customs* traced the progress of world civilization in a universal context, thereby rejecting both nationalism and the traditional Christian frame of reference. Voltaire was also the first scholar to make a serious attempt to write the history of the world, eliminating theological frameworks and emphasizing economics, culture, and political history. He was the first to emphasize the

debt of medieval culture to Middle Eastern civilization. Although he repeatedly warned against political bias on the part of the historian, he did not miss many opportunities to expose the intolerance and frauds of the Catholic Church over the ages—a topic that was Voltaire's life-long intellectual interest.

Voltaire's early attempts to make history an empirical, objective discipline did not find many followers. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, European historians only strengthened their biases. As Europe gradually benefited from the ongoing scientific progress and dominated the world in the self-imposed mission to colonize nearly all other continents, Eurocentrism prevailed in history. The practice of viewing and presenting the world from a European or generally Western perspective, with an implied belief in the pre-eminence of Western culture, dominated among European historians who contrasted the progressively mechanized character of European culture with traditional hunting, farming and herding societies in many of the areas of the world being newly conquered and colonized. These included the Americas, Asia, Africa and, later, the Pacific and Australasia. Many European writers of this time construed the history of Europe as paradigmatic for the rest of the world. Other cultures were identified as having reached a stage that Europe itself had already passed: primitive hunter-gatherer, farming, early civilization, feudalism and modern liberal-capitalism. Only Europe was considered to have achieved the last stage. With this assumption, Europeans were also presented as racially superior, and European history as a discipline became essentially the history of the dominance of white peoples.

However, even within the Eurocentric perspective, not all Europeans were equal; Western historians largely ignored aspects of history, such as class, gender, or ethnicity. Until relatively recently (particularly the rapid development of social history in the 1960s and 1970s), mainstream Western historical narratives focused on political and military history, while cultural or social history was written mostly from the perspective of the elites. Consequently, what was in fact an experience of a selected few (usually white males of upper classes, with some occasional mentions of their female counterparts), was typically presented as the illustrative experience of the entire society. In the United States, some of the first to break this approach were African American scholars who at the turn of the 20th century wrote histories of black Americans and called for their inclusion in the mainstream historical narrative.



The title page to The Historians' History of the World: A Comprehensive Narrative of the Rise and Development of Nations as Recorded by over two thousand of the Great Writers of all Ages, 1907. The Historians' History of the World is a 25-volume encyclopedia of world history originally published in English near the beginning of the 20th century. It is quite extensive but its perspective is entirely Western Eurocentric. For example, while four volumes focus on the history of England (with Scotland and Ireland included in one of them), "Poland, the Balkans, Turkey, minor Eastern states, China, Japan" are all described in one volume. It was compiled by Henry Smith Williams, a medical doctor and author, as well as other authorities on history, and published in New York in 1902 by Encyclopædia Britannica and the Outlook Company.

Bias in the Teaching of History

The biased approach to historical writing is present in the teaching of history as well. From the origins of national mass schooling systems in the 19th century, the teaching of history to promote national sentiment has been a high priority. Until today, in most countries history textbook are tools to foster nationalism and patriotism and promote the most favorable version of national history. In the United States, one of the most striking examples of this approach is the continuous narrative of the United States as a state established on the principles of personal liberty and democracy. Although aspects of U.S. history, such as slavery, genocide of American Indians, or disfranchisement of the large segments of the society for decades after the onset of the American statehood, are now taught in most (yet not all) American schools, they are presented as marginal in the larger narrative of liberty and democracy.

In many countries, history textbooks are sponsored by the national government and are written to put the national heritage in the most favorable light, although academic historians have often fought against the politicization of the textbooks, sometimes with success. Interestingly, the 21st-century Germany attempts to be an example of how to remove nationalistic narratives from history education. As the 20th-century history of Germany is filled with events and processes that are rarely a cause of national pride, the history curriculum in Germany (controlled by the 16 German states) is characterized by a transnational perspective that emphasizes the all-European heritage, minimizes the idea of national pride, and fosters the notion of civil society centered on democracy, human rights, and peace. Yet, even in the rather unusual German case, Eurocentrism continues to dominate.

The challenge to replace national, or even nationalist, perspectives with a more inclusive transnational or global view of human history is also still very present in college-level history curricula. In the United States after World War I, a strong movement emerged at the university level to teach courses in Western Civilization with the aim to give students a common heritage with Europe. After 1980, attention increasingly moved toward teaching world history or requiring students to take courses in non-western cultures. Yet, world history courses still struggle to move beyond the Eurocentric perspective, focusing heavily on the history of Europe and its links to the United States.

Despite all the progress and much more focus on the groups that have been traditionally excluded from mainstream historical narratives (people of color, women, the working class, the poor, the disabled, LGBTQI-identified people, etc.), bias remains a component of historical investigation, whether it is a product of nationalism, author's political views, or an agenda-driven interpretation of sources. It is only appropriate to state that the present world history book, while written in accordance with the most recent scholarly and educational practices, has been written and edited by authors trained in American universities and published in the United States. As such, it is also not free from both national (U.S.) and individual (authors') biases.

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1.5: The Evolution of Humans

Learning Objectives

- To understand the process and timeline of human evolution

Key Points

- Humans began to evolve about seven million years ago, and progressed through four stages of evolution. Research shows that the first modern humans appeared 200,000 years ago.
- Neanderthals were a separate species from humans. Although they had larger brain capacity and interbred with humans, they eventually died out.
- A number of theories examine the relationship between environmental conditions and human evolution.
- The main human adaptations have included bipedalism, larger brain size, and reduced sexual dimorphism.

Terms

aridity hypothesis

The theory that the savannah was expanding due to increasingly arid conditions, which then drove hominin adaptation.

turnover pulse hypothesis

The theory that extinctions due to environmental conditions hurt specialist species more than generalist ones, leading to greater evolution among specialists.

Red Queen hypothesis

The theory that species must constantly evolve in order to compete with co-evolving animals around them.

encephalization

An evolutionary increase in the complexity and/or size of the brain.

sexual dimorphism

Differences in size or appearance between the sexes of an animal species.

social brain hypothesis

The theory that improving cognitive capabilities would allow hominins to influence local groups and control resources.

Toba catastrophe theory

The theory that there was a near-extinction event for early humans about 70,000 years ago.

savannah hypothesis

The theory that hominins were forced out of the trees they lived in and onto the expanding savannah; as they did so, they began walking upright on two feet.

hominids

A primate of the family Hominidae that includes humans and their fossil ancestors.

bipedal

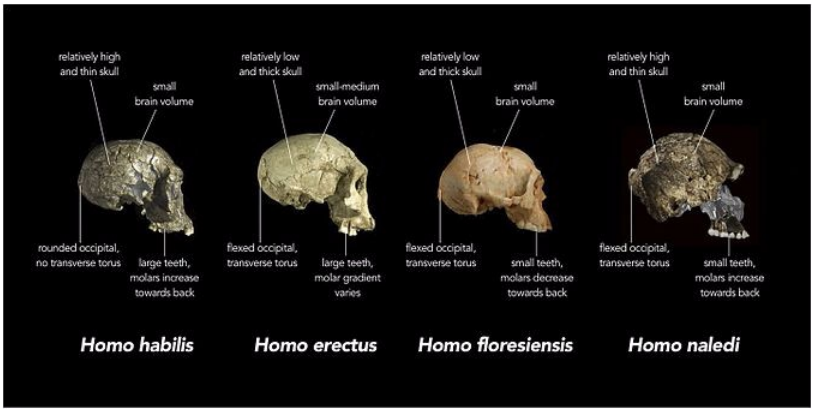
Describing an animal that uses only two legs for walking.

Human evolution began with primates. Primate development diverged from other mammals about 85 million years ago. Various divergences among apes, gibbons, orangutans occurred during this period, with *Homini* (including early humans and chimpanzees) separating from *Gorillini* (gorillas) about 8 millions years ago. Humans and chimps then separated about 7.5 million years ago.

Skeletal structure of humans and other primates. A comparison of the skeletal structures of gibbons, humans, chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans.

Generally, it is believed that hominids first evolved in Africa and then migrated to other areas. There were four main stages of human evolution. The first, between four and seven million years ago, consisted of the proto hominins *Sahelanthropus*, *Orrorin* and *Ardipithecus*. These humans may have been bipedal, meaning they walked upright on two legs. The second stage, around four million years ago, was marked by the appearance of *Australopithecus*, and the third, around 2.7 million years ago, featured *Paranthropus*.

The fourth stage features the genus *Homo*, which existed between 1.8 and 2.5 million years ago. *Homo habilis*, which used stone tools and had a brain about the size of a chimpanzee, was an early hominin in this period. Coordinating fine hand movements needed for tool use may have led to increasing brain capacity. This was followed by *Homo erectus* and *Homo ergaster*, who had double the brain size and may have been the first to control fire and use more complex tools. *Homo heidelbergensis* appeared about 800,000 years ago, and modern humans, *Homo sapiens*, about 200,000 years ago. Humans acquired symbolic culture and language about 50,000 years ago.



Comparison of skull features among early humans.A comparison of Homo habilis, Homo erectus, Homo floresiensis and Homo naledi skull features.

Neanderthals

A separate species, *Homo neanderthalensis*, had a common ancestor with humans about 660,000 years ago, and engaged in interbreeding with *Homo sapiens* about 45,000 to 80,000 years ago. Although their brains were larger, Neanderthals had fewer social and technological innovations than humans, and they eventually died out.

Theories of Early Human Evolution

The savannah hypothesis states that hominins were forced out of the trees they lived in and onto the expanding savannah; as they did so, they began walking upright on two feet. This idea was expanded in the aridity hypothesis, which posited that the savannah was expanding due to increasingly arid conditions resulting in hominin adaptation. Thus, during periods of intense aridification, hominins also were pushed to evolve and adapt.

The turnover pulse hypothesis states that extinctions due to environmental conditions hurt specialist species more than generalist ones. While generalist species spread out when environmental conditions change, specialist species become more specialized and have a greater rate of evolution. The Red Queen hypothesis states that species must constantly evolve in order to compete with co-evolving animals around them. The social brain hypothesis states that improving cognitive capabilities would allow hominins to influence local groups and control resources. The Toba catastrophe theory states that there was a near-extinction event for early humans about 70,000 years ago.

Human Adaptations

Bipedalism, or walking upright, is one of the main human evolutionary adaptations. Advantages to be found in bipedalism include the freedom of the hands for labor and less physically taxing movement. Walking upright better allows for long distance travel and hunting, for a wider field of vision, a reduction of the amount of skin exposed to the sun, and overall thrives in a savannah

environment. Bipedalism resulted in skeletal changes to the legs, knee and ankle joints, spinal vertebrae, toes, and arms. Most significantly, the pelvis became shorter and rounded, with a smaller birth canal, making birth more difficult for humans than other primates. In turn, this resulted in shorter gestation (as babies need to be born before their heads become too large), and more helpless infants who are not fully developed before birth.

Larger brain size, also called encephalization, began in early humans with *Homo habilis* and continued through the Neanderthal line (capacity of 1,200 – 1,900 cm3). The ability of the human brain to continue to grow after birth meant that social learning and language were possible. It is possible that a focus on eating meat, and cooking, allowed for brain growth. Modern humans have a brain volume of 1250 cm3.

Humans have reduced sexual dimorphism, or differences between males and females, and hidden estrus, which means the female is fertile year-round and shows no special sign of fertility. Human sexes still have some differences between them, with males being slightly larger and having more body hair and less body fat. These changes may be related to pair bonding for long-term raising of offspring.

Other adaptations include lessening of body hair, a chin, a descended larynx, and an emphasis on vision instead of smell.

Human Evolution

A video showing evolution from early animals to modern humans.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: http://pb.libretexts.org/ewc/?p=30

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1.6: The Neolithic Revolution

Learning Objectives

- Explain the significance of the Neolithic Revolution

Key Points

- During the Paleolithic Era, humans grouped together in small societies and subsisted by gathering plants, and fishing, hunting or scavenging wild animals.
- The Neolithic Revolution references a change from a largely nomadic hunter-gatherer way of life to a more settled, agrarian-based one, with the inception of the domestication of various plant and animal species—depending on species locally available and likely also influenced by local culture.
- There are several competing (but not mutually exclusive) theories as to the factors that drove populations to take up agriculture, including the Hilly Flanks hypothesis, the Feasting model, the Demographic theories, the evolutionary/intentionality theory, and the largely discredited Oasis Theory.
- The shift to agricultural food production supported a denser population, which in turn supported larger sedentary communities, the accumulation of goods and tools, and specialization in diverse forms of new labor.
- The nutritional standards of Neolithic populations were generally inferior to that of hunter-gatherers, and they worked longer hours and had shorter life expectancies.
- Life today, including our governments, specialized labor, and trade, is directly related to the advances made in the Neolithic Revolution.

Terms

Hilly Flanks hypothesis

The theory that agriculture began in the hilly flanks of the Taurus and Zagros mountains, where the climate was not drier, and fertile land supported a variety of plants and animals amenable to domestication.

Evolutionary/Intentionality theory

The theory that domestication was part of an evolutionary process between humans and plants.

Neolithic Revolution

The world's first historically verifiable advancement in agriculture. It took place around 12,000 years ago.

Hunter-gatherer

A nomadic lifestyle in which food is obtained from wild plants and animals; in contrast to an agricultural lifestyle, which relies mainly on domesticated species.

Paleolithic Era

A period of history that spans from 2.5 million to 20,000 years ago, during which time humans evolved, used stone tools, and lived as hunter-gatherers.

Oasis Theory

The theory that humans were forced into close association with animals due to changes in climate.

Feasting model

The theory that displays of power through feasting drove agricultural technology.

Specialization

A process where laborers focused on one specialty area rather than creating all needed items.

> Demographic theories
>
> Theories about how sedentary populations may have driven agricultural changes.

Before the Rise of Civilization: The Paleolithic Era

The first humans evolved in Africa during the Paleolithic Era, or Stone Age, which spans the period of history from 2.5 million to about 10,000 BCE. During this time, humans lived in small groups as hunter-gatherers, with clear gender divisions for labor. The men hunted animals while the women gathered food, such as fruit, nuts and berries, from the local area. Simple tools made of stone, wood, and bone (such as hand axes, flints and spearheads) were used throughout the period. Fire was controlled, which created heat and light, and allowed for cooking.Humankind gradually evolved from early members of the genus *Homo*—such as *Homo habilis*, who used simple stone tools— into fully behaviorally and anatomically modern humans (*Homo sapiens)* during the Paleolithic era. During the end of the Paleolithic, specifically the Middle and or Upper Paleolithic, humans began to produce the earliest works of art and engage in religious and spiritual behavior, such as burial and ritual. Paleolithic humans were nomads, who often moved their settlements as food became scarce. This eventually resulted in humans spreading out from Africa (beginning roughly 60,000 years ago) and into Eurasia, Southeast Asia, and Australia. By about 40,000 years ago, they had entered Europe, and by about 15,000 years ago, they had reached North America followed by South America.

Stone ball from a set of Paleolithic bolas. Paleoliths (artifacts from the Paleolithic), such as this stone ball, demonstrate some of the stone technologies that the early humans used as tools and weapons.

During about 10,000 BCE, a major change occurred in the way humans lived; this would have a cascading effect on every part of human society and culture. That change was the Neolithic Revolution.

The Neolithic Revolution: From Hunter-Gatherer to Agriculturalist

The beginning of the Neolithic Revolution in different regions has been dated from perhaps 8,000 BCE in the Kuk Early Agricultural Site of Melanesia Kuk to 2,500 BCE in Subsaharan Africa, with some considering the developments of 9,000-7,000 BCE in the Fertile Crescent to be the most important. This transition everywhere is associated with the change from a largely nomadic hunter-gatherer way of life to a more settled, agrarian-based one, due to the inception of the domestication of various plant and animal species—depending on the species locally available, and probably also influenced by local culture.It is not known why humans decided to begin cultivating plants and domesticating animals. While more labor-intensive, the people must have seen the relationship between cultivation of grains and an increase in population. The domestication of animals provided a new source of protein, through meat and milk, along with hides and wool, which allowed for the production of clothing and other objects.There

are several competing (but not mutually exclusive) theories about the factors that drove populations to take up agriculture. The most prominent of these are:

- The Oasis Theory, originally proposed by Raphael Pumpelly in 1908, and popularized by V. Gordon Childe in 1928, suggests as the climate got drier due to the Atlantic depressions shifting northward, communities contracted to oases where they were forced into close association with animals. These animals were then domesticated together with planting of seeds. However, this theory has little support amongst archaeologists today because subsequent climate data suggests that the region was getting wetter rather than drier.
- The Hilly Flanks hypothesis, proposed by Robert Braidwood in 1948, suggests that agriculture began in the hilly flanks of the Taurus and Zagros mountains, where the climate was not drier, as Childe had believed, and that fertile land supported a variety of plants and animals amenable to domestication.
- The Feasting model by Brian Hayden suggests that agriculture was driven by ostentatious displays of power, such as giving feasts, to exert dominance. This system required assembling large quantities of food, a demand which drove agricultural technology.
- The Demographic theories proposed by Carl Sauer and adapted by Lewis Binford and Kent Flannery posit that an increasingly sedentary population outgrew the resources in the local environment and required more food than could be gathered. Various social and economic factors helped drive the need for food.
- The Evolutionary/Intentionality theory, developed by David Rindos and others, views agriculture as an evolutionary adaptation of plants and humans. Starting with domestication by protection of wild plants, it led to specialization of location and then full-fledged domestication.

Effects of the Neolithic Revolution on Society

The traditional view is that the shift to agricultural food production supported a denser population, which in turn supported larger sedentary communities, the accumulation of goods and tools, and specialization in diverse forms of new labor. Overall a population could increase its size more rapidly when resources were more available. The resulting larger societies led to the development of different means of decision making and governmental organization. Food surpluses made possible the development of a social elite freed from labor, who dominated their communities and monopolized decision-making. There were deep social divisions and inequality between the sexes, with women's status declining as men took on greater roles as leaders and warriors. Social class was determined by occupation, with farmers and craftsmen at the lower end, and priests and warriors at the higher.

Effects of the Neolithic Revolution on Health

Neolithic populations generally had poorer nutrition, shorter life expectancies, and a more labor-intensive lifestyle than hunter-gatherers. Diseases jumped from animals to humans, and agriculturalists suffered from more anemia, vitamin deficiencies, spinal deformations, and dental pathologies.

Overall Impact of the Neolithic Revolution on Modern Life

The way we live today is directly related to the advances made in the Neolithic Revolution. From the governments we live under, to the specialized work laborers do, to the trade of goods and food, humans were irrevocably changed by the switch to sedentary agriculture and domestication of animals. Human population swelled from five million to seven billion today.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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2.1: The Sumerians

Learning Objectives

- To understand the history and accomplishments of the Sumerian people

Key Points

- The Sumerians were a people living in Mesopotamia from the 27th-20th century BCE.
- The major periods in Sumerian history were the Ubaid period (6500-4100 BCE), the Uruk period (4100-2900 BCE), the Early Dynastic period (2900-2334 BCE), the Akkadian Empire period (2334 – 2218 BCE), the Gutian period (2218-2047 BCE), Sumerian Renaissance/Third Dynasty of Ur (2047-1940 BCE), and then decline.
- Many Sumerian clay tablets have been found with writing. Initially, pictograms were used, followed by cuneiform and then ideograms.
- Sumerians believed in anthropomorphic polytheism, or of many gods in human form that were specific to each city-state.
- Sumerians invented or perfected many forms of technology, including the wheel, mathematics, and cuneiform script.

Terms

City-states

A city that with its surrounding territory forms an independent state.

cuneiform script

Wedge-shaped characters used in the ancient writing systems of Mesopotamia, surviving mainly on clay tablets.

ideograms

Written characters symbolizing an idea or entity without indicating the sounds used to say it.

pictograms

A pictorial symbol for a word or phrase. They are the earliest known forms of writing.

pantheon

The collective gods of a people or religion.

Epic of Gilgamesh

An epic poem from the Third Dynasty of Ur (circa 2100 BCE), which is seen as the earliest surviving great work of literature.

anthropomorphic

Having human characteristics.

"Sumerian" is the name given by the Semitic-speaking Akkadians to non-Semitic speaking people living in Mespotamia. City-states in the region, which were organized by canals and boundary stones and dedicated to a patron god or goddess, first rose to power during the prehistoric Ubaid and Uruk periods. Sumerian written history began in the 27th century BCE, but the first intelligible writing began in the 23rd century BCE. Classical Sumer ends with the rise of the Akkadian Empire in the 23rd century BCE, and only enjoys a brief renaissance in the 21st century BCE. The Sumerians were eventually absorbed into the Akkadian/Babylonian population.

Periods in Sumerian History

The Ubaid period (6500-4100 BCE) saw the first settlement in southern Mesopotamia by farmers who brought irrigation agriculture. Distinctive, finely painted pottery was evident during this time.

The Uruk period (4100-2900 BCE) saw several transitions. First, pottery began to be mass-produced. Second, trade goods began to flow down waterways in southern Mespotamia, and large, temple-centered cities (most likely theocratic and run by priests-kings) rose up to facilitate this trade. Slave labor was also utilized.

The Early Dynastic period (2900-2334 BCE) saw writing, in contrast to pictograms, become commonplace and decipherable. The Epic of Gilgamesh mentions several leaders, including Gilgamesh himself, who were likely historical kings. The first dynastic king was Etana, the 13th king of the first dynasty of Kish. War was on the increase, and cities erected walls for self-preservation. Sumerian culture began to spread from southern Mesopotamia into surrounding areas.

Sumerian Necklaces and Headgear Sumerian necklaces and headgear discovered in the royal (and individual) graves, showing the way they may have been worn.

During the Akkadian Empire period (2334-2218 BCE), many in the region became bilingual in both Sumerian and Akkadian. Toward the end of the empire, though, Sumerian became increasingly a literary language.

The Gutian period (2218-2047 BCE) was marked by a period of chaos and decline, as Guti barbarians defeated the Akkadian military but were unable to support the civilizations in place.

The Sumerian Renaissance/Third Dynasty of Ur (2047-1940 BCE) saw the rulers Ur-Nammu and Shulgi, whose power extended into southern Assyria. However, the region was becoming more Semitic, and the Sumerian language became a religious language.

The Sumerian Renaissance ended with invasion by the Amorites, whose dynasty of Isin continued until 1700 BCE, at which point Mespotamia came under Babylonian rule.

Language and Writing

Many Sumerian clay tablets written in cuneiform script have been discovered. They are not the oldest example of writing, but nevertheless represent a great advance in the human ability to write down history and create literature. Initially, pictograms were used, followed by cuneiform, and then ideograms. Letters, receipts, hymns, prayers, and stories have all been found on clay tablets.

Bill of Sale on a Clay Tablet. This clay tablet shows a bill of sale for a male slave and building, circa 2600 BCE.

Religion

Sumerians believed in anthropomorphic polytheism, or of many gods in human form, which were specific to each city-state. The core pantheon consisted of An (heaven), Enki (a healer and friend to humans), Enlil (gave spells spirits must obey), Inanna (love and war), Utu (sun-god), and Sin (moon-god).

Technology

Sumerians invented or improved a wide range of technology, including the wheel, cuneiform script, arithmetic, geometry, irrigation, saws and other tools, sandals, chariots, harpoons, and beer.

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2.2: The Assyrians

Learning Objectives

- Describe key characteristics and notable events of the Assyrian Empire

Key Points

- Centered on the Upper Tigris river in northern Mesopotamia, the Assyrians came to rule powerful empires at several times, the last of which grew to be the largest and most powerful empire the world had yet seen.
- At its peak, the Assyrian empire stretched from Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea to Persia, and from the Caucasus Mountains (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan) to the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt. It was at the height of technological, scientific, and cultural achievements for its time.
- In the Old Assyrian period, Assyria established colonies in Asia Minor and the Levant, and asserted itself over southern Mesopotamia under king Ilushuma.
- Assyria experienced fluctuating fortunes in the Middle Assyrian period, with some of its kings finding themselves under the influence of foreign rulers while others eclipsed neighboring empires.
- Assyria became a great military power during the Neo-Assyrian period, and saw the conquests of large empires, such as Egyptians, the Phoenicians, the Hittites, and the Persians, among others.
- After its fall in the late 600s BCE, Assyria remained a province and geo-political entity under various empires until the mid-7th century CE.

Terms

Aššur

The original capital of the Assyrian Empire, which dates back to 2600 BCE.

Assyrian Empire

A major Semitic kingdom of the Ancient Near East, which existed as an independent state for a period of approximately nineteen centuries from c. 2500-605 BCE.

The Assyrian Empire was a major Semitic kingdom, and often empire, of the Ancient Near East. It existed as an independent state for a period of approximately 19 centuries from c. 2500 BCE to 605 BCE, which spans the Early Bronze Age through to the late Iron Age. For a further 13 centuries, from the end of the 7th century BCE to the mid-7th century CE, it survived as a geo-political entity ruled, for the most part, by foreign powers (although a number of small Neo-Assyrian states arose at different times throughout this period).

Map of the Ancient Near East during the 14th century BCE, showing the great powers of the day. This map shows the extent of the empires of Egypt (orange), Hatti (blue), the Kassite kingdom of Babylon (black), Assyria (yellow), and Mitanni (brown). The

extent of the Achaean/Mycenaean civilization is shown in purple.

Centered on the Upper Tigris river, in northern Mesopotamia (northern Iraq, northeast Syria, and southeastern Turkey), the Assyrians came to rule powerful empires at several times, the last of which grew to be the largest and most powerful empire the world had yet seen.

As a substantial part of the greater Mesopotamian "Cradle of Civilization," Assyria was at the height of technological, scientific, and cultural achievements for its time. At its peak, the Assyrian empire stretched from Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea to Persia (Iran), and from the Caucasus Mountains (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan) to the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt. Assyria is named for its original capital, the ancient city of Ašur (a.k.a., Ashur) which dates to c. 2600 BCE and was located in what is now the Saladin Province of northern Iraq. Ashur was originally one of a number of Akkadian city states in Mesopotamia. In the late 24th century BCE, Assyrian kings were regional leaders under Sargon of Akkad, who united all the Akkadian Semites and Sumerian-speaking peoples of Mesopotamia under the Akkadian Empire (c. 2334 BC-2154 BCE). Following the fall of the Akkadian Empire, c. 2154 BCE, and the short-lived succeeding Sumerian Third Dynasty of Ur, which ruled southern Assyria, Assyria regained full independence.

The history of Assyria proper is roughly divided into three periods, known as Old Assyrian (late 21st-18th century BCE), Middle Assyrian (1365-1056 BCE), and Neo-Assyrian (911- 612BCE). These periods roughly correspond to the Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age, and Early Iron Age, respectively. In the Old Assyrian period, Assyria established colonies in Asia Minor and the Levant. Under king Ilushuma, it asserted itself over southern Mesopotamia. From the late 19th century BCE, Assyria came into conflict with the newly created state of Babylonia, which eventually eclipsed the older Sumero-Akkadian states in the south, such as Ur, Isin, Larsa and Kish. Assyria experienced fluctuating fortunes in the Middle Assyrian period. Assyria had a period of empire under Shamshi-Adad I and Ishme-Dagan in the 19th and 18th centuries BCE. Following the reigns of these two kings, it found itself under Babylonian and Mitanni-Hurrian domination for short periods in the 18th and 15th centuries BCE, respectively.

However, a shift in the Assyrian's dominance occurred with the rise of the Middle Assyrian Empire (1365 BCE-1056 BCE). This period saw the reigns of great kings, such as Ashur-uballit I, Arik-den-ili, Tukulti-Ninurta I, and Tiglath-Pileser I. Additionally, during this period, Assyria overthrew Mitanni and eclipsed both the Hittite Empire and Egyptian Empire in the Near East. Long wars helped build Assyria into a warrior society, supported by landed nobility, which supplied horses to the military. All free male citizens were required to serve in the military, and women had very low status.

Beginning with the campaigns of Adad-nirari II from 911 BCE, Assyria again showed itself to be a great power over the next three centuries during the Neo-Assyrian period. It overthrew the Twenty-Fifth dynasty of Egypt, and conquered a number of other notable civilizations, including Babylonia, Elam, Media, Persia, Phoenicia/Canaan, Aramea (Syria), Arabia, Israel, and the Neo-Hittites. They drove the Ethiopians and Nubians from Egypt, defeated the Cimmerians and Scythians, and exacted tribute from Phrygia, Magan, and Punt, among others.

After its fall (between 612-605 BCE), Assyria remained a province and geo-political entity under the Babylonian, Median, Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, Roman, and Sassanid Empires, until the Arab Islamic invasion and conquest of Mesopotamia in the mid-7th century CE when it was finally dissolved.

Assyria is mainly remembered for its military victories, technological advancements (such as using iron for weapons and building roads), use of torture to inspire fear, and a written history of conquests. Its military had not only general troops, but charioteers, cavalry, bowmen, and lancers.

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2.3: River Valley Civilizations

Learning Objectives

- Explain why early civilizations arose on the banks of rivers

Key Points

- Rivers were attractive locations for the first civilizations because they provided a steady supply of drinking water and game, made the land fertile for growing crops, and allowed for easy transportation.
- Early river civilizations were all hydraulic empires that maintained power and control through exclusive control over access to water. This system of government arose through the need for flood control and irrigation, which requires central coordination and a specialized bureaucracy.
- Hydraulic hierarchies gave rise to the established permanent institution of impersonal government, since changes in ruling were usually in personnel, but not in the structure of government.

Terms

Fertile Crescent

A crescent-shaped region containing the comparatively moist and fertile land of otherwise arid and semi-arid Western Asia, and the Nile Valley and Nile Delta of northeast Africa. Often called the cradle of civilization.

Hydraulic empire

A social or governmental structure that maintains power through exclusive control of water access.

Caste

A form of social stratification characterized by endogamy (hereditary transmission of a lifestyle). This lifestyle often includes an occupation, ritual status in a hierarchy, and customary social interaction and exclusion based on cultural notions of purity and pollution.

Water crisis

There is not enough fresh, clean water to meet local demand.

Water shortage

Water is less available due to climate change, pollution, or overuse.

Neolithic Revolution

Also called the Agricultural Revolution, this was the wide-scale transition of human cultures from being hunter-gatherers to being settled agriculturalists.

Water stress

Difficulty in finding fresh water, or the depletion of available water sources.

The First Civilizations

The first civilizations formed on the banks of rivers. The most notable examples are the Ancient Egyptians, who were based on the Nile, the Mesopotamians in the Fertile Crescent on the Tigris/Euphrates rivers, the Ancient Chinese on the Yellow River, and the Ancient India on the Indus. These early civilizations began to form around the time of the Neolithic Revolution (12000 BCE).Rivers were attractive locations for the first civilizations because they provided a steady supply of drinking water and made the land fertile for growing crops. Moreover, goods and people could be transported easily, and the people in these civilizations

could fish and hunt the animals that came to drink water. Additionally, those lost in the wilderness could return to civilization by traveling downstream, where the major centers of human population tend to concentrate.

The Nile River and Delta. Most of the Ancient Egyptian settlements occurred along the northern part of the Nile, pictured in this satellite image taken from orbit by NASA.

Hydraulic Empires

Though each civilization was uniquely different, we can see common patterns amongst these first civilizations since they were all based around rivers. Most notably, these early civilizations were all hydraulic empires. A hydraulic empire (also known as hydraulic despotism, or water monopoly empire) is a social or governmental structure which maintains power through exclusive control over water access. This system of government arises through the need for flood control and irrigation, which requires central coordination and a specialized bureaucracy. This political structure is commonly characterized by a system of hierarchy and control based around class or caste. Power, both over resources (food, water, energy) and a means of enforcement, such as the military, are vital for the maintenance of control. Most hydraulic empires exist in desert regions, but imperial China also had some such characteristics, due to the exacting needs of rice cultivation. The only hydraulic empire to exist in Africa was under the Ajuran State near the Jubba and Shebelle Rivers in the 15th century CE.Karl August Wittfogel, the German scholar who first developed the notion of the hydraulic empire, argued in his book, *Oriental Despotism* (1957), that strong government control characterized these civilizations because a particular resource (in this case, river water) was both a central part of economic processes and environmentally limited. This fact made controlling supply and demand easier and allowed the establishment of a more complete monopoly, and also prevented the use of alternative resources to compensate. However, it is also important to note that complex irrigation projects predated states in Madagascar, Mexico, China and Mesopotamia, and thus it cannot be said that a key, limited economic resource necessarily mandates a strong centralized bureaucracy. According to Wittfogel, the typical hydraulic empire government has no trace of an independent aristocracy—in contrast to the decentralized feudalism of medieval Europe. Though tribal societies had structures that were usually personal in nature, exercised by a patriarch over a tribal group related by various degrees of kinship, hydraulic hierarchies gave rise to the established permanent institution of impersonal government. Popular revolution in such a state was very difficult; a dynasty might die out or be overthrown by force, but the new regime would differ very little from the old one. Hydraulic empires were usually destroyed by foreign conquerors.

Water Scarcity Today

Access to water is still crucial to modern civilizations; water scarcity affects more than 2.8 billion people globally. Water stress is the term used to describe difficulty in finding fresh water or the depletion of available water sources. Water shortage is the term used when water is less available due to climate change, pollution, or overuse. Water crisis is the term used when there is not

enough fresh, clean water to meet local demand. Water scarcity may be physical, meaning there are inadequate water resources available in a region, or economic, meaning governments are not managing available resources properly. The United Nations Development Programme has found that water scarcity generally results from the latter issue.

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2.4: The Akkadian Empire

Learning Objectives

- Describe the key political characteristics of the Akkadian Empire

Key Points

- The Akkadian Empire was an ancient Semitic empire centered in the city of Akkad and its surrounding region in ancient Mesopotamia, which united all the indigenous Akkadian speaking Semites and the Sumerian speakers under one rule within a multilingual empire.
- King Sargon, the founder of the empire, conquered several regions in Mesopotamia and consolidated his power by instating Akaddian officials in new territories. He extended trade across Mesopotamia and strengthened the economy through rain-fed agriculture in northern Mesopotamia.
- The Akkadian Empire experienced a period of successful conquest under Naram-Sin due to benign climatic conditions, huge agricultural surpluses, and the confiscation of wealth.
- The empire collapsed after the invasion of the Gutians. Changing climatic conditions also contributed to internal rivalries and fragmentation, and the empire eventually split into the Assyrian Empire in the north and the Babylonian empire in the south.

Terms

Gutians

A group of barbarians from the Zagros Mountains who invaded the Akkadian Empire and contributed to its collapse.

Sargon

The first king of the Akkadians. He conquered many of the surrounding regions to establish the massive multilingual empire.

Akkadian Empire

An ancient Semitic empire centered in the city of Akkad and its surrounding region in ancient Mesopotamia.

Cuneiform

One of the earliest known systems of writing, distinguished by its wedge-shaped marks on clay tablets, and made by means of a blunt reed for a stylus.

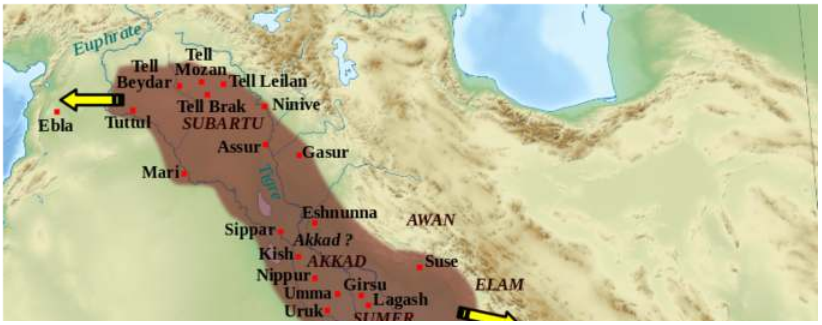
Semites

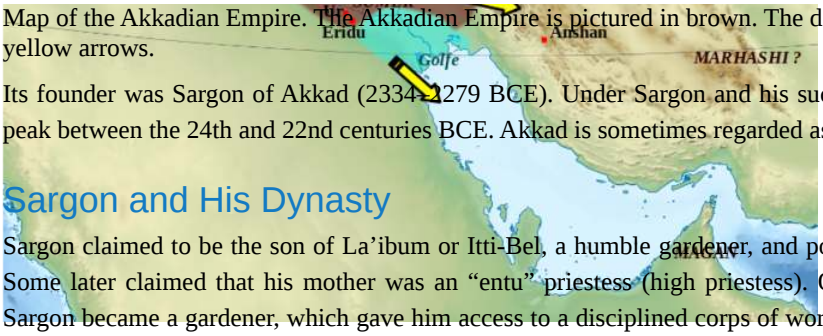
Today, the word “Semite” may be used to refer to any member of any of a number of peoples of ancient Southwest Asian descent, including the Akkadians, Phoenicians, Hebrews (Jews), Arabs, and their descendants.

Naram-Sin

An Akkadian king who conquered Ebla, Armum, and Magan, and built a royal residence at Tell Brak.

The Akkadian Empire was an ancient Semitic empire centered in the city of Akkad, which united all the indigenous Akkadian speaking Semites and Sumerian speakers under one rule. The Empire controlled Mesopotamia, the Levant, and parts of Iran.





Map of the Akkadian Empire. The Akkadian Empire is pictured in brown. The directions of the military campaigns are shown as yellow arrows.

Its founder was Sargon of Akkad (2334–2279 BCE). Under Sargon and his successors, the Akkadian Empire reached its political peak between the 24th and 22nd centuries BCE. Akkad is sometimes regarded as the first empire in history.

Sargon and His Dynasty

Sargon claimed to be the son of La'ibum or Itti-Bel, a humble gardener, and possibly a *hierodule*, or priestess to Ishtar or Inanna. Some later claimed that his mother was an "entu" priestess (high priestess). Originally a cupbearer to king Ur-Zababa of Kish, Sargon became a gardener, which gave him access to a disciplined corps of workers who also may have served as his first soldiers. Displacing Ur-Zababa, Sargon was crowned king and began a career of foreign conquest. He invaded Syria and Canaan on four different campaigns, and spent three years subduing the countries of "the west" to unite them with Mesopotamia "into a single empire."

Sargon's empire reached westward as far as the Mediterranean Sea and perhaps Cyprus (Kaptara); northward as far as the mountains; eastward over Elam; and as far south as Magan (Oman)—a region over which he purportedly reigned for 56 years, though only four "year-names" survive. He replaced rulers with noble citizens of Akkad. Trade extended from the silver mines of Anatolia to the lapis lazuli mines in Afghanistan, and from the cedars of Lebanon to the copper of Magan. The empire's breadbasket was the rain-fed agricultural system of northern Mesopotamia (Assyria), and a chain of fortresses was built to control the imperial wheat production.

Sargon, throughout his long life, showed special deference to the Sumerian deities, particularly Inanna (Ishtar), his patroness, and Zababa, the warrior god of Kish. He called himself "the anointed priest of Anu" and "the great ensi of Enlil".

Sargon managed to crush his opposition even in old age. Difficulties also broke out in the reign of his sons, Rimush (2278–2270 BCE), who was assassinated by his own courtiers, and Manishtushu (2269–2255 BCE), who reigned for 15 years. He, too, was likely assassinated in a palace conspiracy.

Bronze head of a king. Bronze head of a king, most likely Sargon of Akkad but possibly Naram-Sin. Unearthed in Nineveh (now in Iraq).

Naram-Sin

Manishtushu's son and successor, Naram-Sin (called, Beloved of Sin) (2254–2218 BCE), assumed the imperial title "King Naram-Sin, King of the Four Quarters." He was also, for the first time in Sumerian culture, addressed as "the god of Agade (Akkad)." This represents a marked shift away from the previous religious belief that kings were only representatives of the people toward the gods.

Naram-Sin conquered Ebla and Armum, and built a royal residence at Tell Brak, a crossroads at the heart of the Khabur River basin of the Jezirah. Naram-Sin also conquered Magan and created garrisons to protect the main roads. This productive period of Akkadian conquest may have been based upon benign climatic conditions, huge agricultural surpluses, and the confiscation of the wealth of other peoples.

Stele of Naram-Sin. This stele commemorates Naram-Sin's victory against the Lullubi from Zagros in 2260 BCE. Naram-Sin is depicted to be wearing a horned helmet, a symbol of divinity, and is also portrayed in a larger scale in comparison to others to emphasize his superiority.

Living in the Akkadian Empire

Future Mesopotamian states compared themselves to the Akkadian Empire, which they saw as a classical standard in governance. The economy was dependent on irrigated farmlands of southern Iraq, and rain-fed agriculture of Northern Iraq. There was often a surplus of agriculture but shortages of other goods, like metal ore, timber, and building stone. Art of the period often focused on kings, and depicted somber and grim conflict and subjugation to divinities. Sumerians and Akkadians were bilingual in each other's languages, but Akkadian gradually replaced Sumerian. The empire had a postal service, and a library featuring astronomical observations.

Collapse of the Akkadian Empire

The Empire of Akkad collapsed in 2154 BCE, within 180 years of its founding. The collapse ushered in a Dark Age period of regional decline that lasted until the rise of the Third Dynasty of Ur in 2112 BCE. By the end of the reign of Naram-Sin's son, Shar-kali-sharri (2217-2193 BCE), the empire had weakened significantly. There was a period of anarchy between 2192 BC and 2168 BCE. Some centralized authority may have been restored under Shu-Durul (2168-2154 BCE), but he was unable to prevent the empire collapsing outright from the invasion of barbarian peoples, known as the Gutians, from the Zagros Mountains.

Little is known about the Gutian period or for how long it lasted. Cuneiform sources suggest that the Gutians' administration showed little concern for maintaining agriculture, written records, or public safety; they reputedly released all farm animals to roam about Mesopotamia freely, and soon brought about famine and rocketing grain prices. The Sumerian king Ur-Nammu (2112-2095 BCE) later cleared the Gutians from Mesopotamia during his reign.

The collapse of rain-fed agriculture in the Upper Country due to drought meant the loss of the agrarian subsidies which had kept the Akkadian Empire solvent in southern Mesopotamia. Rivalries between pastoralists and farmers increased. Attempts to control

access to water led to increased political instability; meanwhile, severe depopulation occurred.

After the fall of the Akkadian Empire, the Akkadian people coalesced into two major Akkadian speaking nations: Assyria in the north, and, a few centuries later, Babylonia in the south.

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2.5: Ur

Learning Objectives

- To understand the significance of the city-state of Ur

Key Points

- Ur was a major Sumerian city-state located in Mesopotamia, founded circa 3800 BCE.
- Cuneiform tablets show that Ur was a highly centralized, wealthy, bureaucratic state during the third millennium BCE.
- The Ziggurat of Ur was built in the 21st century BCE, during the reign of Ur-Nammu, and was reconstructed in the 6th century BCE by Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon.
- Control of Ur passed among various peoples until the Third Dynasty of Ur, which featured the strong kings Ur-Nammu and Shulgi.
- Ur was uninhabited by 500 BCE.

Terms

Sargon the Great

A Semitic emperor of the Akkadian Empire, known for conquering Sumerian city-states in the 24th and 23rd centuries BCE.

Ziggurat

A rectangular stepped tower, sometimes surmounted by a temple.

Sumerian

A group of non-Semitic people living in ancient Mesopotamia.

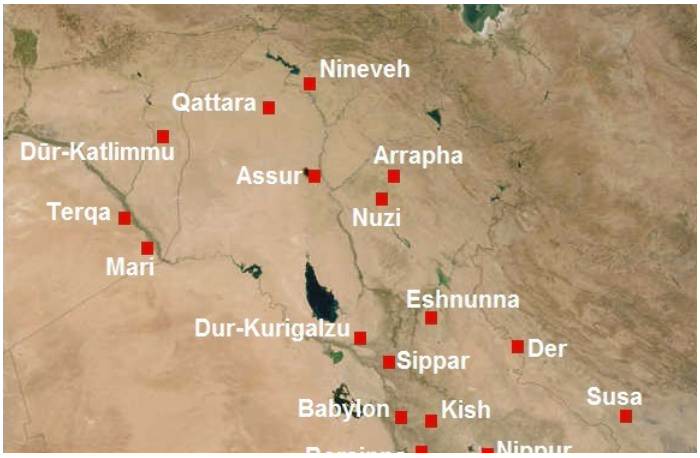
Cuneiform

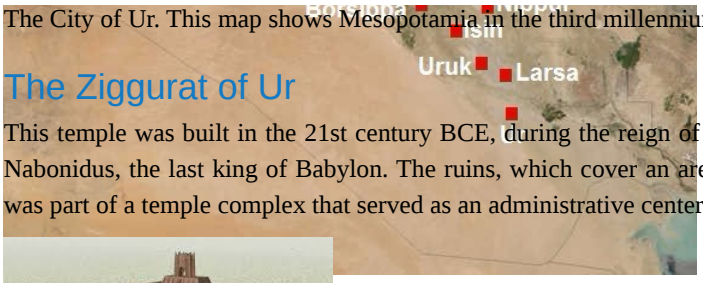
Wedge-shaped characters imprinted onto clay tablets, used in ancient writing systems of Mesopotamia.

A Major Mesopotamian City

Ur was a major Sumerian city-state located in Mesopotamia, marked today by Tell el-Muqayyar in southern Iraq. It was founded circa 3800 BCE, and was recorded in written history from the 26th century BCE. Its patron god was Nanna, the moon god, and the city's name literally means "the abode of Nanna."

Cuneiform tablets show that Ur was, during the third millennium BCE, a highly centralized, wealthy, bureaucratic state. The discovery of the Royal Tombs, dating from about the 25th century BCE, showed that the area had luxury items made out of precious metals and semi-precious stones, which would have required importation. Some estimate that Ur was the largest city in the world from 2030-1980 BCE, with approximately 65,000 people.





The City of Ur. This map shows Mesopotamia in the third millennium BCE, with Ur in the south.

The Ziggurat of Ur

This temple was built in the 21st century BCE, during the reign of Ur-Nammu, and was reconstructed in the 6th century BCE by Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon. The ruins, which cover an area of 3,900 feet by 2,600 feet, were uncovered in the 1930s. It was part of a temple complex that served as an administrative center for the city of Ur, and was dedicated to Nanna, the moon god.

The Ziggurat of Ur. This is a reconstruction of Ur-Nammu's ziggurat.

Control of Ur

Between the 24th and 22nd century BCE, Ur was controlled by Sargon the Great, of the Akkadian Empire. After the fall of this empire, Ur was ruled by the barbarian Gutians, until King Ur-Nammu came to power, circa 2047 – 2030 BCE (the Third Dynasty of Ur). Advances during this time included the building of temples, like the Ziggurat, better agricultural irrigation, and a code of laws, called the Code of Ur-Nammu, which preceded the Code of Hammurabi by 300 years.

Shulgi succeeded Ur-Nammu, and was able to increase Ur's power by creating a highly centralized bureaucratic state. Shulgi, who eventually declared himself a god, ruled from 2029-1982 BCE, and was well-known for at least two thousand years after.

Three more kings, Amar-Sin, Shu0Sin and Ibbi-Sin, ruled Ur before it fell to the Elamites in 1940 BCE. Although Ur lost its political power, it remained economically important. It was ruled by the first dynasty of Babylonia, then part of the Sealand Dynasty, then by the Kassites before falling to the Assyrian Empire from the 10th-7th century BE. After the 7th century BCE, it was ruled by the Chaldean Dynasty of Babylon. It began its final decline around 550 BCE, and was uninhabited by 500 BE. The final decline was likely due to drought, changing river patterns and the silting of the Persian Gulf.

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2.6: Babylon

Learning Objectives

- Describe key characteristics of the Babylonian Empire under Hammurabi

Key Points

- A series of conflicts between the Amorites and the Assyrians followed the collapse of the Akkadian Empire, out of which Babylon arose as a powerful city-state c. 1894 BCE.
- Babylon remained a minor territory for a century after it was founded, until the reign of its sixth Amorite ruler, Hammurabi (1792-1750 BCE), an extremely efficient ruler who established a bureaucracy with taxation and centralized government.
- Hammurabi also enjoyed various military successes over the whole of southern Mesopotamia, modern-day Iran and Syria, and the old Assyrian Empire in Asian Minor.
- After the death of Hammurabi, the First Babylonian Dynasty eventually fell due to attacks from outside its borders.

Terms

Marduk

The south Mesopotamian god that rose to supremacy in the pantheon over the previous god, Enlil.

Hammurabi

The sixth king of Babylon, who, under his rule, saw Babylonian advancements, both militarily and bureaucratically.

Code of Hammurabi

A code of law that echoed and improved upon earlier written laws of Sumer, Akkad, and Assyria.

Amorites

An ancient Semitic-speaking people from ancient Syria who also occupied large parts of Mesopotamia in the 21st Century BCE.

The Rise of the First Babylonian Dynasty

Following the disintegration of the Akkadian Empire, the Sumerians rose up with the Third Dynasty of Ur in the late 22nd century BCE, and ejected the barbarian Gutians from southern Mesopotamia. The Sumerian “Ur-III” dynasty eventually collapsed at the hands of the Elamites, another Semitic people, in 2002 BCE. Conflicts between the Amorites (Western Semitic nomads) and the Assyrians continued until Sargon I (1920-1881 BCE) succeeded as king in Assyria and withdrew Assyria from the region, leaving the Amorites in control (the Amorite period).

One of these Amorite dynasties founded the city-state of Babylon circa 1894 BCE, which would ultimately take over the others and form the short-lived first Babylonian empire, also called the Old Babylonian Period.

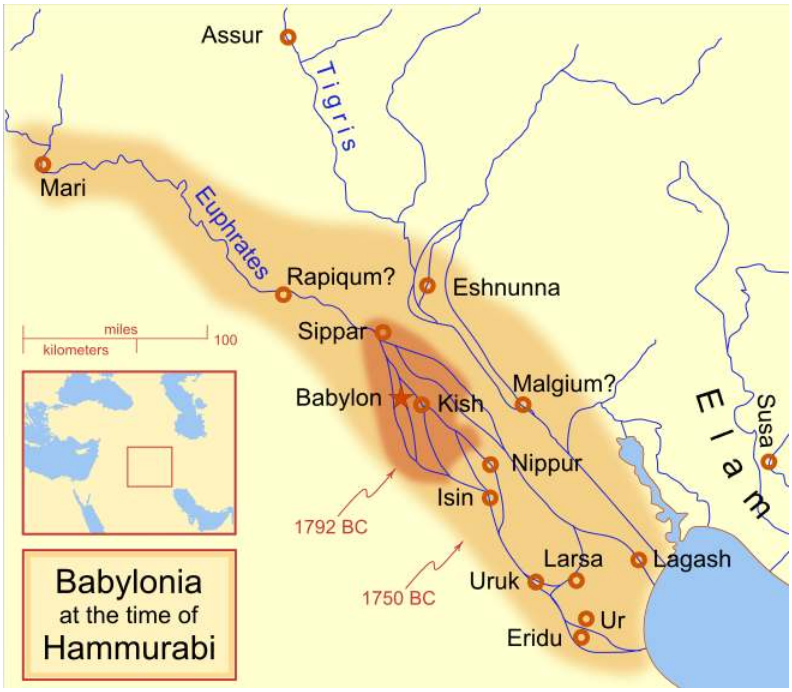
A chieftain named Sumuabum appropriated the then relatively small city of Babylon from the neighboring Mesopotamian city state of Kazallu, turning it into a state in its own right. Sumuabum appears never to have been given the title of King, however.

The Babylonians Under Hammurabi

Babylon remained a minor territory for a century after it was founded, until the reign of its sixth Amorite ruler, Hammurabi (1792-1750 BCE). He was an efficient ruler, establishing a centralized bureaucracy with taxation. Hammurabi freed Babylon from Elamite dominance, and then conquered the whole of southern Mesopotamia, bringing stability and the name of Babylonia to the region.

The armies of Babylonia under Hammurabi were well-disciplined, and he was able to invade modern-day Iran to the east and conquer the pre-Iranic Elamites, Gutians and Kassites. To the west, Hammurabi enjoyed military success against the Semitic states

of the Levant (modern Syria), including the powerful kingdom of Mari. Hammurabi also entered into a protracted war with the Old Assyrian Empire for control of Mesopotamia and the Near East. Assyria had extended control over parts of Asia Minor from the 21st century BCE, and from the latter part of the 19th century BCE had asserted itself over northeast Syria and central Mesopotamia as well. After a protracted, unresolved struggle over decades with the Assyrian king Ishme-Dagan, Hammurabi forced his successor, Mut-Ashkur, to pay tribute to Babylon c. 1751 BCE, thus giving Babylonia control over Assyria's centuries-old Hattian and Hurrian colonies in Asia Minor.



Babylonia under Hammurabi. The extent of the Babylonian Empire at the start and end of Hammurabi's reign.

One of the most important works of this First Dynasty of Babylon was the compilation in about 1754 BCE of a code of laws, called the Code of Hammurabi, which echoed and improved upon the earlier written laws of Sumer, Akkad, and Assyria. It is one of the oldest deciphered writings of significant length in the world. The Code consists of 282 laws, with scaled punishments depending on social status, adjusting "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Nearly one-half of the Code deals with matters of contract. A third of the code addresses issues concerning household and family relationships.

From before 3000 BC until the reign of Hammurabi, the major cultural and religious center of southern Mesopotamia had been the ancient city of Nippur, where the god Enlil reigned supreme. However, with the rise of Hammurabi, this honor was transferred to Babylon, and the god Marduk rose to supremacy (with the god Ashur remaining the dominant deity in Assyria). The city of Babylon became known as a "holy city," where any legitimate ruler of southern Mesopotamia had to be crowned. Hammurabi turned what had previously been a minor administrative town into a major city, increasing its size and population dramatically, and conducting a number of impressive architectural works.

The Decline of the First Babylonian Dynasty

Despite Hammurabi's various military successes, southern Mesopotamia had no natural, defensible boundaries, which made it vulnerable to attack. After the death of Hammurabi, his empire began to disintegrate rapidly. Under his successor Samsu-iluna (1749-1712 BCE), the far south of Mesopotamia was lost to a native Akkadian king, called Ilum-ma-ili, and became the Sealand Dynasty; it remained free of Babylon for the next 272 years.

Both the Babylonians and their Amorite rulers were driven from Assyria to the north by an Assyrian-Akkadian governor named Puzur-Sin, c. 1740 BCE. Amorite rule survived in a much-reduced Babylon, Samshu-iluna's successor, Abi-Eshuh, made a vain attempt to recapture the Sealand Dynasty for Babylon, but met defeat at the hands of king Damqi-ilishu II. By the end of his reign, Babylonia had shrunk to the small and relatively weak nation it had been upon its foundation.

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2.7: Hammurabi's Code

Learning Objectives

- Describe the significance of Hammurabi's code

Key Points

- The Code of Hammurabi is one of the oldest deciphered writings of length in the world (written c. 1754 BCE), and features a code of law from ancient Babylon in Mesopotamia.
- The Code consisted of 282 laws, with punishments that varied based on social status (slaves, free men, and property owners).
- Some have seen the Code as an early form of constitutional government, as an early form of the presumption of innocence, and as the ability to present evidence in one's case.
- Major laws covered in the Code include slander, trade, slavery, the duties of workers, theft, liability, and divorce. Nearly half of the code focused on contracts, and a third on household relationships.
- There were three social classes: the amelu (the elite), the mushkenu (free men) and ardu (slave).
- Women had limited rights, and were mostly based around marriage contracts and divorce rights.

Terms

cuneiform

Wedge-shaped characters used in the ancient writing systems of Mesopotamia, impressed on clay tablets.

ardu

In Babylon, a slave.

mushkenu

In Babylon, a free man who was probably landless.

amelu

In Babylon, an elite social class of people.

stele

A stone or wooden slab, generally taller than it is wide, erected as a monument.

The Code of Hammurabi is one of the oldest deciphered writings of length in the world, and features a code of law from ancient Babylon in Mesopotamia. Written in about 1754 BCE by the sixth king of Babylon, Hammurabi, the Code was written on stone stele and clay tablets. It consisted of 282 laws, with punishments that varied based on social status (slaves, free men, and property owners). It is most famous for the "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (*lex talionis*) form of punishment. Other forms of codes of law had been in existence in the region around this time, including the Code of Ur-Nammu, king of Ur (c. 2050 BCE), the Laws of Eshnunna (c. 1930 BCE) and the codex of Lipit-Ishtar of Isin (c. 1870 BCE).

The laws were arranged in groups, so that citizens could easily read what was required of them. Some have seen the Code as an early form of constitutional government, and as an early form of the presumption of innocence, and the ability to present evidence in one's case. Intent was often recognized and affected punishment, with neglect severely punished. Some of the provisions may have been codification of Hammurabi's decisions, for the purpose of self-glorification. Nevertheless, the Code was studied, copied, and used as a model for legal reasoning for at least 1500 years after.

The prologue of the Code features Hammurabi stating that he wants "to make justice visible in the land, to destroy the wicked person and the evil-doer, that the strong might not injure the weak." Major laws covered in the Code include slander, trade, slavery, the duties of workers, theft, liability, and divorce. Nearly half of the code focused on contracts, such as wages to be paid, terms of transactions, and liability in case of property damage. A third of the code focused on household and family issues, including

inheritance, divorce, paternity and sexual behavior. One section establishes that a judge who incorrectly decides an issue may be removed from his position permanently. A few sections address military service.

One of the most well-known sections of the Code was law #196: “If a man destroy the eye of another man, they shall destroy his eye. If one break a man’s bone, they shall break his bone. If one destroy the eye of a freeman or break the bone of a freeman he shall pay one gold mina. If one destroy the eye of a man’s slave or break a bone of a man’s slave he shall pay one-half his price.”

The Social Classes

Under Hammurabi’s reign, there were three social classes. The *amelu* was originally an elite person with full civil rights, whose birth, marriage and death were recorded. Although he had certain privileges, he also was liable for harsher punishment and higher fines. The king and his court, high officials, professionals and craftsmen belonged to this group. The *mushkenu* was a free man who may have been landless. He was required to accept monetary compensation, paid smaller fines and lived in a separate section of the city. The *ardu* was a slave whose master paid for his upkeep, but also took his compensation. *Ardu* could own property and other slaves, and could purchase his own freedom.

Women’s Rights

Women entered into marriage through a contract arranged by her family. She came with a dowry, and the gifts given by the groom to the bride also came with her. Divorce was up to the husband, but after divorce he then had to restore the dowry and provide her with an income, and any children came under the woman’s custody. However, if the woman was considered a “bad wife” she might be sent away, or made a slave in the husband’s house. If a wife brought action against her husband for cruelty and neglect, she could have a legal separation if the case was proved. Otherwise, she might be drowned as punishment. Adultery was punished with drowning of both parties, unless a husband was willing to pardon his wife.

Discovery of the Code

Archaeologists, including Egyptologist Gustave Jequier, discovered the code in 1901 at the ancient site of Susa in Khuzestan; a translation was published in 1902 by Jean-Vincent Scheil. A basalt stele containing the code in cuneiform script inscribed in the Akkadian language is currently on display in the Louvre, in Paris, France. Replicas are located at other museums throughout the world.

The Code of Hammurabi. This basalt stele has the Code of Hammurabi inscribed in cuneiform script in the Akkadian language.

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2.8: Babylonian Culture

Learning Objectives

- Evaluate the extent and influence of Babylonian culture

Key Points

- Babylonian temples were massive structures of crude brick, supported by buttresses. Such uses of brick led to the early development of the pilaster and column, and of frescoes and enameled tiles.
- Certain pieces of Babylonian art featured crude three-dimensional statues, and gem-cutting was considered a high-perfection art.
- The Babylonians produced extensive compendiums of astronomical records containing catalogues of stars and constellations, as well as schemes for calculating various astronomical coordinates and phenomena.
- Medicinally, the Babylonians introduced basic medical processes, such as diagnosis and prognosis, and also catalogued a variety of illnesses with their symptoms.
- Both Babylonian men and women learned to read and write, and much of Babylonian literature is translated from ancient Sumerian texts, such as the Epic of Gilgamesh.

Terms

Epic of Gilgamesh

One of the most famous Babylonian works, a twelve-book saga translated from the original Sumerian.

pilaster

An architectural element in classical architecture used to give the appearance of a supporting column and to articulate an extent of wall, with only an ornamental function.

etiology

Causation. In medicine, cause or origin of disease or condition.

mudbrick

A brick mixture of loam, mud, sand, and water mixed with a binding material, such as rice husks or straw.

Enūma Anu Enlil

A series of cuneiform tablets containing centuries of Babylonian observations of celestial phenomena.

Diagnostic Handbook

The most extensive Babylonian medical text, written by Esagil-kin-apli of Borsippa.

Art and Architecture

In Babylonia, an abundance of clay and lack of stone led to greater use of mudbrick. Babylonian temples were thus massive structures of crude brick, supported by buttresses. The use of brick led to the early development of the pilaster and column, and of frescoes and enameled tiles. The walls were brilliantly colored, and sometimes plated with zinc or gold, as well as with tiles. Painted terracotta cones for torches were also embedded in the plaster. In Babylonia, in place of the bas-relief, there was a preponderance of three-dimensional figures—the earliest examples being the Statues of Gudea—that were realistic, if also somewhat clumsy. The paucity of stone in Babylonia made every pebble a commodity and led to a high perfection in the art of gem-cutting.

Astronomy

During the 8th and 7th centuries BCE, Babylonian astronomers developed a new empirical approach to astronomy. They began studying philosophy dealing with the ideal nature of the universe and began employing an internal logic within their predictive planetary systems. This was an important contribution to astronomy and the philosophy of science, and some scholars have thus referred to this new approach as the first scientific revolution. Tablets dating back to the Old Babylonian period document the application of mathematics to variations in the length of daylight over a solar year. Centuries of Babylonian observations of celestial phenomena are recorded in a series of cuneiform tablets known as the "Enūma Anu Enlil." In fact, the oldest significant astronomical text known to mankind is Tablet 63 of the Enūma Anu Enlil, the Venus tablet of Ammi-saduqa, which lists the first and last visible risings of Venus over a period of about 21 years. This record is the earliest evidence that planets were recognized as periodic phenomena. The oldest rectangular astrolabe dates back to Babylonia c. 1100 BCE. The MUL.APIN contains catalogues of stars and constellations as well as schemes for predicting heliacal risings and the settings of the planets, as well as lengths of daylight measured by a water-clock, gnomon, shadows, and intercalations. The Babylonian GU text arranges stars in "strings" that lie along declination circles (thus measuring right-ascensions or time-intervals), and also employs the stars of the zenith, which are also separated by given right-ascensional differences.

Medicine

The oldest Babylonian texts on medicine date back to the First Babylonian Dynasty in the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE. The most extensive Babylonian medical text, however, is the Diagnostic Handbook written by the ummânū, or chief scholar, Esagil-kin-apli of Borsippa.

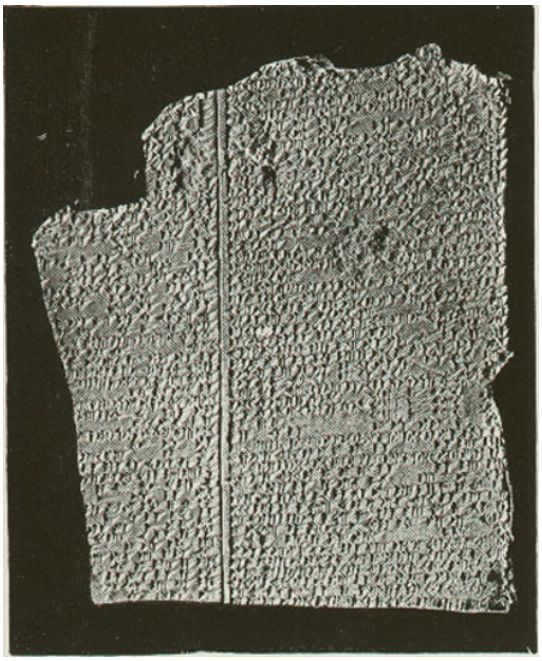
The Babylonians introduced the concepts of diagnosis, prognosis, physical examination, and prescriptions. The Diagnostic Handbook additionally introduced the methods of therapy and etiology outlining the use of empiricism, logic, and rationality in diagnosis, prognosis and treatment. For example, the text contains a list of medical symptoms and often detailed empirical observations along with logical rules used in combining observed symptoms on the body of a patient with its diagnosis and prognosis. In particular, Esagil-kin-apli discovered a variety of illnesses and diseases and described their symptoms in his Diagnostic Handbook, including those of many varieties of epilepsy and related ailments.

Literature

Libraries existed in most towns and temples. Women as well as men learned to read and write, and had knowledge of the extinct Sumerian language, along with a complicated and extensive syllabary.

A considerable amount of Babylonian literature was translated from Sumerian originals, and the language of religion and law long continued to be written in the old agglutinative language of Sumer. Vocabularies, grammars, and interlinear translations were compiled for the use of students, as well as commentaries on the older texts and explanations of obscure words and phrases. The characters of the syllabary were organized and named, and elaborate lists of them were drawn up.

There are many Babylonian literary works whose titles have come down to us. One of the most famous of these was the Epic of Gilgamesh, in twelve books, translated from the original Sumerian by a certain Sin-liqi-unninni, and arranged upon an astronomical principle. Each division contains the story of a single adventure in the career of King Gilgamesh. The whole story is a composite product, and it is probable that some of the stories are artificially attached to the central figure.



A Tablet from the Epic of Gilgamesh. The Deluge tablet of the Gilgamesh epic in Akkadian.

Philosophy

The origins of Babylonian philosophy can be traced back to early Mesopotamian wisdom literature, which embodied certain philosophies of life, particularly ethics, in the forms of dialectic, dialogs, epic poetry, folklore, hymns, lyrics, prose, and proverbs. Babylonian reasoning and rationality developed beyond empirical observation. It is possible that Babylonian philosophy had an influence on Greek philosophy, particularly Hellenistic philosophy. The Babylonian text Dialogue of Pessimism contains similarities to the agonistic thought of the sophists, the Heraclitean doctrine of contrasts, and the dialogs of Plato, as well as a precursor to the maieutic Socratic method of Socrates.

Neo-Babylonian Culture

The resurgence of Babylonian culture in the 7th and 6th century BCE resulted in a number of developments. In astronomy, a new approach was developed, based on the philosophy of the ideal nature of the early universe, and an internal logic within their predictive planetary systems. Some scholars have called this the first scientific revolution, and it was later adopted by Greek astronomers. The Babylonian astronomer Seleucus of Seleucia (b. 190 BCE) supported a heliocentric model of planetary motion. In mathematics, the Babylonians devised the base 60 numeral system, determined the square root of two correctly to seven places, and demonstrated knowledge of the Pythagorean theorem before Pythagoras.

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2.9: Nebuchadnezzar and the Fall of Babylon

Learning Objectives

- Describe the key characteristics of the Second Dynasty of Isin

Key Points

- Following the collapse of the First Babylonian Dynasty under Hammurabi, the Babylonian Empire entered a period of relatively weakened rule under the Kassites for 576 years. The Kassite Dynasty eventually fell itself due to the loss of territory and military weakness.
- The Kassites were succeeded by the Elamites, who themselves were conquered by Marduk-kabit-ahheshu, the founder of the Second Dynasty of Isin.
- Nebuchadnezzar I was the most famous ruler of the Second Dynasty of Isin. He enjoyed military successes for the first part of his career, then turned to peaceful building projects in his later years.
- The Babylonian Empire suffered major blows to its power when Nebuchadnezzar's sons lost a series of wars with Assyria, and their successors effectively became vassals of the Assyrian king. Babylonia descended into a period of chaos in 1026 BCE.

Terms

Assyrian Empire

A major Semitic empire of the Ancient Near East which existed as an independent state for a period of approximately nineteen centuries.

Nebuchadnezzar I

The most famous ruler of the Second Dynasty of Isin, who sacked the Elamite capital of Susa and devoted himself to peaceful building projects after securing Babylonia's borders.

Elamites

An ancient civilization centered in the far west and southwest of modern-day Iran.

Kassite Dynasty

An ancient Near Eastern people who controlled Babylonia for nearly 600 years after the fall of the First Babylonian Dynasty.

Marduk-kabit-ahheshu

Overthrower of the Elamites and the founder of the Second Dynasty of Isin.

Kudurru

A type of stone document used as boundary stones and as records of land grants to vassals by the Kassites in ancient Babylonia.

The Fall of the Kassite Dynasty and the Rise of the Second Dynasty of Isin

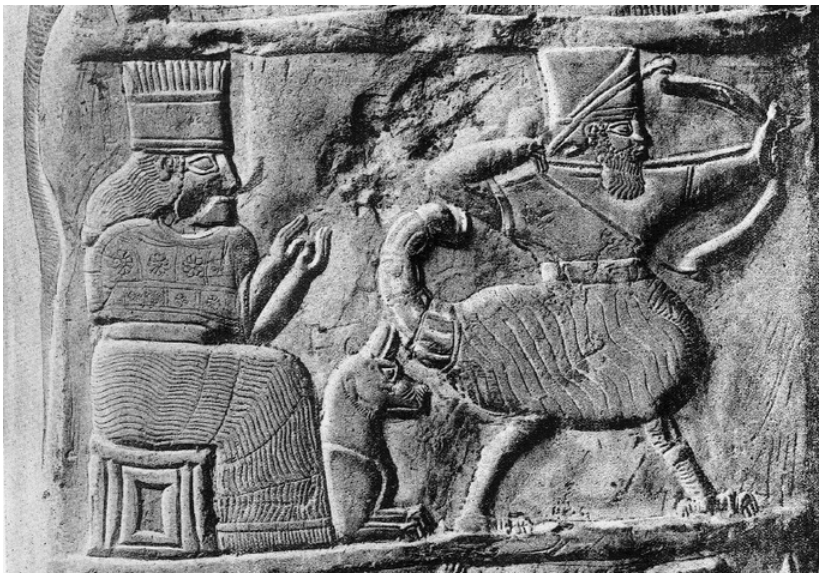
Following the collapse of the First Babylonian Dynasty under Hammurabi, the Babylonian Empire entered a period of relatively weakened rule under the Kassites for 576 years— the longest dynasty in Babylonian history. The Kassite Dynasty eventually fell due to the loss of territory and military weakness, which resulted in the evident reduction in literacy and culture. In 1157 BCE, Babylon was conquered by Shutruk-Nahhunte of Elam.

The Elamites did not remain in control of Babylonia long, and Marduk-kabit-ahheshu (1155-1139 BCE) established the Second Dynasty of Isin. This dynasty was the very first native Akkadian-speaking south Mesopotamian dynasty to rule Babylon, and was to remain in power for some 125 years. The new king successfully drove out the Elamites and prevented any possible Kassite revival. Later in his reign, he went to war with Assyria and had some initial success before suffering defeat at the hands of the

Assyrian king Ashur-Dan I. He was succeeded by his son Itti-Marduk-balatu in 1138 BCE, who was followed a year later by Ninurta-nadin-shumi in 1137 BCE.

The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I and His Sons

Nebuchadnezzar I (1124-1103 BCE) was the most famous ruler of the Second Dynasty of Isin. He not only fought and defeated the Elamites and drove them from Babylonian territory but invaded Elam itself, sacked the Elamite capital Susa, and recovered the sacred statue of Marduk that had been carried off from Babylon. In the later years of his reign, he devoted himself to peaceful building projects and securing Babylonia's borders. His construction activities are memorialized in building inscriptions of the Ekituš-ḫegal-tila, the temple of Adad in Babylon, and on bricks from the temple of Enlil in Nippur. A late Babylonian inventory lists his donations of gold vessels in Ur. The earliest of three extant economic texts is dated to Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year; in addition to two kudurrus and a stone memorial tablet, they form the only existing commercial records. These artifacts evidence the dynasty's power as builders, craftsmen, and managers of the business of the empire.



The Kudurru of Nebuchadnezzar. This detail depicts Nebuchadnezzar granting Marduk freedom from taxation.

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his two sons, firstly Enlil-nadin-apli (1103-1100 BCE), who lost territory to Assyria, and then Marduk-nadin-ahhe (1098-1081 BCE), who also went to war with Assyria. Some initial success in these conflicts gave way to catastrophic defeat at the hands of Tiglath-pileser I, who annexed huge swathes of Babylonian territory, thereby further expanding the Assyrian Empire. Following this military defeat, a terrible famine gripped Babylon, which invited attacks from Semitic Aramean tribes from the west.

In 1072 BCE, King Marduk-shapik-zeri signed a peace treaty with Ashur-bel-kala of Assyria. His successor, Kadašman-Buriaš, however, did not maintain his predecessor's peaceful intentions, and his actions prompted the Assyrian king to invade Babylonia and place his own man on the throne. Assyrian domination continued until c. 1050 BCE, with the two reigning Babylonian kings regarded as vassals of Assyria. Assyria descended into a period of civil war after 1050 BCE, which allowed Babylonia to once more largely free itself from the Assyrian yoke for a few decades.

However, Babylonia soon began to suffer repeated incursions from Semitic nomadic peoples migrating from the west, and large swathes of Babylonia were appropriated and occupied by these newly arrived Arameans, Chaldeans, and Suteans. Starting in 1026 and lasting till 911 BCE, Babylonia descended into a period of chaos.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Early Civilizations of Africa and the Andes

3.1: Sao

3.2: Ancient Carthage

3.3: The Caral Civilization

3.4: The Chavín Civilization

3.5: The Valdivia Culture

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3.1: Sao

Learning Objectives

- Identify where and when the Sao lived

Key Points

- The Sao civilization flourished in Middle Africa from the 6th century BCE to as late as the 16th century CE. Due to a lack of written records, little is known about the Sao's culture or political organization.
- One theory of the origin of the Sao states that they descended from the Hyksos, who conquered Ancient Egypt and later moved south, from the Nile valley to mid-Africa, after fleeing invaders. The Sao were made up of several patrilineal clans who were united into a single polity with one language, race, and religion.
- It is unclear why the Sao declined, but it may have been due to conquest or assimilation.
- Today, several ethnic groups of northern Cameroon and southern Chad, particularly the Sara, claim to be descendants of the Sao.

Terms

Hyksos

A people of mixed Semitic and Asian descent who invaded Egypt and settled in the Nile delta c. 1640 BCE. They were driven out of Egypt c. 1532 BCE.

patrilineal

Pertaining to descent through male lines.

Islamization

The process of a society's shift toward the religion of Islam.

The Sao civilization flourished in Middle Africa from the 6th century BCE to as late as the 16th century CE. They lived by the Chari River, south of Lake Chad, in parts of modern-day Cameroon and Chad.

Chari River. Region including Lake Chad, Cameroon, and environs.

For more than 2,000 years, the Chadian Basin has been inhabited by agricultural and sedentary people. The region became a crossroads of civilizations. The earliest of these were the legendary Sao, known today only from artifacts and oral histories. They

left no written records and are known only through archaeological finds and the oral history of their successors in the territory. Unfortunately, little is known about the Sao's culture or political organization. One theory of the origin of the Sao states that they descended from the Hyksos, who conquered Ancient Egypt and later moved south, from the Nile valley to mid-Africa, after fleeing invaders.

Sao artifacts show that they were skilled workers in bronze, copper, and iron. They made bronze sculptures and terra cotta statues of human and animal figures, funerary urns, and highly decorated pottery. The Sao were made up of several patrilineal clans who were united into a single polity with one language, race, and religion.

Sao Sculpture. A Sao sculpture from Chad.

The Sao's demise may have come about due to conquest, Islamization, or a combination of the two. Traditional tales say that the Sao west of Lake Chad fell to "Yemenites" from the east. If true, the newcomers may have been Arab Bedouin or Sayfuwa raiders coming from the east, who moved into the region in the 14th century CE. Although some scholars estimate that the Sao civilization south of Lake Chad lasted until the 14th or 15th century CE, the majority opinion is that it ceased to exist as a separate culture sometime in the 16th century CE.

The Sao fell to the Kanem Empire, the first and longest-lasting of the empires that developed in Chad's Sahelian strip by the end of the 1st millennium CE. The power of Kanem and its successors was based on control of the trans-Saharan trade routes that passed through the region.

Today, several ethnic groups of northern Cameroon and southern Chad, particularly the Sara, claim to be descendants of the Sao. The Sara are an ethnic group who reside in southern Chad and Central African Republic. They make up 27.7% of Chad's total population (year 1993 Census). Other ethnic groups in the Lake Chad basin area, including the Buduma, Gamergu, Kanembu, Kotoko and Musgum, also claim to be descended from the Sao.

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3.2: Ancient Carthage

Learning Objectives

- Explain Carthage's culture and the Punic Wars

Key Points

- Ancient Carthage was the empire born of the Phoenician city-state Carthage.
- Carthage practiced highly advanced and productive agriculture and manufacturing.
- Carthage traded in almost every commodity wanted by the ancient world, including spices from Arabia, Africa, and India. It also participated in the slave trade.
- The military of Carthage was one of the largest military forces in the ancient world; its navy was its strongest force.
- The Punic Wars were fought with Rome from 265 BCE to 146 BCE. The main cause was the conflict of interest between the existing Carthaginian Empire and the expanding Roman Republic.
- The Third Punic War began in 149 BCE, and culminated in the defeat of Carthage.

Terms

Phoenician

A Semitic people inhabiting ancient Phoenicia and its colonies.

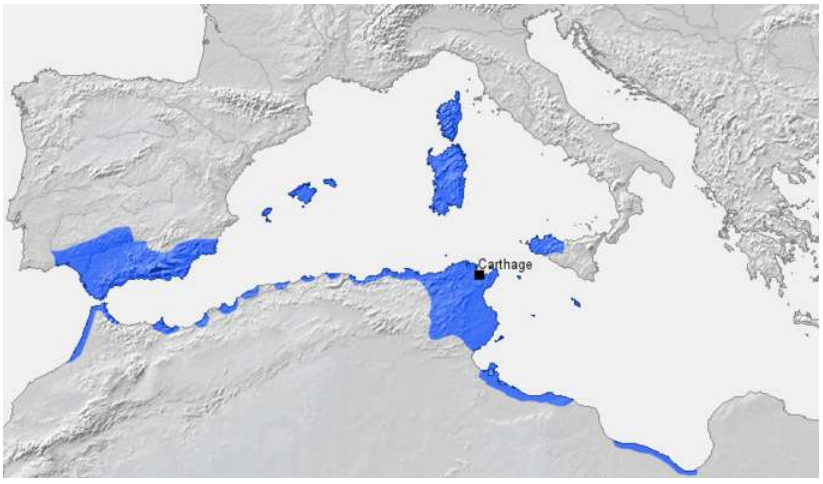
polytheism

The belief in, or worship of, more than one god.

Punic Wars

A set of three wars between Carthage and Rome that culminated in the fall of Carthage.

Ancient Carthage was a North African, Phoenician civilization that lasted from c. 650 BCE to 146 BCE. They were defeated by the Romans in 146 BCE. Carthage eventually extended across northern Africa and into the south of modern-day Spain.



Carthage. Ancient Carthage in 264 BCE.

Culture

Carthaginian religion was based on Phoenician religion (derived from the faiths of the Levant), a form of polytheism. Many of the gods the Carthaginians worshiped were localized, and are now known only under their local names.

Carthage produced finely embroidered silks, dyed textiles of cotton, linen,and wool, artistic and functional pottery, and perfumes. Its artisans worked expertly with ivory, glassware, and wood, as well as with metals and precious stones. It traded in salted Atlantic

fish and fish sauce (garum), and brokered the products of almost every Mediterranean people. In addition to manufacturing, Carthage practiced highly advanced and productive agriculture, using iron ploughs, irrigation, and crop rotation.

Carthaginian commerce extended by sea throughout the Mediterranean, and perhaps into the Atlantic as far as the Canary Islands, and by land across the Sahara desert. According to Aristotle, the Carthaginians and others had treaties of commerce to regulate their exports and imports.The empire of Carthage depended heavily on its trade with cities of the Iberian peninsula, from which it obtained vast quantities of silver, lead, copper and—most importantly —tin ore, which was essential for the manufacture of bronze objects by the civilizations of antiquity.

Carthaginian trade-relations with the Iberians (and the naval strength that enforced Carthage's monopoly on Iberian trade and that with tin-rich Britain), made it the sole significant broker of tin and maker of bronze in its day. Maintaining this monopoly was one of the major sources of power and prosperity for Carthage; Carthaginian merchants strove to keep the location of the tin mines secret. In addition to its role as the sole significant distributor of tin, Carthage's central location in the Mediterranean and control of the waters between Sicily and Tunisia allowed it to control the eastern peoples' supply of tin. Carthage was also the Mediterranean's largest producer of silver mined in Iberia and on the North African coast; after the tin monopoly, silver was one of its most profitable trades.

Carthage also sent caravans into the interior of Africa and Persia. It traded its manufactured and agricultural goods to the coastal and interior peoples of Africa for salt, gold, timber, ivory, ebony, apes, peacocks, skins, and hides. Its merchants invented the practice of sale by auction and used it to trade with the African tribes. In other ports, they tried to establish permanent warehouses, or sell their goods in open-air markets.

Carthage obtained amber from Scandinavia, and from the Celtiberians, Gauls, and Celts they got amber, tin, silver, and furs. Sardinia and Corsica produced gold and silver for Carthage, and Phoenician settlements on islands, such as Malta and the Balearic Islands, produced commodities that would be sent back to Carthage for large-scale distribution. The city supplied poorer civilizations with simple products (such as pottery, metallic objects, and ornamentations), often displacing the local manufacturing, and meanwhile brought its best works to wealthier civilizations (such as the Greeks and Etruscans). Carthage traded in almost every commodity wanted by the ancient world, including spices from Arabia, Africa and India. It also participated in the slave trade.

Military and Warfare

The military of Carthage was one of the largest military forces in the ancient world. Although Carthage's navy was always its main military force, the army acquired a key role in the spread of Carthaginian power over the native peoples of northern Africa and southern Iberian Peninsula, from the 6th century BC to the 3rd century BC. Carthage's military also allowed it to expand into Sardinia and the Balearic Islands. This expansion transformed the military from a body of citizen-soldiers into a multinational force composed primarily of foreign mercenary units.

Ancient Carthage was almost constantly at war with the Greeks or the Romans. One set of wars was called the Punic Wars. They were fought with Rome from 265 BCE to 146 BCE. The main cause of the Punic Wars was the conflict of interest between the existing Carthaginian Empire and the expanding Roman Republic. The Romans were initially interested in expansion via Sicily (at that time a cultural melting pot), part of which lay under Carthaginian control. At the start of the first Punic War, Carthage was the dominant power of the Western Mediterranean, with an extensive maritime empire. Rome, meanwhile, was the rapidly ascending power in Italy, which still lacked the naval power of Carthage.

It was during the Second Punic War that the Carthaginian leader Hannibal launched his famous overland attack on Rome. By the end of the third war, which began in 149 BCE, many hundreds of thousands of soldiers from both sides had been lost, and Rome succeeded in conquering Carthage's empire. The Romans completely destroyed Carthage, and became the most powerful state in the Western Mediterranean. During this period, Rome emerged as the dominant Mediterranean power and one of the most powerful cities in classical antiquity. The Roman victories over Carthage in these wars gave Rome a preeminent status, a status it would retain until the 5th century CE.

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3.3: The Caral Civilization

Learning Objectives

- Describe the significance of the Caral civilization of the Andes

Key Points

- The Caral civilization (also known as Caral-Supe) was part of the Norte Chico civilization complex, in what is now the Norte Chico region of north-central coastal Peru.
- The urban complex of Caral takes up more than 150 acres, and contains plazas, dwellings, and a 28-meters-high temple.
- Some scholars have suggested that Norte Chico was founded on seafood and maritime resources, rather than development of agricultural cereal and crop surpluses.
- One of the artifacts found at Caral is a knotted textile piece, called a quipu, which archaeologists believe was a method of keeping records.
- Evidence of warfare has not been found in Caral.
- A geoglyph of a human with long hair and open mouth was discovered in 2000 by Marco Machacuay and Rocio Aramburu just west of Caral.
- At its peak, approximately 3,000 people are believed to have lived in Caral.
- Norte Chico civilizations are pre-ceramic cultures of the pre-Columbian Late Archaic; they completely lacked ceramics, and apparently had almost no art. The most impressive achievement of these civilizations was its monumental architecture.

Terms

Caral civilization

A complex pre-Columbian society that included as many as 30 major population centers, in what is now the Norte Chico region of north-central coastal Peru.

geoglyph

A large design produced on the ground, typically formed by rocks, stones, trees, gravel, or earth.

quipu

A knotted textile piece found at the Caral site, believed to be used for record-keeping.

The Caral civilization (also known as the Norte Chico civilization and as Caral-Supe) was a complex pre-Columbian society, located in what is now the Norte Chico region of north-central coastal Peru, near Supe, Barranca province, Peru (200 km north of Lima). Its location allowed it to take advantage of three rivers: the Fortaleza, the Pativilca, and the Supe. It has been established as the oldest known civilization in the Americas, and as one of the six sites where civilization separately originated in the ancient world.

The Caral flourished between the 30th and 18th centuries BCE. This complex society arose a millennium after Sumer in Mesopotamia, was contemporaneous with the Egyptian pyramids, and predated the Mesoamerican Olmec by nearly two millennia.

Caral. The remains of the Caral site in Peru

Caral was discovered by Paul Kosok in 1948, and further studied by archaeologist Ruth Shady. The urban complex of Caral takes up more than 150 acres, and holds plazas, dwellings, and a 28-meters-high temple. Its urban plan was used by Andean civilizations for the next four thousand years. One of the artifacts found at Caral is a knotted textile piece named a quipu, which archaeologists believe was a method of keeping records. Other pieces found include flutes made of condor and pelican bones, and cornetts made of deer and llama bones. Evidence of warfare has not been found. A geoglyph was discovered in 2000 by Marco Machacuay and Rocio Aramburu just west of Caral. The lines of the etching form a human face with long hair and an open mouth. At its peak, approximately 3,000 people are believed to have lived in Caral.

Caral Temple. A view of the Caral temple

The Norte-Chico Region

In archaeological nomenclature, Norte Chico civilizations are pre-ceramic cultures of the pre-Columbian Late Archaic; they completely lacked ceramics and apparently had almost no art. The most impressive achievement of these civilizations was its monumental architecture, including large earthwork platform mounds and sunken circular plazas. Archaeological evidence suggests use of textile technology and, possibly, the worship of common god symbols, both of which recur in pre-Columbian Andean cultures. Sophisticated government is assumed to have been required to manage the ancient Norte Chico. Questions remain over its organization, particularly the political influence of food resources. Some scholars have suggested that Norte Chico was founded on seafood and maritime resources, as opposed to the development of agricultural cereal and crop surpluses, which have been considered essential to the rise of other ancient civilizations.

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3.4: The Chavín Civilization

Learning Objectives

- Describe the significance of the Chavín civilization

Key Points

- The Chavín civilization developed in the northern Andean highlands of Peru between 900-250 BCE.
- There were three stages of development: Urabarriu (900-500 BCE), Chakinani (500-400 BCE), and Jarabarriu (400-250 BCE).
- Chavín had a small, powerful elite that was legitimized through a claim to divine authority.
- The chief example of Chavín architecture is the Chavín de Huántar temple, the design of which displays a complex and innovative adaptation to the highland environment of Peru.
- The Chavín people showed advanced knowledge of acoustics, metallurgy, soldering, and temperature control. One of their main economic resources was ch'arki, or llama jerky.
- Chavín art represents the first widespread, recognizable artistic style in the Andes, and can be divided into two phases: the first phase corresponds to the construction of the "Old Temple" at Chavín de Huántar (c. 900-500 BCE); the second phase corresponds to the construction of Chavín de Huántar's "New Temple" (c. 500-200 BCE).
- Significant pieces of art include the Lanzón, Tello Obelisk, and tenon heads.

Terms

camelids

A mammal of the camel family (Camelidae).

Lanzón

A stone stela found in the Chavín de Huántar temple.

Tello Obelisk

A huge sculpted shaft depicting a Chavín creation myth.

ch'arki

Llama jerky.

Chavín civilization

A civilization in the northern Andean highlands of Peru from 900-250 BCE, known for their construction of temples and their advancements in engineering and metallurgy.

axis mundi

A pivot point linking heaven, earth and the underworld.

psychotropic drugs

A chemical substance that changes brain function and results in alterations in perception, mood, or consciousness.

Urabarriu

A stage of development in the Chavín civilization from 900-500 BCE.

Chakinani

A stage of development in the Chavín civilization from 500-400 BCE.

Jarabarriu

A stage of development in the Chavín civilization from 400-250 BCE.

The Chavín civilization developed in the northern Andean highlands of Peru between 900-250 BCE. Their influence extended to other civilizations along the coast. The Chavín civilization was located in the Mosna Valley, where the Mosna and Huachecsa rivers merge. It is now a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Map Showing Location of the Chavín. This map shows the location of the Chavín culture, as well as the areas the Chavín influenced.

Stages of Development

Urabarriu lasted from 900-500 BCE, and just a few hundred people lived at Chavín de Huantar. Ceramics were influenced by other cultures, and the people grew some maize and potatoes. Chakinani, from 500-400 BCE, was a transitional time, when residents migrated to the ceremonial center. From 400-250 BCE, Jarabarriu saw a dramatic increase in population, with an urban/suburban pattern of settlement.

Society

Chavín had a small, powerful elite that was legitimized through a claim to divine authority. These shamans were able to control and influence local citizens (probably partially through the use of psychotropic drugs), and were able to plan and carry out construction of temples and stone-walled galleries.

Architecture

The chief example of Chavín architecture is the Chavín de Huántar temple. The temple's design shows complex innovation to adapt to the highland environment of Peru. To avoid flooding and the destruction of the temple during the rainy season, the Chavín people created a successful drainage system with canals under the temple structure; the rushing water during the rainy season sounds like one of the Chavín's sacred animals, the jaguar.

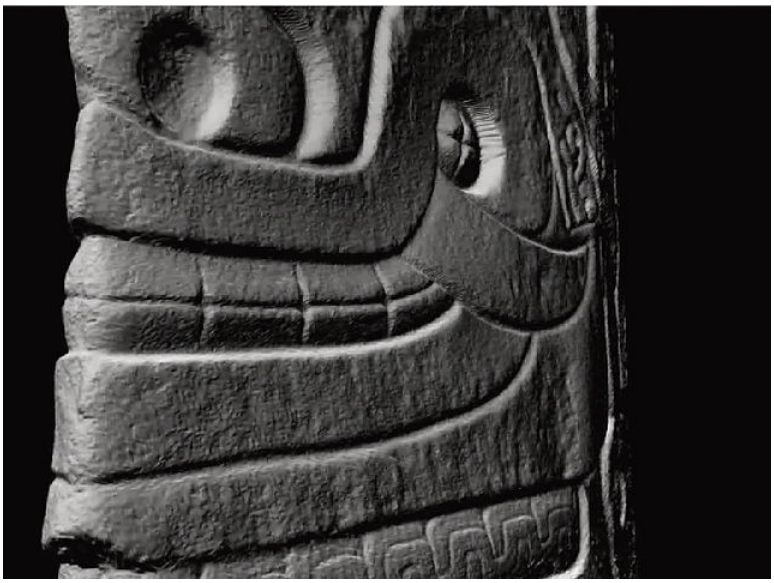
Economic Activity

The Chavín people showed advanced knowledge of acoustics, metallurgy, soldering, and temperature control to accommodate the rainy season. The Chavín were also skilled in developing refined goldwork, and used early techniques of melting metal and soldering.

The Chavín people domesticated camelids, such as llamas, which were used as pack animals, and for fiber and meat. The Chavin produced ch'arki, or llama jerky, which was commonly traded by camelid herders and was the main economic resource for the Chavín people. They also successfully cultivated several crops, including potatoes, quinoa, and maize. They developed an irrigation system to assist the growth of these crops.

Art

Chavín art represents the first widespread, recognizable artistic style in the Andes, and can be divided into two phases: the first phase corresponds to the construction of the "Old Temple" at Chavín de Huántar (c. 900-500 BCE); the second phase corresponds to the construction of Chavín de Huántar's "New Temple" (c. 500-200 BCE). The Old Temple featured the Lanzón, which was housed in a central cruciform chamber in a labyrinth of underground passages. The Lanzón functions as axis mundi, or a pivot point linking the heavens, earth, and underworld.



The Lanzón at Chavín. Shown here is the most important stela statue of the central deity of the Chavín, called the Lanzón.

Chavín art decorated the walls of the temple and includes carvings, sculptures and pottery. Artists depicted exotic creatures found in other regions, such as jaguars and eagles, rather than local plants and animals. The feline figure is one of the most important motifs seen in Chavín art. It has an important religious meaning and is repeated on many carvings and sculptures. Eagles are also commonly seen throughout Chavín art. It was intentionally difficult to interpret and understand, as it was meant to be read by the high priests alone.

Incised Strombus-Shell Trumpet. This shell trumpet was likely used in ceremonies. The incised designs show a person of high rank playing a shell trumpet, surrounded by snakes.

The Tello Obelisk is a huge sculpted shaft decorated with images of plants, animals, including caymans and birds, and humans, which may be portraying a creation myth. Tenon heads are massive stone carvings of fanged jaguar heads, found at the tops of interior walls in Chavín de Huantar.

Influence

Chavín had wide-ranging influence, with its art and architecture styles spreading for miles around. There is little evidence of warfare in Chavín relics; instead, local citizens were likely controlled by a combination of religious pressure and environmental conditions.

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3.5: The Valdivia Culture

Learning Objectives

- Describe the significance of the Valdivia culture

Key Points

- The Valdivia culture of Ecuador (3500-1800 BCE) is one of the oldest settled cultures recorded in the Americas.
- The Valdivia lived in a community that built its houses in a circle or oval around a central plaza and were sedentary, egalitarian people.
- Valdivian pottery (bowls, jars, and feminine figures) are the oldest in the Americas, dating to 2700 BCE.
- Valdivians created rafts with sails, and built a maritime trade network with tribes in the Andes and Amazon.
- A main trading item was the red shell of the thorny oyster, called Spondylus.

Terms

Spondylus

A genus of bivalve mollusks, also known as thorny oysters.

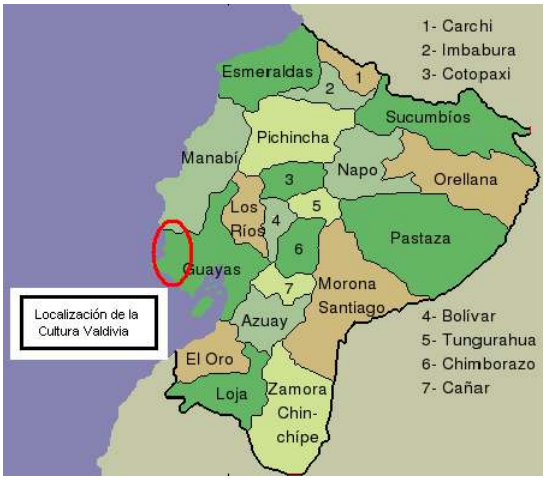
cassava

The starchy tuberous root of a tropical tree.

egalitarian

Believing in the principle that all people are equal.

The Valdivia culture is one of the oldest settled cultures recorded in the Americas. It emerged from the earlier Las Vegas culture, and thrived on the Santa Elena peninsula near the modern-day town of Valdivia, Ecuador, between 3500-1800 BCE.



Map of Valdivian Culture. Shown here is the location of the Valdivia culture.

Life Among the Valdivians

The Valdivia lived in a community that built its houses in a circle or oval around a central plaza. They were sedentary, egalitarian people who lived off farming and fishing, and occasional deer hunting. From the remains that have been found, it has been determined that Valdivians cultivated maize, kidney beans, squash, cassava, chili peppers, and cotton plants, the latter of which was used to make clothing.

Pottery

Valdivian pottery, which has been dated to 2700 BCE, was initially rough and practical, but over time became splendid, delicate, and large. Bowls, jars, and female statues were used in daily life and religious ceremonies. They generally used the colors red and gray, and polished dark red pottery is characteristic of the Valdivia period. In their ceramics and stone works, the Valdivia culture showed a progression from the most simple, to much more complicated works. Valdivians were the first Americans to use pottery.

Valdivian Pottery. Valdivian pottery is the oldest in America, on display in this image at the Museo de La Plata in Argentina.

The trademark Valdivia pottery piece is the “Venus” of Valdivia: feminine ceramic figures. The “Venus” of Valdivia likely represented actual people; each figurine is individual and unique, as can be seen in the hairstyles. They were made by joining two rolls of clay, leaving the lower portion separated as legs and forming the body and head from the top portion. The arms were usually very short, and in most cases were bent towards the chest, holding the breasts or chin.

Trade

Valdivians created rafts with sails, and built a maritime trade network with tribes in the Andes and Amazon. A main trading item was the red shell of the thorny oyster, called Spondylus, which were often made into ornaments, and were considered more valuable than gold or silver.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Ancient Egypt

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4.1: Ancient Egyptian Religion

Learning Objectives

- Describe the religious beliefs and practices of Ancient Egypt

Key Points

- The religion of Ancient Egypt lasted for more than 3,000 years, and was polytheistic, meaning there were a multitude of deities, who were believed to reside within and control the forces of nature.
- Formal religious practice centered on the pharaoh, or ruler, of Egypt, who was believed to be divine, and acted as intermediary between the people and the gods. His role was to sustain the gods so that they could maintain order in the universe.
- The Egyptian universe centered on Ma'at, which has several meanings in English, including truth, justice and order. It was fixed and eternal; without it the world would fall apart.
- The most important myth was of Osiris and Isis. The divine ruler Osiris was murdered by Set (god of chaos), then resurrected by his sister and wife Isis to conceive an heir, Horus. Osiris then became the ruler of the dead, while Horus eventually avenged his father and became king.
- Egyptians were very concerned about the fate of their souls after death. They believed ka (life-force) left the body upon death and needed to be fed. Ba, or personal spirituality, remained in the body. The goal was to unite ka and ba to create akh.
- Artistic depictions of gods were not literal representations, as their true nature was considered mysterious. However, symbolic imagery was used to indicate this nature.
- Temples were the state's method of sustaining the gods, since their physical images were housed and cared for; temples were not a place for the average person to worship.
- Certain animals were worshipped and mummified as representatives of gods.
- Oracles were used by all classes.

Terms

Ma'at

The Egyptian universe.

heka

The ability to use natural forces to create "magic."

pantheon

The core actors of a religion.

polytheistic

A religion with more than one worshipped god.

ka

The spiritual part of an individual human being or god that survived after death.

Duat

The realm of the dead; residence of Osiris.

ba

The spiritual characteristics of an individual person that remained in the body after death. Ba could unite with the ka.

akh

The combination of the ka and ba living in the afterlife.

The religion of Ancient Egypt lasted for more than 3,000 years, and was polytheistic, meaning there were a multitude of deities, who were believed to reside within and control the forces of nature. Religious practices were deeply embedded in the lives of Egyptians, as they attempted to provide for their gods and win their favor. The complexity of the religion was evident as some deities existed in different manifestations and had multiple mythological roles. The pantheon included gods with major roles in the universe, minor deities (or “demons”), foreign gods, and sometimes humans, including deceased Pharaohs.

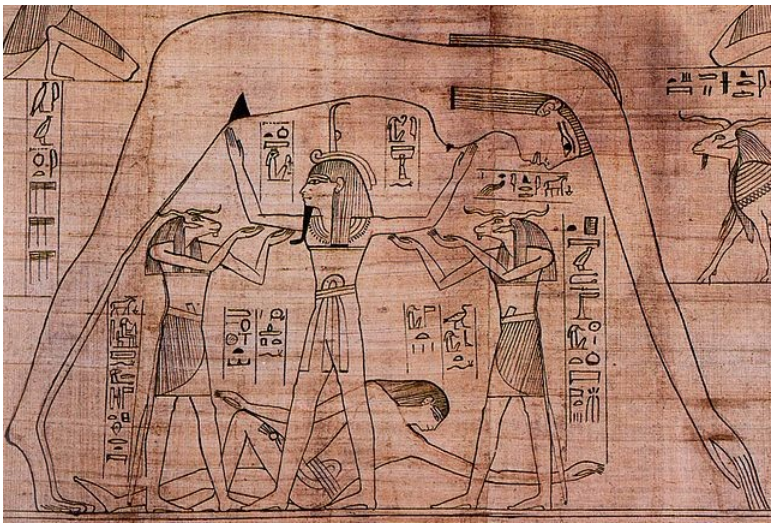
Formal religious practice centered on the pharaoh, or ruler, of Egypt, who was believed to be divine, and acted as intermediary between the people and the gods. His role was to sustain the gods so that they could maintain order in the universe, and the state spent its resources generously to build temples and provide for rituals. The pharaoh was associated with Horus (and later Amun) and seen as the son of Ra. Upon death, the pharaoh was fully deified, directly identified with Ra and associated with Osiris, the god of death and rebirth. However, individuals could appeal directly to the gods for personal purposes through prayer or requests for magic; as the pharaoh’s power declined, this personal form of practice became stronger. Popular religious practice also involved ceremonies around birth and naming. The people also invoked “magic” (called heka) to make things happen using natural forces.

Gods of the Pantheon. This wall painting shows, from left to right, the gods Osiris, Anubis and Horus.

Cosmology

The Egyptian universe centered on Ma’at, which has several meanings in English, including truth, justice and order. It was fixed and eternal (without it the world would fall apart), and there were constant threats of disorder requiring society to work to maintain it. Inhabitants of the cosmos included the gods, the spirits of deceased humans, and living humans, the most important of which was the pharaoh. Humans should cooperate to achieve this, and gods should function in balance. Ma’at was renewed by periodic events, such as the annual Nile flood, which echoed the original creation. Most important of these was the daily journey of the sun god Ra.

Egyptians saw the earth as flat land (the god Geb), over which arched the sky (goddess Nut); they were separated by Shu, the god of air. Underneath the earth was a parallel underworld and undersky, and beyond the skies lay Nu, the chaos before creation. Duat was a mysterious area associated with death and rebirth, and each day Ra passed through Duat after traveling over the earth during the day.



Egyptian Cosmology. In this artwork, the air god Shu is assisted by other gods in holding up Nut, the sky, as Geb, the earth, lies beneath.

Myths

Egyptian myths are mainly known from hymns, ritual and magical texts, funerary texts, and the writings of Greeks and Romans. The creation myth saw the world as emerging as a dry space in the primordial ocean of chaos, marked by the first rising of Ra. Other forms of the myth saw the primordial god Atum transforming into the elements of the world, and the creative speech of the intellectual god Ptah.

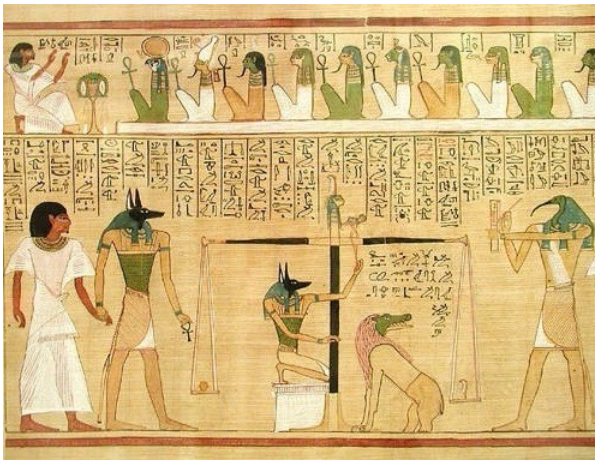
The most important myth was of Osiris and Isis. The divine ruler Osiris was murdered by Set (god of chaos), then resurrected by his sister and wife Isis to conceive an heir, Horus. Osiris then became the ruler of the dead, while Horus eventually avenged his father and became king. This myth set the Pharaohs, and their succession, as orderliness against chaos.

The Afterlife

Egyptians were very concerned about the fate of their souls after death, and built tombs, created grave goods and gave offerings to preserve the bodies and spirits of the dead. They believed humans possessed ka, or life-force, which left the body at death. To endure after death, the ka must continue to receive offerings of food; it could consume the spiritual essence of it. Humans also possessed a ba, a set of spiritual characteristics unique to each person, which remained in the body after death. Funeral rites were meant to release the ba so it could move, rejoin with the ka, and live on as an akh. However, the ba returned to the body at night, so the body must be preserved.

Mummification involved elaborate embalming practices, and wrapping in cloth, along with various rites, including the Opening of the Mouth ceremony. Tombs were originally mastabas (rectangular brick structures), and then pyramids.

However, this originally did not apply to the common person: they passed into a dark, bleak realm that was the opposite of life. Nobles did receive tombs and grave gifts from the pharaoh. Eventually, by about 2181 BCE, Egyptians began to believe every person had a ba and could access the afterlife. By the New Kingdom, the soul had to face dangers in the Duat before having a final judgment, called the Weighing of the Heart, where the gods compared the actions of the deceased while alive to Ma’at, to see if they were worthy. If so, the ka and ba were united into an akh, which then either traveled to the lush underworld, or traveled with Ra on his daily journey, or even returned to the world of the living to carry out magic.



Funerary Text. In this section from the Book of the Dead for the scribe Hunefer, the Weighing of the Heart is shown.

Rise and Fall of Gods

Certain gods gained a primary status over time, and then fell as other gods overtook them. These included the sun god Ra, the creator god Amun, and the mother goddess Isis. There was even a period of time where Egypt was monotheistic, under Pharaoh Akhenaten, and his patron god Aten.

The Relationships of Deities

Just as the forces of nature had complex interrelationships, so did Egyptian deities. Minor deities might be linked, or deities might come together based on the meaning of numbers in Egyptian mythology (i.e., pairs represented duality). Deities might also be linked through syncretism, creating a composite deity.

Artistic Depictions of Gods

Artistic depictions of gods were not literal representations, since their true nature was considered mysterious. However, symbolic imagery was used to indicate this nature. An example was Anubis, a funerary god, who was shown as a jackal to counter its traditional meaning as a scavenger, and create protection for the mummy.

Temples

Temples were the state's method of sustaining the gods, as their physical images were housed and cared for; they were not a place for the average person to worship. They were both mortuary temples to serve deceased pharaohs and temples for patron gods. Starting as simple structures, they grew more elaborate, and were increasingly built from stone, with a common plan. Ritual duties were normally carried out by priests, or government officials serving in the role. In the New Kingdom, professional priesthood became common, and their wealth rivaled that of the pharaoh.

Rituals and Festivals

Aside from numerous temple rituals, including the morning offering ceremony and re-enactments of myths, there were coronation ceremonies and the sed festival, a renewal of the pharaoh's strength during his reign. The Opet Festival at Karnak involved a procession carrying the god's image to visit other significant sites.

Animal Worship

At many sites, Egyptians worshipped specific animals that they believed to be manifestations of deities. Examples include the Apis bull (of the god Ptah), and mummified cats and other animals.

Use of Oracles

Commoners and pharaohs asked questions of oracles, and answers could even be used during the New Kingdom to settle legal disputes. This might involve asking a question while a divine image was being carried, and interpreting movement, or drawing lots.

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4.2: Ancient Egyptian Art

Learning Objectives

- Examine the development of Egyptian Art under the Old Kingdom

Key Points

- Ancient Egyptian art includes painting, sculpture, architecture, and other forms of art, such as drawings on papyrus, created between 3000 BCE and 100 CE.
- Most of this art was highly stylized and symbolic. Much of the surviving forms come from tombs and monuments, and thus have a focus on life after death and preservation of knowledge.
- Symbolism meant order, shown through the pharaoh's regalia, or through the use of certain colors.
- In Egyptian art, the size of a figure indicates its relative importance.
- Paintings were often done on stone, and portrayed pleasant scenes of the afterlife in tombs.
- Ancient Egyptians created both monumental and smaller sculptures, using the technique of sunk relief.
- Ka statues, which were meant to provide a resting place for the ka part of the soul, were often made of wood and placed in tombs.
- Faience was sintered-quartz ceramic with surface vitrification, used to create relatively cheap small objects in many colors. Glass was originally a luxury item but became more common, and was used to make small jars, for perfume and other liquids, to be placed in tombs. Carvings of vases, amulets, and images of deities and animals were made of steatite. Pottery was sometimes covered with enamel, particularly in the color blue.
- Papyrus was used for writing and painting, and and was used to record every aspect of Egyptian life.
- Architects carefully planned buildings, aligning them with astronomically significant events, such as solstices and equinoxes. They used mainly sun-baked mud brick, limestone, sandstone, and granite.
- The Amarna period (1353-1336 BCE) represents an interruption in ancient Egyptian art style, subjects were represented more realistically, and scenes included portrayals of affection among the royal family.

Terms

scarabs

Ancient Egyptian gem cut in the form of a scarab beetle.

Faience

Glazed ceramic ware.

ushabti

Ancient Egyptian funerary figure.

Ka

The supposed spiritual part of an individual human being or god that survived after death, and could reside in a statue of the person.

sunk relief

Sculptural technique in which the outlines of modeled forms are incised in a plane surface beyond which the forms do not project.

regalia

The emblems or insignia of royalty.

> papyrus
>
> A material prepared in ancient Egypt from the stem of a water plant, used in sheets for writing or painting on.

Ancient Egyptian art includes painting, sculpture, architecture, and other forms of art, such as drawings on papyrus, created between 3000 BCE and 100 AD. Most of this art was highly stylized and symbolic. Many of the surviving forms come from tombs and monuments, and thus have a focus on life after death and preservation of knowledge.

Symbolism

Symbolism in ancient Egyptian art conveyed a sense of order and the influence of natural elements. The regalia of the pharaoh symbolized his or her power to rule and maintain the order of the universe. Blue and gold indicated divinity because they were rare and were associated with precious materials, while black expressed the fertility of the Nile River.

Hierarchical Scale

In Egyptian art, the size of a figure indicates its relative importance. This meant gods or the pharaoh were usually bigger than other figures, followed by figures of high officials or the tomb owner; the smallest figures were servants, entertainers, animals, trees and architectural details.

Painting

Before painting a stone surface, it was whitewashed and sometimes covered with mud plaster. Pigments were made of mineral and able to stand up to strong sunlight with minimal fade. The binding medium is unknown; the paint was applied to dried plaster in the “fresco a secco” style. A varnish or resin was then applied as a protective coating, which, along with the dry climate of Egypt, protected the painting very well. The purpose of tomb paintings was to create a pleasant afterlife for the dead person, with themes such as journeying through the afterworld, or deities providing protection. The side view of the person or animal was generally shown, and paintings were often done in red, blue, green, gold, black and yellow.

Wall Painting of Nefertari. In this wall painting of Nefertari, the side view is apparent.

Sculpture

Ancient Egyptians created both monumental and smaller sculptures, using the technique of sunk relief. In this technique, the image is made by cutting the relief sculpture into a flat surface, set within a sunken area shaped around the image. In strong sunlight, this technique is very visible, emphasizing the outlines and forms by shadow. Figures are shown with the torso facing front, the head in side view, and the legs parted, with males sometimes darker than females. Large statues of deities (other than the pharaoh) were not common, although deities were often shown in paintings and reliefs.

Colossal sculpture on the scale of the Great Sphinx of Giza was not repeated, but smaller sphinxes and animals were found in temple complexes. The most sacred cult image of a temple's god was supposedly held in the naos in small boats, carved out of precious metal, but none have survived.

Ka statues, which were meant to provide a resting place for the ka part of the soul, were present in tombs as of Dynasty IV (2680-2565 BCE). These were often made of wood, and were called reserve heads, which were plain, hairless and naturalistic. Early tombs had small models of slaves, animals, buildings, and objects to provide life for the deceased in the afterworld. Later, ushabti figures were present as funerary figures to act as servants for the deceased, should he or she be called upon to do manual labor in the afterlife.

Ka Statue. The ka statue was placed in the tomb to provide a physical place for the ka to manifest. This statue is found at the Egyptian Museum of Cairo.

Many small carved objects have been discovered, from toys to utensils, and alabaster was used for the more expensive objects. In creating any statuary, strict conventions, accompanied by a rating system, were followed. This resulted in a rather timeless quality, as few changes were instituted over thousands of years.

Faience, Pottery, and Glass

Faience was sintered-quartz ceramic with surface vitrification used to create relatively cheap, small objects in many colors, but most commonly blue-green. It was often used for jewelry, scarabs, and figurines. Glass was originally a luxury item, but became more common, and was to used to make small jars, of perfume and other liquids, to be placed in tombs. Carvings of vases, amulets, and images of deities and animals were made of steatite. Pottery was sometimes covered with enamel, particularly in the color blue. In tombs, pottery was used to represent organs of the body removed during embalming, or to create cones, about ten inches tall, engraved with legends of the deceased.

Papyrus

Papyrus is very delicate and was used for writing and painting; it has only survived for long periods when buried in tombs. Every aspect of Egyptian life is found recorded on papyrus, from literary to administrative documents.

Architecture

Architects carefully planned buildings, aligning them with astronomically significant events, such as solstices and equinoxes, and used mainly sun-baked mud brick, limestone, sandstone, and granite. Stone was reserved for tombs and temples, while other buildings, such as palaces and fortresses, were made of bricks. Houses were made of mud from the Nile River that hardened in the sun. Many of these houses were destroyed in flooding or dismantled; examples of preserved structures include the village Deir al-Madinah and the fortress at Buhen.

The Giza Necropolis, built in the Fourth Dynasty, includes the Pyramid of Khufu (also known as the Great Pyramid or the Pyramid of Cheops), the Pyramid of Khafre, and the Pyramid of Menkaure, along with smaller “queen” pyramids and the Great Sphinx.

The Pyramids of Giza. The Pyramid of Khufu (Great Pyramid) is the largest of the pyramids pictured here.

The Temple of Karnak was first built in the 16th century BCE. About 30 pharaohs contributed to the buildings, creating an extremely large and diverse complex. It includes the Precincts of Amon-Re, Montu and Mut, and the Temple of Amehotep IV (dismantled).

The Temple of Karnak. Shown here is the hypostyle hall of the Temple of Karnak.

The Luxor Temple was constructed in the 14th century BCE by Amenhotep III in the ancient city of Thebes, now Luxor, with a major expansion by Ramesses II in the 13th century BCE. It includes the 79-foot high First Pylon, friezes, statues, and columns.

The Amarna Period (1353-1336 BCE)

During this period, which represents an interruption in ancient Egyptian art style, subjects were represented more realistically, and scenes included portrayals of affection among the royal family. There was a sense of movement in the images, with overlapping figures and large crowds. The style reflects Akhenaten’s move to monotheism, but it disappeared after his death.

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4.3: Ancient Egyptian Monuments

Learning Objectives

- Describe the impressive attributes of the monuments erected by Egyptians in the Old Kingdom

Key Points

- Ancient Egyptian architects carefully planned buildings, aligning them with astronomically significant events, such as solstices and equinoxes, and used mainly sun-baked mud brick, limestone, sandstone, and granite.
- Egyptian pyramids were highly reflective, referenced the sun, and were usually placed on the West side of the Nile River.
- About 135 pyramids have been discovered in Egypt, with the largest (in Egypt and the world) being the Great Pyramid of Giza.
- The Great Sphinx of Giza is a reclining sphinx (a mythical creature with a lion's body and a human head); its face is meant to represent the Pharaoh Khafra. It is the world's oldest and largest monolith.
- Egyptian temples were used for official, formal worship of the gods by the state, and to commemorate pharaohs. The temple was the house of a particular god, and Egyptians would perform rituals, give offerings, re-enact myths, and keep order in the universe (ma'at).
- The Temple of Karnak was first built in the 16th century BCE. About 30 pharaohs contributed to the buildings, creating an extremely large and diverse complex.
- The Luxor Temple was constructed in the 14th century BCE by Amenhotep III in the ancient city of Thebes, now Luxor. It later received a major expansion by Ramesses II in the 13th century BCE.

Terms

monolith

A large single upright block of stone, especially one shaped into, or serving as, a pillar or monument.

friezes

Broad, horizontal bands of sculpted or painted decoration.

pylon

In ancient Egypt, two tapering towers with a less elevated section between them, forming a gateway.

peristyle courts

In ancient Egypt, courts that open to the sky.

Hypostyle halls

In ancient Egypt, covered rooms with columns.

equinoxes

Either of the two times in the year when the sun crosses the celestial equator, and day and night are of equal length.

solstices

Either of the two times in the year (summer and winter) when the sun reaches its highest or lowest point in the sky at noon.

ma'at

The ancient Egyptian concept of truth, balance, order, harmony, law, morality and justice.

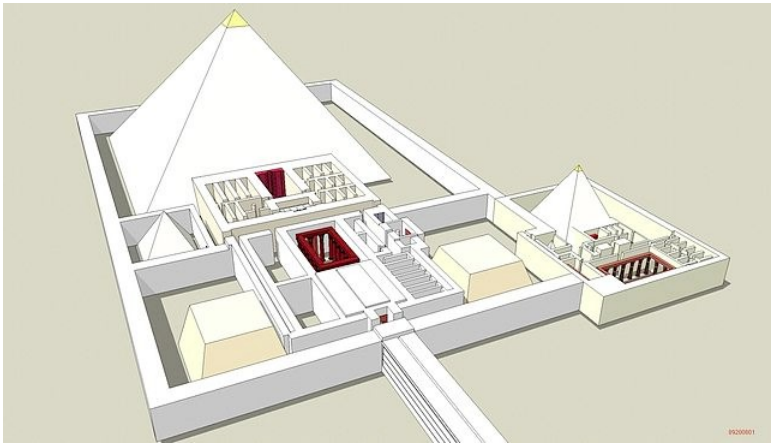
obelisks

Stone pillars, typically having a square or rectangular cross section and pyramidal top, used as monuments or landmarks.

Ancient Egyptian architects carefully planned buildings, aligning them with astronomically significant events, such as solstices and equinoxes. They used mainly sun-baked mud brick, limestone, sandstone, and granite. Stone was reserved for tombs and temples, while other buildings, such as palaces and fortresses, were made of bricks.

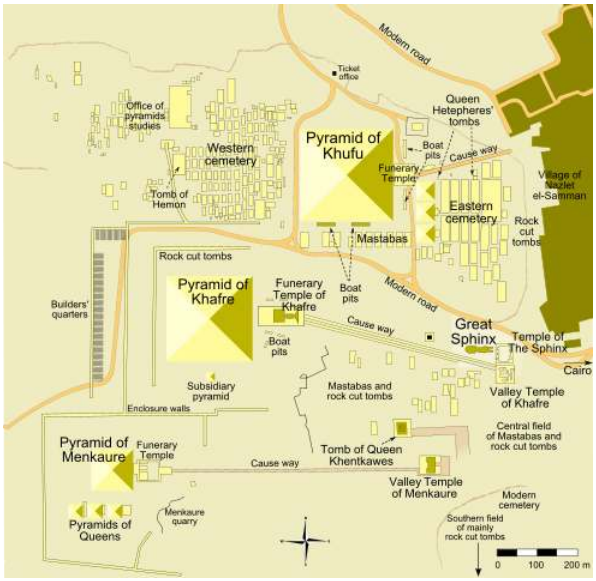
Pyramids

Egyptian pyramids referenced the rays of the sun, and appeared highly polished and reflective, with a capstone that was generally a hard stone like granite, sometimes plated with gold, silver or electrum. Most were placed west of the Nile, to allow the pharaoh's soul to join with the sun during its descent.



Old Kingdom Pyramid Temple Reconstruction. In this reconstruction, a causeway leads out to the valley temple.

About 135 pyramids have been discovered in Egypt, with the largest (in Egypt and the world) being the Great Pyramid of Giza. Its base is over 566,000 square feet in area, and was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The Giza Necropolis, built in the Fourth Dynasty, includes the Pyramid of Khufu (also known as the Great Pyramid or the Pyramid of Cheops), the Pyramid of Khafre and the Pyramid of Menkaure, along with smaller "queens" pyramids and the Great Sphinx.



Map of Giza Pyramid Complex. A map showing the layout of the Giza Pyramid area, including the Pyramids of Khufu, Khafre, Menkaure, and the Great Sphinx.

The Great Sphinx of Giza

This limestone statue of a reclining sphinx (a mythical creature with a lion's body and a human head) is located on the Giza Plateau to the west of the Nile. It is believed the face is meant to represent the Pharaoh Khafra. It is the largest and oldest monolith statue in

the world, at 241 feet long, 63 feet wide, and 66.34 feet tall. It is believed to have been built during the reign of Pharaoh Khafra (2558-2532 BCE). It was probably a focus of solar worship, as the lion is a symbol associated with the sun.

The Great Sphinx of Giza. Here the Great Sphinx is shown against the Pyramid of Kahfre.

Temples

Egyptian temples were used for official, formal worship of the gods by the state, and to commemorate pharaohs. The temple was the house dedicated to a particular god, and Egyptians would perform rituals there, give offerings, re-enact myths and keep order in the universe (ma'at). Pharaohs were in charge of caring for the gods, and they dedicated massive resources to this task. Priests assisted in this effort. The average citizen was not allowed into the inner sanctum of the temple, but might still go there to pray, give offerings, or ask questions of the gods.

The inner sanctuary had a cult image of the temple's god, as well as a series of surrounding rooms that became large and elaborate over time, evolving into massive stone edifices during the New Kingdom. Temples also often owned surrounding land and employed thousands of people to support its activities, creating a powerful institution. The designs emphasized order, symmetry and monumentality. Hypostyle halls (covered rooms filled with columns) led to peristyle courts (open courts), where the public could meet with priests. At the front of each court was a pylon (broad, flat towers) that held flagpoles. Outside the temple building was the temple enclosure, with a brick wall to symbolically protect from outside disorder; often a sacred lake would be found here. Decoration included reliefs (bas relief and sunken relief) of images and hieroglyphic text and sculpture, including obelisks, figures of gods (sometimes in sphinx form), and votive figures. Egyptian religions faced persecution by Christians, and the last temple was closed in 550 AD.

The Temple of Karnak was first built in the 16th century BCE. About 30 pharaohs contributed to the buildings, creating an extremely large and diverse complex. It includes the Precincts of Amon-Re, Montu and Mut, and the Temple of Amehotep IV (dismantled).

Temple of KarnakThis view of the Temple of Karnak shows they hypostyle hall, with massive columns.

The Luxor Temple was constructed in the 14th century BCE by Amenhotep III in the ancient city of Thebes, now Luxor, with a major expansion by Ramesses II in the 13th century BCE. It includes the 79-foot high First Pylon, friezes, statues, and columns.

Luxor Temple. Shown here is the entrance pylon of Luxor Temple, one of the major New Kingdom temples.

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4.4: Ancient Egyptian Trade

Learning Objectives

- Describe the economic structure of ancient Egypt

Key Points

- Trade was occurring in the 5th century BCE onwards, especially with Canaan, Lebanon, Nubia and Punt.
- Just before the First Dynasty, Egypt had a colony in southern Canaan that produced Egyptian pottery for export to Egypt.
- In the Second Dynasty, Byblos provided quality timber that could not be found in Egypt.
- By the Fifth Dynasty, trade with Punt gave Egyptians gold, aromatic resins, ebony, ivory, and wild animals.
- A well-traveled land route from the Nile to the Red Sea crossed through the Wadi Hammamat. Another route, the Darb el-Arbain, was used from the time of the Old Kingdom of Egypt.
- Egyptians built ships as early as 3000 BCE by lashing planks of wood together and stuffing the gaps with reeds. They used them to import goods from Lebanon and Punt.

Terms

papyrus

A material prepared in ancient Egypt from the stem of a water plant, used in sheets for writing, painting, or making rope, sandals, and boats.

obsidian

A hard, dark, glasslike volcanic rock.

electrum

A natural or artifical alloy of gold, with at least 20% silver, used for jewelry.

myrrh

A fragrant gum resin obtained from certain trees, often used in perfumery, medicine and incense.

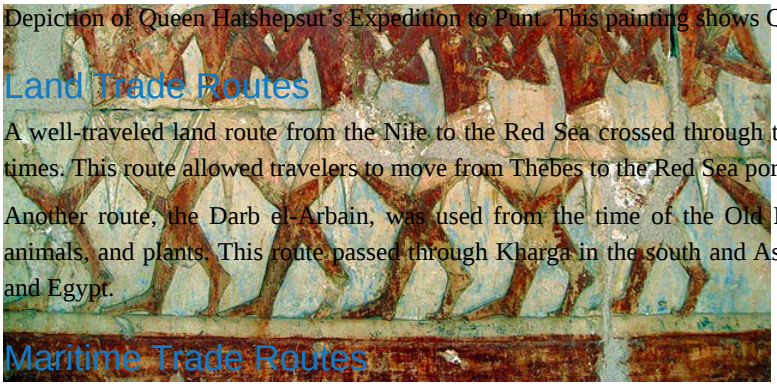
malachite

A bright green mineral consisting of copper hydroxyl carbonate.

Early examples of ancient Egyptian trade included contact with Syria in the 5th century BCE, and importation of pottery and construction ideas from Canaan in the 4th century BCE. By this time, shipping was common, and the donkey, camel, and horse were domesticated and used for transportation. Lebanese cedar has been found in the tombs of Nekhen, dated to the Naqada I and II periods. Egyptians during this period also imported obsidian from Ethiopia, gold and incense from Nubia in the south, oil jugs from Palestine, and other goods from the oases of the western desert and the cultures of the eastern Mediterranean. Egyptian artifacts from this era have been found in Canaan and parts of the former Mesopotamia. In the latter half of the 4th century BCE, the gemstone lapis lazuli was being imported from Badakhshan (modern-day Afghanistan).

Just before the First Dynasty, Egypt had a colony in southern Canaan that produced Egyptian pottery for export to Egypt. In the Second Dynasty, Byblos provided quality timber that could not be found in Egypt. By the Fifth Dynasty, trade with Punt gave Egyptians gold, aromatic resins, ebony, ivory, and wild animals. Egypt also traded with Anatolia for tin and copper in order to make bronze. Mediterranean trading partners provided olive oil and other fine goods.

Egypt commonly exported grain, gold, linen, papyrus, and finished goods, such as glass and stone objects.



Depiction of Queen Hatshepsut's Expedition to Punt. This painting shows Queen Hatshepsut's expedition to Punt.

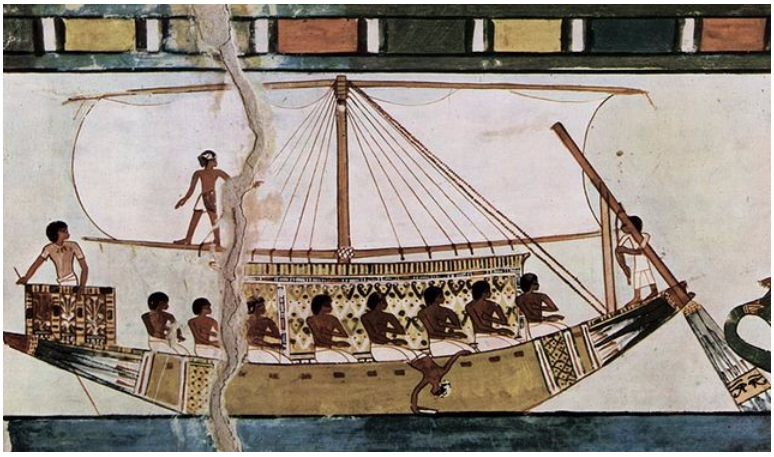
Land Trade Routes

A well-traveled land route from the Nile to the Red Sea crossed through the Wadi Hammamat, and was known from predynastic times. This route allowed travelers to move from Thebes to the Red Sea port of Elim, and led to the rise of ancient cities.

Another route, the Darb el-Arbain, was used from the time of the Old Kingdom of Egypt to trade gold, ivory, spices, wheat, animals, and plants. This route passed through Kharga in the south and Asyut in the north, and was a major route between Nubia and Egypt.

Maritime Trade Routes

Egyptians built ships as early as 3000 BCE by lashing planks of wood together and stuffing the gaps with reeds.



Egyptian Sailing Ship. This painting depicts an Egyptian ship from c. 1420 BCE.

Pharaoh Sahure, of the Fifth Dynasty, is known to have sent ships to Lebanon to import cedar, and to the Land of Punt for myrrh, malachite, and electrum. Queen Hatshepsut sent ships for myrrh in Punt, and extended Egyptian trade into modern-day Somalia and the Mediterranean.

Queen Hatshepsut. Queen Hatshepsut expanded trade into modern-day Somalia and the Mediterranean.

An ancient form of the Suez Canal is believed to have been started by Pharaoh Senusret II or III of the Twelfth Dynasty, in order to connect the Nile River with the Red Sea.

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4.5: Ancient Egyptian Culture

Learning Objectives

- Examine the artistic and social developments of the Middle Kingdom

Key Points

- The Middle Kingdom (2134-1690 BCE) was a time of prosperity and stability, as well as a resurgence of art, literature, and architecture.Block statue was a new type of sculpture invented in the Middle Kingdom, and was often used as a funerary monument.
- Literature had new uses during the Middle Kingdom, and many classics were written during the period.

Terms

funerary monuments

Sculpture meant to decorate a tomb within a pyramid.

The Middle Kingdom (2134-1690 BCE) was a time of prosperity and stability, as well as a resurgence of art, literature, and architecture. Two major innovations of the time were the block statue and new forms of literature.

The Block Statue

The block statue came into use during this period. This type of sculpture depicts a squatting man with knees drawn close to the chest and arms folded on top of the knees. The body may be adorned with a cloak, which makes the body appear to be a block shape. The feet may be covered by the cloak, or left uncovered. The head was often carved in great detail, and reflected Egyptian beauty ideals, including large ears and small breasts. The block statue became more popular over the years, with its high point in the Late Period, and was often used as funerary monuments of important, non-royal individuals. They may have been intended as guardians, and were often fully inscribed.

Example of Block Statue. An example of a block statue from the Late Period, c. 650-633 BCE.

Literature

In the Middle Kingdom period, due to growth of middle class and scribes, literature began to be written to entertain and provide intellectual stimulation. Previously, literature served the purposes of maintaining divine cults, preserving souls in the afterlife, and documenting practical activities. However, some Middle Kingdom literature may have been transcriptions of the oral literature and

poetry of the Old Kingdom. Future generations of Egyptians often considered Middle Kingdom literature to be “classic,” with the ultimate example being the Story of Sinuhe.

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4.6: Nubia and Ancient Culture

Learning Objectives

- Describe the Nubian kingdoms, emphasizing their relationship with Egypt

Key Points

- Nubia consisted of two major regions along the Nile River, from Aswan to Khartoum.
- Nubian history can be traced from c. 2000 BCE onward to 1504 AD, when Nubia was divided between Egypt and the Sennar sultanate and became Arabized.
- Nubia and Ancient Egypt had periods of both peace and war.
- Around 3500 BCE, the “A-Group” of Nubians arose, existing side-by-side with the Naqada of Upper Egypt.
- Nubia was first mentioned by ancient Egyptian trading accounts in 2300 BCE.
- During the Egyptian Middle Kingdom (c. 2040-1640 BCE), Egypt began expanding into Nubian territory in order to control trade routes, and to build a series of forts along the Nile.
- The “Medjay” were people from the Nubia region who worked in the Egyptian military.
- Some Egyptian pharaohs were of Nubian origin, especially during the Kushite Period, although they closely followed the usual Egyptian methods of governing.

Terms

pharaoh

A ruler in ancient Egypt.

Nubia consisted of two major regions along the Nile River, from Aswan to Khartoum. Upper Nubia sat between the Second and Sixth Cataracts of the Nile (modern-day central Sudan), and Lower Nubia sat between the First and Second Cataracts (modern-day southern Egypt and northern Sudan).

The Nubian Region. This map shows the modern-day location of Nubia.

Nubian history can be traced from c. 2000 BCE onward to 1504 AD, when Nubia was divided between Egypt and the Sennar sultanate and became Arabized. It was later united within the Ottoman Egypt in the 19th century, and the Kingdom of Egypt from 1899 to 1956.

Depiction of Nubians Worshipping. This painting shows Nubians at worship.

Nubia and Egypt

Nubia and Ancient Egypt had periods of both peace and war. It is believed, based on rock art, that Nubian rulers and early Egyptian pharaohs used similar royal symbols. There was often peaceful cultural exchange and cooperation, and marriages between the two did occur. Egyptians did, however, conquer Nubian territory at various times. Nubians conquered Egypt in the 25th Dynasty.

Egyptians called the Nubian region "Ta-Seti," which means "The Land of the Bow," a reference to Nubian archery skills. Around 3500 BCE, the "A-Group" of Nubians arose, existing side-by-side with the Naqada of Upper Egypt. These two groups traded gold, copper tools, faience, stone vessels, pots, and more. Egyptian unification in 3300 BCE may have been helped along by Nubian culture, which was conquered by Upper Egypt.

Nubia was first mentioned by ancient Egyptian trading accounts in 2300 BCE. Nubia was a gateway to the riches of Africa, and goods like gold, incense, ebony, copper, ivory, and animals flowed through it. By the Sixth Dynasty, Nubia was fractured into a group of small kingdoms; the population (called "C-Group") may have been made up of Saharan nomads.

During the Egyptian Middle Kingdom (c. 2040-1640 BCE), Egypt began expanding into Nubian territory in order to control trade routes, and to build a series of forts along the Nile.

Depiction of Battle with the Nubians. This painting shows Ramses II battling Nubians from his war chariot.

The Egyptians called a certain region of northern modern-day Sudan, where ancient Nubians lived, "Medjay." This name gradually began to reference people, not the region. Those who lived in this region worked in the Egyptian military as scouts, later as garrison troops, and finally as elite paramilitary police.

Some Egyptian pharaohs were of Nubian origin, especially during the Kushite Period, although they closely followed the usual Egyptian methods of governing. In fact, they were seen, and saw themselves, as culturally Egyptian. The two cultures were so close that some scholars see them as indistinguishable. Nubians appear to have been assimilated into Egyptian culture.

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4.7: The Rise of Egyptian Civilization

Learning Objectives

- Describe the rise of civilization along the Nile River

Key Points

- The prehistory of Egypt spans from early human settlements to the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period of Egypt (c. 3100 BCE), and is equivalent to the Neolithic period.
- The Late Paleolithic in Egypt began around 30,000 BCE, and featured mobile buildings and tool-making industry.
- The Mesolithic saw the rise of various cultures, including Halfan, Qadan, Sebilian, and Harifian.
- The Neolithic saw the rise of cultures, including Merimde, El Omari, Maadi, Tasian, and Badarian.
- Three phases of Naqada culture included: the rise of new types of pottery (including blacktop-ware and white cross-line-ware), the use of mud-bricks, and increasingly sedentary lifestyles.
- During the Protodynastic period (3200-3000 BCE) powerful kings were in place, and unification of the state occurred, which led to the Early Dynastic Period.

Terms

Neolithic

The later part of the Stone Age, during which ground or polished stone weapons and implements were used.

nomadic pastoralism

The herding of livestock to find fresh pasture to graze.

Fertile Crescent

Also known as the Cradle of Civilization, the Fertile Crescent is a crescent-shaped region containing the comparatively moist and fertile land of Western Asia, the Nile Valley, and the Nile Delta.

serekhs

An ornamental vignette combining a view of a palace facade and a top view of the royal courtyard. It was used as a royal crest.

The prehistory of Egypt spans from early human settlements to the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period of Egypt (c. 3100 BCE), which started with the first Pharoah Narmer (also known as Menes). It is equivalent to the Neolithic period, and is divided into cultural periods, named after locations where Egyptian settlements were found.

The Late Paleolithic

This period began around 30,000 BCE. Ancient, mobile buildings, capable of being disassembled and reassembled were found along the southern border near Wadi Halfa. Aterian tool-making industry reached Egypt around 40,000 BCE, and Khormusan industry began between 40,000 and 30,000 BCE.

The Mesolithic

Halfan culture arose along the Nile Valley of Egypt and in Nubia between 18,000 and 15,000 BCE. They appeared to be settled people, descended from the Khormusan people, and spawned the Ibero-Marusian industry. Material remains from these people include stone tools, flakes, and rock paintings.

The Qadan culture practiced wild-grain harvesting along the Nile, and developed sickles and grinding stones to collect and process these plants. These people were likely residents of Libya who were pushed into the Nile Valley due to desiccation in the Sahara. The Sebilian culture (also known as Esna) gathered wheat and barley.

The Harifian culture migrated out of the Fayyum and the Eastern deserts of Egypt to merge with the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B; this created the Circum-Arabian Nomadic Pastoral Complex, who invented nomadic pastoralism, and may have spread Proto-Semitic language throughout Mesopotamia.

The Neolithic

Expansion of the Sahara desert forced more people to settle around the Nile in a sedentary, agriculture-based lifestyle. Around 6000 BCE, Neolithic settlements began to appear in great number in this area, likely as migrants from the Fertile Crescent returned to the area. Weaving occurred for the first time in this period, and people buried their dead close to or within their settlements.

The Merimde culture (5000-4200 BCE) was located in Lower Egypt. People lived in small huts, created simple pottery, and had stone tools. They had cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs, and planted wheat, sorghum, and barley. The first Egyptian life-size clay head comes from this culture.

The El Omari culture (4000-3100 BCE) lived near modern-day Cairo. People lived in huts, and had undecorated pottery and stone tools. Metal was unknown.

The Maadi culture (also known as Buto Maadi) is the most important Lower Egyptian prehistoric culture. Copper was used, pottery was simple and undecorated, and people lived in huts. The dead were buried in cemeteries.

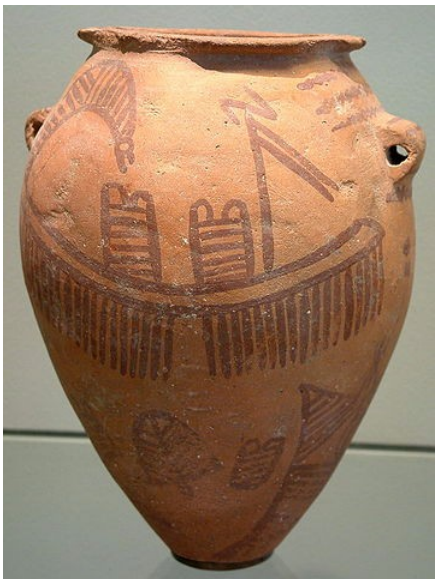
The Tasian culture (4500-3100 BCE) produced a kind of red, brown, and black pottery, called blacktop-ware. From this period on, Upper Egypt was strongly influenced by the culture of Lower Egypt.

The Badarian culture (4400-4000 BCE) was similar to the Tasian, except they improved blacktop-ware and used copper in addition to stone.

The Amratian culture (Naqada I) (4000-3500 BCE) continued making blacktop-ware, and added white cross-line-ware, which featured pottery with close, parallel, white, crossed lines. Mud-brick buildings were first seen in this period in small numbers.

Amratian (Naqada I) Terracotta Figure. This terracotta female figure, c. 3500-3400 BCE, is housed at the Brooklyn Museum.

The Gerzean culture (Naqada II, 3500-3200 BCE) saw the laying of the foundation for Dynastic Egypt. It developed out of Amratian culture, moving south through Upper Egypt. Its pottery was painted dark red with pictures of animals, people and ships. Life was increasingly sedentary and focused on agriculture, as cities began to grow. Mud bricks were mass-produced, copper was used for tools and weapons, and silver, gold, lapis, and faience were used as decorations. The first Egyptian-style tombs were built.



Naqada II Pottery. This pottery has a ship theme, and is done in the style of Naqada II.

Protodynastic Period (Naqada III) (3200 – 3000 BCE)

During this period, the process of state formation, begun in Naqada II, became clearer. Kings headed up powerful polities, but they were unrelated. Political unification was underway, which culminated in the formation of a single state in the Early Dynastic Period. Hieroglyphs may have first been used in this period, along with irrigation. Additionally, royal cemeteries and serekhs (royal crests) came into use.

Serekh of King Djet. This serekh (royal crest) shows the Horus falcon.

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4.8: The Old Kingdom

Learning Objectives

- Explain the reasons for the rise and fall of the Old Kingdom

Key Points

- The Old Kingdom is the name commonly given to the period when Egypt gained in complexity and achievement, spanning from the Third Dynasty through the Sixth Dynasty (2686-2181 BCE).
- The royal capital of Egypt during the Old Kingdom was located at Memphis, where the first notable king of the Old Kingdom, Djoser, established his court.
- In the Third Dynasty, formerly independent ancient Egyptian states became known as Nomes, which were ruled solely by the pharaoh. The former rulers of these states were subsequently forced to assume the role of governors, or otherwise work in tax collection.
- Egyptians during this Dynasty worshipped their pharaoh as a god, and believed that he ensured the stability of the cycles that were responsible for the annual flooding of the Nile. This flooding was necessary for their crops.
- The Fourth Dynasty saw multiple large-scale construction projects under pharaohs Sneferu, Khufu, and Khufu's sons Djedefra and Khafra, including the famous pyramid and Sphinx at Giza.
- The Fifth Dynasty saw changes in religious beliefs, including the rise of the cult of the sun god Ra, and the deity Osiris.

Terms

Ra

The sun god, or the supreme Egyptian deity, worshipped as the creator of all life, and usually portrayed with a falcon's head bearing a solar disc.

Osiris

The Egyptian god of the underworld, and husband and brother of Isis.

Nomes

Subnational, administrative division of Ancient Egypt.

nomarchs

Semi-feudal rulers of Ancient Egyptian provinces.

Old Kingdom

Encompassing the Third to Eighth Dynasties, the name commonly given to the period in the 3rd millennium BCE, when Egypt attained its first continuous peak of complexity and achievement.

Djoser

An ancient Egyptian pharaoh of the Third Dynasty, and the founder of the Old Kingdom.

necropolis

A cemetery, especially a large one belonging to an ancient city.

Sneferu

A king of the Fourth Dynasty, who used the greatest mass of stones in building pyramids.

The Old Kingdom is the name commonly given to the period from the Third Dynasty through the Sixth Dynasty (2686-2181 BCE), when Egypt gained in complexity and achievement. The Old Kingdom is the first of three so-called "Kingdom" periods that mark the high points of civilization in the Nile Valley. During this time, a new type of pyramid (the step) was created, as well as many

other massive building projects, including the Sphinx. Additionally, trade became more widespread, new religious ideas were born, and the strong centralized government was subtly weakened and finally collapsed.

The king (not yet called Pharaoh) of Egypt during this period resided in the new royal capital, Memphis. He was considered a living god, and was believed to ensure the annual flooding of the Nile. This flooding was necessary for crop growth. The Old Kingdom is perhaps best known for a large number of pyramids, which were constructed as royal burial places. Thus, the period of the Old Kingdom is often called “The Age of the Pyramids.”

Egypt’s Old Kingdom was also a dynamic period in the development of Egyptian art. Sculptors created early portraits, the first life-size statues, and perfected the art of carving intricate relief decoration. These had two principal functions: to ensure an ordered existence, and to defeat death by preserving life in the next world.

The Beginning: Third Dynasty (c. 2650-2613 BCE)

The first notable king of the Old Kingdom was Djoser (reigned from 2691-2625 BCE) of the Third Dynasty, who ordered the construction of the step pyramid in Memphis’ necropolis, Saqqara. It was in this era that formerly independent ancient Egyptian states became known as nomes, and were ruled solely by the king. The former rulers of these states were forced to assume the role of governors or tax collectors.

Golden Age: Fourth Dynasty (2613-2494 BCE)

The Old Kingdom and its royal power reached a zenith under the Fourth Dynasty, which began with Sneferu (2613-2589 BCE). Using a greater mass of stones than any other king, he built three pyramids: Meidum, the Bent Pyramid, and the Red Pyramid. He also sent his military into Sinai, Nubia and Libya, and began to trade with Lebanon for cedar.

Sneferu was succeeded by his (in)famous son, Khufu (2589-2566 BCE), who built the Great Pyramid of Giza. After Khufu’s death, one of his sons built the second pyramid, and the Sphinx in Giza. Creating these massive projects required a centralized government with strong powers, sophistication and prosperity. Builders of the pyramids were not slaves but peasants, working in the farming off-season, along with specialists like stone cutters, mathematicians, and priests. Each household needed to provide a worker for these projects, although the wealthy could have a substitute.

The Pyramid of Khufu at Giza. The Great Pyramid of Giza was built c. 2560 BCE, by Khufu during the Fourth Dynasty. It was built as a tomb for Khufu and constructed over a 20-year period. Modern estimates place construction efforts to require an average workforce of 14,567 people and a peak workforce of 40,000.

Great Sphinx of Giza and the pyramid of Khafre. The Sphinx is a limestone statue of a reclining mythical creature with a lion's body and a human head that stands on the Giza Plateau on the west bank of the Nile in Giza, Egypt. The face is generally believed to represent the face of King Khafra.

The later kings of the Fourth Dynasty were king Menkaura (2532-2504 BCE), who built the smallest pyramid in Giza, Shepseskaf (2504-2498 BCE), and perhaps Djedefptah (2498-2496 BCE). During this period, there were military expeditions into Canaan and Nubia, spreading Egyptian influence along the Nile into modern-day Sudan.

Religious Changes: Fifth Dynasty (2494-2345 BCE)

The Fifth Dynasty began with Userkaf (2494-2487 BCE), and with several religious changes. The cult of the sun god Ra, and temples built for him, began to grow in importance during the Fifth Dynasty. This lessened efforts to build pyramids. Funerary prayers on royal tombs (called Pyramid Texts) appeared, and the cult of the deity Osiris ascended in importance.

Egyptians began to build ships to trade across maritime routes. Goods included ebony, incense, gold, and copper. They traded with Lebanon for cedar, and perhaps with modern-day Somalia for other goods. Ships were held together by tightly tied ropes.

Decline and Collapse: The Sixth Dynasty (2345-2181 BCE)

The power of the king and central government declined during this period, while that of nomarchs (regional governors) increased. These nomarchs were not part of the royal family. They passed down the title through their lineage, thus creating local dynasties that were not under the control of the king. Internal disorder resulted during and after the long reign of Pepi II (2278-2184 BCE), due to succession struggles, and eventually led to civil war. The final blow was a severe drought between 2200-2150 BCE, which prevented Nile flooding. Famine, conflict, and collapse beset the Old Kingdom for decades.

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4.9: The First Intermediate Period

Learning Objectives

- Describe the processes by which the First Intermediate Period occurred, and then transitioned into the Middle Kingdom

Key Points

- The First Intermediate Period was a dynamic time in history, when rule of Egypt was roughly divided between two competing power bases. One of those bases resided at Heracleopolis in Lower Egypt, a city just south of the Faiyum region. The other resided at Thebes in Upper Egypt.
- The Old Kingdom fell due to problems with succession from the Sixth Dynasty, the rising power of provincial monarchs, and a drier climate that resulted in widespread famine.
- Little is known about the Seventh and Eighth Dynasties due to a lack of evidence, but the Seventh Dynasty was most likely an oligarchy, while Eighth Dynasty rulers claimed to be the descendants of the Sixth Dynasty kings. Both ruled from Memphis.
- The Heracleopolitan Kings saw periods of both violence and peace under their rule, and eventually brought peace and order to the Nile Delta region.
- Siut princes to the south of the Heracleopolitan Kingdom became wealthy from a variety of agricultural and economic activities, and acted as a buffer during times of conflict between the northern and southern parts of Egypt.
- The Theban Kings enjoyed a string of military successes, the last of which was a victory against the Heracleopolitan Kings that unified Egypt under the Twelfth Dynasty.

Terms

First Intermediate Period

A period of political conflict and instability lasting approximately 100 years and spanning the Seventh to Eleventh Dynasties.

Mentuhotep II

A pharaoh of the Eleventh Dynasty, who defeated the Heracleopolitan Kings and unified Egypt. Often considered the first pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom.

nomarchs

Ancient Egyptian administration officials responsible for governing the provinces.

oligarchy

A form of power structure in which power effectively rests with a small number of people who are distinguished by royalty, wealth, family ties, education, corporate, or military control.

The First Intermediate Period (c. 2181-2055 BCE), often described as a “dark period” in ancient Egyptian history after the end of the Old Kingdom, spanned approximately 100 years. It included the Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, and part of the Eleventh dynasties.

The First Intermediate Period was a dynamic time in history when rule of Egypt was roughly divided between two competing power bases: Heracleopolis in Lower Egypt, and Thebes in Upper Egypt. It is believed that political chaos during this time resulted in temples being pillaged, artwork vandalized, and statues of kings destroyed. These two kingdoms eventually came into military conflict. The Theban kings conquered the north, which resulted in the reunification of Egypt under a single ruler during the second part of the Eleventh dynasty.

Events Leading to the First Intermediate Period

The Old Kingdom, which preceded this period, fell for numerous reasons. One was the extremely long reign of Pepi II (the last major king of the Sixth Dynasty), and the resulting succession issues. Another major problem was the rise in power of the provincial nomarchs. Toward the end of the Old Kingdom, the positions of the nomarchs had become hereditary, creating family

legacies independent from the king. They erected tombs in their own domains and often raised armies, and engaged in local rivalries. A third reason for the dissolution of centralized kingship was the low level of the Nile inundation, which may have resulted in a drier climate, lower crop yields, and famine.

The Seventh and Eighth Dynasties at Memphis

The Seventh and Eighth dynasties are often overlooked because very little is known about the rulers of these two periods. The Seventh Dynasty was most likely an oligarchy based in Memphis that attempted to retain control of the country. The Eighth Dynasty rulers, claiming to be the descendants of the Sixth Dynasty kings, also ruled from Memphis.

The Heracleopolitan Kings

After the obscure reign of the Seventh and Eighth dynasty kings, a group of rulers rose out of Heracleopolis in Lower Egypt, and ruled for approximately 94 years. These kings comprise the Ninth and Tenth Dynasties, each with 19 rulers.

The founder of the Ninth Dynasty, Wahkare Khety I, is often described as an evil and violent ruler who caused much harm to the inhabitants of Egypt. He was seized with madness, and, as legend would have it, was eventually killed by a crocodile. Kheti I was succeeded by Kheti II, also known as Meryibre, whose reign was essentially peaceful but experienced problems in the Nile Delta. His successor, Kheti III, brought some degree of order to the Delta, although the power and influence of these Ninth Dynasty kings were still insignificant compared to that of the Old Kingdom kings.

A distinguished line of nomarchs rose out of Siut (or Asyut), which was a powerful and wealthy province in the south of the Heracleopolitan kingdom. These warrior princes maintained a close relationship with the kings of the Heracleopolitan royal household, as is evidenced by the inscriptions in their tombs. These inscriptions provide a glimpse at the political situation that was present during their reigns, and describe the Siut nomarchs digging canals, reducing taxation, reaping rich harvests, raising cattle herds, and maintaining an army and fleet. The Siut province acted as a buffer state between the northern and southern rulers and bore the brunt of the attacks from the Theban kings.

The Theban Kings

The Theban kings are believed to have been descendants of Intef or Inyotef, the nomarch of Thebes, often called the “Keeper of the Door of the South. ” He is credited with organizing Upper Egypt into an independent ruling body in the south, although he himself did not appear to have tried to claim the title of king. Intef II began the Theban assault on northern Egypt, and his successor, Intef III, completed the attack and moved into Middle Egypt against the Heracleopolitan kings. The first three kings of the Eleventh Dynasty (all named Intef) were, therefore, also the last three kings of the First Intermediate Period. They were succeeded by a line of kings who were all called Mentuhotep. Mentuhotep II, also known as Nebhepetra, would eventually defeat the Heracleopolitan kings around 2033 BCE, and unify the country to continue the Eleventh Dynasty and bring Egypt into the Middle Kingdom.

Mentuhotep II. Painted sandstone seated statue of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II, Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

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4.10: The Middle Kingdom

Learning Objectives

- Describe the various characteristics of Sensuret III's rule during the height of the Middle Kingdom

Key Points

- The Middle Kingdom had two phases: the end of the Eleventh Dynasty, which ruled from Thebes, and the Twelfth Dynasty onwards, which was centred around el-Lisht.
- During the First Intermediate Period, the governors of the nomes of Egypt—called nomarchs— gained considerable power. Amenemhet I also instituted a system of co-regency, which ensured a smooth transition from monarch to monarch and contributed to the stability of the Twelfth Dynasty.
- The height of the Middle Kingdom came under the rules of Sensuret III and Amenemhat III, the former of whom established clear boundaries for Egypt, and the latter of whom efficiently exploited Egyptian resources to bring about a period of economic prosperity.
- The Middle Kingdom declined into the Second Intermediate Period during the Thirteenth Dynasty, after a gradual loss of dynastic power and the disintegration of Egypt.

Terms

Amenemhat III

Egyptian king who saw a great period of economic prosperity through efficient exploitation of natural resources.

nomes

Subnational administrative divisions within ancient Egypt.

Middle Kingdom

Period of unification in Ancient Egyptian history, stretching from the end of the Eleventh Dynasty to the Thirteenth Dynasty, roughly between 2030-1640 BCE.

Senusret III

Warrior-king during the Twelfth Dynasty, who centralized power within Egypt through various military successes.

Sobekneferu

The first known female ruler of Egypt.

waret

Administrative divisions in Egypt.

genut

Daybooks.

The Middle Kingdom, also known as the Period of Reunification, is a period in the history of Ancient Egypt stretching from the end of the Eleventh Dynasty to the end of the Twelfth Dynasty, roughly between 2000-1700 BCE. There were two phases: the end of the Eleventh Dynasty, which ruled from Thebes, and the Twelfth Dynasty onwards, which was centred around el-Lisht.

The End of the Eleventh Dynasty and the Rise of the Twelfth Dynasty

Toward the end of the First Intermediate Period, Mentuhotep II and his successors unified Egypt under a single rule, and commanded such faraway locations as Nubia and the Sinai. He reigned for 51 years and restored the cult of the ruler, considering himself a god and wearing the headdresses of Amun and Min. His descendants ruled Egypt, until a vizier, Amenemhet I, came to power and initiated the Twelfth Dynasty.

From the Twelfth dynasty onward, pharaohs often kept well-trained standing armies, which formed the basis of larger forces raised for defense against invasion, or for expeditions up the Nile or across the Sinai. However, the Middle Kingdom remained defensive in its military strategy, with fortifications built at the First Cataract of the Nile, in the Delta and across the Sinai Isthmus.

Amenemhet I never held the absolute power commanded, in theory, by the Old Kingdom pharaohs. During the First Intermediate Period, the governors of the nomes of Egypt—nomarchs— gained considerable power. To strengthen his position, Amenemhet required registration of land, modified nome borders, and appointed nomarchs directly when offices became vacant. Generally, however, he acquiesced to the nomarch system, creating a strongly feudal organization.

In his 20th regnal year, Amenemhat established his son, Senusret I, as his co-regent. This instituted a practice that would be used throughout the Middle and New Kingdoms. The reign of Amenemhat II, successor to Senusret I, has been characterized as largely peaceful. It appears Amenemhet allowed nomarchs to become hereditary again. In his 33rd regnal year, he appointed his son, Senusret II, co-regent.

There is no evidence of military activity during the reign of Senusret II. Senusret instead appears to have focused on domestic issues, particularly the irrigation of the Faiyum. He reigned only fifteen years, and was succeeded by his son, Senusret III.

Height of the Middle Kingdom

Senusret III was a warrior-king, and launched a series of brutal campaigns in Nubia. After his victories, Senusret built a series of massive forts throughout the country as boundary markers; the locals were closely watched.

Statue head of Sensuret III. Statue head of Sensuret III, one of the kings in the Twelfth Dynasty.

Domestically, Senusret has been given credit for an administrative reform that put more power in the hands of appointees of the central government. Egypt was divided into three warets, or administrative divisions: North, South, and Head of the South (perhaps Lower Egypt, most of Upper Egypt, and the nomes of the original Theban kingdom during the war with Herakleopolis,

respectively). The power of the nomarchs seems to drop off permanently during Sensuret's reign, which has been taken to indicate that the central government had finally suppressed them, though there is no record that Senusret took direct action against them.

The reign of Amenemhat III was the height of Middle Kingdom economic prosperity, and is remarkable for the degree to which Egypt exploited its resources. Mining camps in the Sinai, that had previously been used only by intermittent expeditions, were operated on a semi-permanent basis. After a reign of 45 years, Amenemhet III was succeeded by Amenemhet IV, under whom dynastic power began to weaken. Contemporary records of the Nile flood levels indicate that the end of the reign of Amenemhet III was dry, and crop failures may have helped to destabilize the dynasty. Furthermore, Amenemhet III had an inordinately long reign, which led to succession problems. Amenemhet IV was succeeded by Sobekneferu, the first historically attested female king of Egypt, who ruled for no more than four years. She apparently had no heirs, and when she died the Twelfth Dynasty came to a sudden end.

Decline into the Second Intermediate Period

After the death of Sobeknefru, Egypt was ruled by a series of ephemeral kings for about 10-15 years. Ancient Egyptian sources regard these as the first kings of the Thirteenth Dynasty.

After the initial dynastic chaos, a series of longer reigning, better attested kings ruled for about 50-80 years. The strongest king of this period, Neferhotep I, ruled for 11 years, maintained effective control of Upper Egypt, Nubia, and the Delta, and was even recognized as the suzerain of the ruler of Byblos. At some point during the Thirteenth Dynasty, the provinces of Xois and Avaris began governing themselves. Thus began the final portion of the Thirteenth Dynasty, when southern kings continued to reign over Upper Egypt; when the unity of Egypt fully disintegrated, however, the Middle Kingdom gave way to the Second Intermediate Period.

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4.11: The Second Intermediate Period

Learning Objectives

- Explain the dynamics between the various groups of people vying for power during the Second Intermediate Period

Key Points

- The brilliant Twelfth Dynasty was succeeded by a weaker Thirteenth Dynasty, which experienced a splintering of power.
- The Hyksos made their first appearance during the reign of Sobekhotep IV, and overran Egypt at the end of the Fourteenth Dynasty. They ruled through the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Dynasties.
- The Abydos Dynasty was a short-lived Dynasty that ruled over part of Upper Egypt, and was contemporaneous with the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Dynasties.
- The Seventeeth Dynasty established itself in Thebes around the time that the Hyksos took power in Egypt, and co-existed with the Hyksos through trade for a period of time. However, rulers from the Seventeenth Dynasty undertook several wars of liberation that eventually once again unified Egypt in the Eighteenth Dynasty.

Terms

Hyksos

An Asiatic people from West Asia who took over the eastern Nile Delta, ending the Thirteenth dynasty of Egypt and initiating the Second Intermediate Period.

Abydos Dynasty

A short-lived local dynasty ruling over parts of Upper Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period in Ancient Egypt.

Baal

The native storm god of the Hyksos.

Second Intermediate Period

Spanning the Fourteenth to Seventeenth Dynasties, a period of Egyptian history where power was split between the Hyksos and a Theban-based dynasty in Upper Egypt.

The Second Intermediate Period (c. 1782-1550 BCE) marks a time when Ancient Egypt once again fell into disarray between the end of the Middle Kingdom, and the start of the New Kingdom. It is best known as the period when the Hyksos, who reigned during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Dynasties, made their appearance in Egypt.

The Thirteenth Dynasty (1803 – 1649 BCE)

The brilliant Egyptian Twelfth Dynasty—and the Golden Age of the Middle Kingdom— came to an end around 1800 BCE with the death of Queen Sobekneferu (1806-1802 BCE), and was succeeded by the much weaker Thirteenth Dynasty (1803-1649 BCE). Pharoahs ruled from Memphis until the Hyksos conquered the capital in 1650 BCE.

The Fourteenth Dynasty (c. 1725-1650 BCE)

The Thirteenth Dynasty proved unable to hold onto the long land of Egypt, and the provincial ruling family in Xois, located in the marshes of the western Delta, broke away from the central authority to form the Fourteenth Dynasty. The capital of this dynasty was likely Avaris. It existed concurrently with the Thirteenth Dynasty, and its rulers seemed to be of Canaanite or West Semitic descent.

Fourteenth Dynasty Territory. The area in orange is the territory possibly under control of the Fourteenth Dynasty.

The Fifteenth Dynasty (c. 1650-1550 BCE)

The Hyksos made their first appearance in 1650 BCE and took control of the town of Avaris. They would also conquer the Sixteenth Dynasty in Thebes and a local dynasty in Abydos (see below). The Hyksos were of mixed Asiatic origin with mainly Semitic components, and their native storm god, Baal, became associated with the Egyptian storm god Seth. They brought technological innovation to Egypt, including bronze and pottery techniques, new breeds of animals and new crops, the horse and chariot, composite bow, battle-axes, and fortification techniques for warfare. These advances helped Egypt later rise to prominence.

Luxor Temple. Thebes was the capital of many of the Sixteenth Dynasty pharaohs.

The Sixteenth Dynasty

This dynasty ruled the Theban region in Upper Egypt for 70 years, while the armies of the Fifteenth Dynasty advanced against southern enemies and encroached on Sixteenth territory. Famine was an issue during this period, most notably during the reign of Neferhotep III.

The Abydos Dynasty

The Abydos Dynasty was a short-lived local dynasty that ruled over part of Upper Egypt and was contemporaneous with the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Dynasties c. 1650-1600 BCE. The royal necropolis of the Abydos Dynasty was found in the southern part of Abydos, in an area called Anubis Mountain in ancient times, adjacent to the tombs of the Middle Kingdom rulers.

The Abydos Dynasty. This map shows the possible extent of power of the Abydos Dynasty (in red).

The Seventeenth Dynasty (c. 1580-1550 BCE)

Around the time Memphis and Itj-tawy fell to the Hyksos, the native Egyptian ruling house in Thebes declared its independence from Itj-tawy and became the Seventeenth Dynasty. This dynasty would eventually lead the war of liberation that drove the Hyksos

back into Asia. The Theban-based Seventeenth Dynasty restored numerous temples throughout Upper Egypt while maintaining peaceful trading relations with the Hyksos kingdom in the north. Indeed, Senakhtenre Ahmose, the first king in the line of Ahmoside kings, even imported white limestone from the Hyksos-controlled region of Tura to make a granary door at the Temple of Karnak. However, his successors—the final two kings of this dynasty—,Seqenenre Tao and Kamose, defeated the Hyksos through several wars of liberation. With the creation of the Eighteenth Dynasty around 1550 BCE, the New Kingdom period of Egyptian history began with Ahmose I, its first pharaoh, who completed the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt and placed the country, once again, under centralized administrative control.

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4.12: The New Kingdom

Learning Objectives

- Explain the reasons for the collapse of the New Kingdom

Key Points

- The New Kingdom saw Egypt attempt to create a buffer against the Levant and by attaining its greatest territorial by extending into Nubia and the Near East. This was possibly a result of the foreign rule of the Hyksos during the Second Intermediate Period,
- The Eighteenth Dynasty contained some of Egypt's most famous pharaohs, including Hatshepsut, Akhenaten, Thutmose III, and Tutankhamun. Hatshepsut concentrated on expanding Egyptian trade, while Thutmose III consolidated power.
- Akhenaten's devotion to Aten defined his reign with religious fervor, while art flourished under his rule and attained an unprecedented level of realism.
- Due to Akenaten's lack of interest in international affairs, the Hittites gradually extended their influence into Phoenicia and Canaan.
- Ramesses II attempted war against the Hittites, but eventually agreed to a peace treaty after an indecisive result.
- The heavy cost of military efforts in addition to climatic changes resulted in a loss of centralized power at the end of the Twentieth Dynasty, leading to the Third Intermediate Period.

Terms

Hyksos

An Asiatic people from West Asia who took over the eastern Nile Delta, ending the Thirteenth dynasty of Egypt and initiating the Second Intermediate Period.

Abydos Dynasty

A short-lived local dynasty ruling over parts of Upper Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period in Ancient Egypt.

Baal

The native storm god of the Hyksos.

Second Intermediate Period

Spanning the Fourteenth to Seventeenth Dynasties, a period of Egyptian history where power was split between the Hyksos and a Theban-based dynasty in Upper Egypt.

The New Kingdom of Egypt, also referred to as the Egyptian Empire, is the period in ancient Egyptian history between 1550-1070 BCE, covering the Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Dynasties of Egypt. The New Kingdom followed the Second Intermediate Period, and was succeeded by the Third Intermediate Period. It was Egypt's most prosperous time and marked the peak of its power.

The Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties (1292-1069 BCE) are also known as the Ramesside period, after the eleven pharaohs that took the name of Ramesses. The New Kingdom saw Egypt attempt to create a buffer against the Levant and attain its greatest territorial extent. This was possibly a result of the foreign rule of the Hyksos during the Second Intermediate Period.

The Eighteenth Dynasty (c. 1543-1292 BCE)

The Eighteenth Dynasty, also known as the Thutmosid Dynasty, contained some of Egypt's most famous pharaohs, including Ahmose I, Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, Amenhotep III, Akhenaten (c. 1353-1336 BCE) and his queen Nefertiti, and Tutankhamun. Queen Hatshepsut (c. 1479 – 1458 BCE) concentrated on expanding Egypt's external trade by sending a commercial expedition to the land of Punt, and was the longest-reigning woman pharaoh of an indigenous dynasty. Thutmose III, who would become known as the greatest military pharoah, expanded Egypt's army and wielded it with great success to consolidate the empire created by his

predecessors. These victories maximized Egyptian power and wealth during the reign of Amenhotep III. It was also during the reign of Thutmose III that the term “pharaoh,” originally referring to the king’s palace, became a form of address for the king.

One of the best-known Eighteenth Dynasty pharaohs is Amenhotep IV (c. 1353-1336 BCE), who changed his name to Akhenaten in honor of Aten and whose exclusive worship of the deity is often interpreted as the first instance of monotheism. Under his reign Egyptian art flourished and attained an unprecedented level of realism. Toward the end of this dynasty, the Hittites had expanded their influence into Phoenicia and Canaan, the outcome of which would be inherited by the rulers of the Nineteenth Dynasty.

Bust of Akhenaten. Akhenaten, born Amenhotep IV, was the son of Queen Tiye. He rejected the old Egyptian religion and promoted the Aten as a supreme deity.

The Nineteenth Dynasty (c. 1292-1187 BCE)

New Kingdom Egypt would reach the height of its power under Seti I and Ramesses II, who fought against the Libyans and Hittites. The city of Kadesh was a flashpoint, captured first by Seti I and then used as a peace bargain with the Hatti, and later attacked again by Ramesses II. Eventually, the Egyptians and Hittites signed a lasting peace treaty.

Egyptian and Hittite Empires. This map shows the Egyptian (green) and Hittite (red) Empires around 1274 BCE.

Ramesses II had a large number of children, and he built a massive funerary complex for his sons in the Valley of the Kings. The Nineteenth Dynasty ended in a revolt led by Setnakhte, the founder of the Twentieth Dynasty.

Temple of Ramesses II. Detail of the Temple of Ramesses II.

The Twentieth Dynasty (c. 1187-1064 BCE)

The last “great” pharaoh from the New Kingdom is widely regarded to be Ramesses III. In the eighth year of his reign, the Sea Peoples invaded Egypt by land and sea, but were defeated by Ramesses III.

The heavy cost of warfare slowly drained Egypt's treasury and contributed to the gradual decline of the Egyptian Empire in Asia. The severity of the difficulties is indicated by the fact that the first known labor strike in recorded history occurred during the 29th year of Ramesses III's reign, over food rations. Despite a palace conspiracy which may have killed Ramesses III, three of his sons ascended the throne successively as Ramesses IV, Ramesses VI and Ramesses VIII. Egypt was increasingly beset by droughts, below-normal flooding of the Nile, famine, civil unrest, and official corruption. The power of the last pharaoh of the dynasty, Ramesses XI, grew so weak that, in the south, the High Priests of Amun at Thebes became the de facto rulers of Upper Egypt. The Smendes controlled Lower Egypt even before Ramesses XI's death. Menes eventually founded the Twenty-first Dynasty at Tanis.

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4.13: Hatshepsut

Learning Objectives

- Describe the achievements of Hatshepsut in Ancient Egypt

Key Points

- Hatshepsut reigned Egypt from 1478-1458 BCE, during the Eighteenth Dynasty. She ruled longer than any other woman of an indigenous Egyptian dynasty.
- Hatshepsut established trade networks that helped build the wealth of the Eighteenth Dynasty.
- Hundreds of construction projects and statuary were commissioned by Hatshepsut, including obelisks and monuments at the Temple of Karnak.
- While not the first female ruler of Egypt, Hatshepsut's reign was longer and more prosperous; she oversaw a peaceful, wealthy era.
- The average woman in Egypt was quite liberated for the time, and had a variety of property and other rights.
- Hatshepsut died in 1458 BCE in middle age, possibly of diabetes and bone cancer. Her mummy was discovered in 1903 and identified in 2007.

Terms

kohl

A black powder used as eye makeup.

obelisks

Stone pillars, typically having a square or rectangular cross section and a pyramidal tip, used as a monument.

co-regent

The situation wherein a monarchical position, normally held by one person, is held by two.

Hatshepsut reigned in Egypt from 1478-1458 BCE, during the Eighteenth Dynasty, longer than any other woman of an indigenous Egyptian dynasty. According to Egyptologist James Henry Breasted, she was "the first great woman in history of whom we are informed." She was the daughter of Thutmose I and his wife Ahmes. Hatshepsut's husband, Thutmose II, was also a child of Thutmose I, but was conceived with a different wife. Hatshepsut had a daughter named Neferure with her husband, Thutmose II. Thutmose II also fathered Thutmose III with Iset, a secondary wife. Hatshepsut ascended to the throne as co-regent with Thutmose III, who came to the throne as a two-year old child.

Statue of Hatshepsut. This statue of Hatshepsut is housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Trade Networks

Hatshepsut established trade networks that helped build the wealth of the Eighteenth Dynasty. This included a successful mission to the Land of Punt in the ninth year of her reign, which brought live myrrh trees and frankincense (which Hatshepsut used as kohl eyeliner) to Egypt. She also sent raiding expeditions to Byblos and Sinai, and may have led military campaigns against Nubia and Canaan.

Building Projects

Hatshepsut was a prolific builder, commissioning hundreds of construction projects and statuary. She had monuments constructed at the Temple of Karnak, and restored the original Precinct of Mut at Karnak, which had been ravaged during the Hyksos occupation of Egypt. She installed twin obelisks (the tallest in the world at that time) at the entrance to this temple, one of which still stands. Karnak's Red Chapel was intended as a shrine to her life, and may have stood with these obelisks.

The Temple of Pakhet was a monument to Bast and Sekhmet, lioness war goddesses. Later in the Nineteenth Dynasty, King Seti I attempted to take credit for this monument. However, Hatshepsut's masterpiece was a mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri; the focal point was the Djeser-Djeseru ("the Sublime of Sublimes"), a colonnaded structure built 1,000 years before the Greek Parthenon. The Hatshepsut needle, a granite obelisk, is considered another great accomplishment.

Hatshepsut Temple. The colonnaded design is evident in this temple.

Female Rule

Hatshepsut was not the first female ruler of Egypt. She had been preceded by Merneith of the First Dynasty, Nimaathap of the Third Dynasty, Nitocris of the Sixth Dynasty, Sobekneferu of the Twelfth Dynasty, Ahhotep I of the Seventeenth Dynasty, Ahmose-Nefertari, and others. However, Hatshepsut's reign was longer and more prosperous; she oversaw a peaceful, wealthy era. She was also proficient at self-promotion, which was enabled by her wealth.

Hieroglyphs of Thutmose III and Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut, on the right, is shown having the trappings of a greater role.

The word “king” was considered gender-neutral, and women could take the title. During her father’s reign, she held the powerful office of God’s Wife, and as wife to her husband, Thutmose II, she took an active role in administration of the kingdom. As pharaoh, she faced few challenges, even from her co-regent, who headed up the powerful Egyptian army and could have unseated her, had he chosen to do so.

Women’s Status in Egypt

The average woman in Egypt was quite liberated for the time period. While her foremost role was as mother and wife, an average woman might have worked in weaving, perfume making, or entertainment. Women could own their own businesses, own and sell property, serve as witnesses in court cases, be in the company of men, divorce and remarry, and have access to one-third of their husband’s property.

Hatshepsut’s Death

Hatshepsut died in 1458 BCE in middle age; no cause of death is known, although she may have had diabetes and bone cancer, likely from a carcinogenic skin lotion. Her mummy was discovered in the Valley of the Kings by Howard Carer in 1903, although at the time, the mummy’s identity was not known. In 2007, the mummy was found to be a match to a missing tooth known to have belonged to Hatshepsut.

Osirian Statues of Hatshepsut. These statues of Hatshepsut at her tomb show her holding the crook and flail associated with Osiris.

After her death, mostly during Thutmose III's reign, haphazard attempts were made to remove Hatshepsut from certain historical and pharaonic records. Amenhotep II, the son of Thutmose III, may have been responsible. The Tyldesley hypothesis states that Thutmose III may have decided to attempt to scale back Hatshepsut's role to that of regent rather than king.

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4.14: The Third Intermediate Period

Learning Objectives

- Describe the general landscape of the political chaos during Third Intermediate Period

Key Points

- The period of the Twenty-first Dynasty was characterized by the country's fracturing kingship, as power became split more and more between the pharaoh and the High Priests of Amun at Thebes.
- Egypt was temporarily reunified during the Twenty-second Dynasty, and experienced a period of stability, but shattered into two states after the reign of Osorkon II.
- Civil war raged in Thebes and was eventually quelled by Osorkon B, who founded the Upper Egyptian Libyan Dynasty. This dynasty collapsed, however, with the rise of local city-states.
- The Twenty-fourth Dynasty saw the conquest of the Nubians over native Egyptian rulers, and the Nubians ruled through the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, when they expanded Egyptian power to the extent of the New Kingdom and restored many temples. Due to lacking military power, however, the Egyptians were conquered by the Assyrians toward the end of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty.
- The end of the Third Intermediate Period and the Twenty-sixth Dynasty saw Assyrian rule over Egypt. Although some measure of independence was regained, Egypt faced pressure and eventual defeat at the hands of the Persians.

Terms

Nubia

A region along the Nile river, located in northern Sudan and southern Egypt.

Third Intermediate Period

Spanning the Twenty-first to Twenty-sixth Dynasties. A period of Egyptian decline and political instability.

Assyrians

A major Mesopotamian East Semitic-speaking people.

High Priests of Amun

The highest-ranking priest in the priesthood of the Ancient Egyptian god, Amun. Assumed significant power along with the pharaoh in the Twenty-First Dynasty.

The Third Intermediate Period of Ancient Egypt began with the death of the last pharaoh of the New Kingdom, Ramesses XI in 1070 BCE, and ended with the start of the Postdynastic Period. The Third Intermediate Period was one of decline and political instability. It was marked by a division of the state for much of the period, as well as conquest and rule by foreigners. However, many aspects of life for ordinary Egyptians changed relatively little.

The Twenty-First Dynasty (c. 1077-943 BCE)

The period of the Twenty-first Dynasty was characterized by the country's fracturing kingship. Even in Ramesses XI's day, the Twentieth Dynasty of Egypt was losing its grip on power in the city of Thebes, where priests were becoming increasingly powerful. The Amun priests of Thebes owned 2/3 of all the temple lands in Egypt, 90% of ships, and many other resources. Consequently, the Amun priests were as powerful as the Pharaoh, if not more so. After the death of Ramesses XI, his successor, Smendes I, ruled from the city of Tanis, but was mainly active only in Lower Egypt. Meanwhile, the High Priests of Amun at Thebes effectively ruled Middle and Upper Egypt in all but name. During this time, however, this division was relatively insignificant, due to the fact that both priests and pharaohs came from the same family.

The Twenty-Second (c. 943-716 BCE) and Twenty-Third (c. 880-720 BCE) Dynasties

The country was firmly reunited by the Twenty-second Dynasty, founded by Shoshenq I in approximately 943 BCE. Shoshenq I descended from Meshwesh immigrants originally from Ancient Libya. This unification brought stability to the country for well over a century, but after the reign of Osorkon II, the country had shattered in two states. Shoshenq III of the Twenty-Second Dynasty controlled Lower Egypt by 818 BCE, while Takelot II and his son Osorkon (the future Osorkon III) ruled Middle and Upper Egypt. In Thebes, a civil war engulfed the city between the forces of Pedubast I, a self-proclaimed pharaoh. Eventually Osorkon B defeated his enemies, and proceeded to found the Upper Egyptian Libyan Dynasty of Osorkon III, Takelot III, and Rudamun. This kingdom quickly fragmented after Rudamun's death with the rise of local city-states.

The Twenty-Fourth Dynasty (c. 732-720 BCE)

The Nubian kingdom to the south took full advantage of the division of the country. Nubia had already extended its influence into the Egyptian city of Thebes around 752 BCE, when the Nubian ruler Kashta coerced Shepenupet into adopting his own daughter Amenirdis as her successor. Twenty years later, around 732 BCE, these machinations bore fruit for Nubia when Kashta's successor Piye marched north in his Year 20 campaign into Egypt, and defeated the combined might of the native Egyptian rulers.

The Twenty-Fifth Dynasty (c. 760-656 BCE)

Following his military conquests, Piye established the Twenty-fifth Dynasty and appointed the defeated rulers as his provincial governors. Rulers under this dynasty originated in the Nubian Kingdom of Kush. Their reunification of Lower Egypt, Upper Egypt, and Kish created the largest Egyptian empire since the New Kingdom. They assimilated into Egyptian culture but also brought some aspects of Kushite culture. During this dynasty, the first widespread building of pyramids since the Middle Kingdom resumed. The Nubians were driven out of Egypt in 670 BCE by the Assyrians, who installed an initial puppet dynasty loyal to the Assyrians.

Nubian Pharaohs. Statues of the Nubian Pharaohs of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty.

End of the Third Intermediate Period

Upper Egypt remained under the rule of Tantamani for a time, while Lower Egypt was ruled by the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, starting in 664 BCE. Although originally established as clients of the Assyrians, the Twenty-sixth Dynasty managed to take advantage of the time of troubles facing the Assyrian empire to successfully bring about Egypt's political independence. In 656 BCE, Psamtik I (last of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty kings) occupied Thebes and became pharaoh, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt. He proceeded to reign over a united Egypt for 54 years from his capital at Sais. Four successive Saite kings continued guiding Egypt through a period of peace and prosperity from 610-525 BCE. Unfortunately for this dynasty, however, a new power was growing in the Near East: Persia. Pharaoh Psamtik III succeeded his father, Ahmose II, only six months before he had to face the Persian Empire at Pelusium. The new king was no match for the Persians, who had already taken Babylon. Psamtik III was defeated and briefly escaped to Memphis. He was ultimately imprisoned, and later executed at Susa, the capital of the Persian king Cambyses. With the Saite kings exterminated, Camybes assumed the formal title of Pharaoh.

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4.15: The Decline of Ancient Egypt

Learning Objectives

- Explain why Ancient Egypt declined as an economic and political force

Key Points

- After a renaissance in the 25th Dynasty, ancient Egypt was occupied by Assyrians, initiating the Late Period.
- In 525 BCE, Egypt was conquered by Persia, and incorporated into the Achaemenid Persian Empire.
- In 332 BCE, Egypt was given to Macedonia and Alexander the Great. During this period, the new capital of Alexandria flourished.
- Egypt became a Roman province after the defeat of Marc Antony and Queen Cleopatra VII in 30 BCE. During this period, religious and other traditions slowly declined.

Terms

Hellenistic

Relating to Greek history, language, and culture, during the time between the death of Alexander the Great and the defeat of Mark Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BCE.

hieroglyphics

A formal writing system used by ancient Egyptians, consisting of pictograms.

pagan

A person holding religious beliefs other than those of the main world religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Ancient Egypt went through a series of occupations and suffered a slow decline over a long period of time. First occupied by the Assyrians, then the Persians, and later the Macedonians and Romans, Egyptians would never again reach the glorious heights of self-rule they achieved during previous periods.

Third Intermediate Period (1069-653 BCE)

After a renaissance in the Twenty-fifth dynasty, when religion, arts, and architecture (including pyramids) were restored, struggles against the Assyrians led to eventual conquest of Egypt by Esarhaddon in 671 BCE. Native Egyptian rulers were installed but could not retain control of the area, and former Pharaoh Taharqa seized control of southern Egypt for a time, until he was defeated again by the Assyrians. Taharqa's successor, Tanutamun, also made a failed attempt to regain Egypt, but was defeated.

Late Period (672-332 BCE)

Having been victorious in Egypt, the Assyrians installed a series of vassals known as the Saite kings of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. In 653 BCE, one of these kings, Psamtik I, was able to achieve a peaceful separation from the Assyrians with the help of Lydian and Greek mercenaries. In 609 BCE, the Egyptians attempted to save the Assyrians, who were losing their war with the Babylonians, Chaldeans, Medians, and Scythians. However, they were unsuccessful.

In 525 BCE, the Persians, led by Cambyses II, invaded Egypt, capturing the Pharaoh Psamtik III. Egypt was joined with Cyprus and Phoenicia in the sixth satrapy of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, also called the Twenty-seventh Dynasty. This ended in 402 BCE, and the last native royal house of dynastic Egypt, known as the Thirtieth Dynasty, was ruled by Nectanebo II. Persian rule was restored briefly in 343 BCE, known as the Thirty-first Dynasty, but in 332 BCE, Egypt was handed over peacefully to the Macedonian ruler, Alexander the Great.

Macedonian and Ptolemaic Period (332-30 BCE)

Alexander the Great was welcomed into Egypt as a deliverer, and the new capital city of Alexandria was a showcase of Hellenistic rule, capped by the famous Library of Alexandria. Native Egyptian traditions were honored, but eventually local revolts, plus interest in Egyptian goods by the Romans, caused the Romans to wrest Egypt from the Macedonians.

Roman Period (30 BCE-641CE)

Egypt became a Roman province after the defeat of Marc Antony and Queen Cleopatra VII in 30 BCE. Some Egyptian traditions, including mummification and worship of local gods, continued, but local administration was handled exclusively by Romans. The spread of Christianity proved to be too powerful, and pagan rites were banned and temples closed. Egyptians continued to speak their language, but the ability to read hieroglyphics disappeared as temple priests diminished.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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5.1: The Eastern Zhou Period

Learning Objectives

- Explain the main political and military developments during the Eastern Zhou period

Key Points

- During the first part of the Eastern Zhou period, called the Spring and Autumn period, the king became less powerful and the regional feudal became lords more so, until only seven consolidated powerful feudal states were left.
- During the second part of the period, called the Warring States period, strong states vied for power until the Qin conquered them all and created a unified dynasty.
- Developments during the period included increasing use of infantry, a trend toward bureaucracy and large-scale projects, the use of iron over bronze, and intellectual and philosophical developments.

Terms

Hegemony

Domination, influence, or authority over another, especially by one political group over a society or by one nation over others.

feudalism

A social system in which nobility hold lands from the King in exchange for military service, and peasants lived on the nobles' land and provided services.

decentralized

Moving away from a single point of administration to multiple locations, and usually giving them a degree of autonomy.

infantry

Soldiers marching or fighting on foot.

The End of the Western Zhou Period

The first period of Zhou rule, which lasted from 1046-771 BCE and was referred to as the Western Zhou period, was characterized mostly by unified, peaceful rule. The lords under feudalism gained increasing power, and ultimately the Zhou King You was assassinated, and the capital, Haojing, was sacked in 770 BCE. The capital was quickly moved east to Chengzhou, near modern-day Luoyang, and the Zhou abandoned the western regions. Thus, the assassination marked the end of the Western Zhou period and the beginning of the Eastern Zhou period.

The Spring and Autumn Period of Eastern Zhou

The first part of the Eastern Zhou period is known as the Spring and Autumn period, named after the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, a text that narrated events on a year-by-year basis, and marked the beginning of China's deliberately recorded history. This period lasted from about 771-476 BCE. During this time, power became increasingly decentralized as regional feudal lords began to absorb smaller powers and vie for hegemony. The monarchy continued to lose power, and the people were nearly always at war.

The period from 685-591 BCE was called The Five Hegemons, and featured, in order, the Hegemony of Qi, Song, Jin, Qin, and Chu. By the end of 5th century BCE, the feudal system was consolidated into seven prominent and powerful states—Han, Wei, Zhao, Yue, Chu, Qi, and Qin—and China entered the Warring States period, when each state vied for complete control.

The Warring States Period

This period, in the second half of the Eastern Zhou, lasted from about 475-221 BCE, when China was united under the Qin Dynasty. The partition of the Jin state created seven major warring states. After a series of wars among these powerful states, King

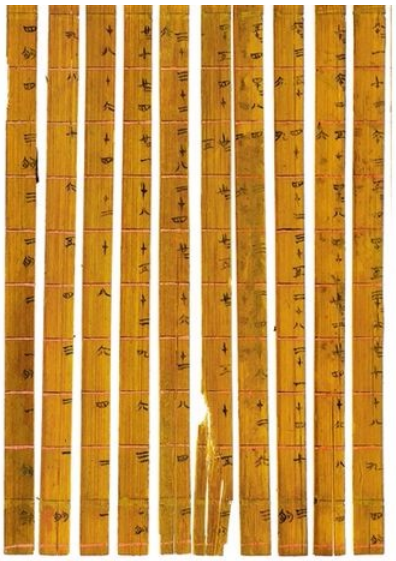
Zhao of Qin defeated King Nan of Zhou and conquered West Zhou in 256 BCE; his grandson, King Zhuangxiang of Qin, conquered East Zhou, bringing the Zhou Dynasty to an end.

A Map of the Warring States of China. This map shows the Warring States late in the period. Qin has expanded southwest, Chu north and Zhao northwest.

Developments During the Eastern Zhou

While the chariot remained in use, there was a shift during the period to infantry, possibly because of the invention of the crossbow. This meant that war became larger scale, as peasants were drafted to take the place of nobility as soldiers and needed complex logistical support. The aristocracy's importance dwindled as the king's became stronger, and strong central bureaucracies took hold. *The Art of War*, attributed to Sun Tzu, was written during this time; it remains a very influential book about strategy.

A sophisticated form of commercial arithmetic was in place during the period, as shown by a bundle of bamboo slips showing two digit decimal multiplication.



Bamboo Slips Showing Arithmetic. These bamboo slips show a sophisticated two digit decimal multiplication table.

A history of the Spring and Autumn Period, called the *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, was published during this time.

Developments in iron work replaced bronze as the dominant metal used in warfare. Trade became increasingly important among states within China. Large-scale works, including the Dujiangyan Irrigation System and the Zhengguo Canal, were completed and increased agricultural production.

Iron Sword from the Warring States Period. This iron sword is an example of the metal work done during this period.

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5.2: The Warring States Period

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate understanding of the main characteristics of the Warring States period

Key Points

- The second part of the Eastern Zhou period is known as the Warring States period. During this time, the seven states remaining from the Spring and Autumn period intensely and unrelentingly battled each other for total power.
- It was during this period that the Iron Age spread in China, leading to stronger tools and weapons made from iron instead of bronze.
- This period also saw the further development of Confucianism (by Mencius), Daoism, Legalism, and Mohism.
- By this time, two key Chinese social characteristics had solidified: 1) the concept of the patrilineal family as the basic unit of society, and 2) the concept of natural social differentiation into classes.
- Iron replaced the use of bronze, sophisticated math came into use, and large-scale projects were undertaken.
- Ultimately, in 221 BCE, the Qin state emerged victorious and unified China once more under the Qin Dynasty.

Terms

crossbow

A mechanised weapon, based on the bow and arrow, that fires bolts; it was invented during the Warring States period of the Zhou Dynasty, when its low cost and ease of use made it a preferable weapon to the chariot.

Over the course of the Spring and Autumn period, regional feudal lords consolidated and absorbed smaller powers; by 476 BCE, seven prominent states were left, all led by individual kings. The second part of the Eastern Zhou period is known as the Warring States period; during this time these few remaining states battled each other for total power.

Conflict Among the Seven States

The king by now was powerless, and the rulers of the seven independent states began to refer to themselves as kings as well. These major Chinese states were in constant competition. Since none of the states wanted any one rival to become too powerful, if one state became too strong, the others would join forces against it, so no state achieved dominance. This led to nearly 250 years of inconclusive warfare that became larger and larger in scale. It was also at this point that there first emerged the concept of a Chinese emperor who would rule over all the various kings, though the first Chinese emperors did not rule until China was unified under the later Qin Dynasty. The crossbow was invented, and its low cost and easy use (as compared to the expensive chariot) resulted in the increased conscription of peasants as expandable infantry.

Technological and Philosophical Development

The Iron Age had reached China by 600 CE, but it was during this period that the age spread and took root in China: by the time of the Warring States Period, China saw a widespread adoption of iron tools and weapons that were significantly stronger than their bronze counterparts.

This period also saw the further development of the philosophical movements that originated in the Hundred Schools of Thought of the Spring and Autumn period. Mencius further developed Confucian philosophy, expanding upon its doctrines and asserting the innate goodness of the individual and the importance of destiny. Daoism, Legalism, and Mohism became more developed. Archaic writing also gave way to a far more recognizable form of Chinese script.

Cultural, Economic, and Social Development

Two fundamental Chinese social characteristics had become apparent by this time: 1) the concept of the patrilineal family as the basic unit in society, with high importance placed on blood relations, and 2) the concept of natural social differentiation into classes, each regarded in terms of their contributions to society.

Large-scale projects, like the Dujiangyan Irrigation System and the Zhengguo Canal, were carried out. Sophisticated arithmetic was carried out, including two digit decimal multiplication.

The Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals was a literary achievement. In other literary works, sayings of philosophers of the period were recorded in the Analects and the Art of War.

The Rise of the Qin State and Resolution of the Warring States Period

Though the military rivalries and alliances in the Warring States period were complex and constantly in flux, over time the Qin state, under the leadership of King Zheng, emerged as the most powerful. The Qin were particularly strongly rooted in Legalist philosophy, which advocated the importance of the state at the expense of the individual. They were also known for being ruthless and ignoring etiquette and protocol of war in order to win at all costs. In particular, Shang Yang, adviser to Zheng, enacted laws to force subjects of the kingdom to act in ways that helped the state; he forced them to marry early, have many children, and produce certain quotas of food. Ultimately, in 221 BCE, the Qin state conquered the others and established the Qin Dynasty.

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5.3: Chinese Philosophy

Learning Objectives

- Discuss Confucianism, Daoism, Legalism, and Mohism.

Key Points

- Confucius stressed tradition and believed that an individual should strive to be virtuous and respectful, and to fit into his or her place in society.
- Confucianism remained prevalent in China from the Han Dynasty in 202 BCE to the end of dynastic rule in 1911.
- Lao-tzu was the legendary founder of Daoism, recorded in the form of the book the *Tao Te Ching*.
- Daoism advocated that the individual should follow a mysterious force, called The Way (dao), of the universe, and that all things were one.
- Legalism held that humans were inherently bad and needed to be kept in line by a strong state. According to Legalism, the state was far more important than the individual.
- Legalists could be divided into three types: those concerned with the position of ruler, those concerned with laws, and those concerned with tactics to keep the state safe.
- Mohism emerged under the philosopher Mozi, and its most well-known concept was “impartial care.” Mohism also stated that all people should be equal in their material benefit, and in their protection from harm.

Terms

Five Classics

The basis of civil examinations in imperial China and the Confucian canon. They consist of the Book of Odes, the Book of Documents, the Book of Changes, the Book of Rites, and the Spring and Autumn Annals.

chi

Life force or body energy, which supposedly circulates through the body along meridians.

Tao Te Ching

The book which forms the basis of Daoist philosophy.

Analects

The document in which the students of Confucius recorded his teachings.

jen

Human virtue, under Confucianism.

Confucianism

Confucius, who lived during the 6th century BCE, was one of the foremost Chinese philosophers. He looked back on the Western Zhou period, with its strong centralized state, as an ideal. He was pragmatic and sought to reform the existing government, encouraging a system of mutual duty between superiors and inferiors. Confucius stressed tradition and believed that an individual should strive to be virtuous and respectful, and to fit into his or her place in society. After his death in 479 BCE, his students wrote down his ethical and moral teachings in the *Lun-yü,* or *Analects.*

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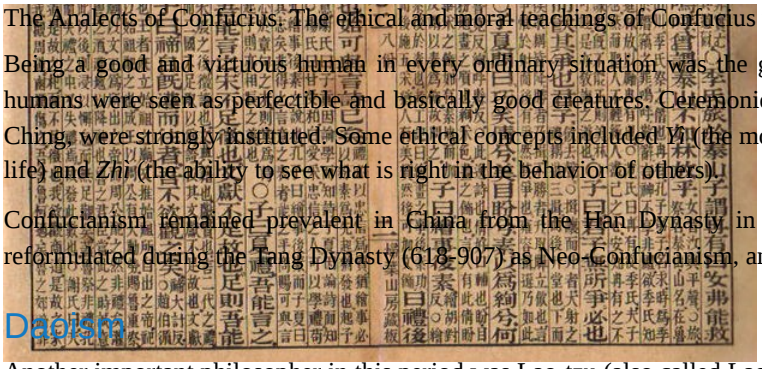


The Analects of Confucius. The ethical and moral teachings of Confucius were written down by his students in this document.

Being a good and virtuous human in every ordinary situation was the goal of Confucianism. This virtue was called “jen,” and humans were seen as perfectible and basically good creatures. Ceremonies and rituals based on the Five Classics, especially the I Ching, were strongly instituted. Some ethical concepts included *Yi* (the moral disposition to do good), *Lǐ* (ritual norms for everyday life) and *Zhi* (the ability to see what is right in the behavior of others).

Confucianism remained prevalent in China from the Han Dynasty in 202 BCE to the end of dynastic rule in 1911. It was reformulated during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) as Neo-Confucianism, and became the basis of imperial exams.

Daoism

Another important philosopher in this period was Lao-tzu (also called Laozi), who founded Daoism (also called Taoism) during the same period as Confucianism. Lao-tzu is a legendary figure—it is uncertain if he actually existed. According to myth, Lao-tzu was born around 604 BCE as an old man. As he left his home to live a life of solitude, he was asked by the city gatekeeper to write down his thoughts. He did so in a book called *Tao Te Ching*, and was never seen again.

Lao-Tzu. A depiction of Lao-Tzu, the founder of Daoism.

Daoism advocated that the individual should follow a mysterious force, called The Way (dao), of the universe and act in accordance with nature. Daoism stressed the oneness of all things, and was strictly individualistic, as opposed to Confucianism, which advocated acting as society expected.

Daoism as a religion arose over time, and involved the worship of gods and ancestors, the cultivation of “chi” energy, a system of morals, and the use of alchemy to achieve immortality. It is still in practice today.

Legalism

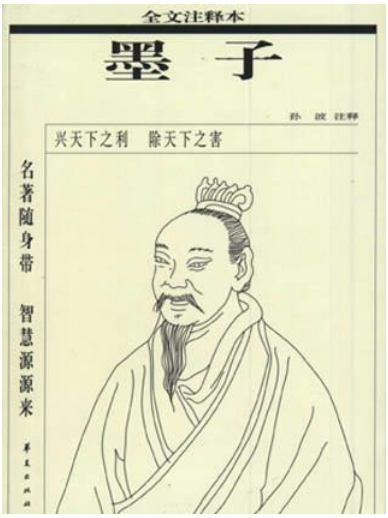
Although Confucianism and Daoism are the Chinese philosophies that have endured most to this day, even more important to this early period was a lesser-known philosophy called Legalism. This held that humans are inherently bad and need to be kept in line by a strong state. According to Legalism, the state was far more important than the individual. While Legalism held that laws should be clear and public and that everyone should be subject to them, it also contended that rulers had supreme power and must use stealth and secrecy to remain in power. Legalists also believed that society must strive to dominate other societies.

Legalists could be divided into three types. The first was concerned with *shi*, or the investment of the position of ruler with power (rather than the person) and the necessity of obtaining facts to rule well. The second was concerned with *fa*, or laws, regulations, and standards. This meant all were equal under the ruler, and the state was run by law, not a ruler. The third was the concept of *shu*, or tactics to keep the state safe. Legalism was generally in competition with Confucianism, which advocated a just and reciprocal relationship between the state and its subjects.

Depiction of Shang Yang. Shang Yang was a Legalist reformer under the Qin.

Mohism

Mohism emerged around the same time as the other philosophies discussed here, under the philosopher Mozi (c. 470-391 BCE). The most well-known concept under Mohism was “impartial care,” also known as “universal love.” This meant that people should care equally about other people, regardless of their true relationship to that person. This opposed the ideas of Confucianism, which said that love should be greater for close relationships. Mohism also stressed the ideas of self-restraint, reflection and authenticity.



Depiction of Mozi. The Chinese philosopher who began Mohism is shown here.

Mohism also stated that all people should be equal in their material benefit and in their protection from harm. Society could be improved by having it function like an organism, with a uniform moral compass. Those who were qualified should receive jobs, and thus the ruler would be surrounded by people of talent and skill. An unrighteous ruler would result in seven disasters for the state, including neglect of military defense, repression, illusions about strength, distrust, famine, and more.

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5.4: The Qin Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Support the argument that the Qin Dynasty, though short-lived, was one of the most important periods of China's Classical Age

Key Points

- The leader of the victorious Qin state established the Qin Dynasty and recast himself as Shi Huangdi, the First Emperor of China.
- The Qin Dynasty was one of the shortest in all of Chinese history, lasting only about 15 years, but was also one of the most important. It was marked by a strong sense of unification and crucial technological and cultural innovation.
- Shi Huangdi standardized writing throughout the empire, built expansive infrastructure, such as highways and canals, standardized currency and measurement, conducted a census, and established a postal system.
- Legalism was the official philosophy, and other philosophies, such as Confucianism, were suppressed. Shi Huangdi also built the Great Wall of China, roughly 1,500 miles long and guarded by a massive army, to protect the nation against northern invaders.
- The Qin Dynasty collapsed after only 15 years. There was a brief period of chaos until the Han Dynasty was established.

Terms

Legalism

A Chinese philosophy claiming that a strong state is necessary to curtail human self-interest.

Mandate of Heaven

The belief, dating from ancient China, that heaven gives a ruler the right to rule fairly.

Great Wall of China

An ancient Chinese fortification, almost 4,000 miles long, originally designed to protect China from the Mongols. Construction began during the Qin Dynasty, under Shi Huangdi.

When the Qin state emerged victorious from the Warring States period in 221 BCE, the state's leader, King Zheng, claimed the Mandate of Heaven and established the Qin Dynasty. He renamed himself Shi Huangdi (First Emperor), a far grander title than King, establishing the way in which China would be ruled for the next two millennia. Today he is known as Qin Shi Huang, meaning First Qin Emperor. He relied on brutal techniques and Legalist doctrine to consolidate and expand his power. The nobility were stripped of control and authority so that the independent and disloyal nobility that had plagued the Zhou would not pose a problem.

The Qin Dynasty was one of the shortest in all of Chinese history, lasting only about 15 years, but it was also one of the most important. With Qin Shi Huang's standardization of society and unification of the states, for the first time in centuries, into the first Chinese empire, he enabled the Chinese to think of themselves as members of a single kingdom. This laid the foundation for the consolidation of the Chinese territories that we know today, and resulted in a very bureaucratic state with a large economy, capable of supporting an expanded military.

Innovations of Emperor Shi Huangdi

The First Emperor divided China into provinces, with civil and military officials in a hierarchy of ranks. He built the Lingqu Canal, which joined the Yangtze River basin to the Canton area via the Li River. This canal helped send half a million Chinese troops to conquer the lands to the south.

Qin Shi Huang standardized writing, a crucial factor in the overcoming of cultural barriers between provinces, and unifying the empire. He also standardized systems of currency, weights, and measures, and conducted a census of his people. He established

elaborate postal and irrigation systems, and built great highways.

In contrast, in line with his attempt to impose Legalism, Qin Shi Huang strongly discouraged philosophy (particularly Confucianism) and history—he buried 460 Confucian scholars alive and burned many of their philosophical texts, as well as many historical texts that were not about the Qin state. This burning of books and execution of philosophers marked the end of the Hundred Schools of Thought. The philosophy of Mohism in particular was completely wiped out.

Finally, Qin Shi Huang began the building of the Great Wall of China, one of the greatest construction feats of all time, to protect the nation against barbarians. Seven hundred thousand forced laborers were used in building the wall, and thousands of them were crushed beneath the massive gray rocks. The wall was roughly 1,500 miles long, and wide enough for six horses to gallop abreast along the top. The nation's first standing army, possibly consisting of millions, guarded the wall from northern invaders.

The Great Wall of China.

The Terracotta Army

Another of Qin Shi Huang's most impressive building projects was the preparation he made for his own death. He had a massive tomb created for him on Mount Li, near modern-day Xi'an, and was buried there when he died. The tomb was filled with thousands and thousands of life-sized (or larger) terracotta soldiers meant to guard the emperor in his afterlife. This terracotta army was rediscovered in the twentieth century. Each soldier was carved with a different face, and those that were armed had real weapons.

The Terracotta Army. A close-up of two soldiers in the terracotta army. Note how their faces differ from each other—each soldier was constructed to be unique.

Collapse of the Qin Dynasty

Qin Shi Huang was paranoid about his death, and because of this he was able to survive numerous assassination attempts. He became increasingly obsessed with immortality and employed many alchemists and sorcerers. Ironically, he ultimately died by poisoning in 210 BCE, when he drank an "immortality potion."

The First Emperor's brutal techniques and tyranny produced resistance among the people, especially the conscripted peasants and farmers whose labors built the empire. Upon the First Emperor's death, China plunged into civil war, exacerbated by floods and droughts. In 207 BCE, Qin Shi Huang's son was killed, and the dynasty collapsed entirely. Chaos reigned until 202 BCE, when Gaozu, a petty official, became a general and reunited China under the Han Dynasty.

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5.5: The Rise of the Han Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Compare the Han Dynasty with the earlier Qin Dynasty, and explain the Western Han period

Key Points

- The Han Dynasty put an end to civil war and reunified China in 202 BCE, ushering in a golden age of peace and prosperity during which progress and cultural development took place.
- The Western Han period continued a lot of the Qin's policies, but modified them with Confucian ideals. Because of this, the Han lasted far longer than the harsher Qin Dynasty- the Western Han period in particular lasted until 9 CE, when there was a brief rebellion.
- One of the most exalted Han emperors was Emperor Wu. He made Confucianism the official philosophy, encouraged reciprocity between the state and its people, reformed the economy and agriculture, made contact with India, defended China from the Huns, and doubled the size of the empire.
- Rebellions and external threats posed challenges to the Western Han, but it was able to survive.

Terms

four occupations

A hierarchy in which aristocratic scholars had the highest social status, followed by farmers, then craftsmen and artisans, and finally merchants.

patrilineal

Descent through the male line in a family.

golden age

A happy age of peace and prosperity; a time of great progress or achievement.

xian

Mythical afterlife paradise during the Han Dynasty.

Chu-Han Contention

A four-year (206-202 BCE) civil war between the Chu and Han states.

socialism

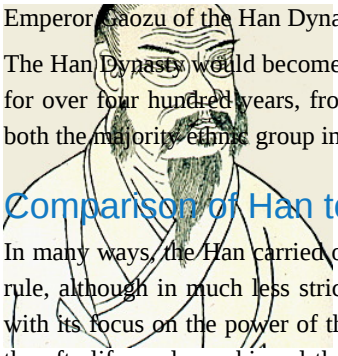
A political philosophy based on principles of community decision making, social equality, and the avoidance of economic and social exclusion, with preference to community goals over individual ones.

laissez-faire

A policy of governmental non-interference in economic affairs.

Formation of the Han Dynasty

By the time the Qin Dynasty collapsed in 207 BCE, eighteen separate kingdoms had declared their independence. The Han and Chu states emerged as the most powerful, but the Han state was the victor of the Chu-Han Contention, a four-year civil war. Gaozu, who had been born a peasant, founded the Han Dynasty in 202 BCE, reunifying China.



Emperor Gaozu of the Han Dynasty. Emperor Gaozu, formerly known as Liu Bang, founded the Han Dynasty.

The Han Dynasty would become one of the most important and long-lasting dynasties in all of Chinese history. It would rule China for over four hundred years, from 206 BCE-220 CE, and ushered in a golden age of peace, prosperity, and development. Today, both the majority ethnic group in China and Chinese script are called Han.

Comparison of Han to Qin

In many ways, the Han carried on policies that began in the Qin. Provincial rule occurred in both, and the Han continued Legalist rule, although in much less stricter fashion. Confucianism was banned during the Qin, but resurrected during the Han. The Qin, with its focus on the power of the state, was not shaped by religion in the same way the Han was. The Han were considered with the afterlife, and worshipped their ancestors. Both had defined social classes, but in the Han, peasants were treated with greater respect and classes were based on occupations.

The Western Han Period and Political Reform

At first the Han Dynasty established its capital at Chang'an, in western China. This Western Han period would last from 206 BCE to 9 CE, when the dynasty's rule would be briefly interrupted by rebellion and the short-lived Xin Dynasty.

Throughout the Western Han period, the Han largely continued the governing policies of the Qin, continuing to expand the bureaucracy and encouraging a centralized state. There were, however, differences between the two dynasties, and it was perhaps these differences that allowed the Han to rule for so much longer than the Qin. The Han were more interested in the lives and well-being of their subjects, and they modified some of the harsher aspects of the earlier dynasty's rule with Confucian ideals of government. Freedom of speech and writing was restored, and the more laissez-faire style of governing allowed harmony, prosperity, and population growth.

This period also saw the further development of the four-class hierarchy, called the "four occupations," which gave aristocratic scholars the highest social status, followed by farmers, then craftsmen and artisans, and finally merchants.

The family during this time was patrilineal and featured a small number of nuclear family members. Arranged, monogamous marriages were the norm for most. Sons received equal shares of family property and were often sent away when married.

Ritual sacrifices of animals and food were made to deities, spirits, and ancestors at temples and shrines. Each person was seen as having a two-part soul. The spirit-soul, which went to the afterlife paradise of immortals, called xian, and the body-soul, which remained in its earthly tomb.

Other innovations included the first use of negative numbers in mathematics, the recording of stars and comets, the armillary sphere, which represented star movements in three dimensions, the waterwheel, and other engineering feats.

Emperor Wu

One of the most exalted Han emperors was Emperor Wu, who ruled from 141-87 BCE. He was responsible for a great number of innovations and political and military feats.

Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty. A portrait of Emperor Wu, one of the most influential rulers of the Han Dynasty.

Emperor Wu experimented with socialism, and made Confucianism the single official philosophy. The Confucian classics were reassembled and transcribed. The Confucian ideal of each person accepting his social position helped legitimize the state and made people more willing to accept its power. At the same time, these ideals encouraged the state to act justly toward its people. There was reciprocity too in the fact that the state was funded partly by land taxes (a portion of the harvest); this meant that the prosperity of the agricultural estates determined the prosperity of the Han government.

Emperor Wu also founded great government industries and transportation and delivery services, developed governmental control of profit, and imposed a 5% income tax. He created civil-service examinations to test potential government officials on their knowledge of the Confucian classics, so that bureaucrats would be chosen for their intelligence instead of their social connections. Emperor Wu also reformed the Chinese economy and nationalized the salt and iron industries, and he initiated reforms that made farming more efficient.

Through Emperor Wu's southern and western conquests, the Han Dynasty made contact with the Indian cultural sphere. Emperor Wu repelled the invading barbarians (the Xiongnu, or Huns, a nomadic-pastoralist warrior people from the Eurasian steppe), and roughly doubled the size of the empire, claiming lands that included Korea, Manchuria, and even part of Turkistan. As China pushed its borders further, trade contacts were established with lands to the west, most notably via the Silk Road.

Challenges During the Western Han Period

Nonetheless, the Han faced many challenges. Emperor Gaozu rewarded his supporters with grants of land, which started again the same problems that had brought down the Zhou Dynasty. Several rebellions broke out, the most serious of which was the Rebellion of the Seven States. Nonetheless, the Han emperors stamped out the rebellions and gradually reduced the power of the small kingdoms (though never abolished them completely).

Another major danger to the Han was the external threat of the barbarians, the most dangerous of whom were the Huns. However, the Han Dynasty was able to face these internal and external threats and survive because of the strong centralized state they had established.

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5.6: The Silk Road

Learning Objectives

- Describe the importance of the Silk Road

Key Points

- The Silk Road was established by China's Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) through territorial expansion.
- The Silk Road was a series of trade and cultural transmission routes that were central to cultural interaction between the West and East.
- A great deal of protection and stability was provided on the Silk Road by the Han.
- A second *Pax Sinica* in 737 CE helped the Silk Road reach its golden age of cultural integration.
- The Mongol Empire, and *Pax Mongolica*, strengthened and re-established the Silk Road between 1207 and 1360 CE. However, as the Mongol Empire disintegrated, so did the Silk Road.

Terms

Pax Sinica

Latin term for "Chinese peace" maintained by Chinese hegemony.

nomadic-pastoralist

A lifestyle in which livestock are herded to find fresh grazing pastures in an irregular pattern of movement.

Pax Mongolica

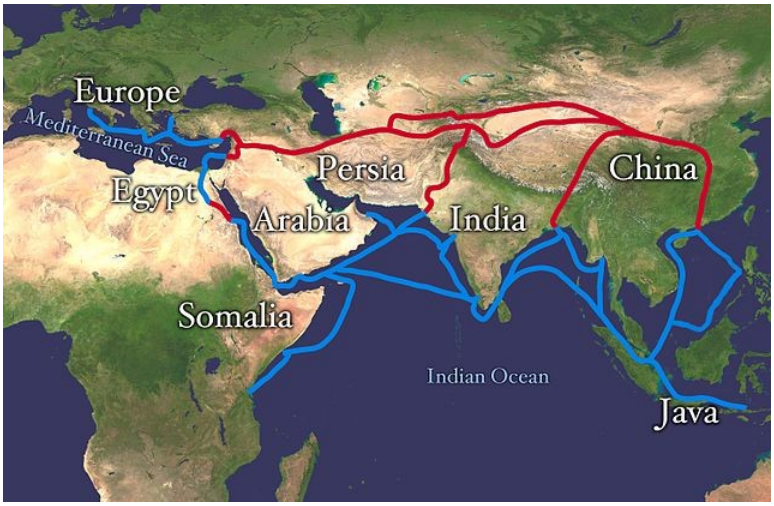
Latin term for "Mongolian peace" during their Empire.

Tang Dynasty

An imperial dynasty of China, from 618-907 CE.

Establishment of the Silk Road

Through southern and western conquests, the Han Dynasty of China (206 BCE-220 CE) made contact with the Indian cultural sphere. Emperor Wu repelled the invading barbarians (the Xiongnu, or Huns, a nomadic-pastoralist warrior people from the Eurasian steppe) and roughly doubled the size of the empire, claiming lands that included Korea, Manchuria, and even part of Turkistan. As China pushed its borders further, trade contacts were established with lands to the west, most notably via the Silk Road.



Map of Silk Road. In this map of the Silk Road, red shows the land route and blue shows the maritime route.

The Silk Road was a series of trade and cultural transmission routes that were central to cultural interaction between the West and East. Silk was certainly the major trade item from China, but many other goods were traded as well. These routes enabled strong trade relationships to develop with Persia, India, and the Roman Empire.

Example of Woven Silk Textile. This woven silk textile from the Western Han era was found at Tomb No. 1 at Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan Province.

Chinese Control of the Silk Road

This expanded western territory became particularly important because of the silk routes. By this century, the Chinese had become very active in the silk trade, though until the Hans provided sufficient protection, the Silk Road had not functioned well because of nomad pirates. Expansion by the Han took place around 114 BCE, led mainly by imperial envoy Zhang Qian. The Great Wall of China was expanded to provide extra protection.

The Tang Dynasty reopened the route in 639 CE, but then lost it to the Tibetans in 678 CE. Control of the Silk Road would shuttle between China and Tibet until 737 CE. This second *Pax Sinica* helped the Silk Road reach its golden age. China was open to foreign cultures, and its urban areas could be quite cosmopolitan. The Silk Road helped to integrate cultures, but also exposed tribal and pastoral societies to new developments, sometimes causing them to become skilled warriors.

The Mongolian Empire and the Disintegration of the Silk Road

The Mongol Empire, and *Pax Mongolica*, strengthened and re-established the Silk Road between 1207 and 1360 CE. However, as the Mongol Empire disintegrated, so did the Silk Road. Gunpowder hastened the failing integration, and the Silk Road stopped being a shipping route for silk around 1453 CE. A lasting effect of this was to inspire Europeans to find alternate routes to Asia for trade, including Christopher Columbus' famous overseas voyage in 1492.

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5.7: The Eastern Han Period

Learning Objectives

- Describe the Eastern Han period

Key Points

- The 400-year Han Dynasty was briefly interrupted by the rebellious Xin Dynasty. The first part of the Han Dynasty is known as the Western Han period; the Eastern Han period began when the Han overthrew the rebellion and reestablished the dynasty in 25 CE.
- Emperor Guangwu, the first emperor of the Eastern Han period, regained lost land and pacified the people.
- The Rule of Ming and Zhang was an era of prosperity; taxes were reduced, Confucian ideals were encouraged, the government was capable and strong, and the processes of creating paper and porcelain were perfected.
- A series of rebellions led to powerful generals who attempted to control the young emperor. Eventually, three states gained control and the Han Dynasty was ended.

Terms

Chimei

A rebel army that ended the Xin dynasty after unrest.

regent

A relative in a royal family who looks after the throne for an underaged king until he is mature enough to receive power.

porcelain

A Chinese innovation perfected during the Eastern Han Period; durable, high-quality, and attractive ceramic ware.

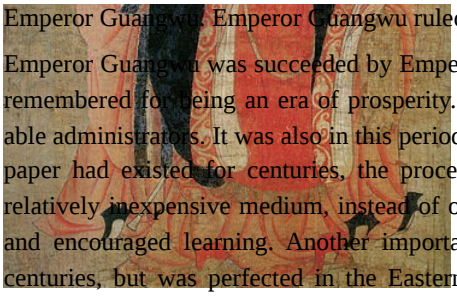
Interruption by the Xin Dynasty

When the Western Han period ended in 9 CE, the regent to the prior emperor, Wang Mang, proclaimed his own new dynasty, the Xin Dynasty. He attempted a number of radical reforms, such as new forms of currency, a ban on slavery, and a return to old models of land distribution. A series of major floods on the Yellow River, however, displaced thousands of peasants, and caused massive unrest. A rebel army called the Chimei (“Red Eyebrows”) developed out of the peasantry, and they defeated Wang Mang’s armies and stormed the capital of Chang’an. They killed Wang Mang and put their own puppet ruler on the throne.

The Eastern Han Period

A new Han emperor, Emperor Guangwu, took control and ruled from Luoyang, in eastern China; thus began the Eastern Han period, which lasted from 25-220 CE. He defeated the Chimei rebels, as well as rival warlords, to reunify China again under the Han Dynasty.

Under Emperor Guangwu, the empire was strengthened considerably. Areas that had fallen away from Chinese control, such as Korea and Vietnam, were reconquered. The Hun Confederation, which had grown strong during China’s period of instability, was pacified.


Emperor Guangwu. Emperor Guangwu ruled during the Eastern Han Dynasty.

Emperor Guangwu was succeeded by Emperor Ming, followed by Emperor Zhang. The Rule of Ming and Zhang, as it is called, is remembered for being an era of prosperity. Taxes were reduced, Confucian ideals were encouraged, and the emperors appointed able administrators. It was also in this period that paper, one of China's most important inventions, emerged. Though early forms of paper had existed for centuries, the process was now perfected. With paper, Chinese texts could circulate on a durable and relatively inexpensive medium, instead of on clay, silk, or bamboo. This allowed Chinese texts to become more readily available and encouraged learning. Another important innovation of this time was porcelain. Porcelain existed in previous forms for centuries, but was perfected in the Eastern Han period. The improvement of porcelain allowed for durable, high-quality, and attractive ceramic ware.

Ceramic Candle Holder from the Eastern Han Dynasty. A ceramic candle holder from the Eastern Han Dynasty, with prancing animal figures.

The Fall of the Eastern Han

A series of rebellions, including the Yellow Turban and Five Pecks of Rice, began in 184 CE. Military generals appointed during these crises kept their militia forces intact even after defeating the rebels. General-in-Chief He Jin plotted to overthrow palace eunuchs. He was discovered and killed, however, in the end 2,000 eunuchs were also killed. A series of generals attempted to control the young emperor, culminating in three spheres of influence. Cao Cao ruled the north, Sun Quan ruled the south, and Liu Bei controlled the west. After Cao Cao's death, his son Cao Pi forced Emperor Xian to give up his throne to him. This ended the Han Dynasty, and started a period of conflict between these three states, called Cao Wei, Eastern Wu and Shu Han.

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5.8: Invention of Paper

Learning Objectives

- Analyze the importance of paper and its invention

Key Points

- Cai Lun (202 BCE-220 CE), a Chinese official working in the Imperial court during the Han Dynasty, is attributed with the invention of paper.
- A basic process is still followed today that consists of creating felted sheets of fiber suspended in water, then draining the water and allowing the fibers to dry in a thin matted sheet.
- Early paper was used for wrapping and writing, as well as for toilet paper, tea bags, and napkins.
- After the Battle of Talas in 751 CE, during which the Chinese were defeated, two Chinese prisoners are believed to have leaked the secrets to making paper.

Terms

bast fibers

Fibrous material from the phloem of a plant, used as fiber in matting, cord, etc.

papyrus

A material prepared in ancient Egypt from the pithy stem of a water plant, used in sheets throughout the ancient Mediterranean world as a surface for writing or painting.

While the word “paper” is derived from papyrus, the early Egyptian thick writing sheets, it is made quite differently. While papyrus is made from the dried pith of the papyrus plant that has been woven, paper has been disintegrated and reformed.

During the Shang (1600-1050 BCE) and Zhou (1050-250 BCE) dynasties, bone, bamboo, and sometimes silk were used as writing tablets. Cai Lun (202 BCE-220 CE), a Chinese official working in the Imperial court during the Han Dynasty, is attributed with the invention of paper. However, earlier examples have been found, and he may have simply improved upon a known process. Legend states that he was inspired by the nests of paper wasps.

Portrait of Cai Lun. This portrait of Cai Lun depicts the invention of paper.

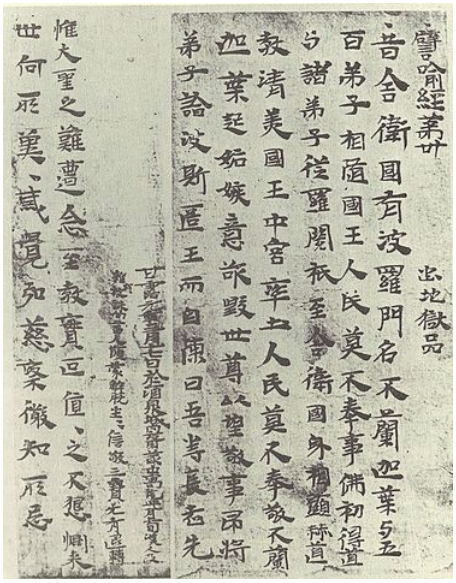
Cai Lun’s paper was made using mulberry and other bast fibers along with fishnets, old rags, and hemp waste. The bark of the Paper Mulberry and Sandalwood were often used and highly valued during the period. His basic process of creating felted sheets of

fiber suspended in water, then draining the water and allowing the fibers to dry in a thin matted sheet is still followed today.

Chinese Hemp Wrapping Paper. These examples of Chinese hemp wrapping paper date from 100 BCE.

Uses of Paper

Paper was often used as a wrapping material. Paper used to wrap bronze mirrors has been dated to the reign of Emperor Wu in the 2nd century BCE. Paper was also used to wrap poisonous medicines. By the 3rd century CE, paper was commonly used for writing, and by 875 CE it was used as toilet paper. During the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE), paper was folded and sewn into tea bags, and used to make paper cups and napkins. During the Song dynasty (960-1279 CE), the world's first known paper money was produced, and often presented in special paper envelopes.



The Oldest Paper Book. This is the oldest paper book, dating to 256 CE.

Spread of Paper-making to the Islamic World

After the Battle of Talas in 751 CE, during which the Chinese were defeated, two Chinese prisoners are believed to have leaked the secrets to making paper. A paper mill was soon established, and many refinements were made to the process.

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5.9: The Fall of the Han and the Three Kingdoms Period

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate the significance of the Battle of the Red Cliffs and the Three Kingdoms Period

Key Points

- The Han government began to weaken and fracture by the end of the second century CE. General Dong Zhuo captured Emperor Shao and installed his own puppet ruler, Emperor Xian.
- The warlord Cao Cao attempted to reunify China under the Han, but was defeated at the Battle of Red Cliffs.
- The Han Dynasty ultimately collapsed in 220 CE, and China splintered into three warlord kingdoms in what is known as the Three Kingdoms period.
- The Three Kingdoms period was war-torn, but also a time of great technological advancement.

Terms

hydraulic

An engineering technique in which liquid is in motion and transmits energy.

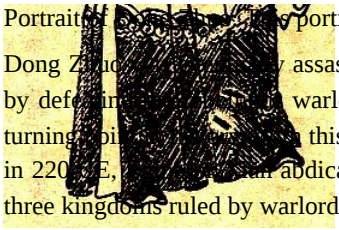
Battle of Red Cliffs

A turning point in history that marked the last attempt to reunite the Han, and the beginning of a time of bloodshed for the Chinese.

After the death of Emperor Zhang (of the Eastern Han period's Rule of Ming and Zhang) in 88 CE, corrupt officials increasingly gained control of the state, while family feuds tore the dynasty apart. As the power of the emperor weakened, military commanders acted more independently and tried to secure power for themselves.

The Fall of the Han Dynasty

In 184 CE, two major Daoist rebellions—the Yellow Turban Rebellion and the Five Pecks of Rice Rebellion—broke out. In order to fight these rebellions Emperor Ling gave military commanders control over their own provinces, but this gave way to a long power struggle. In 189 CE, Emperor Ling died and was succeeded by his 13 year old son, Liu Bian, known as Emperor Shao. Empress Dowager He was regent, and her older brother, General-in-Chief He Jin, became the most powerful official in the court. He Jin wanted to exterminate the Ten Attendants, a group of influential eunuch officials. He summoned General Dong Zhuo to march on the city. The plot was discovered by the eunuchs, and He Jin was killed. In response the Emperor ordered indiscriminate killing of the eunuchs. The survivors kidnapped the Emperor and fled, only to later commit suicide upon General Dong Zhuo's arrival. The General would then replace Emperor Shao with the Prince of Cheniliu, known as Emperor Xian. Xian would be the last emperor of the Han Dynasty.



Portrait of [illegible] portrait of Dong Zhuo dates from a Qing Dynasty edition of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms.

Dong Zhuo [illegible] assassinated and was succeeded by another warlord, Cao Cao, who wanted to reunite the Han Empire by defeating [illegible] warlords. He nearly succeeded but was defeated in 208 CE at the Battle of Red Cliffs, a memorable turning point [illegible] this defeat, most of the hope that the Han Empire would be reunited disappeared. When Cao Cao died in 220 CE, [illegible] abdicated the throne, claiming that he had failed to keep the Mandate of Heaven. China splintered into three kingdoms ruled by warlords; this marks the beginning of the Three Kingdoms period of Chinese history.

The Three Kingdoms Period

When the Han Dynasty collapsed in 220 CE, no one was powerful enough to reunify China under a single emperor. The result was the period of the Three Kingdoms, which lasted until 280 CE, when the Jin Dynasty took over. These three kingdoms, Wei, Shu, and Wu, battled for control in a long series of wars. This was one of the bloodiest times in Chinese history—according to census data, the population decreased from 50 million to 16 million—but it also has long been romanticized in East Asian cultures and remembered as a time of chivalry and honor. It has been celebrated and popularized in operas, folk stories, and novels, and in more recent times, films, television, and video games.

The Three Kingdoms. The Three Kingdoms in 262 CE after the fall of the Han dynasty.

Technology advanced significantly during this period. Shu chancellor Zhuge Liang invented the wooden ox, suggested to be an early form of the wheelbarrow, and improved on the repeating crossbow. Wei mechanical engineer, Ma Jun, invented a hydraulic-powered, mechanical puppet theatre designed for his emperor. He also invented a new irrigation device, the south-pointing chariot, and a non-magnetic directional compass.

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5.10: The Mythical Period

Learning Objectives

- Recall what innovations emerged under the legendary rulers of China's Mythical Period

Key Points

- By 2000 BCE, cities developed in China, and the various cultures of the area began to merge into a larger, more unified Chinese culture.
- Most of what we know about the first part of prehistoric China is from Chinese mythology, which is why it's now known as the Mythical Period.
- The Mythical Period includes the rule of the Three Sovereigns and the Five Emperors.
- The last of the Five Emperors was Emperor Shun. He left his throne to Yu the Great, who founded the Xia dynasty and instituted the practice of passing rulership to a son.

Terms

urbanism

The change in a country or region when its population migrates from rural to urban areas.

millet

Any of a group of various types of grass or its grains used as food, widely cultivated in the developing world.

Go

An abstract strategy board game for two players, where the object is to surround more territory than the opponent.

Yangtze

The longest river in Asia, the Yangtze flows from the highlands of Tibet through central China, and empties into the Pacific Ocean at Shanghai.

Yellow River

Huang He in Chinese. A river of northern China which flows for 5,463 km (3,000 miles) to the Yellow Sea.

Pangu

A mythical Chinese being who created the universe.

Huai

A major river in China located about midway between the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers.

Gilgamesh

The hero of a Babylonian epic, and the legendary king of the Sumerian city state of Uruk.

History as Told by Archaeological Evidence

As in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus River valley, civilization in China developed around a great river. The Yellow River and the Huai and Yangtze Rivers, created fertile land, ripe for experimentation with agriculture. By around 4000 BCE, villages began to appear in these areas. The Neolithic Chinese cultivated a number of crops; the most important was a grain called millet. They also domesticated animals, such as pigs, dogs, and chickens. Silk production, through the domestication of silkworms, also likely began in this early period.

These villages influenced each other more and more over time, and by 2000 BCE a unified Chinese culture began to develop. There is also evidence of urbanism and the use of early writing d this time. These phenomena took place in China about 1000 years

later than in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus River valley.

Pangu. Portrait of Pangu, the creator of the universe according to Chinese mythology. This portrait is from Sancai Tuhui, a Chinese encyclopedia published in 1609, during the Ming Dynasty.

History as Told by Chinese Legend

Chinese mythology tells a different story of the beginning of civilization. It holds that the universe was created by Pangu, the first living being. After his death, Pangu's left eye became the sun and his right eye became the moon. The Three Sovereigns and the Five Emperors, a series of legendary sage emperors and heroes, helped create man. These legendary rulers taught the ancient Chinese to speak, use fire, build houses, farm, and make clothing. Fuxi and his wife, Nüwa, were credited with introducing domesticated animals and creating the basic social structure of family life. Shennong was a divine farmer who gave the people knowledge of agriculture.

The existence of these emperors occurred before written Chinese history, and so the dates of reign are uncertain. The Five Emperors began with Huangdi, or the Yellow Emperor, whose reign is believed to be from 2698-2599 BCE. He was considered the

founding ancestor of the Han Chinese ethnic group, and is credited with the invention of Chinese characters, silk, and traditional Chinese medicine.

The Yellow Emperor, or Huangdi. Portrait of the first of the Five Emperors, who was considered the original ancestor for Han Chinese.

Next came Zhuanxu, who was credited with the invention of the Chinese calendar and the introduction of religion and astrology. Little is known about Emperor Ku's reign, believed to be from 2412-2343 BCE. Emperor Yao, whose reign was from 2317-2234 BCE, was credited with being a role model in dignity and diligence to future emperors, and was the inventor of the game "weiqi" (also known as "Go"). The last was Emperor Shun, whose reign was from 2233-2205 BCE, was known for his devotion. He left his throne to Yu the Great, who founded the Xia dynasty, and instituted the practice of passing rulership to a son. While these events are mythological, at their root there may be ancient memories of very early kings and rulers who emerged among the prehistoric Chinese, similar to the tales of Gilgamesh in Mesopotamia.

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5.11: The Xia Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Recall characteristics of the Xia Dynasty

Key Points

- Sima Qian's "Historical Records," the first comprehensive history of China, said that the last of the Five Emperors, Emperor Shun, left his throne to Yu the Great, who founded the Xia Dynasty.
- The Xia Dynasty was the first Chinese dynasty; it is still not known whether this dynasty existed or is only mythological.
- According to mythology, when the last Xia king became corrupt and cruel, Cheng Tang overthrew him in c. 1760 BCE and founded the Shang Dynasty.
- Many argue that the Zhou Dynasty, which ruled China much later, invented the idea of the Xia Dynasty to support their claim that China could only be, and had always been, ruled by one ruler.

Terms

Mandate of Heaven

The Chinese philosophical concept of the circumstances under which a ruler is allowed to rule. Good rulers were allowed to rule under the Mandate of heaven, while despotic, unjust rulers had the Mandate revoked.

Sima Qian

A renowned Chinese historiographer of the 2nd century BCE who wrote about the Xia Dynasty.

Shang Dynasty

Also called the Yin Dynasty, succeeded the Xia Dynasty and followed the Zhou Dynasty. It existed in the second millennium BCE.

Sima Qian's Historical Records

The earliest comprehensive history of China is the Historical Records, written by Sima Qian, a renowned Chinese historiographer of the 2nd century BCE. This history begins around 3600 BCE, with an account of the Five Emperors. According to this history, the last of the great Five Emperors, Emperor Shun, left his throne to Yu the Great, who founded China's First Dynasty, the Xia Dynasty. Yu supposedly began the practice of inherited rule (passing power from father to son), a model that was perpetuated in the later Shang and Zhou dynasties.

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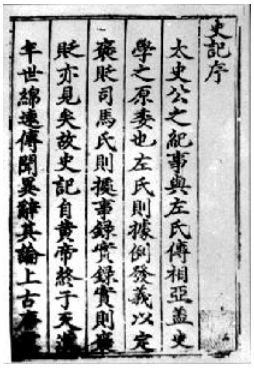
Depiction of Yu the Great. This hanging scroll shows Yu the Great, as imagined by Song Dynasty painter Ma Lin.

According to mythology, Yu's descendants ruled China for nearly 500 years, until the last Xia king became corrupt and cruel. This led to his overthrow in c. 1760 BCE by Cheng Tang, who founded a new dynasty, the Shang Dynasty, in the Huang River Valley.



Sima Qian's Historical Records. The first page of Sima Qian's Historical Records.

Debate Over the Existence of the Xia Dynasty

There is much debate among scholars about how much of this mythology is true. Many argue that the Zhou Dynasty, which ruled China much later, invented the idea of the Xia Dynasty to support their claim that China could only be, and had always been, ruled by one ruler. The Zhou created the idea of the "Mandate of Heaven," which stated that there could be only one legitimate ruler of China at any given time. If he was a good ruler, he would have the support of heaven; if he was despotic, he would be overthrown. The various small states that had comprised Neolithic and Bronze Age China contradicted this version of history. Some people argue, therefore, that the Zhou may have created the idea of an ancient Xia Dynasty to support the idea that China always had one ruler.

Nonetheless, the Xia Dynasty may not be a complete fabrication; recent archaeological evidence may support its existence. (For a long time it was believed that the later Shang Dynasty may also have been purely mythological, until archaeology proved that it was real.) Archaeologists have discovered an advanced Bronze Age culture in China. Its capital, Erlitou, was a huge city around 2000 BCE. This may in fact be the people referred to in Chinese mythology as the Xia. It is believed that the Xia may have created a primitive writing system, though no evidence of this has been found. However, evidence does suggest that the Xia developed agricultural methods and experienced considerable prosperity. However, lack of irrigation and flood protection made the region prone to frequent floods and other natural disasters.

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5.12: Introduction to the Shang Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Compare the Shang Dynasty with the earlier Xia Dynasty

Key Points

- The Shang Dynasty (also called the Yin Dynasty) succeeded the Xia Dynasty, and was followed by the Zhou Dynasty. It was located in the Yellow River valley, during the second millennium BCE.
- The Shang Dynasty is the first period of prehistoric China that has been conclusively proven to have existed by archaeological evidence, such as excavated graves and oracle bones, the oldest substantial evidence of Chinese writing.
- Writing during the Shang Dynasty was already in an advanced form, suggesting that the written language had already existed for a long time.
- Under the Shang Dynasty, the Chinese built huge cities with strong social class divisions, expanded irrigation systems, and monopolized the use of bronze.
- The Shang Dynasty was overthrown in 1046 BCE by the Zhou, who established their own dynasty.

Terms

Oracle bones

Inscriptions of divination records on the bones or shells of animals, dating to the Shang Dynasty of ancient China.

Anyang

A city from the Shang Dynasty, the excavation of which yielded large numbers of oracle bones. This helped prove the existence of the Shang Dynasty.

Zhengzhou

The modern-day area where the new capital of Shang was established during the Shang Dynasty.

Xia Dynasty

The first dynasty in traditional Chinese history.

Map of Shang Dynasty. This map shows the location of the Shang Dynasty in the Yellow River valley.

Jie, the last king of the Xia Dynasty (the first Chinese dynasty), was overthrown c. 1760 BCE by Cheng Tang. It is estimated the Shang ruled from either 1766-1122 or 1556-1046 BCE. While scholars still debate whether the Xia Dynasty actually existed, there is little doubt that the Shang Dynasty existed. The Shang Dynasty is, therefore, generally considered China's first historical dynasty.

Under the Shang Dynasty, a unified sense of Chinese culture emerged. This culture would continue to thrive and evolve, and many modern Chinese still see the Shang culture as China's dominant culture. Under the Shang Dynasty, the Chinese built huge cities with strong social class divisions, expanded irrigation systems, monopolized the use of bronze, and developed a system of writing. Shang kings were believed to fulfill sacred, not political, purposes. Instead, a council of chosen advisers administered various aspects of the government. The border territories of Shang rule were led by chieftains, who gained the right to govern through connections with royalty.

The Shang Dynasty was overthrown in 1046 BCE by the Zhou, a subject people living in the western part of the kingdom.

Archaeological Evidence

The Shang Dynasty is the oldest Chinese dynasty supported by archaeological finds. These have included 11 major Yin royal tombs and building sites of palaces and rituals, as well as weapons and remains of human and animal sacrifices, and artifacts, including bronze, jade, stone, bone, and ceramic.

The oldest surviving form of Chinese writing is inscriptions of divination records on the bones or shells of animals—so-called oracle bones. However, the writing on the oracle bones shows evidence of complex development, indicating that written language had existed for a long time. In fact, modern scholars are able to read it because the language was very similar to the modern Chinese writing system.

Archaeologists have also found ancient cities that correspond with the Shang Dynasty. When Cheng Tang overthrew the last king of the Xia Dynasty, he supposedly founded a new capital for his dynasty at a town called Shang, near modern-day Zhengzhou. Archaeological remains of this town may have been found—it seems to have functioned as a sacred capital, where the most sacred temples and religious objects were housed. This city also had palaces, workshops, and city walls.

Anyang, in modern-day Henan, is another important (but slightly later) Shang city that has been excavated. This site yielded large numbers of oracle bones that describe the travels of eleven named kings. The names and timeframes of these kings match traditional lists of Shang kings. Anyang was a huge city, with an extensive cemetery of thousands of graves and 11 large tombs—evidence of the city's labor force, which may have belonged to the 11 Shang kings.

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5.13: Society Under the Shang Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Summarize the social class system during the Shang Dynasty

Key Points

- The Shang Dynasty (also called the Yin Dynasty) succeeded the Xia Dynasty, and was followed by the Zhou Dynasty. It was located in the Yellow River valley during the second millennium BCE. Citizens of the Shang Dynasty were classified into four social classes: the king and aristocracy, the military, artisans and craftsmen, and peasants.
- Members of the aristocracy were the most respected social class, and were responsible for governing smaller areas of the dynasty.
- Next in social status were the Shang military—both the infantry and the chariot warriors.
- The Shang "middle class" were artisans and craftsmen, who mainly worked with bronze.
- The poorest class in Shang society were the peasants, who were mostly farmers. Some scholars believe they functioned as slaves; others believe they were more like serfs.

Terms

aristocracy

The nobility, or the hereditary ruling class.

artisans

Skilled manual workers, who use tools and machinery in a particular craft.

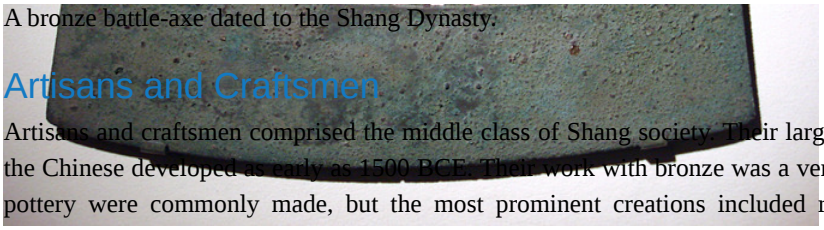
peasants

Members of the lowest social class, who toil on the land. This social class consisted of small farmers and tenants, sharecroppers, farmhands, and other laborers on the land, forming the main labor force in agriculture and horticulture.

The Aristocracy and the Military

The aristocracy were centered around Anyang, the Shang capital, and conducted governmental affairs for the surrounding areas. Regional territories farther from the capital were also controlled by the wealthy.

The Shang military were next in social status, and who were respected and honored for their skill. There were two subdivisions of the military: the infantry (foot soldiers) and the chariot warriors. The latter were noted for their great skill in warfare and hunting. Archaeological evidence has supported the use of horses and other cavalry during the late Shang period, c. 1250 BCE.



A bronze battle-axe dated to the Shang Dynasty.

Artisans and Craftsmen

Artisans and craftsmen comprised the middle class of Shang society. Their largest contribution was their work with bronze, which the Chinese developed as early as 1500 BCE. Their work with bronze was a very important aspect of society. Bronze weapons and pottery were commonly made, but the most prominent creations included ritual vessels and treasures, many of which were discovered via archaeological findings in the 1920s and 1930s. Shang aristocrats and the royalty were likely buried with large numbers of bronze valuables, particularly wine vessels and other ornate structures.

Houmuwu Ding. The “Houmuwu Ding” is the heaviest piece of bronze work found in China so far.

Peasants

At the bottom of the social ladder were the peasants, the poorest of Chinese citizens. They comprised the majority of the population, and were limited to farming and selling crops for profit. Archaeological findings have shown that masses of peasants were buried with aristocrats, leading some scholars to believe that they were the equivalent of slaves. However, other scholars have countered that they may have been similar to serfs. Peasants were governed directly by local aristocrats.

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5.14: Shang Religion

Learning Objectives

- Explain the religious foundation of Shang Dynasty culture

Key Points

- The Shang believed in spiritual control of the world by various gods. They also practiced ancestor worship. They appealed to the gods, including the supreme god Shangdi, and consulted their ancestors through oracle bones.
- The Shang established a lunar calendar using 29-day months, and 12-month years.
- There appears to have been a belief in the afterlife during the Shang Dynasty, evidenced by human and animal bodies and artifacts found in tombs.

terms

shamanism

A shaman is a person who is seen to have access to and influence in the world of spirits, and who typically enters a trance state during rituals, and practices divination and healing.

divination

The practice of seeking knowledge of the future or the unknown by supernatural means.

Shang Religion

Shang religion was characterized by a combination of animism, shamanism, spiritual control of the world, divination, and respect and worship of dead ancestors, including through sacrifice. Different gods represented natural and mythological symbols, such as the moon, sun, wind, rain, dragon, and phoenix. Peasants prayed to these gods for bountiful harvests. Festivals to celebrate gods were also common. In particular, the Shang kings, who considered themselves divine rulers, consulted the great god Shangdi (the "Supreme Being" who ruled over humanity and nature) for advice and wisdom. The Shang believed that the ancestors could also confer good fortune, so they would also consult ancestors through oracle bones in order to seek approval for any major decision, and to learn about future success in harvesting, hunting, or battle.

Shangdi. One depiction of Shangdi, the Supreme Being who ruled over humanity and nature.

Oracle Bones and Divination

The oldest surviving form of Chinese writing is inscriptions of divination records on the bones or shells of animals—so-called oracle bones. Oracle bones were pieces of bone or turtle shell used by the ancient Chinese, especially Chinese kings, in attempts to predict the future. The ancient kings would inscribe their name and the date on the bone along with a question. They would then heat the bone until it cracked, and then interpret the shape of the crack, which was believed to provide an answer to their question.

Questions were carved into oracle bones, such as, “Will we win the upcoming battle?” or “How many soldiers should we commit to the battle?” The bones reveal a great deal about what was important to Shang society. Many of the oracle bones ask questions about war, harvests, and childbirth.

Oracle Bone. This oracle bone from the Shang Dynasty dates to the reign of King Wu Ding.

The Afterlife

It appears that there was belief in the afterlife during the Shang Dynasty. Archaeologists have found Shang tombs surrounded by the skulls and bodies of human sacrifices. Some of these contain jade, which was seen to protect against decay and give immortality. Archaeologists believed that Shang tombs were very similar to those found in the Egyptian pyramids, in that they buried servants with them. Chinese archaeologists theorize that the Shang, like the ancient Egyptians, believed their servants would continue to serve them in the afterlife, so aristocrats’ servants would be killed and buried with them when they died. Another interpretation is that these were enemy warriors captured in battle.

The Burial Pit at the Tomb of Lady Fu Hao. This tomb is located in the ruins of the ancient Shang Dynasty capital, Yin.

The Lunar Calendar

The Shang also established a lunar calendar that was used to predict and record events, such as harvests, births, and deaths (of rulers and peasants alike). The system assumed a 29-day month that began and ended with each new moon; twelve lunar months comprised one lunar year. Priests and astronomers were trained to recalculate the lunar year and add enough days so that each year lasted 365 days. Because the calendar was used to time both crop planting and the harvest, the king had to employ skilled astronomers to predict dates (and successes) of annual harvests; this would help him maintain support from the people.

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5.15: Advancements Under the Shang

Learning Objectives

- Describe some of the technical advancements made under the Shang Dynasty

Key Points

- Bronze casting was perhaps the most important technology during the Shang Dynasty. The Shang made many objects out of bronze, including ceremonial tools, swords, and spearheads for the military.
- The Shang also domesticated horses and developed the chariot, which gave them a massive military advantage over their opponents.
- With these technologies, the Shang military expanded the kingdom's borders significantly.

Terms

chariot

A two-wheeled, horse-drawn vehicle used in ancient warfare and racing.

Oracle bone

Pieces of ox scapula or turtle plastron, used for divination in ancient China.

Shang Bronze Technology

The Shang ruled China during its Bronze Age; perhaps the most important technology at the time was bronze casting. The Shang cast bronze objects by creating molds out of clay, carving a design into the clay, and then pouring molten bronze into the mold. They allowed the bronze to cool and then broke the clay off, revealing a completed bronze object.

Shang Dynasty Bronze. This bronze ding vessel dates to the Shang Dynasty.

The upper classes had the most access to bronze, and they used it for ceremonial objects, and to make offerings to ancestors. Bronze objects were also buried in the tombs of Shang elite. The Shang government used bronze for military weapons, such as swords and spearheads. These weapons gave them a distinct advantage over their enemies.

Shang Military Technology

The chariot was military technology that allowed the Shang to excel at war. Under the Shang, the Chinese domesticated the horse. Horses of that time were still too small to ride, but the Chinese gradually developed the chariot, which harnessed the horse's power. The chariot was a devastating weapon in battle, and it also allowed Shang soldiers to move vast distances at great speeds. A chariot burial site at Anyang (modern-day Henan) dates to the rule of King Wu Ding of the Shang Dynasty (c. 1200 BCE). Oracle bone inscriptions show that the Shang used chariots as mobile command vehicles and in royal hunts. Members of the royal household were often buried with a chariot, horses and a charioteer.

These military technologies were important, because the Shang were constantly at war. A significant number of Shang oracle bones were concerned with battle. The Shang armies expanded the borders of the kingdom and captured precious resources and prisoners of war, who could be enslaved or used as human sacrifice. The oracle bones also show deep concern over the "barbarians" living outside the empire, who were a constant threat to the safety and stability of the kingdom; the military had to be constantly ready to fight them.

Shang Dynasty Bronze Battle Axe. This bronze axe is an example of Shang bronze work.

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5.16: The Mandate of Heaven

Learning Objectives

- Describe the Zhou Dynasty's justification for overthrowing the Shang Dynasty

Key Points

- In 1046 BCE, the Shang Dynasty was overthrown at the Battle of Muye, and the Zhou Dynasty was established.
- The Zhou created the Mandate of Heaven: the idea that there could be only one legitimate ruler of China at a time, and that this ruler had the blessing of the gods. They used this Mandate to justify their overthrow of the Shang, and their subsequent rule.
- Some scholars think the earlier Xia Dynasty never existed—that it was invented by the Zhou to support their claim under the Mandate that there had always been only one ruler of China.

Terms

Battle of Muye

The battle that resulted with the Zhou, a subject people living in the western part of the kingdom, overthrew the Shang Dynasty.

Mandate of Heaven

The Chinese philosophical concept of the circumstances under which a ruler is allowed to rule. Good rulers were allowed to rule under the Mandate of Heaven, while despotic, unjust rulers had the Mandate revoked.

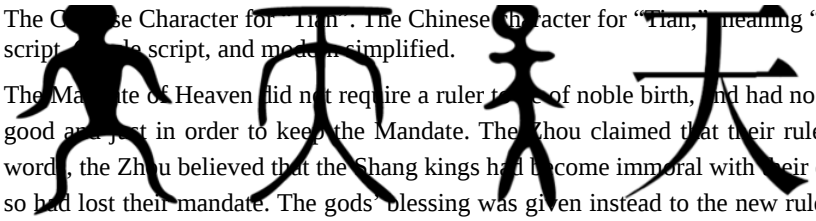
The Fall of the Shang

In 1046 BCE, the Zhou, a subject people living in the western part of the kingdom, overthrew the Shang Dynasty at the Battle of Muye. This was a battle between Shang and Zhou clans, over the Shang's expansion. They largely had the support of the Chinese people: Di Xin (the final king of the Shang Dynasty) had become cruel, spent state money on drinking and gambling, and ignored the state. The Zhou established authority by forging alliances with regional nobles, and founded their new dynasty with its capital at Fenghao (near present-day Xi'an, in western China).

Map of Zhou Dynasty. This map shows the location of the ancient Zhou Dynasty.

The Mandate of Heaven

Under the Zhou Dynasty, China moved away from worship of Shangdi ("Celestial Lord") in favor of worship of Tian ("heaven"), and they created the Mandate of Heaven. According to this idea, there could be only one legitimate ruler of China at a time, and this ruler reigned as the "Son of Heaven" with the approval of the gods. If a king ruled unfairly he could lose this approval, which would result in his downfall. Overthrow, natural disasters, and famine were taken as a sign that the ruler had lost the Mandate of Heaven.



The Chinese Character for "Tian". The Chinese character for "Tian," meaning "heaven," in (from left to right) Bronze script, Seal script, Clerical script, and modern simplified.

The Mandate of Heaven did not require a ruler to be of noble birth, and had no time limitations. Instead, rulers were expected to be good and just in order to keep the Mandate. The Zhou claimed that their rule was justified by the Mandate of Heaven. In other words, the Zhou believed that the Shang kings had become immoral with their excessive drinking, luxuriant living, and cruelty, and so had lost their mandate. The gods' blessing was given instead to the new ruler under the Zhou Dynasty, which would rule China for the next 800 years.

The need for the Zhou to create a history of a unified China is also why some scholars think the Xia Dynasty may have been an invention of the Zhou. The Zhou needed to erase the various small states of prehistoric China from history, and replace them with the monocratic Xia Dynasty in order for their Mandate of Heaven to seem valid (i.e., to support the claim that there always would be, and always had been, only one ruler of China).

The Zhou ruled until 256 BCE, when the state of Qin captured Chengzhou. However, the Mandate of Heaven philosophy carried on throughout ancient China.

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5.17: Society Under the Zhou Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Describe the main accomplishments of the Western Zhou period

Key Points

- The first period of Zhou rule, during which the Zhou held undisputed power over China, is known as the Western Zhou period.
- During the Western Zhou period, the focus of religion changed from the supreme god, Shangdi, to “Tian,” or heaven; advances were made in farming technology; and the feudal system was established.
- Under the feudal system, the monarchy would reward loyal nobles with large pieces of land.
- Over time, the king grew weaker, and the lords of the feudal system grew stronger, until finally, in 711 BCE, one lord joined forces with an invading group of barbarians and killed the king.

Terms

Duke of Zhou

A regent to the king who established the feudal system, and held a lot of power during the Western Zhou period.

Western Zhou period

The first period of Zhou rule, during which the Zhou held undisputed power over China (1046-771 BCE).

feudal system

A social system based on personal ownership of resources and personal fealty between a suzerain (lord) and a vassal (subject). Defining characteristics include direct ownership of resources, personal loyalty, and a hierarchical social structure reinforced by religion.

The first period of Zhou rule, during which the Zhou held undisputed power over China, is known as the Western Zhou period. This period ended when the capital was moved eastward. A number of important innovations took place during this period: the Zhou moved away from worship of Shangdi, the supreme god under the Shang, in favor of Tian (“heaven”); they legitimized rulers, through the Mandate of Heaven (divine right to rule); they moved to a feudal system; developed Chinese philosophy; and made new advances in irrigation that allowed more intensive farming and made it possible for the lands of China to sustain larger populations.

China created a substantial amount of literature during the Zhou Dynasty. These include The Book of History and The Book of Diviners, which was used by fortune tellers. Books dedicated to songs and ceremonial rites were also created. While many of these writings have been destroyed over time, their lasting impression on history is evidence of the strength of Zhou culture.

Like other river valley civilizations of the time, the people under the Zhou Dynasty followed patriarchal roles. Men chose which children would be educated and whom their daughters were married. The household usually consisted of the head male, his wife, his sons and unmarried daughters.

The feudal system in China was structurally similar to ones that followed, such as pre-imperial Macedon, Europe, and Japan. At the beginning of the Zhou Dynasty’s rule, the Duke of Zhou, a regent to the king, held a lot of power, and the king rewarded the loyalty of nobles and generals with large pieces of land. Delegating regional control in this way allowed the Zhou to maintain control over a massive land area. Under this feudal (fengjian) system, land could be passed down within families, or broken up further and granted to more people.

Most importantly, the peasants who farmed the land were controlled by the feudal system. Slavery had been common during the Shang Dynasty, but this decreased and finally disappeared under the Zhou Dynasty, as social status became more fluid and transitory.

The Duke of Zhou. Portrait of the Duke of Zhou in Sancai Tuhui, a Chinese encyclopedia published in 1609 during the Ming Dynasty.

When the Duke of Zhou stepped down, China was united and at peace, leading to years of prosperity. But this only lasted for about seventy-five years. Over time, the central power of the Zhou Dynasty slowly weakened, and the lords of the fiefs originally bestowed by the Zhou came to equal the kings in wealth and influence. They began to actively compete with them for power, and the fiefs gained independence as individual states.

Finally, in 711 BCE, one rebellious noble, the Marquess of Shen, joined forces with invading barbarians, the Quanrong, to defeat the King You. No one came to the king's defense, and he was killed. The Zhou capital was sacked by the barbarians, and with this the Western Zhou period ended.

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5.18: Art Under the Zhou Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Identify some of the art forms prevelant under the Zhou Dynasty

Key Points

- Work in bronze, including inscriptions, continued and expanded in the Zhou Dynasty.
- Few paintings have survived from this period, but we know that they were representations of the real world.
- The production of lacquerware expanded during this period.

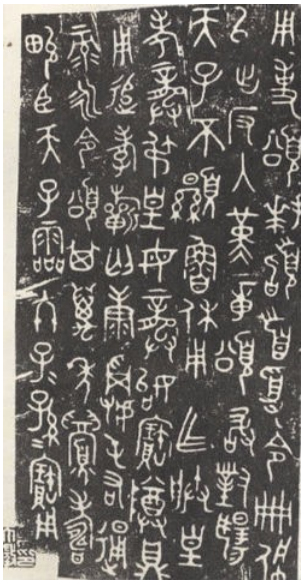
Terms

lacquer

A natural varnish, originating in China or Japan, and extracted from the sap of a sumac tree.

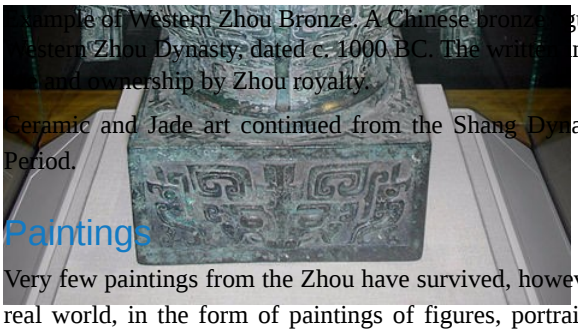
Bronze, Ceramics, and Jade

Chinese script cast onto bronzeware, such as bells and cauldrons, carried over from the Shang Dynasty into the Zhou; it showed continued changes in style over time, and by region. Under the Zhou, expansion of this form of writing continued, with the inclusion of patrons and ancestors.



Example of Bronze Inscription. This example of bronze inscription was cast on the Song ding, ca. 800 BCE. The text records the appointment of a man named Song (颂) as supervisor of the storehouses in Chengzhou, and is repeated on at least 3 tripod pots (鼎 dǐng), 5 tureens (簋 guǐ) and their lids, and 2 vases (壺 hú) and their lids.

Other improvements to bronze objects under the Eastern Zhou included greater attention to detail and aesthetics. The casting process itself was improved by a new technique, called the lost wax method of production.



Example of Western Zhou Bronze. A Chinese bronze "gui" ritual vessel on a pedestal, used as a container for grain. From the Western Zhou Dynasty, dated c. 1000 BC. The written inscription of 11 ancient Chinese characters on the bronze vessel states its [illegible] and ownership by Zhou royalty.

Ceramic and Jade art continued from the Shang Dynasty, and was improved and refined, especially during the Warring States Period.

Paintings

Very few paintings from the Zhou have survived, however written descriptions of the works have remained. Representations of the real world, in the form of paintings of figures, portraits, and historical scenes, were common during the time. This was a new development. Painting was also done on pottery, tomb walls, and on silk.

Example of Silk Painting. This example of silk painting shows a man riding a dragon, and has been dated to the 5th-3rd century BCE.

Lacquerware

Lacquerware was a technique through which objects were decoratively covered by a wood finish and cured to a hard, durable finish. The lacquer itself might also be inlaid or carved. The Zhou continued and developed lacquer work done in the Shang Dynasty. During the Eastern Zhou period, a large quantity of lacquerware began to be produced.

Example of Lacquerware. These are Chinese Western Han (202 BC – 9 CE) era lacquerwares and lacquer tray unearthed from the 2nd-century-BCE Han Tomb No.1 at Mawangdui, Changsha, China in 1972.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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6.1: The Sramana Movement

Learning Objectives

- Understand the Sramana movement

Key Points

- Sramana was an ancient Indian religious movement with origins in the Vedic religion. However, it took a divergent path, rejecting Vedic Hindu ritualism and the authority of the Brahmins—the traditional priests of the Hindu religion.
- Sramanas were those who practiced an ascetic, or strict and self-denying, lifestyle in pursuit of spiritual liberation. They are commonly known as monks.
- The Sramana movement gave rise to Jainism and Buddhism.

terms

Sramana

An ancient Indian religious movement that began as an offshoot of the Vedic religion and focused on ascetic lifestyle and principles.

Brahmin

A member of a caste in Vedic Hinduism, consisting of priests and teachers who are held as intermediaries between deities and followers, and who are considered the protectors of the sacred learning found in the Vedas.

Sramanas

Sramana followers who renounced married and domestic life, and adopted an ascetic path. The Sramanas rejected the authority of the Brahmins.

Vedic Religion

The historical predecessor of modern Hinduism. The Vedas are the oldest scriptures in the Hindu religion.

ascetic

A person who practices severe self-discipline and abstention from worldly pleasures as a way of seeking spiritual enlightenment and freedom.

Sramana was an ancient Indian religious movement that began as an offshoot of the Vedic religion and gave rise to other similar but varying movements, including Buddhism and Jainism. Sramana, meaning “seeker,” was a tradition that began around 800-600 BCE when new philosophical groups, who believed in a more austere path to spiritual freedom, rejected the authority of the Brahmins (the priests of Vedic Hinduism). Modern Hinduism can be regarded as a combination of Vedic and Sramana traditions; it is substantially influenced by both.

Vedic Roots

The Vedic Religion was the historical predecessor of modern Hinduism. The Vedic Period refers to the time period from approximately 1750-500 BCE, during which Indo-Aryans settled into northern India, bringing with them specific religious traditions. Most history of this period is derived from the Vedas, the oldest scriptures in the Hindu religion. Vedas, meaning “knowledge,” were composed by the Aryans in Vedic Sanskrit between 1500 and 500 BCE, in the northwestern region the Indian subcontinent.

There are four Indo-Aryan Vedas: the Rig Veda contains hymns about their mythology; the Sama Veda consists mainly of hymns about religious rituals; the Yajur Veda contains instructions for religious rituals; and the Atharva Veda consists of spells against enemies, sorcerers, and diseases. (Depending on the source consulted, these are spelled, for example, either Rig Veda or Rigveda.)

Sramana Origins

Several Sramana movements are known to have existed in India before the 6th century BCE. Sramana existed in parallel to, but separate from, Vedic Hinduism. The dominant Vedic ritualism contrasted with the beliefs of the Sramanas followers who renounced married and domestic life and adopted an ascetic path, one of severe self-discipline and abstention from all indulgence, in order to achieve spiritual liberation. The Sramanas rejected the authority of the Brahmins, who were considered the protectors of the sacred learning found in the Vedas.

Emaciated Fasting Buddha. Buddha practiced severe asceticism before his enlightenment and recommended a non-ascetic middle way.

Brahmin is a caste, or social group, in Vedic Hinduism consisting of priests and teachers who are held as intermediaries between deities and followers. Brahmins are traditionally responsible for religious rituals in temples, and for reciting hymns and prayers during rite of passage rituals, such as weddings.

In India, Sramana originally referred to any ascetic, recluse, or religious practitioner who renounced secular life and society in order to focus solely on finding religious truth. Sramana evolved in India over two phases: the Paccekabuddha, the tradition of the

individual ascetic, the “lone Buddha” who leaves the world behind; and the Savaka, the phase of disciples, or those who gather together as a community, such as a sect of monks.

Sramana Traditions

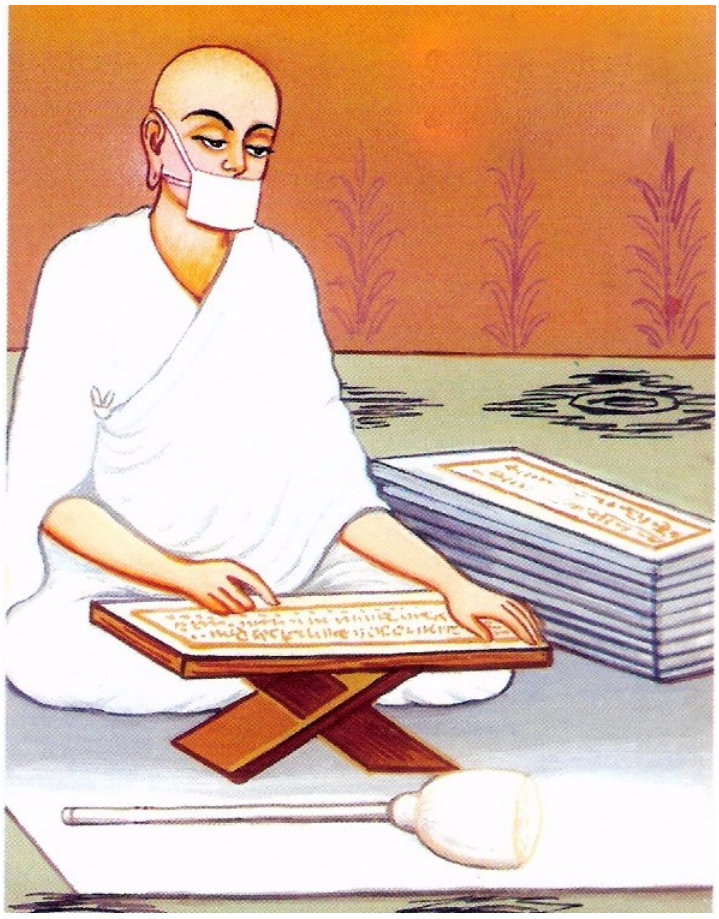
A “tradition” is a belief or behavior passed down within a group or society, with symbolic meaning or special significance. Sramana traditions drew upon established Brahmin concepts to formulate their own doctrines.

The Sramana traditions subscribe to diverse philosophies, and at times significantly disagree with each other, as well as with orthodox Hinduism and its six schools of Hindu philosophy. The differences range from a belief that every individual has a soul, to the assertion that there is no soul. In terms of lifestyle, Sramana traditions include a wide range of beliefs that can vary, from vegetarianism to meat eating, and from family life to extreme asceticism denying all worldly pleasures.

The varied Sramana movements arose in the same circles of ancient India that led to the development of Yogic practices, which include the Hindu philosophy of following a course of physical and mental discipline in order to attain liberation from the material world, and a union between the self and a supreme being or principle.

The Sramana traditions drove the so-called Hindu synthesis after the Vedic period, which spread to southern Indian and parts of Southeast Asia. As it spread, this new Hinduism assimilated popular non-Vedic gods and other traditions from local cultures, as well as the integrated societal divisions, called the caste system.

Sramaṇa traditions later gave rise to Yoga, Jainism, Buddhism, and some schools of Hinduism. They also led to popular concepts in all major Indian religions, such as saṃsāra, the cycle of birth and death, and *moksha*, liberation from that cycle.



Jain Monk in Meditation. An image of a Jain monk, one of the practitioners of the varied Sramana traditions.

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6.2: Buddhism

Learning Objectives

- Understand the development of Buddhism as a major world religion

Key Points

- Sramanas were those who practiced an ascetic, or strict and self-denying, lifestyle in pursuit of spiritual liberation. They are commonly known as monks.
- The Sramana movement gave rise to Buddhism, a non-theistic religion that encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs, and practices, and arose when Siddhartha Gautama began following Sramana traditions in the 5th century BCE.
- Following his "Enlightenment," Siddhartha became known as Buddha, or "Awakened One." He began teaching a Middle Way to spiritual Nirvana, a release from all earthly burdens.
- Buddhism has spread to become one of the world's great religions, with an estimated 488 million followers.

terms

Noble Eightfold Path

The eight concepts taught by Buddha as the means to achieving Nirvana.

Siddhartha Gautama

An aristocratic young man who gave up worldly comforts to follow Sramana, then attained Enlightenment and became known as the Buddha, teaching a Middle Way toward spiritual Nirvana.

Nirvana

A sublime state that marks the release from the cycle of rebirths, known in the Sramana tradition as samsara.

Sramana

An offshoot of the Vedic religion that promoted an ascetic lifestyle; Sramana gave rise to Buddhism and other similar traditions.

Buddhism arose between 500-300 BCE, when Siddhartha Gautama, a young man from an aristocratic family, left behind his worldly comforts to seek spiritual enlightenment. He became a teacher commonly known as the Buddha, meaning "the awakened one," and Buddhism spread to become a non-theistic religion that encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs, and practices largely based on his teachings.

Sramana Origins

Buddhism is based on an ancient Indian religious philosophy called Sramana, which began as an offshoot of the Vedic religion. Several Sramana movements are known to have existed in India before the 6th century BCE. Sramana existed in parallel to, but separate from, Vedic Hinduism, which followed the teachings and rituals found in the Vedas, the most ancient texts of the Vedic religion. Sramana, meaning "seeker," was a tradition that began when new philosophical groups who believed in a more austere path to spiritual freedom rejected the authority of the Vedas and the Brahmins, the priests of Vedic Hinduism, around 800-600 BCE.

Sramana promoted spiritual concepts that became popular in all major Indian religions, such as saṃsāra, the cycle of birth and death, and moksha, liberation from that cycle. The Sramanas renounced married and domestic life, and adopted an ascetic path—one of severe self-discipline and abstention from all indulgence—in order to achieve spiritual liberation. Sramaṇa traditions (or its religious and moral practices) later gave rise to varying schools of Hinduism, as well as Yoga, Jainism, and Buddhism.

Origins of Buddhism

Early texts suggest Siddhartha Gautama was born into the Shakya Clan, a community on the eastern edge of the Indian subcontinent in the 5th century BCE. His father was an elected chieftain, or oligarch, of the small republic. Gautama is thought to

have been born in modern-day Nepal, and raised in the Shakya capital of Kapilvastu, which may have been in Nepal or India. Most scholars agree that he taught and founded a monastic order during the reign of the Magadha Empire. In addition to the Vedic Brahmins, the Buddha's lifetime coincided with the flourishing of influential Sramana schools of thought, including Jainism.

Buddhist teachings explain that Siddhartha was a young man from a respected family, who renounced his family and left his father's palace at age 29 in search of truth and enlightenment through Sramana. Siddhartha began this quest through a period of starvation and, according to legend, grew so thin he could feel his hands if he placed one on his back and the other on his stomach. This explains statues that depict Buddha as thin and withered, rather than the better known depiction of him seated with a large belly.

Emaciated Fasting Buddha. This statue in Chiang Mai, Thailand, depicts the Buddha practicing severe asceticism before his Enlightenment.

Buddha lived as a Sramana ascetic for approximately six years until he had an "awakening" in a place called Bodh Gaya, in the Gaya district of the modern Indian state of Bihar. Sitting under what became known as the Bodhi Tree, Siddhartha discovered what Buddhists call the Noble Eightfold Path, and attained Buddhatva, or Enlightenment, which is said to be a state of being completely free of lust (raga), hatred (dosa), and delusion (moha).

Siddhartha, thereafter known as Buddha, or “awakened one,” was recognized by his followers, called Buddhists, as an enlightened teacher. He taught what he called the Middle Way or Middle Path, the character of the Noble Eightfold Path. This includes eight concepts to be sought after: right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right samadhi (the state of intense concentration brought on through meditation).

His insights were intended to help sentient beings end their suffering through the elimination of ignorance and craving. This could be achieved through understanding the noble path, which is the way to achieve the sublime state of Nirvana. The literal meaning of Nirvana in the Sanskrit language is “blowing out” or “quenching,” and is the ultimate spiritual goal of Buddhism. It marks the release from the cycle of rebirths, known in the Sramana tradition as samsara.

Another important Buddhist concept is Bodhisattva, a Sanskrit word for anyone who has been motivated by great compassion and a wish to attain buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings —those who have a conscious awareness of the self but are in contrast with buddhahood. Sentient beings are characteristically not yet enlightened and are thus confined to the death, rebirth and dukkha (suffering) found in the cycle of samsara. Bodhisattvas, therefore, are those who have set themselves on the path toward enlightenment and hope to benefit others through their journey. Depictions of the bodhisattva path are a popular subject in Buddhist art.

Bodhisattva. Clay sculpture of a bodhisattva, Afghanistan, 7th century.

Rise of Buddhism

Buddha is thought to have died around 483 BCE, after 45 years of travel and teaching. Buddhists believe he passed into a state of Nirvana. Small communities of monks and nuns, known as bhikkus, sprung up along the routes Buddha traveled. Buddhism was overshadowed by the more dominant Hindu religion, but this began to change in the 3rd century BCE; this was when one of the Indian subcontinent's great rulers, Ashoka I of the Maurya Empire, renounced wars, despite having waged war to build his own kingdom. In a major break from others rulers of the time, he converted to Buddhism.

Ashoka promoted the religion's expansion by deploying monks to spread Buddha's teaching. This began a wave of conversion throughout India as well as in surrounding nations, such as Nepal, Tibet, and Burma, but also further afield in Asia, including in China and Japan. Over time Buddhism grew, as greater numbers of people became aware of its teachings, including those in western nations, eventually becoming one of the major religions practiced around the world.

Today, Buddhism is practiced by an estimated 488 million people. China is the nation with the largest number of Buddhists, approximately 244 million followers, or more than 18% of its total population. Other countries that have a large number of Buddhists among their populations include Myanmar with 48.4 million, Japan with 45.8 million, Sri Lanka with 14.2 million, Cambodia with 13.7 million, South Korea with 11 million, Thailand, Laos, Singapore, Taiwan, and Nepal. The United States is home to an estimated 1.2 million Buddhists, or 1.2% of the American population.

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6.3: Jainism

Learning Objectives

- Understand the origins and principles of Jainism

Key Points

- Sramanas were those who practiced an ascetic, or strict and self-denying, lifestyle in pursuit of spiritual liberation. They are commonly known as monks.
- The Sramana movement gave rise to Jainism, which is considered an independent, pre-Buddhist religion with possible roots in the Indus Valley Civilization.
- The predominance of karma is one of the key features of Jainism. Karma is the sum of a person's actions in this and previous lives; it determines his or her fate in future existences.

terms

Jainism

An Indian religion that prescribes a path of non-violence toward all living beings, and emphasizes spiritual independence and equality between all forms of life.

ascetic

A person who practices severe self-discipline and abstention from worldly pleasures in order to attain a higher level of spirituality.

karma

The principle of causality in which intent and actions of an individual influence the future of that person; this is a key concept in Jainism, as well as in Hinduism and Buddhism.

saṃsāra

The repeating cycle of birth, life, and death (reincarnation) within Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Jainism, one of the world's major religions, is believed to have roots in the Indus Valley Civilization, and follows aspects of the Sramana traditions of asceticism—self-denial and control in order to achieve a higher level of spirituality. Although Jainism is considered pre-Buddhist, the two religions have a link through a focus on karma—the concept that good deeds in one life will lead to a better existence in the next life. The ultimate aim of Jainism is to achieve liberation of the soul.

Sramana Origins

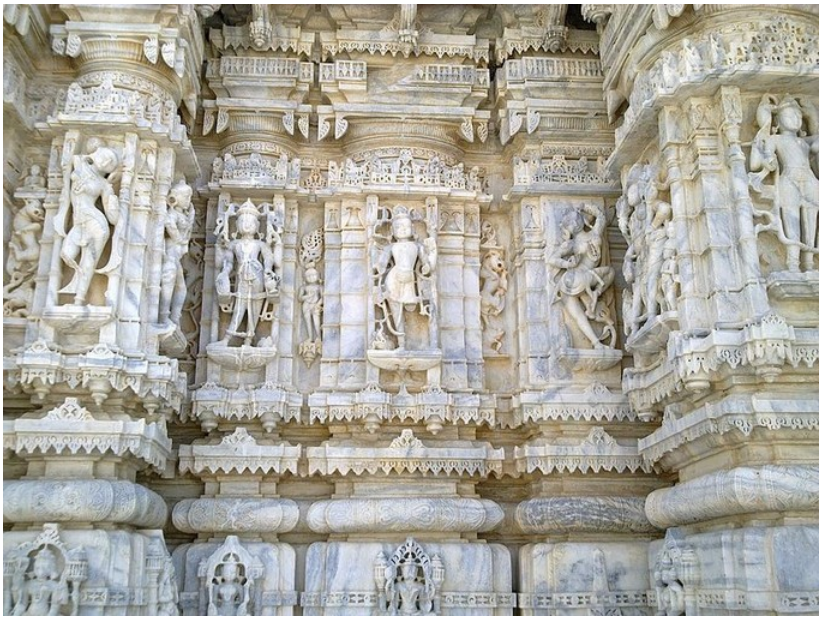
Jainism is based on an ancient Indian religious philosophy called Sramana, which began as an offshoot of the Vedic religion. Several Sramana movements are known to have existed in India before the 6th century BCE. Sramana existed in parallel to, but separate from, Vedic Hinduism, which followed the teachings and rituals found in the Vedas, the most ancient texts of the Vedic religion. Sramana, meaning "seeker," was a tradition that began around 800-600 BCE, when new philosophical groups, who believed in a more austere path to spiritual freedom, rejected the authority of the Vedas and the Brahmins (the priests of Vedic Hinduism).

Sramana promoted spiritual concepts that became popular in all major Indian religions, such as saṃsāra, the cycle of birth and death, and moksha, liberation from that cycle. The Sramanas renounced married and domestic life and adopted an ascetic path (one of severe self-discipline and abstention from all indulgence) in order to achieve spiritual liberation. Sramaṇa traditions (or religious and moral practices) later gave rise to varying schools of Hinduism, as well as Yoga, Buddhism, and Jainism.

Origins of Jainism

Jainism is considered an independent, pre-Buddhist religion that began c. 700 BCE, although its origins are disputed. Some scholars claim Jainism has its roots in the Indus Valley Civilization, reflecting native spirituality prior to the Indo-Aryan migration into India.

Various seals from Indus Valley Civilizations bear resemblance to Rishabha, the first Jain as the visual representation of Vishnu. Many relics depict Jain symbols, including standing nude male figures, images with serpent-heads, and the bull symbol of Vrshabadeva. However, other scholars believe the Sramana traditions were separate and contemporaneous with Indo-Aryan religious practices of the historical Vedic religion.



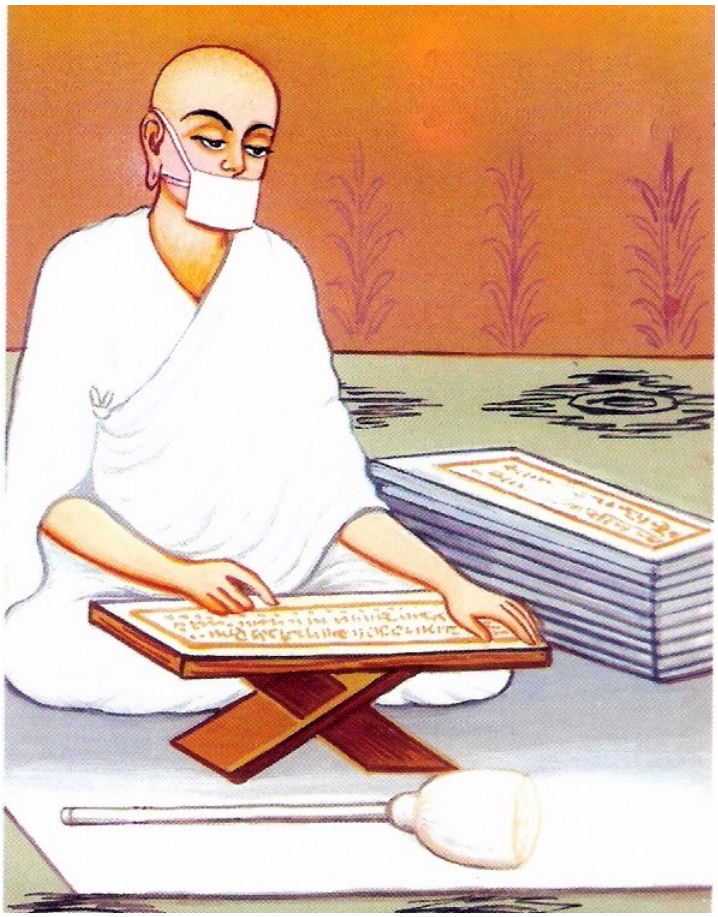
An Elaborate Mirpur Jain Temple Wall. The Jain Temple in Mirpur, India, was built c. 800 CE.

Jainism Beliefs

The distinguishing features of Jain philosophy are its belief in the independent existence of soul and matter; the denial of a creative and omnipotent God, combined with a belief in an eternal universe; and a strong emphasis on non-violence, morality, and ethics. The word Jain derives from the Sanskrit word jina, meaning conqueror, and the ultimate aim of Jain life is to achieve liberation of the soul.

The predominance of karma is one of the key features of Jainism. Karma is the sum of a person's actions in this and previous lives that determine his or her fate in future existences. A Sanskrit word, karma means action, word, or deed. Its focus is on the spiritual principle of cause and effect, with individual actions influencing individual effects. Good intent and good deeds contribute to good karma and future happiness, while bad intent and deeds produce bad karma and future suffering. Karma is a concept associated with rebirth, or the idea that death is the beginning of a new existence. This idea also appears in other Asian religions, including Buddhism.

The motto of Jainism is Parasparopagraho Jivanam, meaning "the function of souls is to help one another." This is associated with the idea of good deeds, and is incorporated into the main principles of Jainism: ahimsa, non-violence; anekantavada, non-absolutism; and aparigraha, non-possessiveness or non-attachment. Followers take five main vows that include ahimsa and aparigraha, as well as satya, not lying; asteya, not stealing; and brahmacharya, chastity. Jain monks and nuns adhere to these vows absolutely, placing Jainism squarely in the ascetic and self discipline traditions of Sramana.



Jain Monk. An image of a Jain monk meditating over religious texts.

Jainism Followers

The majority of Jains live in India, which counts between 4 and 6 million followers. Some of the largest Jain communities outside India are in the United States, which has more than 79,000 followers; Kenya, which has nearly 69,000 adherents; the United Kingdom, which counts nearly 17,000 followers; and Canada, with approximately 12,000 followers. Other countries with notable Jain populations include Tanzania, Nepal, Uganda, Burma, Malaysia, South Africa, Fiji, Australia, and Japan.

Contemporary Jainism is divided into two major schools, or sects, called Digambara and Svetambara. The Svetambara, meaning "white clad," describes its ascetic adherents' practice of wearing white clothes, while the monks of the "sky clad" Digambara do not wear clothing at all, a practice upon which they disagree.

The most important religious festival of Jainism is Mahavir Jayanti, which celebrates the birth of Mahavira—the 24th and last Tirthankara, or teaching god. Other important festivals include Diwali, marking the Nirvana, or liberation, of Mahavira's soul; and the holy event of Paryushana, also known as Das Lakshana, which is a period of between eight and ten days in August or September of fasting, prayer, and meditation.

Paryushana Celebrations. Followers of Jainism celebrate Paryushana at the Jain Center of America in New York City.

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6.4: The Achaemenid Empire

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the Achaemenid as the first global empire

Key Points

- Around 550 BCE, Cyrus the Great (Cyrus II) conquered the Median Empire and started the expansion of the Achaemenid Empire, assimilating the neighboring Lydian and Neo Babylonian empires.
- Cyrus the Great was succeeded by his son Cambryses II in 530 BCE and then the usurper Gaumata, and finally by Darius the Great in 522 BCE.
- By the time of Darius the Great and his son, Xerxes, the Achaemenid Empire had expanded to include Mesopotamia, Egypt, Anatolia, the Southern Caucasus, Macedonia, the western Indus basin, as well as parts of Central Asia, northern Arabia and northern Libya.
- At its height around 475 BCE, the Achaemenid Empire ruled over 44% of the world's population, the highest figure for any empire in history.

Examples

Median Empire

One of the four major powers of the ancient Near East (with Babylonia, Lydia, and Egypt), until it was conquered by Cyrus the Great in 550 BCE.

Pasargadae

The capital of the Achaemenid Empire under Cyrus the Great.

Cyrus the Great

Cyrus II of Persia, also known as Cyrus the Great, created the largest empire the world had seen.

Darius the Great

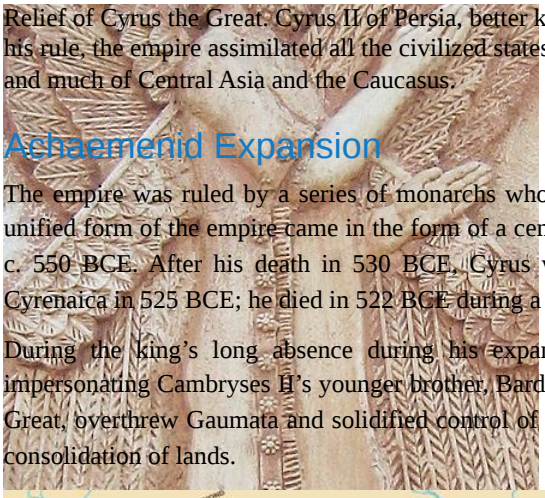
The third king of the Persian Achaemenid Empire, who ruled at its peak from c. 522-486 BCE.

The Achaemenid Empire, c. 550-330 BCE, or First Persian Empire, was founded in the 6th century BCE by Cyrus the Great, in Western and Central Asia. The dynasty drew its name from Achaemenes, who, from 705-675 BCE, ruled Persis, which was land bounded on the west by the Tigris River and on the south by the Persian Gulf. It was the first centralized nation-state, and during expansion in approximately 550-500 BCE, it became the first global empire and eventually ruled over significant portions of the ancient world.

Empire Beginnings

By the 7th century BCE, a group of ancient Iranian people had established the Median Empire, a vassal state under the Assyrian Empire that later tried to gain its independence in the 8th century BCE. After Assyria fell in 605 BCE, Cyaxares, king of the Medes, extended his rule west across Iran.

Around 550 BCE, Cyrus II of Persia, who became known as Cyrus the Great, rose in rebellion against the Median Empire, eventually conquering the Medes to create the first Persian Empire, also known as the Achaemenid Empire. Cyrus utilized his tactical genius, as well as his understanding of the socio-political conditions governing his territories, to eventually assimilate the neighboring Lydian and Neo-Babylonian empires into the new Persian Empire.



Relief of Cyrus the Great. Cyrus II of Persia, better known as Cyrus the Great, was the founder of the Achaemenid Empire. Under his rule, the empire assimilated all the civilized states of the ancient Near East, and eventually conquered most of Southwest Asia and much of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Achaemenid Expansion

The empire was ruled by a series of monarchs who joined its disparate tribes by constructing a complex network of roads. The unified form of the empire came in the form of a central administration around the city of Pasargadae, which was erected by Cyrus c. 550 BCE. After his death in 530 BCE, Cyrus was succeeded by his son Cambyses II, who conquered Egypt, Nubia, and Cyrenaica in 525 BCE; he died in 522 BCE during a revolt.

During the king's long absence during his expansion campaign, a Zoarastrian priest, named Guamata, staged a coup by impersonating Cambryses II's younger brother, Bardiya, and seized the throne. Yet in 522 BCE, Darius I, also known as Darius the Great, overthrew Gaumata and solidified control of the territories of the Achaemenid Empire, beginning what would be a historic consolidation of lands.

Achaemenid Empire in the time of Darius and Xerxes. At its height, the Achaemenid Empire ruled over 44% of the world's population, the highest figure for any empire in history.

Between c. 500-400 BCE, Darius the Great and his son, Xerxe I, ruled the Persian Plateau and all of the territories formerly held by the Assyrian Empire, including Mesopotamia, the Levant, and Cyprus. It eventually came to control Egypt, as well. This expansion continued even further afield with Anatolia and the Armenian Plateau, much of the Southern Caucasus, Macedonia, parts of Greece and Thrace, Central Asia as far as the Aral Sea, the Oxus and Jaxartes areas, the Hindu Kush and the western Indus basin, and parts of northern Arabia and northern Libya.

This unprecedented area of control under a single ruler stretched from the Indus Valley in the east to Thrace and Macedon on the northeastern border of Greece. At its height, the Achaemenid Empire ruled over 44% of the world's population, the highest such figure for any empire in history.

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6.5: Government and Trade in the Achaemenid Empire

Learning Objectives

- Discuss how the central government provided cultural and economic reform

Key Points

- Cyrus the Great maintained control over a vast empire by installing regional governors, called satraps, to rule individual provinces.
- When Darius the Great ascended the throne in 522 BCE, he organized a new uniform monetary system and established Aramaic as the official language of the empire.
- Trade infrastructure facilitated the exchange of commodities in the far reaches of the empire, including the Royal Road, standardized language, and a postal service.
- Tariffs on trade from the territories were one of the empire's main sources of revenue, in addition to agriculture and tribute.

terms

Cyrus Cylinder

An ancient clay artifact that has been called the oldest-known charter of human rights.

Behistun Inscription

An inscription carved in a cliff face of Mount Behistrun in Iran; it provided a key to deciphering cuneiform script.

satrap

The governor of a province in the ancient Median and Achaemenid (Persian) Empires.

satrapy

The territory under the rule of a satrap.

The Achaemenid Empire reached enormous size under the leadership of Cyrus II of Persia (576-530 BCE), commonly known as Cyrus the Great, who created a multi-state empire. Called Cyrus the Elder by the Greeks, he founded an empire initially comprising all the previous civilized states of the ancient Near East and eventually most of Southwest and Central Asia and the Caucus region, stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus River. Control of this large territory involved a centralized government, territorial monarchs who served as proxy rulers for the emperor, and an extensive system of commerce and trade.

Government Organization

Cyrus, whose rule lasted between 29 and 31 years, until his death in battle in 530 BCE, controlled the vast Achaemenid Empire through the use of regional monarchs, called *satrap*, who each oversaw a territory called a satrapy. The basic rule of governance was based upon the loyalty and obedience of the *satrapy* to the central power, the king, and compliance with tax laws. Cyrus also connected the various regions of the empire through an innovative postal system that made use of an extensive roadway and relay stations.

Cyrus the Great was recognized for achievements in human rights and politics, having influenced both Eastern and Western Civilization. The ancient Babylonians called him "The Liberator," while the modern nation of Iran calls Cyrus its "father."

Cyrus Cylinder

The Cyrus Cylinder is an ancient clay artifact, now broken into several fragments, that has been called the oldest-known charter of universal human rights and a symbol of his humanitarian rule.

The cylinder dates from the 6th century BCE, and was discovered in the ruins of Babylon in Mesopotamia, now Iraq, in 1879. In addition to describing the genealogy of Cyrus, the declaration in Akkadian cuneiform script on the cylinder is considered by many Biblical scholars to be evidence of Cyrus's policy of repatriation of the Jewish people following their captivity in Babylon.

The historical nature of the cylinder has been debated, with some scholars arguing that Cyrus did not make a specific decree, but rather that the cylinder articulated his general policy allowing exiles to return to their homelands and rebuild their temples.

In fact, the policies of Cyrus with respect to treatment of minority religions were well documented in Babylonian texts, as well as in Jewish sources. Cyrus was known to have an overall attitude of religious tolerance throughout the empire, although it has been debated whether this was by his own implementation or a continuation of Babylonian and Assyrian policies.

Darius Improvements

When Darius I (550-486 BCE), also known as Darius the Great, ascended the throne of the Achaemenid Empire in 522 BCE, he established Aramaic as the official language and devised a codification of laws for Egypt. Darius also sponsored work on construction projects throughout the empire, focusing on improvement of the cities of Susa, Pasargadae, Persepolis, Babylon, and various municipalities in Egypt.

When Darius moved his capital from Pasargadae to Persepolis, he revolutionized the economy by placing it on a silver and gold coinage and introducing a regulated and sustainable tax system. This structure precisely tailored the taxes of each *satrapy* based on its projected productivity and economic potential. For example, Babylon was assessed for the highest amount of silver taxes, while Egypt owed grain in addition to silver taxes.

Persian reliefs in the city of Persepolis. Darius the Great moved the capital of the Achaemenid Empire to Persepolis c. 522 BCE. He initiated several major architectural projects, including the construction of a palace and a treasure house.

Behistun Inscription

Sometime after his coronation, Darius ordered an inscription to be carved on a limestone cliff of Mount Behistun in modern Iran. The Behistun Inscription, the text of which Darius wrote, came to have great linguistic significance as a crucial clue in deciphering cuneiform script.

The inscription begins by tracing the ancestry of Darius, followed by a description of a sequence of events following the deaths of the previous two Achaemenid emperors, Cyrus the Great and Cyrus's son, Cambyses II, in which Darius fought 19 battles in one year to put down numerous rebellions throughout the Persian lands.

The inscription, which is approximately 15 meters high and 25 meters wide, includes three versions of the text in three different cuneiform languages: Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian, which was a version of Akkadian. Researchers were able to compare the scripts and use it to help decipher ancient languages, in this way making the Behistun Inscription as valuable to cuneiform as the Rosetta Stone is to Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Behistun Inscription. A section of the Behistun Inscription on a limestone cliff of Mount Behistun in western Iran, which became a key in deciphering cuneiform script.

Commerce and Trade

Under the Achaemenids, trade was extensive and there was an efficient infrastructure that facilitated the exchange of commodities in the far reaches of the empire. Tariffs on trade were one of the empire's main sources of revenue, in addition to agriculture and tribute.

The *satrapies* were linked by a 2,500-kilometer highway, the most impressive stretch of which was the Royal Road, from Susa to Sardis. The relays of mounted couriers could reach the most remote areas in 15 days. Despite the relative local independence afforded by the *satrapy* system, royal inspectors regularly toured the empire and reported on local conditions using this route.

Achaemenid golden bowl with lion imagery. Trade in the Achaemenid Empire was extensive. Infrastructure, including the Royal Road, standardized language, and a postal service facilitated the exchange of commodities in the far reaches of the empire.

Military

Cyrus the Great created an organized army to enforce national authority, despite the ethno-cultural diversity among the subject nations, the empire's enormous geographic size, and the constant struggle for power by regional competitors.

This professional army included the Immortals unit, comprising 10,000 highly trained heavy infantry. Under Darius the Great, Persia would become the first empire to inaugurate and deploy an imperial navy, with personnel that included Phoenicians, Egyptians, Cypriots, and Greeks.

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6.6: Zoroastrianism

Learning Objectives

- Explain Zoroastrianism and its impact on Persian culture

Key Points

- Zoroastrianism is ascribed to the teachings of Zoroaster, an Iranian prophet, who worshiped Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord), as its Supreme Being.
- Leading characteristics, such as messianism, heaven and hell, and free will are said to have influenced other religious systems, including Second Temple Judaism, Gnosticism, Christianity, and Islam.
- Zoroastrianism served as the state religion of the pre-Islamic Iranian empires from c. 600 BCE to 650 CE, but saw a steep decline after the Muslim conquest of Persia.
- The religion states that active participation in life through good deeds is necessary to ensure happiness and to keep chaos at bay.

Terms

eschatological

A part of theology concerned with the final events of history, or the ultimate destiny of humanity, often referred to as the "end times."

Sassanids

The last Iranian empire before the rise of Islam.

Gnosticism

A modern term categorizing a collection of ancient religions whose adherents shunned the material world— which they viewed as created by the demiurge—and embraced the spiritual world.

messianism

The belief in a messiah, who acts as a savior, redeemer or liberator of a group of people.

Overview and Theology

Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest religions. It ascribed to the teachings of the Iranian prophet Zoroaster (or Zarathustra), and exalted their deity of wisdom, Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord), as its Supreme Being. Leading characteristics, such as messianism, heaven and hell, and free will are said to have influenced other religious systems, including Second Temple Judaism, Gnosticism, Christianity, and Islam. With possible roots dating back to the second millennium BCE, Zoroastrianism enters recorded history in the 5th-century BCE. It served as the state religion of the pre-Islamic Iranian empires from around 600 BCE to 650 CE. Zoroastrianism was suppressed from the 7th century onwards, following the Muslim conquest of Persia. Recent estimates place the current number of Zoroastrians at around 2.6 million, with most living in India and Iran.

The most important texts of the religion are those of the Avesta, which includes the writings of Zoroaster, known as the Gathas and the Yasna. The Gathas are enigmatic poems that define the religion's precepts, while the Yasna is the scripture. The full name by which Zoroaster addressed the deity is: Ahura, The Lord Creator, and Mazda, Supremely Wise. He proclaimed that there is only one God, the singularly creative and sustaining force of the Universe. He also stated that human beings are given a right of choice, and because of cause and effect are also responsible for the consequences of their choices. The contesting force to Ahura Mazda was called Angra Mainyu, or angry spirit. Post-Zoroastrian scripture introduced the concept of Ahriman, the Devil, which was effectively a personification of Angra Mainyu.

In Zoroastrianism, water (*apo*, *aban*) and fire (*atar*, *azar*) are agents of ritual purity, and the associated purification ceremonies are considered the basis of ritual life. In Zoroastrian cosmogony, water and fire are respectively the second and last primordial elements to have been created, and scripture considers fire to have its origin in the waters. Both water and fire are considered life-

sustaining, and both water and fire are represented within the precinct of a fire temple. Zoroastrians usually pray in the presence of some form of fire (which can be considered evident in any source of light), and the culminating rite of the principle act of worship constitutes a “strengthening of the waters.” Fire is considered a medium through which spiritual insight and wisdom is gained, and water is considered the source of that wisdom.

The religion states that active participation in life through good deeds is necessary to ensure happiness and to keep chaos at bay. This active participation is a central element in Zoroaster’s concept of free will, and Zoroastrianism rejects all forms of monasticism. Ahura Mazda will ultimately prevail over the evil Angra Mainyu or Ahriman, at which point the universe will undergo a cosmic renovation and time will end. In the final renovation, all of creation—even the souls of the dead that were initially banished to “darkness”—will be reunited in Ahura Mazda, returning to life in the undead form. At the end of time, a savior-figure (*a Saoshyant*) will bring about a final renovation of the world (*frashokereti*), in which the dead will be revived.

Zoroastrian Priest. Painted clay and alabaster head of a Zoroastrian priest wearing a distinctive Bactrian-style headdress, Takhti-Sangin, Tajikistan, Greco-Bactrian kingdom, 3rd-2nd century BCE.

History

The roots of Zoroastrianism are thought to have emerged from a common prehistoric Indo-Iranian religious system dating back to the early 2nd millennium BCE. The prophet Zoroaster himself, though traditionally dated to the 6th century BCE, is thought by many modern historians to have been a reformer of the polytheistic Iranian religion who lived in the 10th century BCE. Zoroastrianism as a religion was not firmly established until several centuries later. Zoroastrianism enters recorded history in the mid-5th century BCE. Herodotus’ *The Histories* (completed c. 440 BCE) includes a description of Greater Iranian society with what may be recognizably Zoroastrian features, including exposure of the dead.

The Histories is a primary source of information on the early period of the Achaemenid era (648-330 BCE), in particular with respect to the role of the Magi. According to Herodotus i.101, the Magi were the sixth tribe of the Medians (until the unification of the Persian empire under Cyrus the Great, all Iranians were referred to as “Mede” or “Mada” by the peoples of the Ancient World). The Magi appear to have been the priestly caste of the Mesopotamian-influenced branch of Zoroastrianism today known as Zurvanism, and they wielded considerable influence at the courts of the Median emperors.

Darius I, and later Achaemenid emperors, acknowledged their devotion to Ahura Mazda in inscriptions (as attested to several times in the Behistun inscription), and appear to have continued the model of coexistence with other religions. Whether Darius was a follower of Zoroaster has not been conclusively established, since devotion to Ahura Mazda was (at the time) not necessarily an indication of an adherence to Zoroaster's teaching. A number of the Zoroastrian texts that today are part of the greater compendium of the Avesta have been attributed to that period.

The religion would be professed many centuries following the demise of the Achaemenids in mainland Persia and the core regions of the former Achaemenid Empire—most notably Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and the Caucasus. In the Cappadocian kingdom (whose territory was formerly an Achaemenid possession), Persian colonists who were cut off from their co-religionists in Iran proper continued to practice the Zoroastrianism of their forefathers. There, Strabo, observing in the first century BCE, records that these "fire kindlers" possessed many "holy places of the Persian Gods," as well as fire temples. Strabo furthermore relates, that they were "noteworthy enclosures; and in their midst there is an altar, on which there is a large quantity of ashes and where the magi keep the fire ever burning." Throughout, and after, the Hellenistic periods in the aforementioned regions, the religion would be strongly revived.

As late as the Parthian period, a form of Zoroastrianism was without a doubt the dominant religion in the Armenian lands. The Sassanids aggressively promoted the Zurvanite form of Zoroastrianism, often building fire temples in captured territories to promote the religion. During the period of their centuries long suzerainty over the Caucasus, the Sassanids made attempts to promote Zoroastrianism there with considerable successes. It was also prominent in the pre-Christian Caucasus (especially modern-day Azerbaijan).

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6.7: Rise of the Maurya Empire

Learning Objectives

- Understand the history and significance of the Maurya Empire

Key Points

- The Maurya Empire was founded in 322 BCE by Chandragupta Maurya, who had overthrown the Nanda Dynasty and rapidly expanded his power westward across central and western India in order to take advantage of the disruptions of local powers in the wake of the withdrawal by Alexander the Great's armies.
- According to legend, the teacher Chanakya convinced his disciple, Chandragupta Maurya, to conquer the the kingdom of Magadha (the Nanda Empire) when he was insulted by its king Dhana Nanda.
- Chandragupta Maurya expanded the Maurya Empire north and west as he conquered the Macedonian Satrapies and won the Seleucid-Mauryan war.
- In its time, the Maurya Empire was one of the largest empires of the world.

Terms

Takshashila

An early city in modern-day Pakistan that was believed to be one of the earliest global settings of learning and culture. It is now modern-day Taxila.

Chanakya

Maurya's teacher and loyal advisor during the foundation and expansion of the Maurya Empire.

Nanda Empire

The kingdom led by Dhana Nanda; it was conquered by Chandragupta Maurya in 321 BCE.

Chandragupta Maurya

The founder of the Maurya Empire; he lived from 340-298 BCE.

The Maurya Empire was a geographically extensive Iron Age historical power in ancient India, ruled by the Maurya dynasty from 322-185 BCE. Originating from the kingdom of Magadha in the Indo-Gangetic Plain (modern Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh) in the eastern side of the Indian subcontinent, the empire had its capital city at Pataliputra (modern Patna). The empire was the largest to have ever existed in the Indian subcontinent, spanning over 5 million square kilometres at its zenith under Ashoka.

The Empire was founded in 322 BCE by Chandragupta Maurya, who had overthrown the Nanda Dynasty, and rapidly expanded his power,with Chanakya's help, westward across central and western India. His expansion took advantage of the disruptions of local powers in the wake of the withdrawal westward by Alexander the Great's armies. By 316 BCE, the empire had fully occupied Northwestern India, defeating and conquering the satraps left by Alexander. Chandragupta then defeated the invasion led by Seleucus I, a Macedonian general from Alexander's army, and gained additional territory west of the Indus River.

In its time, the Maurya Empire was one of the largest empires of the world. At its greatest extent, the empire stretched to the north along the natural boundaries of the Himalayas, to the east into Assam, to the west into Balochistan (southwest Pakistan and southeast Iran) and into the Hindu Kush mountains of what is now Afghanistan. The Empire was expanded into India's central and southern regions by the emperors Chandragupta and Bindusara, but it excluded a small portion of unexplored tribal and forested regions near Kalinga (modern Odisha), until it was conquered by Ashoka. It declined for about 50 years after Ashoka's rule ended, and it dissolved in 185 BCE with the foundation of the Shunga Dynasty in Magadha.

Conquest of Magadha and foundation of the Maurya Empire (c. 321 BCE)

According to several legends, Chanakya traveled to Magadha, a kingdom that was large and militarily powerful and feared by its neighbors, but was insulted by its king Dhana Nanda, of the Nanda Dynasty. Chanakya swore revenge and vowed to destroy the Nanda Empire.

The Nanda Empire originated from the region of Magadha in ancient India during the 4th century BCE, and lasted until between 345-321 BCE. At its greatest extent, the empire ruled by the Nanda Dynasty extended from Bengal in the east, to the Punjab region in the west, and as far south as the Vindhya Range. The rulers of this dynasty were famed for the great wealth that they accumulated.

Chanakya encouraged the young Chandragupta Maurya and his army to take over the throne of Magadha. Using his intelligence network, Chandragupta gathered many young men from across Magadha and other provinces, who were upset over the corrupt and oppressive rule of King Dhana, as well as the resources necessary for his army to fight a long series of battles. These men included the former general of Taxila, accomplished students of Chanakya, the representative of King Porus of Kakayee, his son Malayketu, and the rulers of small states.

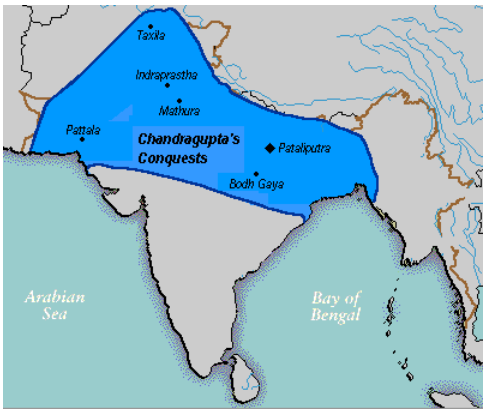
Maurya devised a strategy to invade Pataliputra, the capital of the Nanda Empire. A battle was announced and the Magadhan army was drawn from the city to a distant battlefield in order to engage Maurya's forces. Meanwhile, Maurya's general and spies bribed the Nanda's corrupt general, and created an atmosphere of civil war in the kingdom, which culminated in the death of the heir to the throne.

Upon the civil unrest in the kingdom, Nanda resigned and disappeared into exile. Chanakya contacted the prime minister, Rakshasa, and convinced him that his loyalty was to Magadha, not to the Nanda Dynasty, and that he should remain in office. Chanakya reiterated that choosing to resist would start a war that would severely affect Magadha and destroy the city. Rakshasa accepted Chanakya's reasoning, and Chandragupta Maurya was legitimately installed as the new King of Magadha in 321 BCE, at the age of 21. Rakshasa became Chandragupta's chief advisor, and Chanakya assumed the position of an elder statesman.

Statue of Chandragupta Maurya at the Birla Mandir Hindu temple, Delhi. Chandragupta Maurya conquered the kingdom of Magadha to found the Maurya Empire in 231 BCE, at the age of 21.

Northwest Expansion

With his new seat of power in Magadha, Chandragupta Maurya defeated the remaining Macedonian satraps, and consolidated his reign of the new Maurya Empire. He rapidly expanded his power westward across central and western India, taking advantage of the disruptions of local powers in the wake of the withdrawal westward by Alexander the Great's Greek armies. By 320 BCE, the empire had fully occupied Northwestern India. Chandragupta Maurya would become the first emperor to unify India into one state, creating one of the world's largest empires in its time, and the largest ever in the Indian subcontinent.



The Maurya Empire c. 320 BCE. The Maurya Empire when it was first founded by Chandragupta Maurya c. 320 BCE, after conquering the Nanda Empire when he was only about 20 years old.

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6.8: Expansion of the Maurya Empire

Learning Objectives

- Understand the expansion of the Maurya Empire

Key Points

- The Seleucid Empire tried and failed to reconquer the northwestern part of the Maurya Empire during the Seleucid-Mauryan war, from 305-303 BCE.
- As part of the peace offering, the Maurya Empire gained five territories in exchange for 500 war elephants.
- Several Greeks remained at the Mauryan court as ambassadors to the Hellenistic world.
- Chandragupta Maurya was succeed by his son, Bindusara, in 298 BCE, and then by Bindusara's son, Ashoka the Great, in 272 BCE.
- Under Ashoka the Great, the Maurya Empire expanded into the southern part of the Indian subcontinent.
- Ashoka erected the Edicts of Ashoka, which state his policies and accomplishments, and which were written in both Greek and Sanskrit.

Terms

satrapies

The governors of the provinces of the ancient Median and Achaemenid (Persian) Empires, and several of their successors, such as the Sasanian Empire and the Hellenistic empires.

Edicts of Ashoka

Stone edicts that depicted the policies and accomplishments of Ashoka the Great, and were written in both Greek and Sanskrit.

Ashoka the Great

Lived 304-232 BCE. As the king of the Maurya Empire, he conquered the Indian subcontinent.

Seleucus

The king of the Seleucid Empire who tried to reconquer northwestern Indian, but lost the Selecucid-Mauryan War.

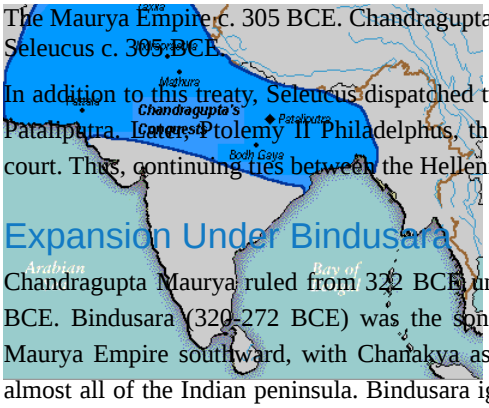
The Seleucid-Mauryan War

In 305 BCE, Emperor Chandragupta Maurya led a series of campaigns to retake the satrapies left behind by Alexander the Great when he returned westward. Seleucus I fought to defend these territories, but both sides made peace in 303 BCE.

Seleucus, one of Alexander's generals, received Babylonia and, from there, expanded his dominions to include much of Alexander's near eastern territories. Seleucus established himself in Babylon in 312 BC, the year used as the foundation date of the Seleucid Empire. He ruled not only Babylonia, but the entire enormous eastern part of Alexander's empire. The Seleucid Empire was a major center of Hellenistic culture. In the areas where a Greek-Macedonian political elite dominated (mostly urban), it maintained the preeminence of Greek customs.

In 305 BCE, Seleucus I tried to reconquer the northwestern parts of India in order to claim them for the growing Seleucid Empire. Little is known of the campaign in which Chandragupta fought with Seleucus over the Indus Valley and the region of Gandhara—a very wealthy kingdom that had submitted decades earlier to Alexander the Great.

Seleucus lost the Seleucid-Mauryan War, and the two rulers reconciled with a peace treaty. The Greeks offered a Macedonian princess for marriage to Chandragupta, and several territories, including the satrapies of Paropamisade (modern-day Kamboja and Gandhara), Arachosia (modern-day Kandhahar), and Gedrosia (modern-day Balochistan). In return, Chandragupta sent 500 war elephants, a military asset which would play a decisive role in Seleucus' victory against western Hellenistic kings at the Battle of Ipsus in 301 BCE.

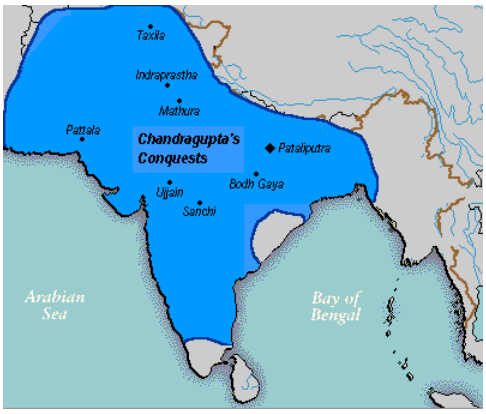


The Maurya Empire c. 305 BCE. Chandragupta extended the borders of the Maurya Empire toward Seleucid Persia, after defeating Seleucus c. 305 BCE.

In addition to this treaty, Seleucus dispatched two Greek ambassadors, Megasthenes and, later, Deimakos, to the Mauryan court at Patalīputra. Later, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the ruler of Ptolemaic Egypt, sent an ambassador named Dionysius to the Mauryan court. Thus, continuing ties between the Hellenistic world and the Mauryan Empire.

Expansion Under Bindusara

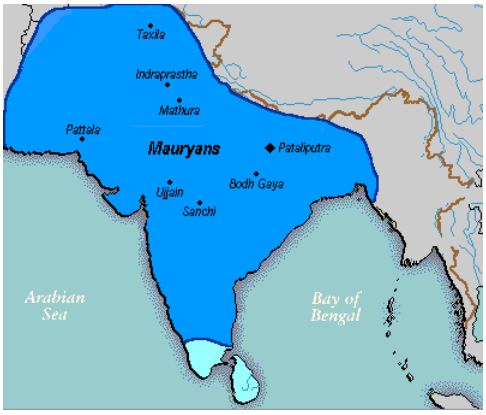
Chandragupta Maurya ruled from 322 BCE until his voluntary retirement and abdication, in favor of his son, Bindusara, in 298 BCE. Bindusara (320-272 BCE) was the son of Maurya and his queen, Durdhara. During his reign, Bindusara expanded the Maurya Empire southward, with Chanakya as his advisor. He brought 16 states under the Maurya Empire and thus conquered almost all of the Indian peninsula. Bindusara ignored the friendly Dravidian kingdoms of the Cholas, ruled by King Ilamcetcenni, the Pandyas, and Cheras. Apart from these southern states, Kalinga (modern-day Odisha) was the only kingdom in India independent from Bindusara's empire.



The Maurya Empire c. 290 BCE. Bindausara (ruler 298-272 BCE) extended the borders of the empire southward into the Deccan Plateau c. 290 BCE.

Ashoka the Great

Bindusara died in 272 BCE, and was succeeded by his son, Ashoka the Great (304-232 BCE). As a young prince, Ashoka (r. 272-232 BCE) was a brilliant commander who crushed revolts in Ujjain and Taxila. As monarch, he was ambitious and aggressive, reasserting the Empire's superiority in southern and western India. But it was his conquest of Kalinga (262-261 BCE) that proved to be the pivotal event of his life. Although Ashoka's army succeeded in overwhelming Kalinga forces of royal soldiers and civilian units, an estimated 100,000 soldiers and civilians were killed in the furious warfare, including over 10,000 of Ashoka's own men. Hundreds of thousands of people were adversely affected by the destruction and fallout of war. When he personally witnessed the devastation, Ashoka began feeling remorse. Although the annexation of Kalinga was completed, Ashoka embraced the teachings of Buddhism, and renounced war and violence. He sent out missionaries to travel around Asia and spread Buddhism to other countries.

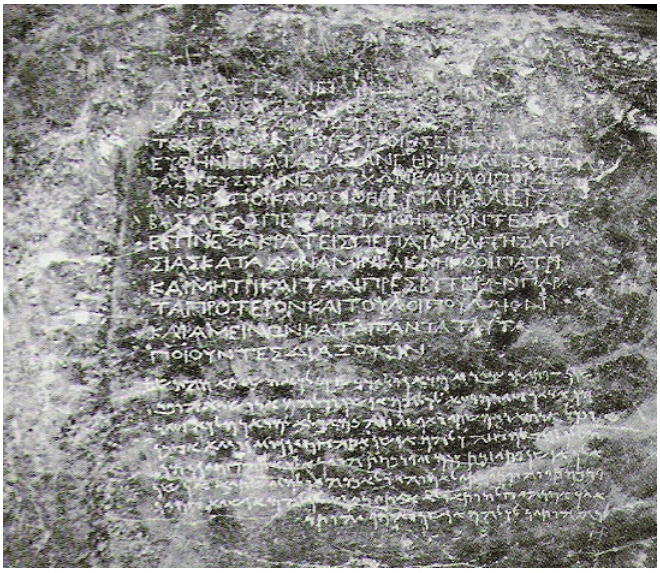


Extent of the Maurya Empire at its height in 265 BCE. Ashoka the Great extended into Kalinga during the Kalinga War c. 265 BCE, and established superiority over the southern kingdoms.

As ruler, Ashoka implemented principles of ahimsa (the principle of "to not injure") by banning hunting and violent sports activities, and ending indentured and forced labor (many thousands of people in war-ravaged Kalinga had been forced into hard labor and servitude). While he maintained a large and powerful army to keep the peace, Ashoka expanded friendly relations with states across Asia and Europe, and sponsored Buddhist missions. He undertook a massive public works building campaign across the country. Among these works were the construction of *stupas*, or Buddhist religious structures, containing relics. One notable stupas created during the reign of Ashoka was The Great Stupa, which stands in Sanchi, India. Over 40 years of peace, harmony, and prosperity made Ashoka one of the most successful and famous monarchs in Indian history. He remains an idealized figure of inspiration in modern India.

The Edicts of Ashoka

Perhaps one of the greatest-known accomplishments of Ashoka was his creation of his edicts, which were erected between 269 BCE and 232 BCE. The Edicts of Ashoka, set in stone, are found throughout the Subcontinent. Ranging from as far west as Afghanistan, and as far south as Andhra (Nellore District), Ashoka's edicts state his policies and accomplishments. Although predominantly written in Prakrit, two of them were written in Greek, and one in both Greek and Aramaic. Ashoka's edicts refer to the Greeks, Kambojas, and Gandharas as peoples forming a frontier region of his empire. They also attest to Ashoka's envoys' travels to the Greek rulers in the west as far as the Mediterranean. Ashoka's edicts also mentioned social and cultural attributes of his empire, emphasizing Buddhism, though not condemning other religions. For this, the Edicts of Ashoka are known as an early document that promoted religious tolerance.



An Edict of Asoka. Bilingual inscription (Greek and Aramaic) by king Asoka, from Kandahar. Kabul Museum.

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6.9: Centralization in the Maurya Empire

Learning Objectives

- Describe the significance of the political stability offered by the Mauryan Empire

Key Points

- The Mauryan Empire was divided into four provinces, each governed by the Kumara, who served as the king's representative.
- Emperor Ashoka maintained a massive standing army to protect the Mauryan Empire and instill stability and peace across West and South Asia.
- Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka's grandfather, had established a single currency across India, a network of regional governors and administrators, and a civil service to provide justice and security for merchants, farmers and traders that continued throughout the Mauryan Dynasty.
- The Mauryan international network of trade extended to the Greek states and Hellenic kingdoms in West Asia and into Southeast Asia.

terms

Arthashastra

An ancient Indian treatise on government, statecraft, military, and economy.

Khyber Pass

A strategically important trade stop on the modern boundary of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

standing army

A permanent army composed of full-time soldiers that is not disbanded during times of peace.

Kumara

A royal prince who oversaw the Mauryan provinces on behalf of the emperor.

Employing a carefully organized bureaucratic system, the Maurya Empire was able to maintain security and political unity across large parts of western and southern Asia. This included a common economic system supporting stable agriculture in its vast landholdings, as well as successful trade and commerce. Through this centralized authority, which included a powerful military, the rulers of the empire bound together the previously fractured regions of the Indian Subcontinent.

Unification and Military

Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Maurya Empire, ruled from 324-297 BCE, before voluntarily abdicating in favor of his son, Bindusara, who ruled from 297 BCE until his death in 272 BCE. This led to a war of succession in which Bindusara's son, Ashoka, defeated his brother, Susima, and rose to the throne in 268 BCE, eventually becoming the greatest ruler of the Maurya Dynasty.

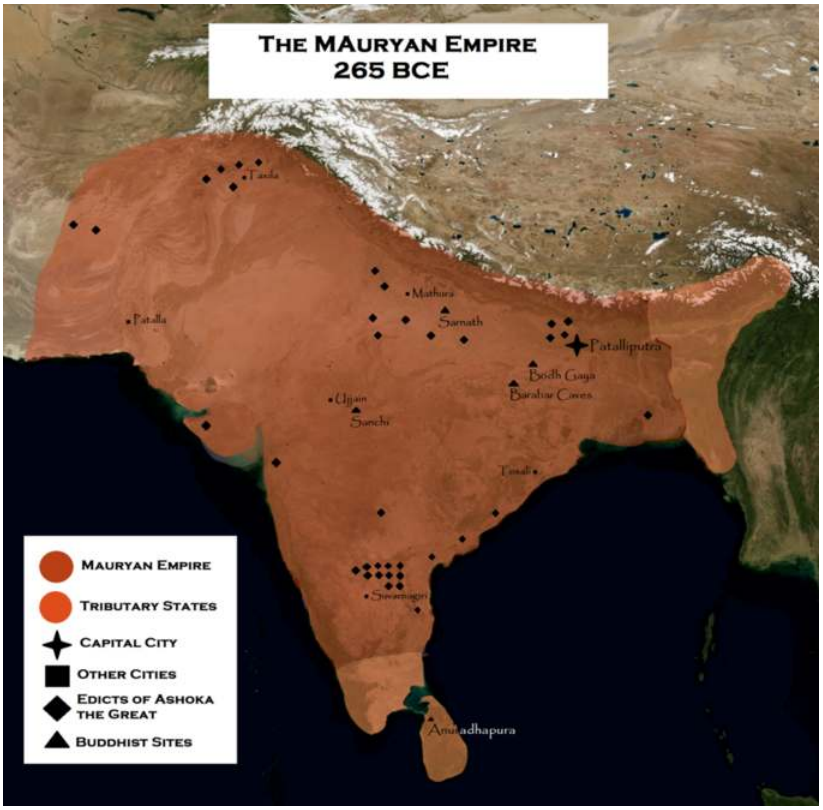
Before the Mauryan Empire, the Indian subcontinent was fragmented into hundreds of kingdoms. These were ruled by powerful regional chieftains with small armies that engaged in internecine warfare. The Mauryan Army eliminated regional chieftains, private armies, and even gangs of bandits, who sought to impose their own supremacy in small areas.

The Mauryan Army, the largest standing military force of its time, supported the expansion and defense of the empire. According to scholars, the empire wielded 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, and 9,000 war elephants, while a vast espionage system collected intelligence for both internal and external security purposes. Although Emperor Ashoka renounced offensive warfare and expansionism, he maintained this standing army to protect the empire from external threats and maintain stability and peace across Western and Southern Asia.

Administration

The Mauryan Empire was divided into four provinces, with the imperial capital at Pataliputra, near the Ganges River in the modern state of Bihar in India. The Edicts of Ashoka, a collection of inscriptions made during Ashoka's reign from 268-232 BCE, give the names of the Maurya Empire's four provincial capitals: Tosali in the east, Ujjain in the west, Suvarnagiri in the south, and Taxila in the north.

The organizational structure began at the imperial level with the emperor and his Mantriparishad, or Council of Ministers. The head of the provincial administration was the Kumara, or royal prince, who governed the provinces as the king's representative, with the assistance of Mahamatyas, who were essentially regional prime ministers. Through this sophisticated system of bureaucracy, the empire governed all aspects of government at every level, from municipal hygiene to international trade.



Maurya Empire at its greatest extent (dark orange), including vassal kingdoms (light orange), 265 BCE. The Maurya Empire provided political stability with a unified central government, which in turn encouraged economic prosperity.

Centralization and Taxation

Chandragupta Maurya, the father of the dynasty, established a single currency across India, a network of regional governors and administrators, and a civil service to provide justice and security for merchants, farmers, and traders.

Through the disciplined central authority of the Mauryan Empire, farmers were freed of tax and crop collection burdens from regional kings. Instead, they paid a nationally administered system of taxation that was strict but fair. The system operated under the principles of the *Arthashastra*, an ancient Indian treatise on economic policy, statecraft, and military strategy. Written in Sanskrit and adhering to Hindu philosophies, the *Arthashastra* includes books on the nature of government, law, civil and criminal courts, ethics, and economic topics, including markets and trade, agriculture, mineralogy, mining and metals, forestry, and others.

Although regimental in revenue collection, the Mauryan Empire funded numerous public works projects to enhance productivity. Like his father and grandfather, Ashoka sponsored the construction of thousands of roads, waterways, canals, rest houses, hospitals, and other types of infrastructure.

Under continued Mauryan rule, political unity and military security encouraged a common economic system, increased agricultural productivity, and enhanced widespread trade and commerce for the first time in West and South Asia.

Coins of the Maurya Empire. Chandragupta Maurya established a single currency across India, including these silver punch mark coins with symbols of wheel and elephant, 3rd century BCE

Trade and Commerce

The Maurya Empire's political unity and internal peace encouraged the expansion of trade in India. Under the Indo-Greek friendship treaty during Ashoka's reign, the Mauryan international network of trade saw great expansion.

The Khyber Pass, on the modern boundary of Pakistan and Afghanistan, became a strategically important point of trade and interaction with the outside world. Greek states and Hellenic kingdoms in West Asia became trading partners. Trade also extended through the Malay Peninsula into Southeast Asia. India's exports included silk, textiles, spices, and exotic foods. The outside world gained new scientific knowledge and technology through expanded trade with the Mauryan Empire.

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6.10: Ashoka's Conversion

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the effects of Ashoka the Great's conversion to Buddhism

Key Points

- While the early part of Ashoka's reign was apparently quite bloodthirsty, he became a follower of the Buddha's teachings after his conquest of Kalinga.
- According to a contemporary text, the Edicts of Ashoka, Ashoka converted to Buddhism because he "felt remorse on account of the conquest of Kalinga because, during the subjugation of a previously unconquered country, slaughter, death, and taking away captive of the people necessarily occur."
- In one source, his conversion is presented as a gradual process coming from intense personal anguish, rather than spurred by a specific event.
- As a Buddhist emperor, Ashoka believed that Buddhism is beneficial for all human beings, as well as animals and plants, so he built a number of stupas. He also well spread Buddhism to neighboring kingdoms.

Terms

Edicts of Ashoka

A collection of 33 inscriptions on the Pillars of Ashoka, as well as boulders and cave walls, made by the Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire during his reign, from 269 BCE to 232 BCE.

Dharma

Cosmic law and order, behaviors that are considered to be in accord with the order that makes life and the universe possible, including duties, rights, laws, conduct, virtues, and "right way of living." Also specifically signifies the teachings of the Buddha.

Background: Conquest of Kalinga

While the early part of Ashoka's reign was apparently quite bloodthirsty, he became a follower of the Buddha's teachings after his conquest of Kalinga on the east coast of India in the present-day states of Odisha and North Coastal Andhra Pradesh. Kalinga was a state that prided itself on its sovereignty and democracy. With its monarchical parliamentary democracy, it was quite an exception in ancient Bharata where there existed the concept of Rajdharma. Rajdharma means the duty of the rulers, which was intrinsically entwined with the concept of bravery and dharma. The Kalinga War happened eight years after his coronation. From Ashoka's 13th inscription, we come to know that the battle was a massive one and caused the deaths of more than 100,000 soldiers and many civilians who rose up in defence; over 150,000 were deported. When he was walking through the grounds of Kalinga after his conquest, rejoicing in his victory, he was moved by the number of bodies strewn there and the wails of the bereaved.

Conversion to Buddhism

Edict 13 on the Edicts of Ashoka Rock Inscriptions reflect the great remorse the king felt after observing the destruction of Kalinga:

His Majesty felt remorse on account of the conquest of Kalinga because, during the subjugation of a previously unconquered country, slaughter, death, and taking away captive of the people necessarily occur, whereas His Majesty feels profound sorrow and regret.

The edict goes on to address the even greater degree of sorrow and regret resulting from Ashoka's understanding that the friends and families of deceased would suffer greatly too.

Legend says that one day after the war was over, Ashoka ventured out to roam the city and all he could see were burnt houses and scattered corpses. The lethal war with Kalinga transformed the vengeful Emperor Ashoka into a stable and peaceful emperor, and he became a patron of Buddhism. According to the prominent Indologist, A. L. Basham, Ashoka's personal religion became

Buddhism, if not before, then certainly after the Kalinga War. However, according to Basham, the Dharma officially propagated by Ashoka was not Buddhism at all. Nevertheless, his patronage led to the expansion of Buddhism in the Mauryan empire and other kingdoms during his rule, and worldwide from about 250 BCE.

After the Kalinga War and Ashoka's conversion, the Empire experienced nearly half a century of peace and security. Mauryan India also enjoyed an era of social harmony, religious transformation, and expansion of the sciences and of knowledge. Chandragupta Maurya's embrace of Jainism increased social and religious renewal and reform across his society, while Ashoka's embrace of Buddhism has been said to have been the foundation of the reign of social and political peace and non-violence across all of India.

Buddhist Kingship

One of the more enduring legacies of Ashoka Maurya was the model that he provided for the relationship between Buddhism and the state. Throughout Theravada Southeastern Asia, the model of rulership embodied by Ashoka replaced the notion of divine kingship that had previously dominated (in the Angkor kingdom, for instance). Under this model of "Buddhist kingship," the king sought to legitimize his rule, not through descent from a divine source, but by supporting and earning the approval of the Buddhist *sangha*. Following Ashoka's example, kings established monasteries, funded the construction of stupas, and supported the ordination of monks in their kingdom. Many rulers also took an active role in resolving disputes over the status and regulation of the sangha, as Ashoka had by calling a conclave to settle a number of contentious issues during his reign. This development ultimately led to a close association in many Southeast Asian countries between the monarchy and the religious hierarchy, an association that can still be seen today in the state-supported Buddhism of Thailand, and the traditional role of the Thai king as both a religious and secular leader. Ashoka also said that his courtiers always governed the people in a moral manner.

As a Buddhist emperor, Ashoka believed that Buddhism is beneficial for all human beings, as well as animals and plants, so he built a number of stupas, Sangharama, viharas, chaitya, and residences for Buddhist monks all over South Asia and Central Asia. According to the Ashokavadana, he ordered the construction of 84,000 stupas to house the Buddhas relics. In the Aryamanjusrimulakalpa, Ashoka takes offerings to each of these stupas, traveling in a chariot adorned with precious metals. He gave donations to viharas and mathas. He sent his only daughter, Sanghamitra, and son, Mahindra, to spread Buddhism in Sri Lanka (then known as Tamraparni).

Stupa. Great Stupa (3rd century BC), Sanchi, India. Ashoka ordered the construction of 84,000 stupas to house the Buddhas relics.

Debate About Ashoka's Conversion and Rule

The use of Buddhist sources in reconstructing the life of Ashoka has had a strong influence on perceptions of Ashoka, as well as the interpretations of his Edicts. Building on traditional accounts, early scholars regarded Ashoka as a primarily Buddhist monarch who underwent a conversion to Buddhism and was actively engaged in sponsoring and supporting the Buddhist monastic institution. Some scholars have tended to question this assessment. The only source of information not attributable to Buddhist sources are the Ashokan Edicts, and these do not explicitly state that Ashoka was a Buddhist. In his edicts, Ashoka expresses support for all the

major religions of his time: Buddhism, Brahmanism, Jainism, and Ajivikaism. His edicts addressed to the population at large (there are some addressed specifically to Buddhists, which is not the case for the other religions) generally focus on moral themes that members of all the religions would accept.

However, the edicts alone strongly indicate that he was a Buddhist. In one edict he belittles rituals, and he banned Vedic animal sacrifices; these strongly suggest that he at least did not look to the Vedic tradition for guidance. Furthermore, many edicts are expressed to Buddhists alone; in one, Ashoka declares himself to be an "upasaka," and in another he demonstrates a close familiarity with Buddhist texts. He erected rock pillars at Buddhist holy sites, but did not do so for the sites of other religions. He also used the word "dhamma" to refer to qualities of the heart that underlie moral action; this was an exclusively Buddhist use of the word. Finally, he promoted ideals that correspond to the first three steps of the Buddha's graduated discourse.

Interestingly, the *Ashokavadana*, presents an alternate view of the familiar Ashoka. In this source, his conversion has nothing to do with the Kalinga War or his descent from the Maurya dynasty. Instead, Ashoka's reason for adopting non-violence appears much more personal. The *Ashokavadana* shows that the main source of Ashoka's conversion, and the acts of welfare that followed, are rooted instead in intense personal anguish, from a wellspring inside himself rather than spurred by a specific event. It thereby illuminates Ashoka as more humanly ambitious and passionate, with both greatness and flaws. *This* Ashoka is very different from the "shadowy do-gooder" of later Pali chronicles.

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6.11: The Indus River Valley Civilization

Learning Objectives

- Identify the importance of the discovery of the Indus River Valley Civilization

Key Points

- The Indus Valley Civilization (also known as the Harappan Civilization) was a Bronze Age society extending from modern northeast Afghanistan to Pakistan and northwest India.
- The civilization developed in three phases: Early Harappan Phase (3300 BCE-2600 BCE), Mature Harappan Phase (2600 BCE-1900 BCE), and Late Harappan Phase (1900 BCE-1300 BCE).
- Inhabitants of the ancient Indus River valley developed new techniques in handicraft, including Carnelian products and seal carving, and metallurgy with copper, bronze, lead, and tin.
- Sir John Hubert Marshall led an excavation campaign in 1921-1922, during which he discovered the ruins of the city of Harappa. By 1931, the Mohenjo-daro site had been mostly excavated by Marshall and Sir Mortimer Wheeler. By 1999, over 1,056 cities and settlements of the Indus Civilization were located.

terms

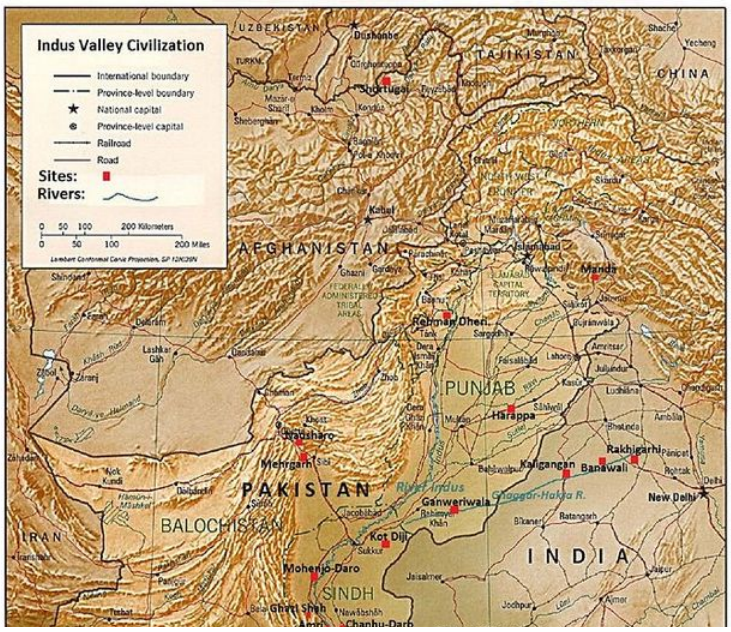
seal

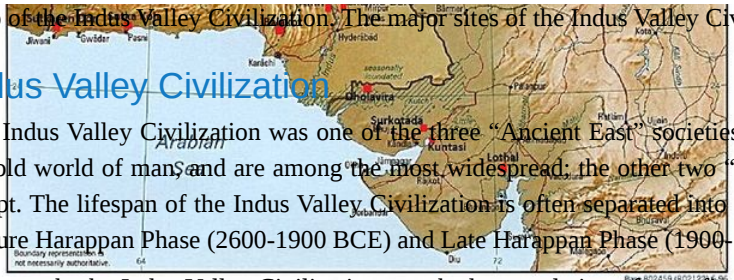
An emblem used as a means of authentication. Seal can refer to an impression in paper, wax, clay, or other medium. It can also refer to the device used.

metallurgy

The scientific and mechanical technique of working with bronze. copper, and tin.

The Indus Valley Civilization existed through its early years of 3300-1300 BCE, and its mature period of 2600-1900 BCE. The area of this civilization extended along the Indus River from what today is northeast Afghanistan, into Pakistan and northwest India. The Indus Civilization was the most widespread of the three early civilizations of the ancient world, along with Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were thought to be the two great cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, emerging around 2600 BCE along the Indus River Valley in the Sindh and Punjab provinces of Pakistan. Their discovery and excavation in the 19th and 20th centuries provided important archaeological data about ancient cultures.





Map of the Indus Valley Civilization. The major sites of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley Civilization was one of the three "Ancient East" societies that are considered to be the cradles of civilization of the old world of man, and are among the most widespread; the other two "Ancient East" societies are Mesopotamia and Pharonic Egypt. The lifespan of the Indus Valley Civilization is often separated into three phases: Early Harappan Phase (3300-2600 BCE), Mature Harappan Phase (2600-1900 BCE) and Late Harappan Phase (1900-1300 BCE).

At its peak, the Indus Valley Civilization may had a population of over five million people. It is considered a Bronze Age society, and inhabitants of the ancient Indus River Valley developed new techniques in metallurgy—the science of working with copper, bronze, lead, and tin. They also performed intricate handicraft, especially using products made of the semi-precious gemstone Carnelian, as well as seal carving— the cutting of patterns into the bottom face of a seal used for stamping. The Indus cities are noted for their urban planning, baked brick houses, elaborate drainage systems, water supply systems, and clusters of large, non-residential buildings.

The Indus Valley Civilization is also known as the Harappan Civilization, after Harappa, the first of its sites to be excavated in the 1920s, in what was then the Punjab province of British India and is now in Pakistan. The discoveries of Harappa, and the site of its fellow Indus city Mohenjo-daro, were the culmination of work beginning in 1861 with the founding of the Archaeological Survey of India in the British Raj, the common name for British imperial rule over the Indian subcontinent from 1858 through 1947.

Harappa and Mohenjo-daro

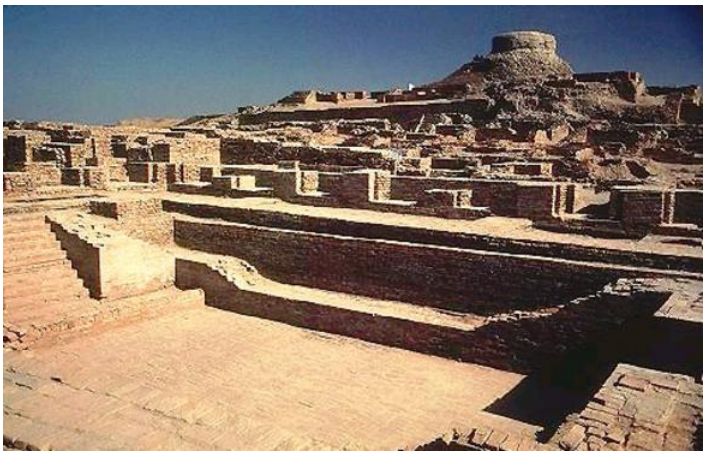
Harappa was a fortified city in modern-day Pakistan that is believed to have been home to as many as 23,500 residents living in sculpted houses with flat roofs made of red sand and clay. The city spread over 150 hectares (370 acres) and had fortified administrative and religious centers of the same type used in Mohenjo-daro. The modern village of Harappa, used as a railway station during the Raj, is six kilometers (3.7 miles) from the ancient city site, which suffered heavy damage during the British period of rule.

Mohenjo-daro is thought to have been built in the 26th century BCE and became not only the largest city of the Indus Valley Civilization but one of the world's earliest, major urban centers. Located west of the Indus River in the Larkana District, Mohenjo-daro was one of the most sophisticated cities of the period, with sophisticated engineering and urban planning. Cock-fighting was thought to have religious and ritual significance, with domesticated chickens bred for religion rather than food (although the city may have been a point of origin for the worldwide domestication of chickens). Mohenjo-daro was abandoned around 1900 BCE when the Indus Civilization went into sudden decline.

The ruins of Harappa were first described in 1842 by Charles Masson in his book, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, the Panjab, & Kalât*. In 1856, British engineers John and William Brunton were laying the East Indian Railway Company line connecting the cities of Karachi and Lahore, when their crew discovered hard, well-burnt bricks in the area and used them for ballast for the railroad track, unwittingly dismantling the ruins of the ancient city of Brahminabad.

Excavations

In 1912, John Faithfull Fleet, an English civil servant working with the Indian Civil Services, discovered several Harappan seals. This prompted an excavation campaign from 1921-1922 by Sir John Hubert Marshall, Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India, which resulted in the discovery of Harappa. By 1931, much of Mohenjo-Daro had been excavated, while the next director of the Archaeological Survey of India, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, led additional excavations.



Excavated Ruins of Mohenjo-daro. The Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro, a city in the Indus River Valley Civilization.

The Partition of India, in 1947, divided the country to create the new nation of Pakistan. The bulk of the archaeological finds that followed were inherited by Pakistan. By 1999, over 1,056 cities and settlements had been found, of which 96 have been excavated.

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6.12: Decline of the Maurya Empire

Learning Objectives

- Describe the factors that contributed to the decline of the Maurya Empire

Key Points

- Ashoka the Great's rule was followed by 50 years of weak kings who did not retain strong central authority. This eventually led to the dissolution of the Maurya Empire.
- General Pusyamitra Sunga staged a coup against the Maurya Dynasty in 185 BCE. As a result, he ascended the throne and founded the Sunga Dynasty.
- In 180 BCE, the Greco-Bactrian King Demetrius conquered the northwestern Indian territories and founded the Indo-Greek Kingdom.
- Buddhism lost favor when the Sunga Dynasty gained power, but remained dominant in the Indo-Greek Kingdom.

terms

Khyber Pass

A mountain pass connecting Afghanistan and Pakistan; it has been an important trade route between Central Asia and South Asia, and a strategic military location.

Demetrius

The Greco-Bactrian king who established the Indo-Greek kingdom when he conquered parts of northwestern India, around 180 BCE.

Sunga

The dynasty founded by the general Pusyamitra Sunga after he staged a coup against the Maurya dynasty in 185 BCE.

Buddhism

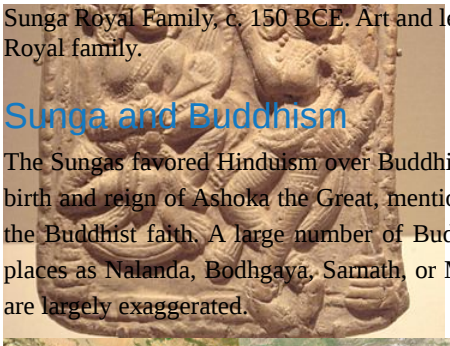
A religion encompassing a variety of traditions, beliefs, and spiritual practices largely based on teachings attributed to the Buddha.

A 50-year succession of weak kings followed the reign of Ashoka the Great, the Indian emperor of the Maurya Dynasty who died in 232 BCE. As Ashoka's highly centralized government lost power, the Maurya Empire lost control over its territories. The different cultures and economies began to break apart, although the kings maintained Buddhism as the state religion.

Sunga Coup and Rule

Brihadratha, the last ruler of the Maurya Dynasty, was assassinated in 185 BCE. The commander-in-chief of his guard, Brahmin General Pusyamitra Sunga, killed Brihadratha during a military parade and ascended the throne. He established the Sunga Dynasty, which prospered from approximately 187 to 78 BCE. Pusyamitra was succeeded after 36 years by his son, Agnimitra, beginning the dynasty of ten Sunga rulers overall. They conducted wars with both foreign and indigenous powers, including the Kalinga, the Satavahana Dynasty, and the Indo-Greek Kingdom. The Sungas were succeeded by the Kanva Dynasty around 73 BCE.

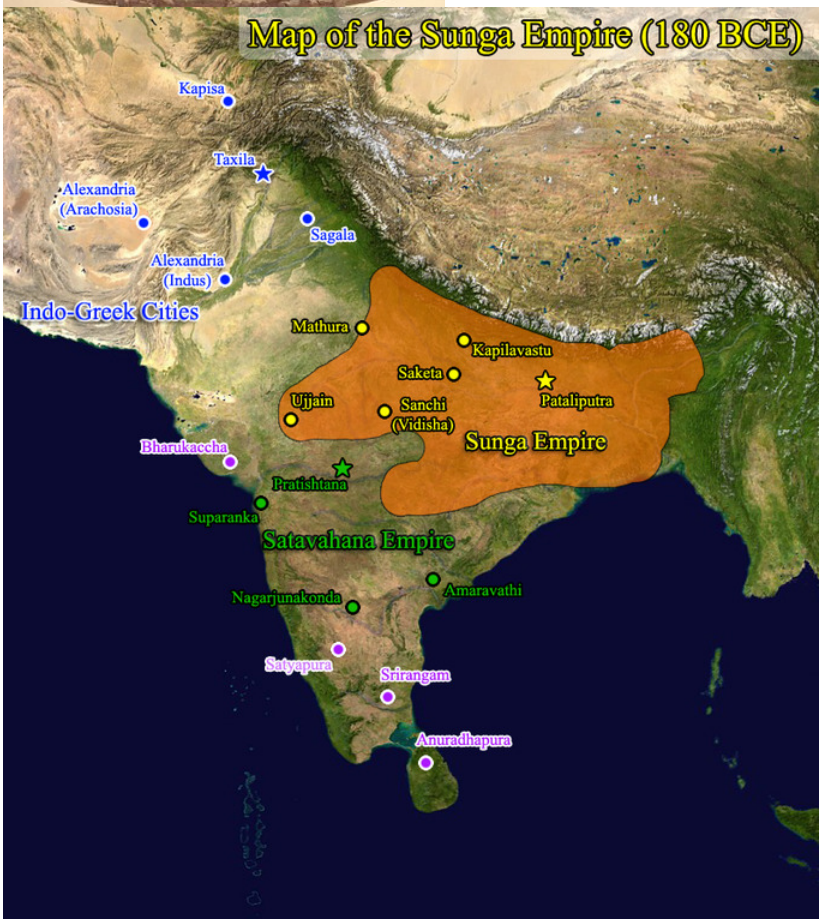
Sunga rulers helped establish the tradition of royal sponsorship of education and the arts at a time when some of the most important developments in Hindu thought were taking place. The Mathura art style took hold during this time, and many small terracotta images, larger stone sculptures, and architectural monuments from the Sunga period are still in existence.



Sunga Royal Family, c. 150 BCE. Art and learning prospered under Sunga patronage, as seen in this terracotta tablet of the Sunga Royal family.

Sunga and Buddhism

The Sungas favored Hinduism over Buddhism. Buddhist sources, such as the Ashokavadana, an Indian Sanskrit text describing the birth and reign of Ashoka the Great, mention that Pusyamitra was hostile towards Buddhists and allegedly persecuted members of the Buddhist faith. A large number of Buddhist monasteries, called viharas, were allegedly converted to Hindu temples in such places as Nalanda, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, or Mathura. Some historians argue, however, that Buddhist accounts of Sunga persecution are largely exaggerated.



Sunga Empire, c. 185 BCE. The Sunga Dynasty was established following a coup by General Pusyamitra Sunga, marking the end of the Maurya Empire.

Indo-Greek Kingdom

In the east, the fall of the Mauryas left the Khyber Pass unguarded, and a wave of foreign invasion followed. The Greco-Bactrian king, Demetrius, capitalized on the break-up and conquered southern Afghanistan and parts of northwestern India around 180 BCE, forming the Indo-Greek Kingdom. The Indo-Greeks maintained territorial holdings for about a century in the Trans-Indus Region, in what is now Pakistan and parts of central India.

Demetrius, who lived from 175 to 140 BCE, founded the city of Sirkap, combining Greek and Indian influences without signs of segregation between the two cultures. The Greek expansion into Indian territory may have been intended to protect Greek populations in India, as well as to protect the Buddhist faith from the alleged religious persecutions of the Sungas.

Seated Buddha statue showing Greek influences. Buddhism was favored in the Indo-Greek Kingdom. Many statues of Buddha from this period display Greek stylistic elements including Greek clothing.

Demetrius was succeeded by Menander, who conquered the largest territory and was one of the most successful Indo-Greek kings. His coins that have been discovered are the most numerous and widespread of all the Indo-Greek kings. According to Buddhist literature, Menander converted to Buddhism and is sometimes described as the Milinda Panha. He helped Buddhism flourish and established the new capital of Sagala.

Coin depicting Menander I. Described in both Greek and Indian accounts, Menander I became the most important of the Indo-Greek rulers. He converted to Buddhism and expanded the Indo-Greek Kingdom.

In Indian literature, the Indo-Greeks are described as “Yavanas” in Sanskrit, or “Yonas” in Pali, which are both thought to be transliterations of “Ionians.” The Buddhist scripture, Majjhima Nikaya, explains that in contrast with the numerous Indian castes, there were only two classes of people in Indo-Greek culture: the Aryas, translated as the masters; and Dasas, the servants.

Indo-Greek Fall

Throughout the first century BCE, the Indo-Greeks progressively lost ground to the Indians in the East, and the Scythians, the Yuezhi, and the Parthians in the West. About 20 Indo-Greek kings are known during this period, including last known Indo-Greek ruler, Strato II, who ruled in the Punjab region until around 55 BCE.

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6.13: Expansion and Decline of the Kushan Empire

Learning Objectives

- Explain the importance of the Kushan Empire

Key Points

- The Yuezhi invaded the Greco-Bactrian kingdom around 135 BCE, displacing the Greek dynasties. The Kushans, a Yuezhi branch, spread south into the region traditionally known as Gandhara, and then expanded across the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent.
- Around 152 CE, the emperor Kanishka sent his armies north to capture territories in present-day western China, and south into modern central India. A direct road from the Kushan Empire and China, as well as the security offered by the Kushan Empire, facilitated trade with the Roman Empire, Sassanid Persia, Aksumite Empire, and Han China.
- The Kushans were influenced by the Hellenistic kingdoms, and maintained a wide variety of faiths, including Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism.
- Kushan control fragmented into semi-independent kingdoms as the Sassanians attacked from the west and the Guptas attacked from the east, collapsing the Kushan Empire around 375 CE.

terms

Greco-Bactrian Kingdom

The easternmost part of the Hellenistic world, covering Bactria and Sogdiana in Central Asia from 250-125 BCE. The Greco-Bactrians expanded into northern India and established the Indo-Greek Kingdom in 180 BCE, which lasted until around 10 CE.

The Kushans

One of five branches of the Yuezhi, who invaded Bactria in 135 BCE, and spread southeast to form the Kushan Empire around 30 CE.

Yuezhi

An ancient Indo-European people who originally settled in the grasslands of the eastern Tarim Basin, part of modern China.

Zoroastrianism

One of the world's oldest monotheistic religions, founded by the Prophet Zoroaster in ancient Iran approximately 3,500 years ago.

Indo-Sassanids

A branch of the Sassanid Persians, who established their rule in the northwestern Indian subcontinent during the third and fourth centuries, at the expense of the declining Kushans.

Kanishka

Buddhist emperor who expanded the Kushan Empire east into the middle of the Indian subcontinent, and north into China.

The Kushan Empire in South Asia originally formed in the early 1st century CE, in the territories of ancient Bactria, around the Oxus River in Central Asia. The Kushans spread from the Kabul River Valley to defeat other Central Asian tribes. These conquests included parts of the northern central Iranian Plateau, once ruled by the Parthian Empire—a major political and cultural power in ancient Iran and Iraq. The Kushans reached their peak under Emperor Kanishka (127-151 CE), a Buddhist whose realm stretched from China to northern and eastern India and parts of Pakistan.

Kushan Origins (30-375 CE)

The Kushans were one of five branches of the Yuezhi confederation, an Indo-European nomadic people. The Yuezhi lived in the grasslands of eastern Central Asia's Tarim Basin, in modern-day Xinjiang, China (possibly speaking varieties of Indo-European

languages), until they were driven west by the Xiongnu in 176-160 BCE.

The Yuezhi reached the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, located in northern Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, around 135 BCE, and displaced the Greek dynasties that resettled to the southeast in areas of the Hindu Kush and the Indus basin, in present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Kushans spread out from Bactria to defeat other Central Asian tribes.

Kushan Expansion

As they wrested territories from the Scythian tribes, the Kushans expanded south into the region traditionally known as Gandhara, establishing the twin capitals Kapisa and Pushklavati, near modern-day Kabul and Peshawar, respectively. During the 1st and early 2nd centuries CE, the Kushans expanded across the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent. Around 152 CE, Emperor Kanishka, a Buddhist, sent his armies north of the Karakoram Mountains to capture additional territories, and subsequently opened a direct road from Gandhara to China that remained under Kushan control for more than a century.

Diplomacy and Trade

At the height of the dynasty, the Kushans loosely ruled a territory that extended to the Aral Sea through present-day Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, into northern India. They had diplomatic contacts with the Roman Empire, Sassanid Persia, Aksumite Empire, and Han China. The Kushan Empire linked the seagoing trade of the Indian Ocean with the commerce of the Silk Road, via the Indus Valley, while providing security that encouraged travel across the Khunjerab Pass and facilitated the spread of Mahayana Buddhism to China.

Culture and Religion

Although philosophy, art, and science developed within its borders, the only textual record we have of the Kushan Empire's history comes from inscriptions and accounts in other languages, particularly Chinese. The Kushans are believed to have been predominantly practitioners of Zoroastrianism, one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions founded by the Prophet Zoroaster in ancient Iran approximately 3,500 years ago. Yet, the Kushans also adopted aspects of Buddhist culture and, like the Egyptians, absorbed remnants of the Greek culture of the Hellenistic kingdoms. Kushan emperors represented a wide variety of faiths, including Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and possibly Saivism, a sect of Hinduism.

Kushan worshipper with Zeus/Serapis/Ohrmazd, 3rd century CE. The Kushans were influenced by the Hellenistic kingdoms and maintained a wide variety of faiths, including Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

Kushan Decline

After the death of Emperor Vasudeva I in 225, the Kushan Empire split into western and eastern halves. The western Kushans in Afghanistan were soon conquered by the Persian Sassanid Empire. In 248 CE, they were defeated again by Persians, who deposed

the western dynasty and replaced them with Persian vassals— cities or kingdoms that forfeited foreign policy independence, in exchange for full autonomy and, in some cases, formal tribute—known as the Indo-Sassanids, or Kushanshas.

The eastern Kushan kingdom was based in the Punjab. Around 270 CE, their territories on the Gangetic Plain became independent under local dynasties, such as the Yaudheyas. In the mid-4th century they were subjugated by the Gupta Empire under its leader, Samudragupta. The last of the Kushan and Sassanian kingdoms were eventually overwhelmed by the Hepthalites, another Indo-European people from the north.

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6.14: Rise of the Gupta Empire

Learning Objectives

- Explain the factors that contributed to the rise of the Gupta Empire

Key Points

- Sri Gupta founded the Gupta Empire c. 240-280 CE, and was succeeded by his son, Ghatotkacha, c. 280-319 CE, followed by Ghatotkacha's son, Chandragupta, c. 319-335 CE.
- After Chandragupta married princess Kumaradevi from the kingdom of Magadha, he conquered or assimilated the nearby kingdoms and assumed the imperial title of Maharajadhiraja, meaning "King of Kings."
- Chandragupta's son, Samudragupta, assumed the throne in 335 CE, and conquered several neighboring kingdoms; eventually, the Gupta Empire extended across the entire Indian subcontinent.
- Samudragupta was succeeded by his son, Chandragupta II, who continued to expand the Gupta Empire through conquest and political alliances.

terms

Maharajadhiraja

A Sanskrit title for "Prince of Princes" or "King of Kings," several degrees higher than the title Maharaja, which means "Great King."

Ashwamedha

A Vedic ritual horse sacrifice; Samudragupta commemorated his territorial conquests with one of these rituals.

The Gupta Empire, founded by Maharaja Sri Gupta, was an ancient Indian realm that covered much of the Indian Subcontinent from approximately 320-550 CE. Gupta rule, while solidified by territorial expansion through war, began a period of peace and prosperity marked by advancements in science, technology, engineering, art, dialectics, literature, logic, mathematics, astronomy, religion, and philosophy.

Gupta Empire Origins

The Gupta Empire was believed to be a dynasty of the Vaishya caste, the third of the four Hindu castes representing merchants and farmers. Founded by Sri Gupta c. 240-280 CE, there are contradictory theories regarding the original homeland of the Guptas. Historians believe Sri Gupta and his son may have been Kushan vassals, or rulers who swore allegiance to the Kushan Empire. Sri Gupta's son and successor, Ghatotkacha, ruled from c. 280-319 CE, while his son, Chandragupta, ascended the throne around 319 and ruled until 335 CE.

Chandragupta married princess Kumaradevi from the Kingdom of Magadha, which was one of the Mahajanapadas (or great countries) of ancient India during the 4th century CE. With a dowry and political alliance from the marriage, Chandragupta conquered or assimilated the kingdoms of Magadha, Prayaga, and Saketa. By 321 CE, he established a realm stretching along the Ganges River to Prayag, the modern-day city of Allahabad, in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Hindus believe the god Brahma offered his first sacrifice after creating the world at Prayag.

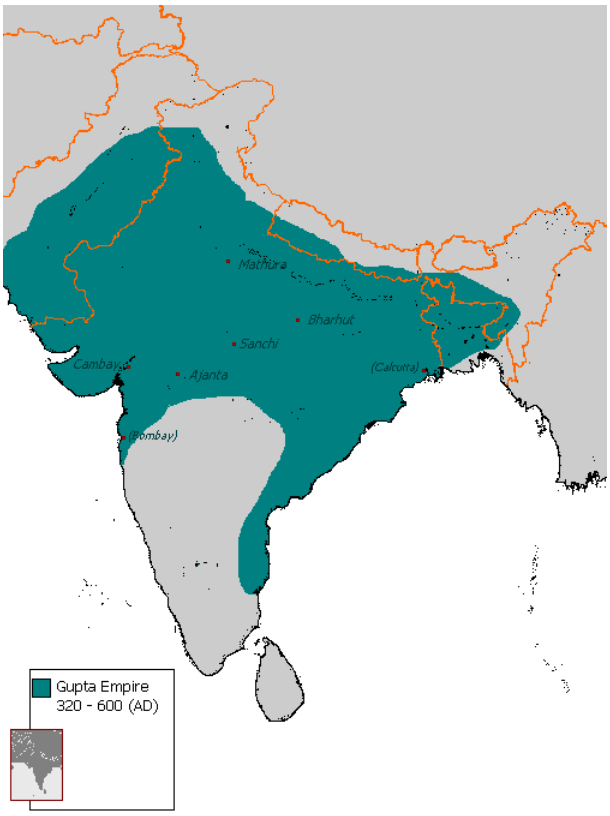
Queen Kumaradevi and King Chandragupta I. A coin from the period of Indian Emperor Samudragupta, 335-380 CE, depicting his parents, King Chandragupta and Queen Kumaradevi.

Gupta Empire Expansion

Samudragupta succeeded his father, Chandragupta I, in 335 CE, and ruled for about 45 years. He conquered the kingdoms of Ahichchhatra and Padmavati early in his reign, then attacked neighboring tribes, including the Malwas, Yaudheyas, Arjunayanas, Maduras, and Abhiras. By his death in 380 CE, Samudragupta had incorporated over 20 kingdoms into his realm, and extended the Gupta Empire from the Himalayas to the Narmada River in central India, and from the Brahmaputra River that cuts through four modern Asian nations to the Yamuna— the longest tributary of the Ganges River in northern India.

To celebrate his conquest, Samudragupta performed the royal Vedic ritual of *Ashwamedha*, or horse sacrifice. Special coins were minted to commemorate the Ashvamedha, and the king took the title of Maharajadhiraja (or "King of Kings") even higher than the traditional ruler's title of Maharaja.

According to the Gupta records, Samudragupta nominated his son, Prince Chandragupta II, born of Queen Dattadevi, as his successor. However, his eldest son, Ramagupta, may have been his immediate successor until he was dethroned by Chandragupta II in 380 CE.



Gupta Empire, 320-600 CE. The Gupta Empire expanded through conquest and political alliances until 395 CE, when it extended across the entire Indian subcontinent.

Gupta Empire of Chandragupta II

After gaining power, Chandragupta II expanded the Gupta Empire through conquest and political marriages until the end of his reign in 413 CE. By 395 CE, his control over India extended coast to-coast. At the high point of his rule, Chandragupta II established a second capital at Ujjain, the largest city in the modern state of Madhya Pradesh in central India. Ujjain, on the eastern bank of the Kshipra River, remained an important political, commercial, and cultural hub through the early 19th century.

Vikramaditya is the name of an emperor of ancient Indian legend, characterized as the ideal king known for generosity, courage, and as a patron of scholars. A number of historians believe that some of these legends are based on Chandragupta II, who is thought to have adopted the title of Vikramaditya.

In the legends, Vikramaditya is said to have thwarted an invasion by the Saka, a group of eastern Iranian nomadic tribes, also known as Scythians, and gained the title of Sakari, or Enemy of the Saka. Chandragupta II conquered the western Indian region of Malwa after defeating the Western Kshatrapas, a branch of the Sakas, as well as expelling the Kushana Empire from the northern Indian city state Mathura. These victories were likely transposed onto the legendary character of Vikramaditya.

Chandragupta II issued gold coin types introduced by his father, Samudragupta, but also introduced several new types of coins, differentiated by the designs on the face of each coin line, such as the Archer or the Tiger-Slayer. He was also the first Gupta king to issue silver coins.

One of the most curious structures in Delhi, India (an iron pillar dating back to the 4th century CE) bears an inscription stating that it was erected as a flagstaff in honor of the Hindu god Vishnu, and in memory of Chandragupta II. The pillar, made of 98% wrought iron, is considered a highlight of ancient Indian achievements in metallurgy; it has stood more than 1,600 years without rusting or decomposing.

Iron Pillar of Delhi. The Iron Pillar of Delhi, India, erected by Chandragupta II to honor the Hindu god Vishnu, in the 4th century CE.

Despite the expansion of the Gupta Empire through war, there were numerous examples of cultural sophistication during the Gupta era, with architecture, sculptures and paintings surviving as reminders of the creativity of the time. Under Gupta rule, a number of notable scholars thrived, including Kalidasa, considered the greatest poet and dramatist of the Sanskrit language; Aryabhata, the first of the Indian mathematician-astronomers who worked on the approximation for *Pi*; Vishnu Sharma, thought to be the author of the *Panchatantra* fables, one of the most widely-translated, non-religious books in history; and the Hindu philosopher Vatsyayana, author of the *Kama Sutra*.

The period of Gupta rule, especially the reign of Chandragupta II, is still remembered as the Golden Age of India.

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6.15: The Golden Age of India

Learning Objectives

- Understand the significance of the Golden Age of India

Key Points

- Prosperity in the Gupta Empire initiated a period known as the Golden Age of India, marked by extensive inventions and discoveries in science, technology, engineering, art, dialectic, literature, logic, mathematics, astronomy, religion, and philosophy.
- Chandragupta II promoted the synthesis of science, art, philosophy, and religion, in part because his court contained the Navartna, or the Nine Jewels, a group of nine scholars who produced advancements in many academic fields.
- Chinese traveler Fa Xian visited India from 399-405 CE, during the reign of Emperor Chandragupta II. He recorded all of his observations in a journal that was later published.

terms

Navartna

Also called the Nine Jewels; a group of nine scholars in the court of Chandragupta II who contributed many advancements in their academic fields.

Fa Xian

A Chinese traveler who recorded detailed observations about his experience in the Gupta Empire in his journal. It was later published.

Chandragupta II

His reign, from 375-415 CE, promoted the synthesis of science, art, philosophy, and religion during the Golden Age of India.

Golden Age of India

A period at the height of the Gupta Empire, marked by extensive inventions and discoveries that contributed to Hindu culture, in subjects such as science, technology, engineering, art, dialectic, literature, logic, mathematics, astronomy, religion, and philosophy.

ayurvedic

A form of alternative medicine established in India.

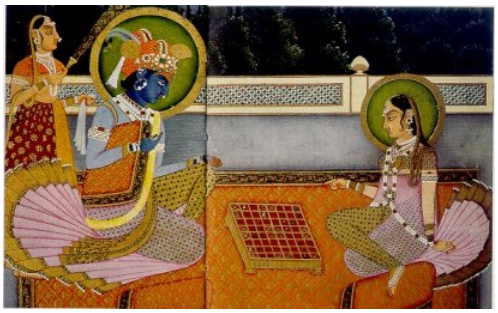
The prosperity created under the leadership of the Gupta Empire, which covered much of the Indian subcontinent from approximately 320-550 CE, enabled the wide pursuit of scientific and artistic endeavors. This period became known as the Golden Age of India because it was marked by extensive inventions and discoveries in science, technology, engineering, art, dialectic, literature, logic, mathematics, astronomy, religion, and philosophy. These discoveries crystallized elements of what is generally considered Hindu culture.

Science, Literature, and Art

Although Chandragupta I and his son, Samudragupta, were prominent rulers, the reign of Chandragupta II included the greatest promotion of science, art, philosophy, and religion by the government. Chandragupta's court was even more influential than those that came before or after because it contained the Navaratnas, or the Nine Jewels, a group of nine scholars who produced advancements in many academic fields.

These scholars included Aryabhata, who is believed to have envisioned the concept of zero, as well as working on the approximation for the long-form number Pi. Aryabhata is also believed to be the first of the Indian mathematician-astronomers who postulated the theory that the Earth moves round the Sun and is not flat, but instead is round and rotates on its own axis. He also may have discovered that the moon and planets shine due to reflected sunlight.

Varahamihira was an astronomer, astrologer, and mathematician, whose main work is a treatise on mathematical astronomy. Sushruta, a famed Indian physician of the Gupta period, wrote the *Samhita*, a Sanskrit text on all of the major concepts of ayurvedic medicine, with innovative chapters on surgery. Other scholars of the Golden Age helped create the first Indian numeral systems with a base of ten. The game of chess also likely originated during this period, where its early form, *Chaturanga*, contained game pieces for infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots, each of which would evolve into the modern pawn, knight, rook, and bishop, respectively.



Krishna and Radha playing Chaturanga. Scholars during the reign of Chandragupta II contributed many scientific advancements in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, and medicine.

Kalidasa, considered the greatest poet and dramatist of the Sanskrit language, also belonged primarily to this period. He wrote plays, such as *Shakuntala*, which is said to have inspired the famed German writer and statesman, Johann von Goethe, centuries later. Kalidasa also became renowned for his study of the *shringara*, or romantic, element of literature. The Indian scholar and Hindu philosopher Vatsyayana, authored the *Kama Sutra*, which became a standard work on human sexual behavior, while Vishnu Sharma was thought to be the author of the *Panchatantra* fables, one of the most widely-translated, non-religious books in history.

The cultural creativity of the Golden Age of India produced magnificent architecture, including palaces and temples, as well as sculptures and paintings of the highest quality. The walls of Buddhist shrines and monasteries were decorated with colorful frescoes, a type of wall paintings. These showed scenes from the life of the Buddha, the ascetic and philosopher, who lived in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent sometime between 6th and 4th centuries, on whose teachings the Buddhist religion is based. Some shrines were cut out of the cliffs, and although dark, they were also decorated with sculptures and paintings.

The Dashavatara Temple. The Golden Age of India produced many temples, decorated with various sculptures and paintings, such as the Dashavatara Temple, also known as the Vishnu Temple, in central India.

Influence on East and Southeast Asia

The Gupta Dynasty promoted Hinduism, but supported Buddhist and Jain cultures as well. Gupta Buddhist art influenced East and Southeast Asia as trade between regions increased. The Gupta Empire became an important cultural center and influenced nearby kingdoms and regions in Burma, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia. Classical forms of Indian music and dance, created under the Guptas, are still practiced all over Asia today.

Fa Xian was one of the first Chinese travelers to visit India during the reign of Gupta Emperor Chandragupta II. He started his journey from China in 399 CE, and reached India in 405 CE. He recorded all of his observations in a journal that was eventually published.

During his stay in India, until c. 411 CE, Fa Xian went on a pilgrimage to Mathura, Kanauj, Kapilavastu, Kushinagar, Vaishali, Pataliputra, Kashi, and Rajgriha. His writings express pleasure in the mildness of the administrations in these places.

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6.16: Decline of the Gupta Empire

Learning Objectives

- Understand the decline of the Gupta Empire

Key Points

- The Gupta Empire flourished under Chandragupta II, but began to falter under his son, Kumaragupta, and grandson, Skandagupta.
- The Huna People, also known as Huns, invaded Gupta territory and caused significant damage to the empire.
- The Gupta Empire ended in 550 CE, when it disintegrated into regional kingdoms after a series of weak rulers and invasions from the east, west, and north.

Terms

Huna

A Central Asian Xionite tribe that consisted of four hordes that repeatedly invaded Gupta territory, and helped cause the downfall of the Gupta Empire.

Skandagupta

Son of Kumaragupta I; the emperor of the Gupta Dynasty from c. 455-467 CE.

Kumaragupta I

Son of Chandragupta II; the emperor of the Gupta Dynasty from c. 415-455 CE.

Chandragupta II

The emperor of the Gupta Dynasty of ancient India from c. 380-415 CE.

The Gupta Empire flourished, in military and territorial conquests as well as cultural and scholastic advancements, during the reign of Emperor Chandragupta II. Yet the succeeding rulers, beginning with Kumaragupta I and then Skandagupta, oversaw the eventual end of the Gupta Empire through military defeats, devalued money and withering leadership.

Kumaragupta

In 415 CE, Chandragupta II was succeeded by his second son, Kumaragupta I, who ruled successfully until 455 CE. The late years of his reign, however, faced difficulties. The Pushyamitras, a tribe of central India, rose up in rebellion against Kumaragupta, while Gupta territories were invaded by the Western Huna people, also known as White Huns.

Kumaragupta defeated both groups and celebrated his victory by performing the royal Vedic ritual of Ashwamedha, or horse sacrifice, which had previously been performed by his grandfather, Emperor Samudragupta, to celebrate his own great military victories.

Coin of Kumaragupta I. A silver coin from the reign of Gupta Emperor Kumaragupta I, c. 415-455 CE.

As his grandfather and father did before him, Kumaragupta also issued news coins to mark his reign. They were stamped with images of his namesake god, Lord Kumara, regarded by Hindus as Regent of Earth.

Skandagupta

Upon Kumaragupta's death in 455 CE, his son, Skandagupta, assumed the throne and ruled until c. 467 CE. He is considered the last of the great Gupta rulers prior to the collapse of the empire.

Skandagupta, who was celebrated as a great warrior for his victorious clashes with the Huns during his father's reign, defeated several rebellions and external threats from the Huna people, notably an invasion in 455 CE. Although victorious, the expenses of the wars against the Hunas drained the empire's resources. The value of the coinage issued under Skandagupta becoming severely reduced.

Coin of Skandagupta. A coin emblazoned with the image of Gupta Dynasty Emperor Skandagupta, who ruled c. 455-467 CE.

The Huna and Gupta's Demise

The Huna were a Central Asian Xionite tribe that consisted of four hordes: Northern Huna, also known as the Black Huns; Southern Huna, the Red Huns; Eastern Huna, the Celestial Huns; and the White Huns, the Western Huna. The White Huns, those who invaded the Gupta Empire during the reign of Kumaragupta, were also known as the Hephthalites, and caused great damage to the failing Gupta Empire. Skandagupta died in 467 CE, and was followed onto the throne by his half-brother, Purugupta, who ruled from 467-473 CE.

Thereafter came a succession of weak kings, beginning with Kumaragupta II from 473-476 CE, followed by Budhagupta, the son of Purugupta. The Hephthalites broke through the Gupta military defenses in the northwest in the 480s, during the reign of Budhagupta, and by 500 CE much of the empire in northwest was overrun by the Huna.

The empire thereafter disintegrated into numerous regional kingdoms, ruled by chieftains. A minor line of the Gupta Clan continued to rule Magadha, one of the 16 Indian Mahajanapadas, or "Great Countries," but the Gupta Empire fell by 550 CE.

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6.17: Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization

Learning Objectives

- Explain the significance of the urban centers in the IVC

Key Points

- The Indus Valley Civilization contained more than 1,000 cities and settlements.
- These cities contained well-organized wastewater drainage systems, trash collection systems, and possibly even public granaries and baths.
- Although there were large walls and citadels, there is no evidence of monuments, palaces, or temples.
- The uniformity of Harappan artifacts suggests some form of authority and governance to regulate seals, weights, and bricks.

Terms

urban planning

A technical and political process concerned with the use of land and design of the urban environment that guides and ensures the orderly development of settlements and communities.

granaries

A storehouse or room in a barn for threshed grain or animal feed.

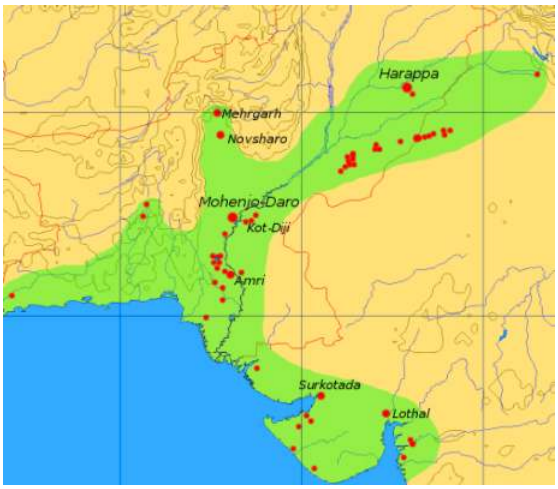
citadels

A central area in a city that is heavily fortified.

Harappa and Mohenjo-daro

Two of the major cities of the Indus Valley Civilization during the Bronze Age.

By 2600 BCE, the small Early Harappan communities had become large urban centers. These cities include Harappa, Ganeriwala, and Mohenjo-daro in modern-day Pakistan, and Dholavira, Kalibangan, Rakhigarhi, Rupar, and Lothal in modern-day India. In total, more than 1,052 cities and settlements have been found, mainly in the general region of the Indus River and its tributaries. The population of the Indus Valley Civilization may have once been as large as five million.



Indus Valley Civilization Sites. This map shows a cluster of Indus Valley Civilization cities and excavation sites along the course of the Indus River in Pakistan.

The remains of the Indus Valley Civilization cities indicate remarkable organization; there were well-ordered wastewater drainage and trash collection systems, and possibly even public granaries and baths. Most city-dwellers were artisans and merchants grouped

together in distinct neighborhoods. The quality of urban planning suggests efficient municipal governments that placed a high priority on hygiene or religious ritual.

Infrastructure

Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, and the recently, partially-excavated Rakhigarhi demonstrate the world's first known urban sanitation systems. The ancient Indus systems of sewerage and drainage developed and used in cities throughout the Indus region were far more advanced than any found in contemporary urban sites in the Middle East, and even more efficient than those in many areas of Pakistan and India today. Individual homes drew water from wells, while waste water was directed to covered drains on the main streets. Houses opened only to inner courtyards and smaller lanes, and even the smallest homes on the city outskirts were believed to have been connected to the system, further supporting the conclusion that cleanliness was a matter of great importance.

Architecture

Harappans demonstrated advanced architecture with dockyards, granaries, warehouses, brick platforms, and protective walls. These massive walls likely protected the Harappans from floods and may have dissuaded military conflicts. Unlike Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt, the inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilization did not build large, monumental structures. There is no conclusive evidence of palaces or temples (or even of kings, armies, or priests), and the largest structures may be granaries. The city of Mohenjo-daro contains the "Great Bath," which may have been a large, public bathing and social area.

Sokhta Koh. Sokhta Koh, a Harappan coastal settlement near Pasni, Pakistan, is depicted in a computer reconstruction. Sokhta Koh means "burnt hill," and corresponds to the browned-out earth due to extensive firing of pottery in open pit ovens.

Authority and Governance

Archaeological records provide no immediate answers regarding a center of authority, or depictions of people in power in Harappan society. The extraordinary uniformity of Harappan artifacts is evident in pottery, seals, weights, and bricks with standardized sizes and weights, suggesting some form of authority and governance.

Over time, three major theories have developed concerning Harappan governance or system of rule. The first is that there was a single state encompassing all the communities of the civilization, given the similarity in artifacts, the evidence of planned settlements, the standardized ratio of brick size, and the apparent establishment of settlements near sources of raw material. The second theory posits that there was no single ruler, but a number of them representing each of the urban centers, including Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, and other communities. Finally, experts have theorized that the Indus Valley Civilization had no rulers as we understand them, with everyone enjoying equal status.

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6.18: Harappan Culture

Learning Objectives

- Identify how artifacts and ruins provided insight into the IRV's technology, economy, and culture

Key Points

- The Indus River Valley Civilization, also known as Harappan civilization, developed the first accurate system of standardized weights and measures, some as accurate as to 1.6 mm.
- Harappans created sculpture, seals, pottery, and jewelry from materials, such as terracotta, metal, and stone.
- Evidence shows Harappans participated in a vast maritime trade network extending from Central Asia to modern-day Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, and Syria.
- The Indus Script remains indecipherable without any comparable symbols, and is thought to have evolved independently of the writing in Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt.

terms

steatite

Also known as Soapstone, steatite is a talc-schist, which is a type of metamorphic rock. It is very soft and has been a medium for carving for thousands of years.

Indus Script

Symbols produced by the ancient Indus Valley Civilization.

chalcolithic period

A period also known as the Copper Age, which lasted from 4300-3200 BCE.

The Indus Valley Civilization is the earliest known culture of the Indian subcontinent of the kind now called "urban" (or centered on large municipalities), and the largest of the four ancient civilizations, which also included Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China. The society of the Indus River Valley has been dated from the Bronze Age, the time period from approximately 3300-1300 BCE. It was located in modern-day India and Pakistan, and covered an area as large as Western Europe.

Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were the two great cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, emerging around 2600 BCE along the Indus River Valley in the Sindh and Punjab provinces of Pakistan. Their discovery and excavation in the 19th and 20th centuries provided important archaeological data regarding the civilization's technology, art, trade, transportation, writing, and religion.

Technology

The people of the Indus Valley, also known as Harappan (Harappa was the first city in the region found by archaeologists), achieved many notable advances in technology, including great accuracy in their systems and tools for measuring length and mass.

Harappans were among the first to develop a system of uniform weights and measures that conformed to a successive scale. The smallest division, approximately 1.6 mm, was marked on an ivory scale found in Lothal, a prominent Indus Valley city in the modern Indian state of Gujarat. It stands as the smallest division ever recorded on a Bronze Age scale. Another indication of an advanced measurement system is the fact that the bricks used to build Indus cities were uniform in size.

Harappans demonstrated advanced architecture with dockyards, granaries, warehouses, brick platforms, and protective walls. The ancient Indus systems of sewerage and drainage developed and used in cities throughout the region were far more advanced than any found in contemporary urban sites in the Middle East, and even more efficient than those in many areas of Pakistan and India today.

Harappans were thought to have been proficient in seal carving, the cutting of patterns into the bottom face of a seal, and used distinctive seals for the identification of property and to stamp clay on trade goods. Seals have been one of the most commonly discovered artifacts in Indus Valley cities, decorated with animal figures, such as elephants, tigers, and water buffalos.

Harappans also developed new techniques in metallurgy—the science of working with copper, bronze, lead, and tin—and performed intricate handicraft using products made of the semi-precious gemstone, Carnelian.

Art

Indus Valley excavation sites have revealed a number of distinct examples of the culture's art, including sculptures, seals, pottery, gold jewelry, and anatomically detailed figurines in terracotta, bronze, and steatite—more commonly known as Soapstone.

Among the various gold, terracotta, and stone figurines found, a figure of a "Priest-King" displayed a beard and patterned robe. Another figurine in bronze, known as the "Dancing Girl," is only 11 cm. high and shows a female figure in a pose that suggests the presence of some choreographed dance form enjoyed by members of the civilization. Terracotta works also included cows, bears, monkeys, and dogs. In addition to figurines, the Indus River Valley people are believed to have created necklaces, bangles, and other ornaments.

Miniature Votive Images or Toy Models from Harappa, c. 2500 BCE. The Indus River Valley Civilization created figurines from terracotta, as well as bronze and steatite. It is still unknown whether these figurines have religious significance.

Trade and Transportation

The civilization's economy appears to have depended significantly on trade, which was facilitated by major advances in transport technology. The Harappan Civilization may have been the first to use wheeled transport, in the form of bullock carts that are identical to those seen throughout South Asia today. It also appears they built boats and watercraft—a claim supported by archaeological discoveries of a massive, dredged canal, and what is regarded as a docking facility at the coastal city of Lothal.

The docks and canal in the ancient city of Lothal, located in modern India. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Indus River Valley Civilization constructed boats and may have participated in an extensive maritime trade network.

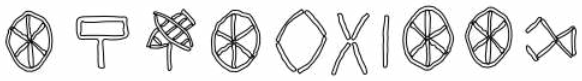
Trade focused on importing raw materials to be used in Harappan city workshops, including minerals from Iran and Afghanistan, lead and copper from other parts of India, jade from China, and cedar wood floated down rivers from the Himalayas and Kashmir. Other trade goods included terracotta pots, gold, silver, metals, beads, flints for making tools, seashells, pearls, and colored gem stones, such as lapis lazuli and turquoise.

There was an extensive maritime trade network operating between the Harappan and Mesopotamian civilizations. Harappan seals and jewelry have been found at archaeological sites in regions of Mesopotamia, which includes most of modern-day Iraq, Kuwait, and parts of Syria. Long-distance sea trade over bodies of water, such as the Arabian Sea, Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, may have become feasible with the development of plank watercraft that was equipped with a single central mast supporting a sail of woven rushes or cloth.

During 4300-3200 BCE of the Chalcolithic period, also known as the Copper Age, the Indus Valley Civilization area shows ceramic similarities with southern Turkmenistan and northern Iran. During the Early Harappan period (about 3200-2600 BCE), cultural similarities in pottery, seals, figurines, and ornaments document caravan trade with Central Asia and the Iranian plateau.

Writing

Harappans are believed to have used Indus Script, a language consisting of symbols. A collection of written texts on clay and stone tablets unearthed at Harappa, which have been carbon dated 3300-3200 BCE, contain trident-shaped, plant-like markings. This Indus Script suggests that writing developed independently in the Indus River Valley Civilization from the script employed in Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt.



Indus Script. These ten Indus Script symbols were found on a “sign board” in the ancient city of Dholavira.

As many as 600 distinct Indus symbols have been found on seals, small tablets, ceramic pots, and more than a dozen other materials. Typical Indus inscriptions are no more than four or five characters in length, most of which are very small. The longest on a single surface, which is less than 1 inch (or 2.54 cm.) square, is 17 signs long. The characters are largely pictorial, but include many abstract signs that do not appear to have changed over time.

The inscriptions are thought to have been primarily written from right to left, but it is unclear whether this script constitutes a complete language. Without a “Rosetta Stone” to use as a comparison with other writing systems, the symbols have remained indecipherable to linguists and archaeologists.

A Rosetta Stone for the Indus script, lecture by Rajesh Rao. Rajesh Rao is fascinated by "the mother of all crossword puzzles," how to decipher the 4,000-year-old Indus script. At TED 2011, he explained how he was enlisting modern computational techniques to read the Indus language. View full lesson: http://ed.ted.com/lessons/a-rosetta-...ipt-rajesh-rao

Religion

The Harappan religion remains a topic of speculation. It has been widely suggested that the Harappans worshipped a mother goddess who symbolized fertility. In contrast to Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations, the Indus Valley Civilization seems to have lacked any temples or palaces that would give clear evidence of religious rites or specific deities. Some Indus Valley seals show a swastika symbol, which was included in later Indian religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

Many Indus Valley seals also include the forms of animals, with some depicting them being carried in processions, while others showing chimeric creations, leading scholars to speculate about the role of animals in Indus Valley religions. One seal from Mohenjo-daro shows a half-human, half-buffalo monster attacking a tiger. This may be a reference to the Sumerian myth of a monster created by Aruru, the Sumerian earth and fertility goddess, to fight Gilgamesh, the hero of an ancient Mesopotamian epic poem. This is a further suggestion of international trade in Harappan culture.

The "Shiva Pashupati" seal. This seal was excavated in Mohenjo-daro and depicts a seated and possibly ithyphallic figure, surrounded by animals.

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6.19: Disappearance of the Indus Valley Civilization

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the causes for the disappearance of the Indus Valley Civilization

Key Points

- One theory suggested that a nomadic, Indo-European tribe, called the Aryans, invaded and conquered the Indus Valley Civilization.
- Many scholars now believe the collapse of the Indus Valley Civilization was caused by climate change.
- The eastward shift of monsoons may have reduced the water supply, forcing the Harappans of the Indus River Valley to migrate and establish smaller villages and isolated farms.
- These small communities could not produce the agricultural surpluses needed to support cities, which where then abandoned.

Terms

Indo-Aryan Migration theory

A theory suggesting the Harappan culture of the Indus River Valley was assimilated during a migration of the Aryan people into northwest India.

monsoon

Seasonal changes in atmospheric circulation and precipitation; usually winds that bring heavy rain once a year.

Aryans

A nomadic, Indo-European tribe called the Aryans suddenly overwhelmed and conquered the Indus Valley Civilization.

The great Indus Valley Civilization, located in modern-day India and Pakistan, began to decline around 1800 BCE. The civilization eventually disappeared along with its two great cities, Mohenjo daro and Harappa. Harappa lends its name to the Indus Valley people because it was the civilization's first city to be discovered by modern archaeologists.

Archaeological evidence indicates that trade with Mesopotamia, located largely in modern Iraq, seemed to have ended. The advanced drainage system and baths of the great cities were built over or blocked. Writing began to disappear and the standardized weights and measures used for trade and taxation fell out of use.

Scholars have put forth differing theories to explain the disappearance of the Harappans, including an Aryan Invasion and climate change marked by overwhelming monsoons.

The Aryan Invasion Theory (c. 1800-1500 BC)

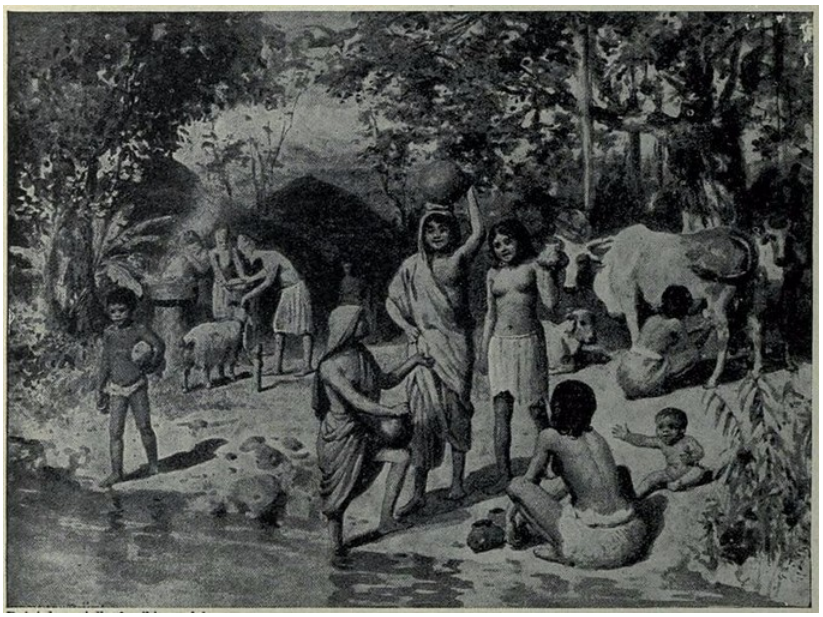
The Indus Valley Civilization may have met its demise due to invasion. According to one theory by British archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler, a nomadic, Indo-European tribe, called the Aryans, suddenly overwhelmed and conquered the Indus River Valley.

Wheeler, who was Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1944 to 1948, posited that many unburied corpses found in the top levels of the Mohenjo-daro archaeological site were victims of war. The theory suggested that by using horses and more advanced weapons against the peaceful Harappan people, the Aryans may have easily defeated them.

Yet shortly after Wheeler proposed his theory, other scholars dismissed it by explaining that the skeletons were not victims of invasion massacres, but rather the remains of hasty burials. Wheeler himself eventually admitted that the theory could not be proven and the skeletons indicated only a final phase of human occupation, with the decay of the city structures likely a result of it becoming uninhabited.

Later opponents of the invasion theory went so far as to state that adherents to the idea put forth in the 1940s were subtly justifying the British government's policy of intrusion into, and subsequent colonial rule over, India.

Various elements of the Indus Civilization are found in later cultures, suggesting the civilization did not disappear suddenly due to an invasion. Many scholars came to believe in an Indo-Aryan Migration theory stating that the Harappan culture was assimilated during a migration of the Aryan people into northwest India.



Aryans in India. An early 20th-century depiction of Aryan people settling in agricultural villages in India.

The Climate Change Theory (c. 1800-1500 BC)

Other scholarship suggests the collapse of Harappan society resulted from climate change. Some experts believe the drying of the Saraswati River, which began around 1900 BCE, was the main cause for climate change, while others conclude that a great flood struck the area.

Any major environmental change, such as deforestation, flooding or droughts due to a river changing course, could have had disastrous effects on Harappan society, such as crop failures, starvation, and disease. Skeletal evidence suggests many people died from malaria, which is most often spread by mosquitoes. This also would have caused a breakdown in the economy and civic order within the urban areas.

Another disastrous change in the Harappan climate might have been eastward-moving monsoons, or winds that bring heavy rains. Monsoons can be both helpful and detrimental to a climate, depending on whether they support or destroy vegetation and agriculture. The monsoons that came to the Indus River Valley aided the growth of agricultural surpluses, which supported the development of cities, such as Harappa. The population came to rely on seasonal monsoons rather than irrigation, and as the monsoons shifted eastward, the water supply would have dried up.

Ruins of the city of Lothal. Archaeological evidence shows that the site, which had been a major city before the downfall of the Indus Valley Civilization, continued to be inhabited by a much smaller population after the collapse. The few people who remained in Lothal did not repair the city, but lived in poorly-built houses and reed huts instead.

By 1800 BCE, the Indus Valley climate grew cooler and drier, and a tectonic event may have diverted the Ghaggar Hakra river system toward the Ganges Plain. The Harappans may have migrated toward the Ganges basin in the east, where they established villages and isolated farms.

These small communities could not produce the same agricultural surpluses to support large cities. With the reduced production of goods, there was a decline in trade with Egypt and Mesopotamia. By around 1700 BCE, most of the Indus Valley Civilization cities had been abandoned.

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6.20: The Indo-Aryan Migration and the Vedic Period

Learning Objectives

- Describe the defining characteristics of the Vedic Period and the cultural consequenes of the Indo-Aryan Migration

Key Points

- The Indo-Aryans were part of an expansion into the Indus Valley and Ganges Plain from1800-1500 BCE. This is explained through Indo-Aryan Migration and Kurgan theories.
- The Indo-Aryans continued to settle the Ganges Plain, bringing their distinct religious beliefs and practices.
- The Vedic Period (c. 1750-500 BCE) is named for the Vedas, the oldest scriptures in Hinduism, which were composed during this period. The period can be divided into the Early Vedic (1750-1000 BCE) and Later Vedic (1000-500 BCE) periods.

terms

Rig-Veda

A sacred Indo-Aryan collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns. It is counted among the four canonical sacred texts of Hinduism, known as the Vedas.

the Vedas

The oldest scriptures of Hinduism composed in Vedic Sanskrit, and originating in ancient India during the Vedic Period (c. 1750-500 BCE).

Ganges Plain

A large, fertile plain encompassing most of northern and eastern India, where the Indo-Aryans migrated.

Scholars debate the origin of Indo-Aryan peoples in northern India. Many have rejected the claim of Indo-Aryan origin outside of India entirely, claiming the Indo-Aryan people and languages originated in India. Other origin hypotheses include an Indo-Aryan Migration in the period 1800-1500 BCE, and a fusion of the nomadic people known as Kurgans. Most history of this period is derived from the Vedas, the oldest scriptures in Hinduism, which help chart the timeline of an era from 1750-500 BCE, known as the Vedic Period.

The Indo-Aryan Migration (1800-1500 BCE)

Foreigners from the north are believed to have migrated to India and settled in the Indus Valley and Ganges Plain from 1800-1500 BCE. The most prominent of these groups spoke Indo-European languages and were called Aryans, or “noble people” in the Sanskrit language. These Indo-Aryans were a branch of the Indo-Iranians, who originated in present-day northern Afghanistan. By 1500 BCE, the Indo-Aryans had created small herding and agricultural communities across northern India.

These migrations took place over several centuries and likely did not involve an invasion, as hypothesized by British archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler in the mid-1940s. Wheeler, who was Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1944 to 1948, suggested that a nomadic, Indo-European tribe, called the Aryans, suddenly overwhelmed and conquered the Indus River Valley. He based his conclusions on the remains of unburied corpses found in the top levels of the archaeological site of Mohenjo-daro, one of the great cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, whom he said were victims of war. Yet shortly after Wheeler proposed his theory, other scholars dismissed it by explaining that the skeletons were not those of victims of invasion massacres, but rather the remains of hasty burials. Wheeler himself eventually admitted that the theory could not be proven.

The Kurgan Hypothesis

The Kurgan Hypothesis is the most widely accepted scenario of Indo-European origins. It postulates that people of a so-called Kurgan Culture, a grouping of the Yamna or Pit Grave culture and its predecessors, of the Pontic Steppe were the speakers of the Proto-Indo-European language. According to this theory, these nomadic pastoralists expanded throughout the Pontic-Caspian

steppe and into Eastern Europe by early 3000 BCE. The Kurgan people may have been mobile because of their domestication of horses and later use of the chariot.

The Vedic Period (c. 1750-500 BCE)

The Vedic Period refers to the time in history from approximately 1750-500 BCE, during which Indo-Aryans settled into northern India, bringing with them specific religious traditions. Most history of this period is derived from the Vedas, the oldest scriptures in the Hindu religion, which were composed by the Aryans in Sanskrit.

Vedic Civilization is believed to have been centered in the northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent and spread around 1200 to the Ganges Plain, a 255-million hectare area (630 million acres) of flat, fertile land named after the Ganges River and covering most of what is now northern and eastern India, eastern parts of Pakistan, and most of Bangladesh. Many scholars believe Vedic Civilization was a composite of the Indo-Aryan and Harappan, or Indus Valley, cultures.

The Ganges Plain (Indo-Gangetic Plain). The Ganges Plain is supported by the Indus and Ganges river systems. The Indo-Aryans settled various parts of the plain during their migration and the Vedic Period.

Early Vedic Period (c. 1750-1000 BCE)

The Indo-Aryans in the Early Vedic Period, approximately 1750-1000 BCE, relied heavily on a pastoral, semi-nomadic economy with limited agriculture. They raised sheep, goats, and cattle, which became symbols of wealth.

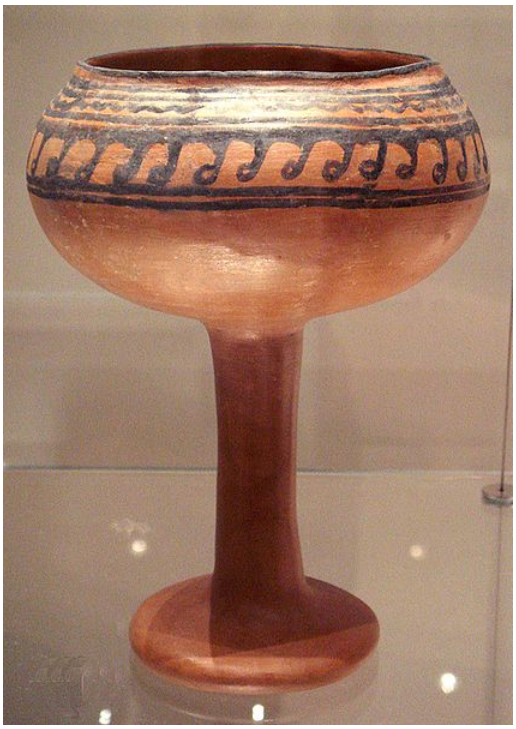
The Indo-Aryans also preserved collections of religious and literary works by memorizing and reciting them, and handing them down from one generation to the next in their sacred language, Sanskrit. The *Rigveda*, which was likely composed during this time, contains several mythological and poetical accounts of the origins of the world, hymns praising the gods, and ancient prayers for life and prosperity.

Organized into tribes, the Vedic Aryans regularly clashed over land and resources. The Rigveda describes the most notable of these conflicts, the Battle of the Ten Kings, between the Bharatas tribe and a confederation of ten competing tribes on the banks of what is now the Ravi River in northwestern India and eastern Pakistan. Led by their king, Sudas, the Bharatas claimed victory and merged with the defeated Purus tribe to form the Kuru, a Vedic tribal union in northern India.

Later Vedic Period (c. 1000-500 BCE)

After the 12th century BCE, Vedic society transitioned from semi-nomadic to settled agriculture. From approximately 1000-500 BCE, the development of iron axes and ploughs enabled the Indo Aryans to settle the thick forests on the western Ganges Plain.

This agricultural expansion led to an increase in trade and competition for resources, and many of the old tribes coalesced to form larger political units. The Indo-Aryans cultivated wheat, rice and barley and implemented new crafts, such as carpentry, leather work, tanning, pottery, jewelry crafting, textile dying, and wine making.



Ceramic goblet from Navdatoli, Malwa, c. 1300 BCE. As the Indo-Aryans developed an agricultural society during the Later Vedic Period (c. 1000-500), they further developed crafts, such as pottery.

Economic exchanges were conducted through gift giving, particularly between kings and priests, and barter using cattle as a unit of currency. While gold, silver, bronze, copper, tin, and lead are mentioned in some hymns as trade items, there is no indication of the use of coins.

The invasion of Darius I (a Persian ruler of the vast Achaemenid Empire that stretched into the Indus Valley) in the early 6th century BCE marked the beginning of outside influence in Vedic society. This continued into what became the Indo-Greek Kingdom, which covered various parts of South Asia and was centered mainly in modern Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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6.21: The Caste System

Learning Objectives

- Explain the history of the caste system

Key Points

- The institution of the caste system, influenced by stories of the gods in the Rig-Veda epic, assumed and reinforced the idea that lifestyles, occupations, ritual statuses, and social statuses were inherited.
- Aryan society was patriarchal in the Vedic Period, with men in positions of authority and power handed down only through the male line.
- There were four classes in the caste system: Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (kings, governors, and warriors), Vaishyas (cattle herders, agriculturists, artisans, and merchants), and Shudras (laborers and service providers). A fifth group, Untouchables, was excluded from the caste system and historically performed the undesirable work.
- The caste system may have been more fluid in Aryan India than it is in modern-day India.

terms

jatis

The term used to denote the thousands of clans, tribes, religions, communities and sub-communities in India.

varnas

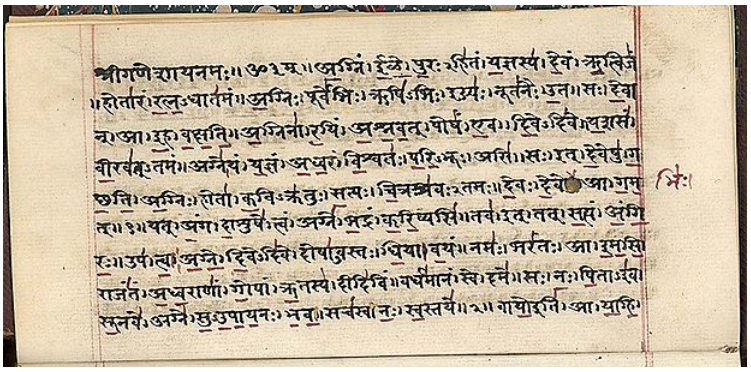
The four broad ranks of the caste system in the Indo-Aryan culture, which included Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (kings, governors and warriors), Vaishyas (cattle herders, agriculturists, artisans, and merchants), and Shudras (laborers and service providers).

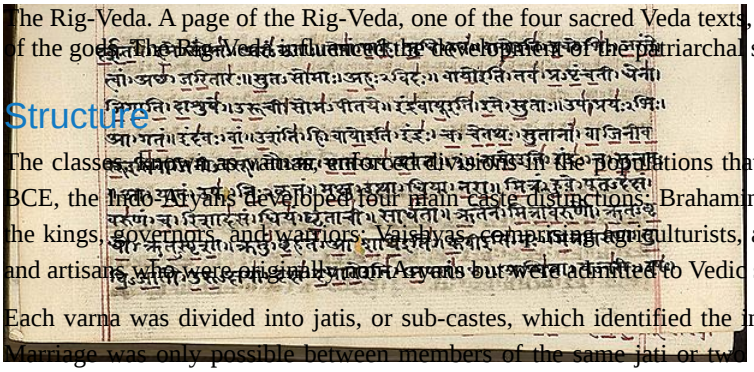
Caste systems through which social status was inherited developed independently in ancient societies all over the world, including the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. The caste system in ancient India was used to establish separate classes of inhabitants based upon their social positions and employment functions in the community. These roles and their importance, including the levels of power and significance based on patriarchy, were influenced by stories of the gods in the Rig-Veda epic.

Origins

The caste system in India may have several origins, possibly starting with the well-defined social orders of the Indo-Aryans in the Vedic Period, c. 1750-500 BCE. The Vedas were ancient scriptures, written in the Sanskrit language, which contained hymns, philosophies, and rituals handed down to the priests of the Vedic religion. One of these four sacred canonical texts, the Rig Veda, described the origins of the world and points to the gods for the origin of the caste system.

The castes were a form of social stratification in Aryan India characterized by the hereditary transmission of lifestyle, occupation, ritual status, and social status. These social distinctions may have been more fluid in ancient Aryan civilizations than in modern India, where castes still exist but sociologists are observing inter-caste marriages and interactions becoming more fluid and less rigid.





The Rig-Veda. A page of the Rig-Veda, one of the four sacred Veda texts, which described the origins of the world and the stories of the gods. The Rig-Veda influenced the development of the patriarchal society and the caste systems in Aryan India.

Structure

The classes (Varnas) and enforced divisions in the populations that still affect this area of the world today. By around 1000 BCE, the Indo-Aryans developed four main caste distinctions: Brahamin, consisting of priests, scholars, and teachers; Kshatriyas, the kings, governors, and warriors; Vaishyas, comprising hunting, agriculturists, artisans, and merchants; and Sudras, the service providers and artisans who were originally non-Aryans but were admitted to Vedic society.

Each varna was divided into jatis, or sub-castes, which identified the individual's occupation and imposed marriage restrictions. Marriage was only possible between members of the same jati or two that were very close. Both varnas and jatis determined a person's purity level. Members of higher varnas or jatis had higher purity levels, and if contaminated by members of lower social groups, even by touch, they would have to undergo extensive cleansing rites.

Castes in India. A page from the manuscript Seventy-two Specimens of Castes in India, which consists of 72 full-color hand-painted images of men and women of the various castes and religious and ethnic groups found in Madura, India at that time. Each drawing was made on mica, a transparent, flaky mineral that splits into thin, transparent sheets. As indicated on the presentation page, the album was compiled by the Indian writing master at an English school established by American missionaries in Madura, and given to the Reverend William Twining. The manuscript shows Indian dress and jewelry adornment in the Madura region as they appeared before the onset of Western influences on South Asian dress and style. Each illustrated portrait is captioned in English and in Tamil, and the title page of the work includes English, Tamil, and Telugu.

As the Aryans expanded their influence, newly conquered groups were assimilated into society by forming a new group below the Sudras, outside the caste system. These outcasts were called Untouchables, as they performed the least desirable activities and jobs, such as dealing with dead bodies, cleaning toilets and washrooms, and tanning and dyeing leather.

Development of Patriarchy

Society during the Vedic Period (c.1750-500 BCE) was patriarchal and patrilineal, meaning to trace ancestral heritage through the male line. Marriage and childbearing were especially important to maintain male lineage. The institution of marriage was important, and different types of marriages—monogamy, polygyny and polyandry—are mentioned in the Rig Veda. All priests, warriors, and tribal chiefs were men, and descent was always through the male line.

In other parts of society, women had no public authority; they only were able to influence affairs within their own homes. Women were to remain subject to the guidance of males in their lives, beginning with their father, then husband, and lastly their sons. Male gods were considered more important than female gods. These distinct gender roles may have contributed to the social stratification of the caste system.

Enduring Influence

The caste system that influenced the social structure of Aryan India has been maintained to some degree into modern-day India. The caste system survived for over two millennia, becoming one of the basic features of traditional Hindu society. Although the Constitution of India, the supreme law document of the Republic of India, formally abolished the caste system in 1950, some people maintain prejudices against members of lower social classes.

Gandhi at Madras, 1933. Mahatma Gandhi visits Madras, now Chennai, during a tour of India in 1933. As leader of the Indian independence movement, Gandhi frequently spoke out against discrimination created by the caste system.

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6.22: Sanskrit

Learning Objectives

- Explain the importance of Sanskrit

Key Points

- Sanskrit is originated as Vedic Sanskrit as early as 1700-1200 BCE, and was orally preserved as a part of the Vedic chanting tradition.
- The scholar Panini standardized Vedic Sanskrit into Classical Sanskrit when he defined the grammar, around 500 BCE.
- Vedic Sanskrit is the language of the Vedas, the oldest scriptures of Hinduism.
- Knowledge of Sanskrit became a marker of high social class during and after the Vedic Period.

terms

Hinduism

The dominant religion of the modern Indian subcontinent, which makes use of Sanskrit in its texts and practices.

Panini

The scholar who standardized the grammar of Vedic Sanskrit to create Classical Sanskrit.

Sanskrit is the primary sacred language of Hinduism, and has been used as a philosophical language in the religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Sanskrit is a standardized dialect of Old Indo-Aryan, originating as Vedic Sanskrit as early as 1700-1200 BCE.

One of the oldest Indo-European languages for which substantial documentation exists, Sanskrit is believed to have been the general language of the greater Indian Subcontinent in ancient times. It is still used today in Hindu religious rituals, Buddhist hymns and chants, and Jain texts.

Origins

Sanskrit traces its linguistic ancestry to Proto-Indo-Iranian and ultimately to Proto-Indo-European languages, meaning that it can be traced historically back to the people who spoke Indo-Iranian, also called the Aryan languages, as well as the Indo-European languages, a family of several hundred related languages and dialects. Today, an estimated 46% of humans speak some form of Indo-European language. The most widely-spoken Indo-European languages are English, Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian, each with over 100 million speakers.

Sanskrit manuscript on palm-leaf, in Bihar or Nepal, 11th century. Sanskrit evolved from Proto-Indo-European languages and was used to write the Vedas, the Hindu religious texts compiled between 1500-500 BCE.

Vedic Sanskrit is the language of the Vedas, the most ancient Hindu scripts, compiled c. 1500-500 BCE. The Vedas contain hymns, incantations called Samhitas, and theological and philosophical guidance for priests of the Vedic religion. Believed to be direct revelations to seers among the early Aryan people of India, the four chief collections are the Rig Veda, Sam Veda, Yajur Vedia, and Atharva Veda. (Depending on the source consulted, these are spelled, for example, either Rig Veda or Rigveda.)

Vedic Sanskrit was orally preserved as a part of the Vedic chanting tradition, predating alphabetic writing in India by several centuries. Modern linguists consider the metrical hymns of the Rigveda Samhita, the most ancient layer of text in the Vedas, to have been composed by many authors over several centuries of oral tradition.

Sanskrit Literature

Sanskrit Literature began with the spoken or sung literature of the Vedas from c. 1500 BCE, and continued with the oral tradition of the Sanskrit Epics of Iron Age India, the period after the Bronze Age began, around 1200 BCE. At approximately 1000 BCE, Vedic Sanskrit began the transition from a first language to a second language of religion and learning.

Around 500 BCE, the ancient scholar Panini standardized the grammar of Vedic Sanskrit, including 3,959 rules of syntax, semantics, and morphology (the study of words and how they are formed and relate to each other). Panini's *Astadhyayi* is the most important of the surviving texts of *Vyakarana*, the linguistic analysis of Sanskrit, consisting of eight chapters laying out his rules and their sources. Through this standardization, Panini helped create what is now known as Classical Sanskrit.

A 2004 Indian stamp honoring Panini, the great Sanskrit grammarian. The scholar Panini standardized the grammar of Vedic Sanskrit to create Classical Sanskrit. With this standardization, Sanskrit became a language of religion and learning.

The classical period of Sanskrit literature dates to the Gupta period and the successive pre-Islamic middle kingdoms of India, spanning approximately the 3rd to 8th centuries CE. Hindu Puranas, a genre of Indian literature that includes myths and legends, fall into the period of Classical Sanskrit.

Drama as a distinct genre of Sanskrit literature emerged in the final centuries BCE, influenced partly by Vedic mythology. Famous Sanskrit dramatists include Shudraka, Bhasa, Asvaghosa, and Kalidasa; their numerous plays are still available, although little is known about the authors themselves. Kalidasa's play, *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, is generally regarded as a masterpiece and was among the first Sanskrit works to be translated into English, as well as numerous other languages.

Works of Sanskrit literature, such as the Yoga-Sutras of Patanjali, which are still consulted by practitioners of yoga today, and the *Upanishads*, a series of sacred Hindu treatises, were translated into Arabic and Persian. Sanskrit fairy tales and fables were characterized by ethical reflections and proverbial philosophy, with a particular style making its way into Persian and Arabic literature and exerting influence over such famed tales as *One Thousand and One Nights*, better known in English as *Arabian Nights*.

Poetry was also a key feature of this period of the language. Kalidasa was the foremost Classical Sanskrit poet, with a simple but beautiful style, while later poetry shifted toward more intricate techniques including stanzas that read the same backwards and forwards, words that could be split to produce different meanings, and sophisticated metaphors.

Importance

Sanskrit is vital to Indian culture because of its extensive use in religious literature, primarily in Hinduism, and because most modern Indian languages have been directly derived from, or strongly influenced by, Sanskrit.

Knowledge of Sanskrit was a marker of social class and educational attainment in ancient India, and it was taught mainly to members of the higher castes (social groups based on birth and employment status). In the medieval era, Sanskrit continued to be spoken and written, particularly by Brahmins (the name for Hindu priests of the highest caste) for scholarly communication.

Today, Sanskrit is still used on the Indian Subcontinent. More than 3,000 Sanskrit works have been composed since India became independent in 1947, while more than 90 weekly, biweekly, and quarterly publications are published in Sanskrit. *Sudharma*, a daily newspaper written in Sanskrit, has been published in India since 1970. Sanskrit is used extensively in the Carnatic and Hindustani branches of classical music, and it continues to be used during worship in Hindu temples as well as in Buddhist and Jain religious practices.

Sanskrit is a major feature of the academic linguistic field of Indo-European studies, which focuses on both extinct and current Indo-European languages, and can be studied in major universities around the world.

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6.23: The Vedas

Key Points

- The Vedas, meaning “knowledge,” are the oldest texts of Hinduism.
- They are derived from the ancient Indo-Aryan culture of the Indian Subcontinent and began as an oral tradition that was passed down through generations before finally being written in Vedic Sanskrit between 1500 and 500 BCE (Before Common Era).
- The Vedas are structured in four different collections containing hymns, poems, prayers, and religious instruction.
- The Indian caste system is based on a fable from the Vedas about the sacrifice of the deity Purusha.

Terms

Rig Veda

The oldest and most important of the four Vedas.

Caste System

An ancient social structure based upon one of the fables in the Vedas, castes persist in modern India.

Vedas

The oldest scriptures of Hinduism, originally passed down orally but then written in Vedic Sanskrit between 1500 and 500 BCE.

Hinduism

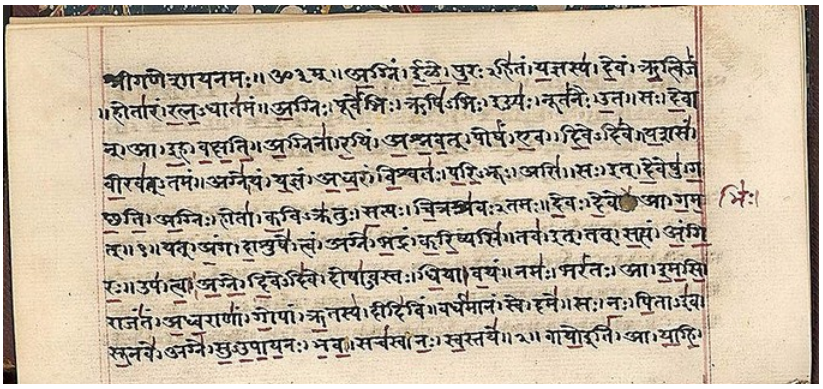
A major world religion that began on the Indian Subcontinent.

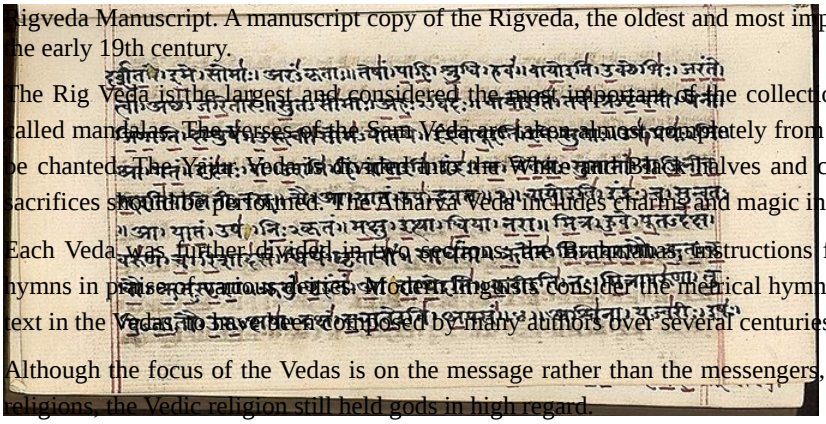
The Indo-Aryan Vedas remain the oldest scriptures of Hinduism, which is considered one of the oldest religions in the world. Vedic ritualism, a composite of ancient Indo-Aryan and Harappan culture, contributed to the deities and traditions of Hinduism over time. The Vedas are split into four major texts and contain hymns, mythological accounts, poems, prayers, and formulas considered sacred to the Vedic religion.

Structure of the Vedas

Vedas, meaning “knowledge,” were written in Vedic Sanskrit between 1500 and 500 BCE in the northwestern region the Indian Subcontinent. The Vedas were transmitted orally during the course of numerous subsequent generations before finally being archived in written form. Not much is known about the authors of the Vedas, as the focus is placed on the ideas found in Vedic tradition rather than those who originated the ideas. The oldest of the texts is the Rig Veda, and while it is not possible to establish precise dates for each of the ancient texts, it is believed the collection was completed by the end of the 2nd millennium BCE (Before Common Era).

There are four Indo-Aryan Vedas: the Rig Veda contains hymns about their mythology; the Sama Veda consists mainly of hymns about religious rituals; the Yajur Veda contains instructions for religious rituals; and the Atharva Veda consists of spells against enemies, sorcerers, and diseases. (Depending on the source consulted, these are spelled, for example, either Rig Veda or Rigveda.)





Rigveda Manuscript. A manuscript copy of the Rigveda, the oldest and most important of the four Vedas of the Vedic religion, from the early 19th century.

The Rig Veda is the largest and considered the most important of the collection, containing 1,028 hymns divided into 10 books called mandalas. The verses of the Sam Veda are taken almost completely from the Rig Veda, but arranged differently so they may be chanted. The Yajur Veda is divided into the White and Black halves and contains prose commentaries on how religious and sacrifices should be performed. The Atharva Veda includes charms and magic incantations written in the style of folklore.

Each Veda was further divided in two sections: the Brahmanas, instructions for religious rituals, and the Samhitas, mantras or hymns in praise of various deities. Modern linguists consider the metrical hymns of the Rigveda Samhita, the most ancient layer of text in the Vedas, to have been composed by many authors over several centuries of oral tradition.

Although the focus of the Vedas is on the message rather than the messengers, such as Buddha or Jesus Christ in their respective religions, the Vedic religion still held gods in high regard.

Vedic Religion

The Aryan pantheon of gods is described in great detail in the Rig Veda. However, the religious practices and deities are not uniformly consistent in these sacred texts, probably because the Aryans themselves were not a homogenous group. While spreading through the Indian Subcontinent, it is probable that their initial religious beliefs and practices were shaped by the absorption of local religious traditions.

According to the hymns of the Rig Veda, the most important deities were Agni, the god of Fire, intermediary between the gods and humans; Indra, the god of Heavens and War, protector of the Aryans against their enemies; Surya, the Sun god; Vayu, the god of Wind; and Prthivi, the goddess of Earth.

Agni, God of Fire. Agni, the Indian God of Fire from the ancient Vedic religion, shown riding a ram.

Vedas and Castes

The Caste System, or groups based on birth or employment status, has been part of the social fabric of the Indian Subcontinent since ancient times. The castes are thought to have derived from a hymn found in the Vedas to the deity Purusha, who is believed to have been sacrificed by the other gods. Afterward Purusha's mind became the Moon, his eyes became the Sun, his head the Sky, and his feet the Earth.

The passage describing the classes of people derived from the sacrifice of Purusha is the first indication of a caste system. The Brahmins, or priests, came from Purusha's mouth; the Kshatriyas, or warrior rulers, came from Purusha's arms; the Vaishyas, or commoners such as landowners and merchants, came from Purusha's thighs; and the Shudras, or laborers and servants, came from Purusha's feet.

Today the castes still exist in the form of varna, or class system, based on the original four castes described in the Vedas. A fifth group known as Dalits, historically excluded from the varna system, are ostracized and called untouchables. The caste system as it exists today is thought to be a product of developments following the collapse of British colonial rule in India. The system is frowned upon by many people in Indian society and was a focus of social justice campaigns during the 20th century by prominent progressive activists such as B. R. Ambedkar, an architect of the Indian Constitution, and Mahatma Gandhi, the revered leader of the nonviolent Indian independence movement.

Gandhi at Madras, 1933. Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi visits Madras, now Chennai, on a tour of India in 1933. During his appearances Gandhi frequently spoke out against the discrimination of the Indian caste system.

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6.24: The Rise of Hinduism

Learning Objectives

- Explain the evolution of hinduism

Key Points

- The Vedic religion was influenced by local cultures and traditions adopted by Indo-Aryans as they spread throughout India. Vedic ritualism heavily influenced the rise of Hinduism, which rose to prominence after c. 400 BCE.
- The Vedas—the oldest texts of the Hindu religion—describe deities, mythology, and instructions for religious rituals.
- The Upanishads are a collection of Vedic texts particularly important to Hinduism that contain revealed truths concerning the nature of ultimate reality, and describing the character and form of human salvation.
- During the 14th and 15th centuries, the Hindu Vijayanagar Empire served as a barrier against Muslim invasion, fostering a reconstruction of Hindu life and administration. The Hindu Maratha Confederacy rose to power in the 18th century and eventually overthrew Muslim rule in India.

terms

moksha

The character and form of human salvation, as described in the Upanishads.

Sramana

Meaning “seeker,” Sramana refers to several Indian religious movements that existed alongside the Vedic religion, the historical predecessor of modern Hinduism.

brahman

The nature of ultimate reality, as described in the Upanishads.

Upanishads

A collection of Vedic texts that contain the earliest emergence of some of the central religious concepts of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

Hinduism is considered one of the oldest religions in the world. Western scholars regard Hinduism as a synthesis, or fusion, of various Indian cultures and traditions, with diverse roots and no stated founder. This synthesis is believed to have developed after Vedic times, between 500 BCE and 300 CE. However, Vedic ritualism, a composite of Indo-Aryan and Harappan culture, contributed to the deities and traditions of Hinduism. The Indo-Aryan Vedas remain the oldest scriptures of the Hindu religion, which has grown culturally and geographically through modern times to become one of the world’s four major religions.

The Vedas

Vedas, meaning “knowledge,” were written in Vedic Sanskrit between 1500 and 500 BCE in the northwestern region of the Indian Subcontinent. There are four Indo-Aryan Vedas: the Rig Veda contains hymns about mythology; the Sama Veda consists mainly of hymns about religious rituals; the Yajur Veda contains instructions for religious rituals; and the Atharva Veda consists of spells against enemies, sorcerers and diseases. (Depending on the source consulted, these are spelled, for example, either Sama Veda or Samaveda.) The Rig Veda is the largest and considered the most important of the collection, containing 1,028 hymns divided into ten books, called mandalas.

The Aryan pantheon of gods is described in great detail in the Rig Veda. However, the religious practices and deities are not uniformly consistent in these sacred texts, probably because the Aryans themselves were not a homogenous group. While spreading through the Indian subcontinent, it is probable their initial religious beliefs and practices were shaped by the absorption of local religious traditions.

According to the hymns of the Rig Veda, the most important deities were Agni, the god of Fire, and the intermediary between the gods and humans; Indra, the god of Heavens and War, protector of the Aryans against their enemies; Surya, the Sun god; Vayu, the god of Wind; and Prthivi, the goddess of Earth.

Modern Hindu representation of Agni, god of fire. The Rig Veda describes the varied deities of Vedic religion. These gods persisted as Vedic religion was assimilated into Hinduism.

The Upanishads

The Upanishads are a collection of Vedic texts that contain the earliest emergence of some of the central religious concepts of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Also known as Vedanta, “the end of the Veda,” the collection is one of the sacred texts of Hinduism thought to contain revealed truths concerning the nature of ultimate reality, or brahman, and describing the character and form of human salvation, called moksha. The Upanishads are found in the conclusion of the commentaries on the Vedas, and have been passed down by oral tradition.

Hindu Synthesis

Sramana, meaning “seeker,” refers to several Indian religious movements, including Buddhism and Jainism, that existed alongside the Vedic religion—the historical predecessor of modern Hinduism. The Sramana traditions drove the so-called Hindu synthesis after the Vedic period that spread to southern Indian and parts of Southeast Asia. As it spread, this new Hinduism assimilated popular non-Vedic gods and other traditions from local cultures, and integrated societal divisions, called the caste system. It is also thought to have included both Buddhist and Sramana influences.

Splinter and Rise of Hinduism

During the reign of the Gupta Empire (between 320-550 CE), which included the period known as the Golden Age of India, the first known stone and cave temples dedicated to Hindu deities were built. After the Gupta period, central power disintegrated and religion became regionalized to an extent, with variants arising within Hinduism and competing with each other, as well as sects of Buddhism and Jainism. Over time, Buddhism declined but some of its practices were integrated into Hinduism, with large Hindu temples being built in South and Southeast Asia.

The Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple in Delhi, the world's largest Hindu temple. Hinduism evolved as a combination of various cultures and traditions, including Vedic religion and the Upanishads.

The Hindu religion maintained its presence and continued to grow despite a long period of Muslim rule in India, from 1200-1750 CE, during which Hindus endured violence as Islam grew to become what is now the second largest religion in India, behind Hinduism. Akbar I, emperor of the ruling Mughal Dynasty in India from 1556-1605 CE, ended official persecution of non-Muslims and recognized Hinduism, protected Hindu temples, and abolished discriminatory taxes against Hindus.

Hindu Prominence

During the 14th and 15th centuries, the Hindu Vijayanagar Empire had arisen and served as a barrier against invasion by Muslim rulers to the north, fostering a reconstruction of Hindu life and administration. Vidyaranya, a minister and mentor to three generations of kings in the Vijayanagar Empire beginning around 1336, helped spread the historical and cultural influence of Shankara an Indian philosopher of the 8th century CE credited with unifying and establishing the main currents of thought in Hinduism.

The Hindu Maratha Confederacy rose to power in the 18th century and eventually overthrew Muslim rule in India. In the 19th century, the Indian subcontinent became a western colony during the period of the British Raj (the name of the British ruling government) beginning in 1858.

Through the period of the Raj, until its end in 1947, there was a Hindu resurgence, known as the Bengali Renaissance, in the Bengal region of India. It included a cultural, social, intellectual, and artistic movement. Indology, an academic study of Indian culture, was also established in the 19th century, and spread knowledge of Vedic philosophy and literature and promoted western interest in Hinduism.

In the 20th century, Hinduism gained prominence as a political force and source of national identity in India. According to the 2011 census, Hindus account for almost 80% of India's population of 1.21 billion people, with 960 million practitioners. Other nations with large Hindu populations include Nepal, with 23 million followers, and Bangladesh, with 15 million. Hinduism counts over 1 billion adherents across the globe, or approximately 15% of the world's population.

Singapore Diwali Decorations. Diwali decorations in Little India are part of an annual Hindu celebration in Singapore, where there are over 260,000 Hindus.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: The Rise and Spread of Islam

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7.5: The Nomadic Tribes of Arabia
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7.13: Muhammad's Successors

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7.1: Expansion Under the Umayyad Caliphates

Learning Objectives

- Describe the advancements made under the Umayyad Caliphate

Key Points

- The Umayyad Caliphate, which emerged after the Rashidun Caliphate collapsed, was characterized by hereditary elections and territory expansion.
- The Umayyad Caliphate became one of the largest unitary states in history and one of the few states to ever extend direct rule over three continents.
- When the Abbasid dynasty revolted against the Umayyads and killed many of their ruling family members, a few Umayyads escaped to the Iberian peninsula and founded the Cordoba Caliphate, characterized by peaceful diplomacy, religious tolerance, and cultural flourishing.

Terms

Umayyad Caliphate

The second of the four major Arab caliphates established after the death of Muhammad.

Dome of the Rock

A shrine located on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem.

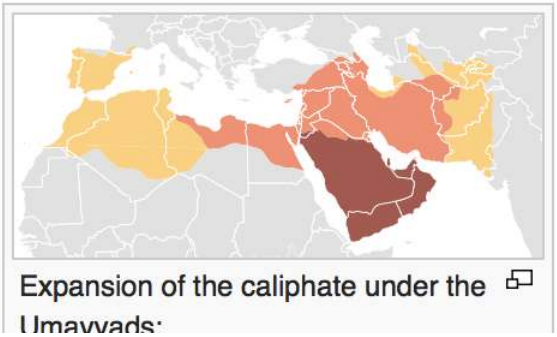
Al-Andalus

Also known as Muslim Spain or Islamic Iberia, a medieval Muslim territory and cultural domain occupying at its peak most of modern-day Spain and Portugal.

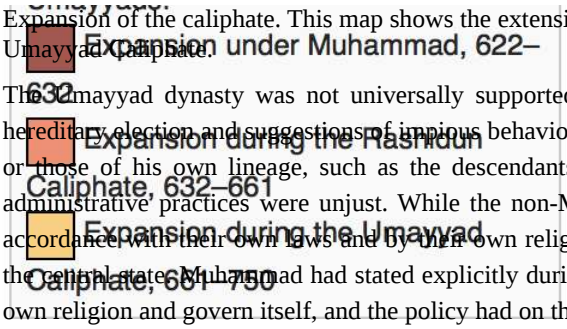
Umayyad Caliphate (661–750)

The Umayyad Caliphate was the second of the four major Arab caliphates established after the death of Muhammad. This caliphate was centered on the Umayyad dynasty, hailing from Mecca. The Umayyad family had first come to power under the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan (r. 644–656), but the Umayyad regime was founded by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, long-time governor of Syria, after the end of the First Muslim Civil War in 661 CE. Syria remained the Umayyads' main power base thereafter, and Damascus was their capital.

Under the Umayyads, the caliphate territory grew rapidly. The Islamic Caliphate became one of the largest unitary states in history, and one of the few states to ever extend direct rule over three continents (Africa, Europe, and Asia). The Umayyads incorporated the Caucasus, Transoxiana, Sindh, the Maghreb, and the Iberian Peninsula (Al-Andalus) into the Muslim world. At its greatest extent, the Umayyad Caliphate covered 5.79 million square miles and included 62 million people (29% of the world's population), making it the fifth largest empire in history in both area and proportion of the world's population. Although the Umayyad Caliphate did not rule all of the Sahara, nomadic Berber tribes paid homage to the caliph. However, although these vast areas may have recognized the supremacy of the caliph, de facto power was in the hands of local sultans and emirs.



Expansion of the caliphate under the Umayyads:



Expansion of the caliphate. This map shows the extension of Islamic rule under Muhammad, the Rashidun Caliphate, and the Umayyad Caliphate.

The Umayyad dynasty was not universally supported within the Muslim community for a variety of reasons, including their hereditary election and suggestions of impious behavior. Some Muslims felt that only members of Muhammad's Banu Hashim clan or those of his own lineage, such as the descendants of Ali, should rule. Some Muslims thought that Umayyad taxation and administrative practices were unjust. While the non-Muslim population had autonomy, their judicial matters were dealt with in accordance with their own laws and by their own religious heads or their appointees. Non-Muslims paid a poll tax for policing to the central state. Muhammad had stated explicitly during his lifetime that each religious minority should be allowed to practice its own religion and govern itself, and the policy had on the whole continued.

There were numerous rebellions against the Umayyads, as well as splits within the Umayyad ranks, which notably included the rivalry between Yaman and Qays. Allegedly, The Sunnis killed Ali's son Hussein and his family at the Battle of Karbala in 680, solidifying the Shi'a-Sunni split. Eventually, supporters of the Banu Hashim and the supporters of the lineage of Ali united to bring down the Umayyads in 750. However, the Shi'at 'Alī, "the Party of Ali," were again disappointed when the Abbasid dynasty took power, as the Abbasids were descended from Muhammad's uncle Abbas ibnAbd al-Muttalib, and not from Ali.

The Abbasid victors desecrated the tombs of the Umayyads in Syria, sparing only that of Umar II, and most of the remaining members of the Umayyad family were tracked down and killed. When Abbasids declared amnesty for members of the Umayyad family, eighty gathered to receive pardons, and all were massacred. One grandson of Hisham, Abd al-Rahman I, survived and established a kingdom in Al-Andalus (Moorish Iberia), proclaiming his family to be the Umayyad Caliphate revived.

Umayyad Dynasty in Cordoba, Spain

The revival of the Umayyad Caliphate in Al-Andalus (what would become modern Spain) was called the Caliphate of Córdoba, which lasted until 1031. The period was characterized by an expansion of trade and culture, and saw the construction of masterpieces of al-Andalus architecture.

The caliphate enjoyed increased prosperity during the 10th century. Abd-ar-Rahman III united al-Andalus and brought the Christian kingdoms of the north under control through force and diplomacy. Abd-ar-Rahman stopped the Fatimid advance into caliphate land in Morocco and al-Andalus. This period of prosperity was marked by increasing diplomatic relations with Berber tribes in north Africa, Christian kings from the north, and France, Germany, and Constantinople.

Córdoba was the cultural and intellectual center of al-Andalus. Mosques, such as the Great Mosque, were the focus of many caliphs' attention. The caliph's palace, Medina Azahara, was on the outskirts of the city, and had many rooms filled with riches from the East. The library of Al-Ḥakam II was one of the largest libraries in the world, housing at least 400,000 volumes, and Córdoba possessed translations of ancient Greek texts into Arabic, Latin and Hebrew. During the Umayyad Caliphate period, relations between Jews and Arabs were cordial; Jewish stonemasons helped build the columns of the Great Mosque. Al-Andalus was subject to eastern cultural influences as well. The musician Ziryab is credited with bringing hair and clothing styles, toothpaste, and deodorant from Baghdad to the Iberian peninsula. Advances in science, history, geography, philosophy, and language occurred during the Umayyad Caliphate as well.

Interior of the Mezquita (Mosque), one of the finest examples of Umayyad architecture in Spain.

Legacy of the Umayyad Caliphate

The Umayyad caliphate was marked both by territorial expansion and by the administrative and cultural problems that such expansion created. Despite some notable exceptions, the Umayyads tended to favor the rights of the old Arab families, and in particular their own, over those of newly converted Muslims (mawali). Therefore, they held to a less universalist conception of Islam than did many of their rivals.

During the period of the Umayyads, Arabic became the administrative language, in which state documents and currency were issued. Mass conversions brought a large influx of Muslims to the caliphate. The Umayyads also constructed famous buildings such as the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem and the Umayyad Mosque at Damascus.

According to one common view, the Umayyads transformed the caliphate from a religious institution (during the Rashidun) to a dynastic one. However, the Umayyad caliphs do seem to have understood themselves as the representatives of God on Earth.

The Umayyads have met with a largely negative reception from later Islamic historians, who have accused them of promoting a kingship (*mulk*, a term with connotations of tyranny) instead of a true caliphate (*khilafa*). In this respect it is notable that the Umayyad caliphs referred to themselves not as *khalifat rasul Allah* ("successor of the messenger of God," the title preferred by the tradition), but rather as *khalifat Allah* ("deputy of God").

Many Muslims criticized the Umayyads for having too many non-Muslim, former Roman administrators in their government. St. John of Damascus was also a high administrator in the Umayyad administration. As the Muslims took over cities, they left the people's political representatives and the Roman tax collectors and administrators. The people's political representatives calculated and negotiated taxes. The central government and the local governments got paid respectively for the services they provided. Many Christian cities used some of the taxes to maintain their churches and run their own organizations. Later, the Umayyads were criticized by some Muslims for not reducing the taxes of the people who converted to Islam.

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7.2: Spread of Islam

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the spread of Islam and identify how the caliphs maintained authority over conquered territories

Key Points

- The expansion of the Arab Empire in the years following the Prophet Muhammad's death led to the creation of caliphates, who occupied a vast geographical area and sought converts to Islamic faith.
- The people of the Islamic world created numerous sophisticated centers of culture and science with far-reaching mercantile networks, travelers, scientists, hunters, mathematicians, doctors, and philosophers.
- Historians distinguish between two separate strands of converts of the time. One is animists and polytheists of tribal societies of the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile crescent; the other is the monotheistic populations of the Middle Eastern agrarian and urbanized societies.
- The Arab conquerors generally respected the traditional middle-Eastern pattern of religious pluralism with regard to the conquered populations, respecting the practice of other faiths in Arab territory, although widespread conversions to Islam came about as a result of the breakdown of historically religiously organized societies.

Terms

Imam

An Islamic leadership position, most commonly in the context of a worship leader of a mosque and Sunni Muslim community.

Zoroastrianism

an ancient Iranian religion and religious philosophy that arose in the eastern ancient Persian Empire, when the religious philosopher Zoroaster simplified the pantheon of early Iranian gods into two opposing forces.

Overview

The expansion of the Arab Empire in the years following the Prophet Muhammad's death led to the creation of caliphates occupying a vast geographical area. Conversion to Islam was boosted by missionary activities, particularly those of Imams, who easily intermingled with local populace to propagate religious teachings. These early caliphates, coupled with Muslim economics and trading and the later expansion of the Ottoman Empire, resulted in Islam's spread outwards from Mecca towards both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and the creation of the Muslim world. Trading played an important role in the spread of Islam in several parts of the world, notably southeast Asia.

Muslim dynasties were soon established and subsequent empires such as those of the Abbasids, Fatimids, Almoravids, Seljukids, and Ajurans, Adal and Warsangali in Somalia, Mughals in India, Safavids in Persia, and Ottomans in Anatolia were among the largest and most powerful in the world. The people of the Islamic world created numerous sophisticated centers of culture and science with far-reaching mercantile networks, travelers, scientists, hunters, mathematicians, doctors, and philosophers, all contributing to the Golden Age of Islam. Islamic expansion in South and East Asia fostered cosmopolitan and eclectic Muslim cultures in the Indian subcontinent, Malaysia, Indonesia, and China.

Within the first century of the establishment of Islam upon the Arabian Peninsula and the subsequent rapid expansion of the Arab Empire during the Muslim conquests, one of the most significant empires in world history was formed. For the subjects of this new empire, formerly subjects of the greatly reduced Byzantine and obliterated Sassanid empires, not much changed in practice. The objective of the conquests was of a practical nature more than anything else, as fertile land and water were scarce in the Arabian Peninsula. A real Islamization therefore only came about in the subsequent centuries.

Conversions to Islam

Historians distinguish between two separate strands of converts of the time. One is animists and polytheists of tribal societies of the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile crescent; the other is the monotheistic populations of the Middle Eastern agrarian and urbanized societies.

For the polytheistic and pagan societies, apart from the religious and spiritual reasons each individual may have had, conversion to Islam "represented the response of a tribal, pastoral population to the need for a larger framework for political and economic integration, a more stable state, and a more imaginative and encompassing moral vision to cope with the problems of a tumultuous society." In contrast, for sedentary and often already monotheistic societies, "Islam was substituted for a Byzantine or Sassanian political identity and for a Christian, Jewish or Zoroastrian religious affiliation." Initially, conversion was neither required nor necessarily wished for: "[The Arab conquerors] did not require the conversion as much as the subordination of non-Muslim peoples. At the outset, they were hostile to conversions because new Muslims diluted the economic and status advantages of the Arabs."

Only in subsequent centuries, with the development of the religious doctrine of Islam and with that the understanding of the Muslim Ummah, did mass conversion take place. The new understanding by the religious and political leadership led in many cases to a weakening or breakdown of the social and religious structures of parallel religious communities such as Christians and Jews. With the weakening of many churches, for example, and with the favoring of Islam and the migration of substantial Muslim Turkish populations into the areas of Anatolia and the Balkans, the "social and cultural relevance of Islam" were enhanced and a large number of peoples were converted.

During the Abbasid Caliphate, expansion ceased and the central disciplines of Islamic philosophy, theology, law, and mysticism became more widespread, and the gradual conversions of the populations within the empire occurred. Significant conversions also occurred beyond the extents of the empire, such as that of the Turkic tribes in Central Asia and peoples living in regions south of the Sahara in Africa through contact with Muslim traders active in the area and Sufi orders. In Africa it spread along three routes—across the Sahara via trading towns such as Timbuktu, up the Nile Valley through the Sudan up to Uganda, and across the Red Sea and down East Africa through settlements such as Mombasa and Zanzibar. These initial conversions were of a flexible nature.

The Arab-Muslim conquests followed a general pattern of nomadic conquests of settled regions, whereby conquering peoples became the new military elite and reached a compromise with the old elites by allowing them to retain local political, religious, and financial authority. Peasants, workers, and merchants paid taxes, while members of the old and new elites collected them.

The Great Mosque of Kairouan, founded in 670 CE by the Arab general and conqueror Uqba Ibn Nafi, is the oldest mosque in western Islamic lands and represents an architectural symbol of the spread of Islam in North Africa, situated in Kairouan, Tunisia.

Policy Toward Non-Muslims

The Arab conquerors did not repeat the mistake made by the Byzantine and Sasanian empires, who had tried and failed to impose an official religion on subject populations, which had caused resentments that made the Muslim conquests more acceptable to them. Instead, the rulers of the new empire generally respected the traditional middle-Eastern pattern of religious pluralism, which was not one of equality but rather of dominance by one group over the others. After the end of military operations, which involved the sacking of some monasteries and confiscation of Zoroastrian fire temples in Syria and Iraq, the early caliphate was characterized by religious tolerance, and people of all ethnicities and religions blended in public life. Before Muslims were ready to build mosques in Syria, they accepted Christian churches as holy places and shared them with local Christians. In Iraq and Egypt, Muslim authorities cooperated with Christian religious leaders. Numerous churches were repaired and new ones built during the Umayyad era.

Some non-Muslim populations did experience persecution, however. After the Muslim conquest of Persia, Zoroastrians were given dhimmi (non-Muslim) status and subjected to persecutions; discrimination and harassment began in the form of sparse violence. Zoroastrians were made to pay an extra tax called Jizya; if they failed, they were killed, enslaved, or imprisoned. Those paying Jizya were subjected to insults and humiliation by the tax collectors. Zoroastrians who were captured as slaves in wars were given their freedom if they converted to Islam.

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7.3: The Islamic Golden Age

Learning Objectives

- Identify the causes of, and developments during, the Islamic Golden Age

Key Points

- The Islamic Golden Age started with the rise of Islam and establishment of the first Islamic state in 622.
- The introduction of paper in the 10th century enabled Islamic scholars to easily write manuscripts; Arab scholars also saved classic works of antiquity by translating them into various languages.
- The Arabs assimilated the scientific knowledge of the civilizations they had overrun, including the ancient Greek, Roman, Persian, Chinese, Indian, Egyptian, and Phoenician civilizations.
- Scientists advanced the fields of algebra, calculus, geometry, chemistry, biology, medicine, and astronomy.
- Many forms of art flourished during the Islamic Golden Age, including ceramics, metalwork, textiles, illuminated manuscripts, woodwork, and calligraphy.

Terms

Averroës

A medieval Andalusian polymath famous for his translations and commentaries of Aristotle.

calligraphy

A visual art related to writing—the design and execution of lettering with a broad tip instrument or brush in one stroke.

arabesque

A form of artistic decoration consisting of surface decorations based on rhythmic linear patterns of scrolling and interlacing foliage, tendrils, and other elements.

Overview

The Islamic Golden Age refers to a period in the history of Islam, traditionally dated from the 8th century to the 13th century, during which much of the historically Islamic world was ruled by various caliphates and science, economic development, and cultural works flourished. This period is traditionally understood to have begun during the reign of the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (786–809) with the inauguration of the House of Wisdom in Baghdad, where scholars from various parts of the world with different cultural backgrounds were mandated to gather and translate all of the world's classical knowledge into the Arabic language.

The end of the age is variously given as 1258 with the Mongolian Sack of Baghdad, or 1492 with the completion of the Christian Reconquista of the Emirate of Granada in Al-Andalus, Iberian Peninsula. During the Golden Age, the major Islamic capital cities of Baghdad, Cairo, and Córdoba became the main intellectual centers for science, philosophy, medicine, and education. The government heavily patronized scholars, and the best scholars and notable translators, such as Hunayn ibn Ishaq, had salaries estimated to be the equivalent of those of professional athletes today.

The School of Nisibis and later the School of Edessa became centers of learning and transmission of classical wisdom. The House of Wisdom was a library, translation institute, and academy, and the Library of Alexandria and the Imperial Library of Constantinople housed new works of literature. Nestorian Christians played an important role in the formation of Arab culture, with the Jundishapur hospital and medical academy prominent in the late Sassanid, Umayyad, and early Abbasid periods. Notably, eight generations of the Nestorian Bukhtishu family served as private doctors to caliphs and sultans between the 8th and 11th centuries.

Literature and Philosophy

With the introduction of paper, information was democratized and it became possible to make a living from simply writing and selling books. The use of paper spread from China into Muslim regions in the 8th century, and then to Spain (and then the rest of

Europe) in the 10th century. Paper was easier to manufacture than parchment and less likely to crack than papyrus, and could absorb ink, making it difficult to erase and ideal for keeping records. Islamic paper makers devised assembly-line methods of hand-copying manuscripts to turn out editions far larger than any available in Europe for centuries. The best known fiction from the Islamic world is *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*, which took form in the 10th century and reached its final form by the 14th century, although the number and type of tales vary.

Painting of the Ali Baba story in The Book of One Thousand and One Nights by Maxfield Parrish. The introduction of paper in the 10th century enabled Islamic scholars to easily write manuscripts, including The Book of One Thousand and One Nights. Arab scholars also saved classic works of antiquity by translating them into various languages.

Christians (particularly Nestorian Christians) contributed to the Arab Islamic civilization during the Ummayad and the Abbasid periods by translating works of Greek philosophers to Syriac and then to Arabic. During the 4th through the 7th centuries, scholarly work in the Syriac and Greek languages was either newly initiated or carried on from the Hellenistic period. Many classic works of antiquity might have been lost if Arab scholars had not translated them into Arabic and Persian and later into Turkish, Hebrew, and Latin. Islamic scholars also absorbed ideas from China and India, and in turn Arabic philosophic literature contributed to the development of modern European philosophy.

Ibn Rushd

Ibn Rushd, also known by his Latinized name Averroës (April 14, 1126–December 10, 1198), was an Al-Andalus Muslim polymath, a master of Aristotelian philosophy, Islamic philosophy, Islamic theology, Maliki law and jurisprudence, logic, psychology, politics, Andalusian classical music theory, medicine, astronomy, geography, mathematics, physics, and celestial mechanics. Averroes was born in Córdoba, Al-Andalus, present-day Spain, and died in Marrakesh, present-day Morocco.

The 13th-century philosophical movement based on Averroes' work is called Averroism. Both Ibn Rushd and the scholar Ibn Sina played a major role in saving the works of Aristotle, whose ideas came to dominate the non-religious thought of the Christian and Muslim worlds. Ibn Rushd has been described as the "founding father of secular thought in Western Europe." He tried to reconcile Aristotle's system of thought with Islam. According to him, there is no conflict between religion and philosophy; rather they are different ways of reaching the same truth. He believed in the eternity of the universe. Ibn Ruhd also held that the soul is divided into two parts, one individual and one divine; while the individual soul is not eternal, all humans at the basic level share one and the same divine soul.

Science and Mathematics

The Arabs assimilated the scientific knowledge of the civilizations they had conquered, including the ancient Greek, Roman, Persian, Chinese, Indian, Egyptian, and Phoenician civilizations. Scientists recovered the Alexandrian mathematical, geometric, and astronomical knowledge, such as that of Euclid and Claudius Ptolemy.

Persian scientist Muhammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī significantly developed algebra in in his landmark text, *Kitab al-Jabr wa-l-Muqabala*, from which the term "algebra" is derived. The term "algorithm" is derived from the name of the scholar al-Khwarizmi, who was also responsible for introducing the Arabic numerals and Hindu-Arabic numeral system beyond the Indian subcontinent. In calculus, the scholar Alhazen discovered the sum formula for the fourth power, using a method readily generalizable to determine the sum for any integral power. He used this to find the volume of a paraboloid.

Medicine

Medicine was a central part of medieval Islamic culture. Responding to circumstances of time and place, Islamic physicians and scholars developed a large and complex medical literature exploring and synthesizing the theory and practice of medicine. Islamic medicine was built on tradition, chiefly the theoretical and practical knowledge developed in India, Greece, Persia, and Rome. Islamic scholars translated their writings from Syriac, Greek, and Sanskrit into Arabic and then produced new medical knowledge based on those texts. In order to make the Greek tradition more accessible, understandable, and teachable, Islamic scholars organized the Greco-Roman medical knowledge into encyclopedias.

The eye, according to Hunain ibn Ishaq. Scholars developed large encyclopedias of medical knowledge during the Islamic Golden Age, such as this one from a manuscript dated circa 1200.

Art

Ceramics, glass, metalwork, textiles, illuminated manuscripts, and woodwork flourished during the Islamic Golden Age. Manuscript illumination became an important and greatly respected art, and portrait miniature painting flourished in Persia. Calligraphy, an essential aspect of written Arabic, developed in manuscripts and architectural decoration.

Arabesque

Typically, though not entirely, Islamic art depicts nature patterns and Arabic calligraphy, rather than figures, because many Muslims feared that the depiction of the human form is idolatry and thereby a sin against God, forbidden in the Quran. There are repeating elements in Islamic art, such as the use of geometrical floral or vegetal designs in a repetition known as the arabesque. The arabesque in Islamic art is often used to symbolize the transcendent, indivisible, and infinite nature of God. Mistakes in repetitions may be intentionally introduced as a show of humility by artists who believe only God can produce perfection, although this theory is disputed.

Detail of arabesque decoration at the Alhambra in Spain. Arabesque in Islamic art is often used to symbolize the transcendent, indivisible, and infinite nature of God.

Calligraphy

The traditional instrument of the Arabic calligrapher is the qalam, a pen made of dried reed or bamboo. Qalam ink is often in color, and chosen such that its intensity can vary greatly, so that the greater strokes of the compositions can be very dynamic in their effect. Islamic calligraphy is applied on a wide range of decorative mediums other than paper, such as tiles, vessels, carpets, and inscriptions. Before the advent of paper, papyrus and parchment were used for writing.

Qur’an manuscript Surat al-Nisa.

Coins were another support for calligraphy. Beginning in 692, the Islamic caliphate reformed the coinage of the Near East by replacing visual depiction with words. This was especially true for dinars, or gold coins of high value, which were inscribed with quotes from the Quran.

Hamdanid gold dinar. 10th-century Syria.

By the 10th century, the Persians, who had converted to Islam, began weaving inscriptions on elaborately patterned silks. These calligraphic-inscribed textiles were so precious that Crusaders brought them to Europe as prized possessions. A notable example is the Suaire de Saint-Josse, used to wrap the bones of St. Josse in the abbey of St. Josse-sur-Mer near Caen in northwestern France.

Architecture and Tilework

There were many advances in architectural construction, and mosques, tombs, palaces, and forts were inspired by Persian and Byzantine architecture. Islamic mosaic art anticipated principles of quasicrystalline geometry, which would not be discovered for 500 more years. This art used symmetric polygonal shapes to create patterns that can continue indefinitely without repeating. These patterns have even helped modern scientists understand quasicrystals at the atomic levels.

Mosque Archway. Geometric patterns: an archway in the Sultan's lodge in the Ottoman Green Mosque in Bursa, Turkey (1424), its girih strapwork forming 10-point stars and pentagons.

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7.4: The Abbasid Empire

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the political stability during the Abbasid Era and the Abbasids' rise to power

Key Points

- The Abbasids overthrew the Umayyad dynasty in 750 CE, supporting the mawali, or non-Arab Muslims, by moving the capital to Baghdad in 762 CE.
- The Persian bureaucracy slowly replaced the old Arab aristocracy as the Abbasids established the new positions of vizier and emir to delegate their central authority.
- The Abbasids maintained an unbroken line of caliphs for over three centuries, consolidating Islamic rule and cultivating great intellectual and cultural developments in the Middle East in the Golden Age of Islam.
- The Fatimid dynasty broke from the Abbasids in 909 and created separate line of caliphs in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Palestine until 1171 CE.
- Abbasid control eventually disintegrated, and the edges of the empire declared local autonomy.
- Though lacking in political power, the dynasty continued to claim authority in religious matters until after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517.

Terms

mawali

Non-Arab Muslims.

Fatimid dynasty

A Shi'a Islamic caliphate that spanned a large area of North Africa, from the Red Sea in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west; they claimed lineage from Muhammad's daughter.

emir

A title of high office used in a variety of places in the Muslim world.

vizier

A high-ranking political advisor or minister in the Muslim world.

Rise of the Abbasid Empire (c. 750 CE)

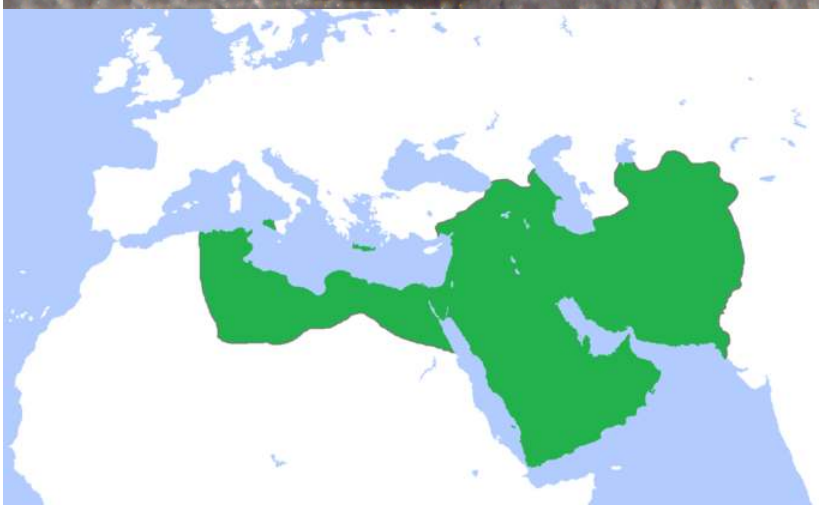
The Umayyad dynasty was overthrown by another family of Meccan origin, the Abbasids, in 750 CE. The Abbasids distinguished themselves from the Umayyads by attacking their moral character and administration. In particular, they appealed to non-Arab Muslims, known as mawali, who remained outside the kinship-based society of the Arabs and were perceived as a lower class within the Umayyad empire. The Abbasid dynasty descended from Muhammad's youngest uncle, Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib (566–653 CE), from whom the dynasty takes its name. Muhammad ibn 'Ali, a great-grandson of Abbas, began to campaign for the return of power to the family of Muhammad, the Hashimites, in Persia during the reign of Umar II, an Umayyad caliph who ruled from 717–720 CE.

Coin of the Abbasids, Baghdad, Iraq, 765 CE.

Power in Baghdad

The Abbasids moved the empire's capital from Damascus, in modern-day Syria, to Baghdad, in modern-day Iraq, in 762 CE. The Abbasids had depended heavily on the support of Persians in their overthrow of the Umayyads, and the geographic power shift appeased the Persian mawali support base. Abu al-'Abbas's successor, Al-Mansur, welcomed non-Arab Muslims to his court. While this helped integrate Arab and Persian cultures, it alienated the Arabs who had supported the Abbasids in their battles against the Umayyads. The Abbasids established the new position of vizier to delegate central authority, and delegated even greater authority to local emirs. As the viziers exerted greater influence, many Abbasid caliphs were relegated to a more ceremonial role as Persian bureaucracy slowly replaced the old Arab aristocracy.

The Abbasids, who ruled from Baghdad, had an unbroken line of caliphs for over three centuries, consolidating Islamic rule and cultivating great intellectual and cultural developments in the Middle East in the Golden Age of Islam. By 940 CE, however, the power of the caliphate under the Abbasids began waning as non-Arabs gained influence and the various subordinate sultans and emirs became increasingly independent.



Map of the Abbasid Caliphate at its greatest extent, c. 850 CE. The Abbasid dynasty ruled as caliphs from their capital in Baghdad, in modern Iraq, after taking over authority of the Muslim empire from the Umayyads in 750 CE.

Decline of the Abbasid Empire

The Abbasid leadership worked to overcome the political challenges of a large empire with limited communication in the last half of the 8th century (750–800 CE). While the Byzantine Empire was fighting Abbasid rule in Syria and Anatolia, the caliphate's military operations were focused on internal unrest. Local governors had begun to exert greater autonomy, using their increasing power to make their positions hereditary. Simultaneously, former supporters of the Abbasids had broken away to create a separate kingdom around Khorosan in northern Persia.

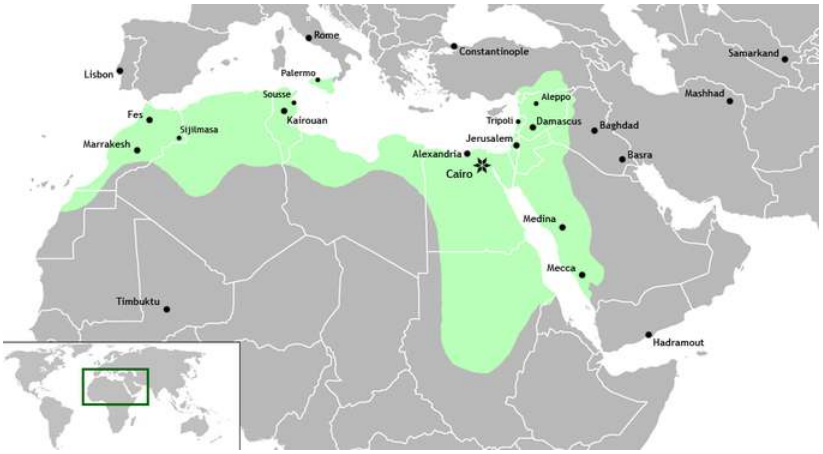
Several factions left the empire to exercise independent authority. In 793 CE, the Shi'a (also called Shi'ite) dynasty of Idrisids gained authored over Fez in Morocco. The Berber Kharijites set up an independent state in North Africa in 801 CE. A family of governors under the Abbasids became increasingly independent until they founded the Aghlabid Emirate in the 830s. Within 50 years, the Idrisids in the Maghreb, the Aghlabids of Ifriqiya, and the Tulunids and Ikshidids of Misr became independent in Africa.

By the 860s governors in Egypt set up their own Tulunid Emirate, so named for its founder Ahmad ibn Tulun, starting a dynastic rule separate from the caliph. In the eastern territories, local governors decreased their ties to the central Abbasid rule. The Saffarids of Herat and the Samanids of Bukhara seceded in the 870s to cultivate a more Persian culture and rule. The Tulinid dynasty managed Palestine, the Hijaz, and parts of Egypt. By 900 CE, the Abbasids controlled only central Mesopotamia, and the Byzantine Empire began to reconquer western Anatolia.

The Fatimid Caliphate (909–1171 CE)

Several factions challenged the Abbasids' claims to the caliphate. Most Shi'a Muslims had supported the Abbasid war against the Umayyads because the Abbasids claimed legitimacy with their familial connection to Muhammad, an important issue for Shi'a. However, once in power, the Abbasids embraced Sunni Islam and disavowed any support for Shi'a beliefs.

The Shiʻa Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi Billah of the Fatimid dynasty, who claimed descent from Muhammad's daughter, declared himself Caliph in 909 CE and created a separate line of caliphs in North Africa. The Fatimid caliphs initially controlled Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, and they expanded for the next 150 years, taking Egypt and Palestine. The Abbasid dynasty finally challenged Fatimid rule, limiting them to Egypt. By the 920s, a Shi'a sect that only recognized the first five Imams and could trace its roots to Muhammad's daughter Fatima, took control of Idrisi and then Aghlabid domains. This group advanced to Egypt in 969 CE, establishing their capital near Fustat in Cairo, which they built as a bastion of Shi'a learning and politics. By 1000 CE, they had become the chief political and ideological challenge to Abbasid Sunni Islam. At this point, the Abbasid dynasty had fragmented into several governorships that were mostly autonomous, although they official recognized caliphal authority from Baghdad. The caliph himself was under "protection" of the Buyid Emirs, who possessed all of Iraq and western Iran, and were quietly Shi'a in their sympathies.



The Fatimid Caliphate at its height, c. 969 CE. The Fatimid dynasty broke from the Abbasids in 909 CE and created separate lines of caliphs in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Palestine until 1171 CE.

Outside Iraq, all the autonomous provinces slowly became states with hereditary rulers, armies, and revenues. They operated under only nominal caliph authority, with emirs ruling their own provinces from their own capitals. Mahmud of Ghazni took the title of "sultan," instead of "emir," signifying the Ghaznavid Empire's independence from caliphal authority, despite Mahmud's ostentatious displays of Sunni orthodoxy and ritual submission to the caliph. In the 11th century, the loss of respect for the caliphs continued, as some Islamic rulers no longer mentioned the caliph's name in the Friday khutba, or struck it off their coinage. The political power of the Abbasids largely ended with the rise of the Buyids and the Seljuq Turks in 1258 CE. Though lacking in political power, the dynasty continued to claim authority in religious matters until after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517.

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7.5: The Nomadic Tribes of Arabia

Learning Objectives

- Describe the societal structure of tribes in Arabia

Key Points

- Nomadic Bedouin tribes dominated the Arabian Peninsula before the rise of Islam.
- Family groups called clans formed larger tribal units, which reinforced family cooperation in the difficult living conditions on the Arabian peninsula and protected its members against other tribes.
- The Bedouin tribes were nomadic pastoralists who relied on their herds of goats, sheep, and camels for meat, milk, cheese, blood, fur/wool, and other sustenance.
- The pre-Islamic Bedouins also hunted, served as bodyguards, escorted caravans, worked as mercenaries, and traded or raided to gain animals, women, gold, fabric, and other luxury items.
- Arab tribes begin to appear in the south Syrian deserts and southern Jordan around 200 CE, but spread from the central Arabian Peninsula after the rise of Islam in the 630s CE.

Terms

Nabatean

an ancient Semitic people who inhabited northern Arabia and Southern Levant, ca. 37–100 CE.

Bedouin

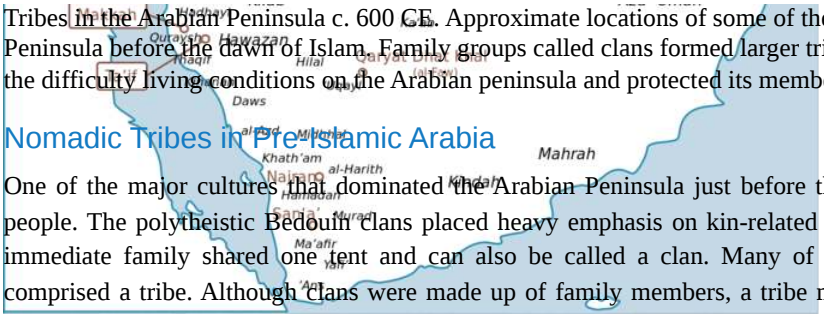
a predominantly desert-dwelling Arabian ethnic group traditionally divided into tribes or clans.

Pre-Islamic Arabia

Pre-Islamic Arabia refers to the Arabian Peninsula prior to the rise of Islam in the 630s.

Some of the settled communities in the Arabian Peninsula developed into distinctive civilizations. Sources for these civilizations are not extensive, and are limited to archaeological evidence, accounts written outside of Arabia, and Arab oral traditions later recorded by Islamic scholars. Among the most prominent civilizations were Thamud, which arose around 3000 BCE and lasted to about 300 CE, and Dilmun, which arose around the end of the fourth millennium and lasted to about 600 CE. Additionally, from the beginning of the first millennium BCE, Southern Arabia was the home to a number of kingdoms, such as the Sabaean kingdom, and the coastal areas of Eastern Arabia were controlled by the Iranian Parthians and Sassanians from 300 BCE.

Pre-Islamic religion in Arabia consisted of indigenous polytheistic beliefs, Ancient Arabian Christianity, Nestorian Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism. Christianity existed in the Arabian Peninsula, and was established first by the early Arab traders who heard the gospel from Peter the apostle at Jerusalem (Acts 2:11), as well as those evangelized by Paul's ministry in Arabia (Galatians 1:17) and by St Thomas. While ancient Arabian Christianity was strong in areas of Southern Arabia, especially with Najran being an important center of Christianity, Nestorian Christianity was the dominant religion in Eastern Arabia prior to the advent of Islam.



Tribes in the Arabian Peninsula c. 600 CE. Approximate locations of some of the important tribes and Empire of the Arabian Peninsula before the dawn of Islam. Family groups called clans formed larger tribal units, which reinforced family cooperation in the difficulty living conditions on the Arabian peninsula and protected its members against other tribes.

Nomadic Tribes in Pre-Islamic Arabia

One of the major cultures that dominated the Arabian Peninsula just before the rise of Islam was that of the nomadic Bedouin people. The polytheistic Bedouin clans placed heavy emphasis on kin-related groups, with each clan clustered under tribes. The immediate family shared one tent and can also be called a clan. Many of these tents and their associated familial relations comprised a tribe. Although clans were made up of family members, a tribe might take in a non-related member and give them familial status. Society was patriarchal, with inheritance through the male lines. Tribes provided a means of protection for its members; death to one clan member meant brutal retaliation.

Non-members of the tribe were viewed as outsiders or enemies. Tribes shared common ethical understandings and provided an individual with an identity. Warfare between tribes was common among the Bedouin, and warfare was given a high honor. The difficult living conditions in the Arabian Peninsula created a heavy emphasis on family cooperation, further strengthening the clan system.

Bedouin shepherd in the Syrian desert. While most modern Bedouins have abandoned their nomadic and tribal traditions for modern urban lifestyles, they retain traditional Bedouin culture with traditional music, poetry, dances, and other cultural practices.

The Bedouin tribes in pre-Islamic Arabia were nomadic-pastoralists. Pastoralists depend on their small herds of goats, sheep, camels, horses, or other animals for meat, milk, cheese, blood, fur/wool, and other sustenance. Because of the harsh climate and the seasonal migrations required to obtain resources, the Bedouin nomadic tribes generally raised sheep, goats, and camels. Each member of the family had a specific role in taking care of the animals, from guarding the herd to making cheese from milk. The nomads also hunted, served as bodyguards, escorted caravans, and worked as mercenaries. Some tribes traded with towns in order to gain goods, while others raided other tribes for animals, women, gold, fabric, and other luxury items.

Bedouin tribes raised camels as part of their nomadic-pastoralist lifestyle. Tribes migrated seasonally to reach resources for their herds of sheep, goats, and camels. Each member of the family had a specific role in taking care of the animals, from guarding the herd to making cheese from milk.

Origin of Jewish and Other Tribes

The first mention of Jews in the areas of modern-day Saudi Arabia dates back, by some accounts, to the time of the First Temple. Immigration to the Arabian Peninsula began in earnest in the 2nd century CE, and by the 6th and 7th centuries there was a considerable Jewish population in Hejaz, mostly in and around Medina. This was partly because of the embrace of Judaism by leaders such as Abu Karib Asad and Dhu Nuwas, who was very aggressive about converting his subjects to Judaism, and who persecuted Christians in his kingdom as a reaction to Christian persecution of Jews there by the local Christians. Before the rise of Islam, there were three main Jewish tribes in the city of Medina: the Banu Nadir, the Banu Qainuqa, and the Banu Qurayza. Arab tribes, most notably the Ghassanids and Lakhmids, began to appear in the south Syrian deserts and southern Jordan from the mid 3rd century CE, during the mid to later stages of the Roman Empire and Sassanid Empire. The Nabatean civilization in Jordan was an Aramaic-speaking ethnic mix of Canaanites, Arameans, and Arabs. According to tradition, the Saudi Bedouin are descendants of two groups. One group, the Yemenis, settled in southwestern Arabia, in the mountains of Yemen, and claimed they descended from a semi-legendary ancestral figure, Qahtan (or Joktan). The second group, the Qaysis, settled in north-central Arabia and claimed they were descendants of the Biblical Ishmael.

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7.6: Arabian Cities

Learning Objectives

- Examine the historical significance of Mecca and Medina

Key Points

- As sea trade routes became more dangerous, several tribes built the Arabian city of Mecca into a center of trade to direct more secure overland caravan routes.
- Once a year, the nomadic tribes would declare a truce and converge upon Mecca in a pilgrimage to pay homage to their idols at the Kaaba and drink from the Zamzam Well.
- The oasis city of Yathrib, also known as Medina, was ruled by several Jewish tribes until Arab tribes gained political power around 400 CE.

Terms

Ishmael

A figure in the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an, and Abraham's first son according to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. He was born of Abraham's marriage to Sarah's handmaiden Hagar.

Kaaba

A sacred building in the city of Mecca that housed the tribal idols until the rise of Islam in 7th century, when it became the center of Islam's most sacred mosque.

Zamzam Well

A well located in the city of Mecca that, according to Islamic belief, is a miraculously generated source of water from God.

Although the majority of pre-Islamic Arabia was nomadic, there were several important cities that came into being as centers of trade and religion, such as Mecca, Medina (Yathrib), Karbala, and Damascus. The most important of these cities was Mecca, which was an important center of trade in the area, as well as the location of the Kaaba (or Ka'ba), one of the most revered shrines in polytheistic Arabia. After the rise of Islam, the Kaaba became the most sacred place in Islam.

Islamic tradition attributes the beginning of Mecca to Ishmael's descendants. Many Muslims point to the Old Testament chapter Psalm 84:3–6 and a mention of a pilgrimage at the Valley of Baca, which is interpreted as a reference to Mecca as Bakkah in Qur'an Surah 3:96. The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, who lived between 60 BCE and 30 BCE, wrote about the isolated region of Arabia in his work *Bibliotheca historica*, describing a holy shrine that Muslims see as Kaaba at Mecca: "And a temple has been set up there, which is very holy and exceedingly revered by all Arabians." Some time in the 5th century, the Kaaba was a place to worship the deities of Arabia's pagan tribes. Mecca's most important pagan deity was Hubal, whose idol had been placed there by the ruling Quraysh tribe and remained until the 7th century.

The City of Mecca

In the 5th century, the Quraysh tribes took control of Mecca and became skilled merchants and traders. In the 6th century, they joined the lucrative spice trade, since battles in other parts of the world were causing traders to divert from the dangerous sea routes to the more secure overland routes. The Byzantine Empire had previously controlled the Red Sea, but piracy had been increasing. Another previous route, which ran through the Persian Gulf via the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, was also threatened by exploitations from the Sassanid Empire, and disrupted by the Lakhmids, the Ghassanids, and the Roman–Persian Wars.

Mecca's prominence as a trading center eventually surpassed the cities of Petra and Palmyra. Historical accounts also provide some indication that goods from other continents may also have flowed through Mecca. Camel caravans, said to have first been used by Muhammad's great-grandfather, were a major part of Mecca's bustling economy. Alliances were struck between the merchants in Mecca and the local nomadic tribes, who would bring goods—leather, livestock, and metals mined in the local mountains—to

Mecca to be loaded on the caravans and carried to cities in Syria and Iraq. Historical accounts provide some indication that goods from other continents may also have flowed through Mecca. Goods from Africa and the Far East passed through en route to Syria. The Meccans signed treaties with both the Byzantines and the Bedouins to negotiate safe passages for caravans and give them water and pasture rights. Mecca became the center of a loose confederation of client tribes, which included those of the Banu Tamim. Other regional powers such as the Abyssinian, Ghassan, and Lakhm were in decline, leaving Meccan trade to be the primary binding force in Arabia in the late 6th century.

The harsh conditions and terrain of the Arabian peninsula meant a near-constant state of conflict between the local tribes, but once a year they would declare a truce and converge upon Mecca in a pilgrimage. Up to the 7th century, this journey was undertaken by the pagan Arabs to pay homage to their shrine and drink from the Zamzam Well. However, it was also the time each year when disputes would be arbitrated, debts would be resolved, and trading would occur at Meccan fairs. These annual events gave the tribes a sense of common identity and made Mecca an important focus for the peninsula.

A modern-day caravan crossing the Arabian Peninsula. As sea trade routes became more dangerous, several tribes built the Arabian city of Mecca into a center of trade to direct more secure overland caravan routes.

The City of Medina (Yathrib)

Although the city of Medina did not have any great distinction until the introduction of Islam, it has always held an important place in trade and agriculture because of its location in a fertile region of the Hejaz. The city was able to maintain decent amounts of food and water, and therefore was an important pit stop for trade caravans traveling along the Red Sea. This was especially important given the merchant culture of Arabia. Along with the port of Jidda, Medina and Mecca thrived through years of pilgrimage.

During the pre-Islamic period up until 622 CE, Medina was known as Yathrib, an oasis city. Yathrib was dominated by Jewish tribes until around 400 CE, when several Arab tribes gained political power. Medina is celebrated for containing the mosque of Muhammad. Medina is 210 miles (340 km) north of Mecca and about 120 miles (190 km) from the Red Sea coast. It is situated in the most fertile part of the Hejaz territory, where the streams of the vicinity converge. An immense plain extends to the south; in every direction the view is bounded by hills and mountains.

In 622 CE, Muhammad and around 70 Meccan Muhajirun believers left Mecca for sanctuary in Yathrib, an event that transformed the religious and political landscape of the city completely. The longstanding enmity between the Aus and Khazraj tribes was dampened as many tribe members, and some local Jews, embraced Islam. Muhammad, linked to the Khazraj through his great-grandmother, was agreed on as civic leader.

The Muslim converts native to Yathrib—whether pagan Arab or Jewish—were called Ansar (“the Patrons” or “the Helpers”). According to Ibn Ishaq, the local pagan Arab tribes, the Muslim Muhajirun from Mecca, the local Muslims (Ansar), and the Jews of the area signed an agreement, the Constitution of Medina, which committed all parties to mutual cooperation under the leadership of Muhammad. The nature of this document as recorded by Ibn Ishaq and transmitted by Ibn Hisham is the subject of dispute among modern Western historians. Many maintain that this “treaty” is possibly a collage of different agreements, oral rather

than written, of different dates, and that it is not clear when they were made. Other scholars, however, both Western and Muslim, argue that the text of the agreement—whether it was originally a single document or several—is possibly one of the oldest Islamic texts we possess.

Old depiction of Medina during Ottoman times.

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7.7: Culture and Religion in Pre-Islamic Arabia

Learning Objectives

- Explain the significance of polytheism and monotheism in pre-Islamic Arabia

Key Points

- Before the rise of the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, most Bedouin tribes practiced polytheism in the form of animism and idolatry.
- Three of the ruling tribes of Yathrib (Medina) were Jewish, one of the oldest monotheistic religions.
- Christianity spread to Arabia after Constantinople conquered Byzantium in 324 CE, and it was adopted by several Bedouin tribes.
- Poetry was a large part of tribal culture and communication, and it was often used as propaganda against other tribes.

Terms

monotheism

The belief in the existence of a single god.

idolatry

The worship of an idol or a physical object, such as a cult image, as a god.

animism

The worldview that non-human entities (animals, plants, and inanimate objects or phenomena) possess a spiritual essence; often practiced by tribal groups before organized religion.

Ka'aba

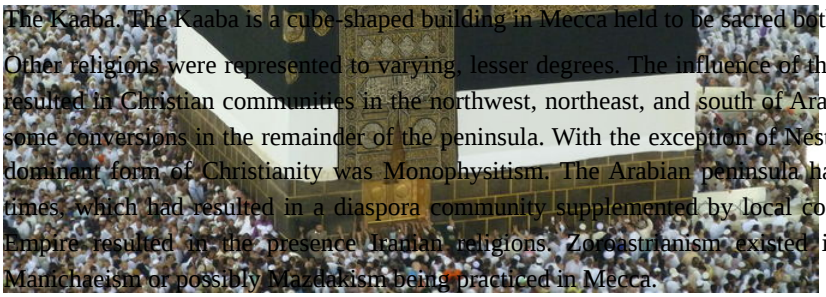
A building at the center of Islam's most sacred mosque, Al-Masjid al-Haram, in Mecca, al-Hejaz, Saudi Arabia. It is the most sacred Muslim site in the world.

polytheism

The worship of or belief in multiple deities usually assembled into a pantheon of gods and goddesses, along with their own religions and rituals.

Overview

Religion in pre-Islamic Arabia was a mix of polytheism, Christianity, Judaism, and Iranian religions. Arab polytheism, the dominant belief system, was based on the belief in deities and other supernatural beings such as djinn. Gods and goddesses were worshipped at local shrines, such as the Kaaba in Mecca. Some scholars postulate that Allah may have been one of the gods of the Meccan religion to whom the shrine was dedicated, although it seems he had little relevance in the religion. Many of the physical descriptions of the pre-Islamic gods are traced to idols, especially near the Kaaba, which is believed to have contained up to 360 of them.



The Kaaba. The Kaaba is a cube-shaped building in Mecca held to be sacred both by Muslims and pre-Islamic polytheistic tribes.

Other religions were represented to varying, lesser degrees. The influence of the adjacent Roman, Axumite, and Sasanian empires resulted in Christian communities in the northwest, northeast, and south of Arabia. Christianity made a lesser impact, but secured some conversions in the remainder of the peninsula. With the exception of Nestorianism in the northeast and the Persian Gulf, the dominant form of Christianity was Monophysitism. The Arabian peninsula had been subject to Jewish migration since Roman times, which had resulted in a diaspora community supplemented by local converts. Additionally, the influence of the Sasanian Empire resulted in the presence Iranian religions. Zoroastrianism existed in the east and south, and there is evidence of Manichaeism or possibly Mazdakism being practiced in Mecca.

Polytheism in Pre-Islamic Arabia

Before the rise of Islam, most Bedouin tribes practiced polytheism, most often in the form of animism. Animists believe that non-human entities (animals, plants, and inanimate objects or phenomena) possess a spiritual essence. Totemism and idolatry, or worship of totems or idols representing natural phenomena, were also common religious practices in the pre-Islamic world. Idols were housed in the Kaaba, an ancient sanctuary in the city of Mecca. The site housed about 360 idols and attracted worshippers from all over Arabia. According to the holy Muslim text the Quran, Ibrahim, together with his son Ishmael, raised the foundations of a house and began work on the Kaaba around 2130 BCE.

The chief god in pre-Islamic Arabia was Hubal, the Syrian god of the moon. The three daughters of Hubal were the chief goddesses of Meccan Arabian mythology: Allāt, Al-‘Uzzá, and Manāt. Allāt was the goddess associated with the underworld. Al-‘Uzzá, “The Mightiest One” or “The Strong,” was a fertility goddess, and she was called upon for protection and victory before war. Manāt was the goddess of fate; the Book of Idols describes her as the most ancient of all these idols. The Book of Idols describes gods and rites of Arabian religion, but criticizes the idolatry of pre-Islamic religion.

Relief of the goddess Allāt, one of the three patron gods of the city of Mecca. Before the rise of the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, most Bedouin tribes practiced polytheism in the form of animism and idolatry.

Monotheism in Pre-Islamic Arabia

Judaism

The most well-known monotheists were the Hebrews, although the Persians and the Medes had also developed monotheism. Judaism is one of the oldest monotheistic religions.

A thriving community of Jewish tribes existed in pre-Islamic Arabia and included both sedentary and nomadic communities. Jews migrated into Arabia starting Roman times. Arabian Jews spoke Arabic as well as Hebrew and Aramaic and had contact with Jewish religious centers in Babylonia and Palestine. The Yemeni Himyarites converted to Judaism in the 4th century, and some of the Kindah, a tribe in central Arabia who were the Himyarites' vassals, were also converted in the 4th/5th century. There is evidence that Jewish converts in the Hejaz were regarded as Jews by other Jews and non-Jews alike, and sought advice from Babylonian rabbis on matters of attire and kosher food. In at least one case, it is known that an Arab tribe agreed to adopt Judaism as a condition for settling in a town dominated by Jewish inhabitants. Some Arab women in Yathrib/Medina are said to have vowed to make their child a Jew if the child survived, since they considered the Jews to be people "of knowledge and the book." Historian Philip Hitti infers from proper names and agricultural vocabulary that the Jewish tribes of Yathrib consisted mostly of Judaized clans of Arabian and Aramaean origin.

Christianity

After Constantine conquered Byzantium in 324 CE, Christianity spread to Arabia. The principal tribes that embraced Christianity were the Himyar, Ghassan, Rabi'a, Tagh'ab, Bahra, and Tunukh, parts of the Tay and Khud'a, the inhabitants of Najran, and the Arabs of Hira. Traditionally, both Jews and Christians believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for Jews the God of the Tanakh, for Christians the God of the Old Testament, the creator of the universe. Both religions reject the view that God is entirely transcendent, and thus separate from the world, as the pre-Christian Greek Unknown God. Both religions also reject atheism on one hand and polytheism on the other.

The main areas of Christian influence in Arabia were on the northeastern and northwestern borders and in what was to become Yemen in the south. The northwest was under the influence of Christian missionary activity from the Roman Empire, where the Ghassanids, residents of a client kingdom of the Romans, were converted to Christianity. In the south, particularly at Najran, a center of Christianity developed as a result of the influence of the Christian kingdom of Axum based on the other side of the Red Sea in Ethiopia. Both the Ghassanids and the Christians in the south adopted Monophysitism. The spread of Christianity was halted in 622 CE by the rise of Islam, though the city of Mecca provided a central location for an intermingling of the two cultures. For example, in addition to the animistic idols, the pre-Islamic Kaaba housed statues of Jesus and his holy mother, Mary.

Nomadic Culture and Poetry

Like later cultures in the region, the Bedouin tribes placed heavy importance on poetry and oral tradition as a means of communication. Poetry was used to communicate within the community and sometimes promoted tribal propaganda. Tribes constructed verses against their enemies, often discrediting their people or fighting abilities. Poets maintained sacred places in their tribes and communities because they were thought to be divinely inspirited. Poets often wrote in classical Arabic, which differed from the common tribal dialect. Poetry was also a form of entertainment, as many poets constructed prose about the nature and beauty surrounding their nomadic lives.

Music

Arabian music extended from the Islamic peoples in Arabia to North Africa, Persia, and Syria. Although the major writings on Arabian music appeared after the dawn of Islam (622 CE), music had already been cultivated for thousands of years. Pre-Islamic Arabian music was primarily vocal, and it may have developed from simple caravan songs (huda) to a more sophisticated secular song (nasb). Instruments were generally used alone and served only to accompany the singer. The short lute ('ud), long lute (tunbur), flute (qussaba), tambourine (duff), and drum (tabl) were the most popular instruments.

An ‘ud. The ‘ud was one of the instruments used to accompany singers. Pre-Islamic and post-Islamic music was important for poetry and oral traditions.

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7.8: Women in Pre-Islamic Arabia

Learning Objectives

- Assess the role and rights of women in Islamic and pre-Islamic Arabia

Key Points

- In the nomadic Bedouin tribes, tribal law determined women's rights, while in the Christian and Jewish southern Arabian Peninsula, Christian and Hebrew edicts determined women's rights.
- Under the customary tribal law existing in Arabia before the rise of Islam, women, as a general rule, had virtually no legal status; fathers sold their daughters into marriage for a price, the husband could terminate the union at will, and women had little or no property or succession rights.
- One of the most important roles for women was to produce children, especially male offspring; women also cooked meals, milked animals, washed clothes, prepared butter and cheese, spun wool, and wove fabric for tents.
- Upper-class women usually had more rights than tribal women and might own property or even inherit from relatives.
- In many modern-day Islamic countries, politics and religion are linked by Sharia law, including the mandatory wearing of the hijab in countries like Saudi Arabia.

Terms

Jahiliyyah

The period of ignorance before the rise of Islam.

hijab

A veil that covers the head and chest, which is particularly worn by some Muslim women in the presence of adult males outside of their immediate family.

Sharia

(Islamic law) deals with many topics addressed by secular law, including crime, politics, and economics, as well as personal matters such as sexual intercourse, hygiene, diet, prayer, everyday etiquette and fasting. Historically, adherence to Islamic law has served as one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Muslim faith.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, women's status varied widely according to the laws and cultural norms of the tribes in which they lived. In the prosperous southern region of the Arabian Peninsula, for example, the religious edicts of Christianity and Judaism held sway among the Sabians and Himyarites. In other places, such as the city of Mecca, and in the nomadic Bedouin tribes, tribal law determined women's rights. Therefore, there was no single definition of the roles played and rights held by women prior to the advent of Islam.

Depiction of the costumes of women in the 4th-6th centuries. Under the customary tribal law existing in Arabia before the rise of Islam, as a general rule women had virtually no legal status; fathers sold their daughters into marriage for a price, the husband could terminate the union at will, and women had little or no property or succession rights.

Tribal Law

Under the customary tribal law existing in Arabia at the advent of Islam, as a general rule women had virtually no legal status. The tribe acted as the main functional unit of Arabian society and was composed of people with connections to a common relative. These tribes were patriarchal and inheritance was passed through the male lines; women could not inherit property. The tribal leader enforced the tribe's spoken rules, which generally limited the rights of the women. Women were often considered property to be inherited or seized in a tribal conflict.

There were also patterns of homicidal abuse of women and girls, including instances of killing female infants if they were considered a liability. The Quran mentions that the Arabs in Jahiliyyah (the period of ignorance or pre-Islamic period) used to bury their daughters alive. The motives were twofold: the fear that an increase in female offspring would result in economic burden, and the fear of the humiliation frequently caused when girls were captured by a hostile tribe and subsequently preferring their captors to their parents and brothers.

Women in Islam and the Hijab

After the rise of Islam, the Quran (the word of God) and the Hadith (the traditions of the prophet Muhammad) developed into Sharia, or Islamic religious law. Sharia dictates that women should cover themselves with a veil. Women who follow these traditions feel it wearing the hijab is their claim to respectability and piety. One of the relevant passages from the Quran translates as "O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons, that are most convenient, that they should be known and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (Quran Surat Al-Ahzab 33:59). These areas of the body are known as "awrah" (parts of the body that should be covered) and are referred to in both the Quran and the Hadith. "Hijab" can also be used to refer to the seclusion of women from men in the public sphere.

Modern-day female art students in Afghanistan. In many modern Islamic countries, Sharia combines politics and religion. For example, in Saudi Arabia it is mandatory for women to wear the hijab, while in Afghanistan it is very common but not legally required by the state.

The practice of women covering themselves with veils was also known during pre-Islamic times. In the Byzantine Empire and pre-Islamic Persia, a veil was a symbol of respect worn by the elite and upper-class women.

Standing woman holding her veil. Terracotta figurine, c. 400–375 BC. Veils were present in the Byzantine Empire and pre-Islamic Persia, and veil wearing is now a basic principle of the Islamic faith.

Marriage

In pre-Islamic Arabian culture, women had little control over their marriages and were rarely allowed to divorce their husbands. Marriages usually consisted of an agreement between a man and his future wife's family, and occurred either within the tribe or between two families of different tribes. As part of the agreement, the man's family might offer property such as camels or horses in exchange for the woman. Upon marriage, the woman would leave her family and reside permanently in the tribe of her husband. Marriage by capture, or "Ba'al," was also a common pre-Islamic practice.

Under Islam, polygyny (the marriage of multiple women to one man) is allowed, but not widespread. In some Islamic countries, such as Iran, a woman's husband may enter into temporary marriages in addition to permanent marriage. Islam forbids Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims.

Family Structure

One of the most important roles for women in pre-Islamic tribes was to produce children, especially male offspring. A woman's male children could inherit property and increased the wealth of the tribe. While men often tended the herds of livestock and guarded the tribe, women played integral roles within tribal society. Women cooked meals, milked animals, washed clothes, prepared butter and cheese, spun wool, and wove fabric for tents.

Upper-Class Women

While the general population of women in pre-Islamic Arabia did not enjoy the luxury of many rights, many women of upper-class status did. They married into comfortable homes and were sometimes able to own property or even inherit from relatives.

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7.9: Early Life of Muhammad

Learning Objectives

- Describe Muhammad's life before 622 CE

Key Points

- Muhammad was born in or around the year 570 CE to the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraysh tribe, one of Mecca's prominent families.
- Muhammad was orphaned at an early age and brought up under the care of his paternal uncle Abu Talib.
- Muhammad worked mostly as a merchant, as well as a shepherd, and married Khadijah, a 40-year-old widow, in 595 CE when he was twenty-five.
- In 605 CE, Muhammad honored all the Meccan clan leaders and set the Black Stone back into the correct spot in the Ka'aba.

Terms

Quraysh tribe

A powerful merchant group that controlled Mecca and the Kaaba.

the Black Stone

The eastern cornerstone of the Kaaba, the ancient stone building located in the center of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is revered by Muslims as an Islamic relic that, according to Muslim tradition, dates back to the time of Adam and Eve.

Overview

Muhammad unified Arabia into a single religious polity under Islam. Muslims and Bahá'ís believe he is a messenger and prophet of God. The Quran, the central religious text in Islam, alludes to Muhammad's life. Muhammad's life is traditionally defined into two periods: pre-hijra (emigration) in Mecca (from 570 to 622 CE) and post-hijra in Medina (from 622 until 632 CE). There are also traditional Muslim biographies of Muhammad (the sira literature), which provide additional information about Muhammad's life. Muhammad is almost universally considered by Muslims as the last prophet sent by God to mankind. While non-Muslims regard Muhammad as the founder of Islam, Muslims consider him to have restored the unaltered original monotheistic faith of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other prophets.

Childhood

Muhammad was born around the year 570 CE to the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraysh tribe, one of Mecca's prominent families. His father, Abdullah, died almost six months before Muhammad was born. According to Islamic tradition, Muhammad was sent to live with a Bedouin family in the desert, as desert life was considered healthier for infants. Muhammad stayed with his foster mother, Halimah bint Abi Dhuayb, and her husband until he was two years old. At the age of six, Muhammad lost his biological mother, Amina, to illness and was raised by his paternal grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, until he died when Muhammad was eight. He then came under the care of his uncle Abu Talib, the new leader of Banu Hashim.

Adolescence and Early Adulthood

While still in his teens, Muhammad accompanied his uncle on trading journeys to Syria, gaining experience in commercial trade, which was the only career open to him as an orphan. Islamic tradition states that when Muhammad was either nine or twelve, while accompanying a caravan to Syria he met a Christian monk or hermit named Bahira, who is said to have foreseen Muhammed's career as a prophet of God. Little is known of Muhammad during his later youth; available information is fragmented, and it is difficult to separate history from legend. It is known that he became a merchant and "was involved in trade between the Indian ocean and the Mediterranean Sea." Due to his upright character during this time, he acquired the nickname "al-Amin," meaning "faithful, trustworthy," and "al-Sadiq," meaning "truthful."

Muhammad worked as a trader for Khadija, a widow, until he married her in 595 CE at the age of 25. The marriage lasted for 25 years and was reported to be a happy one. Muhammad relied upon Khadija and did not enter into a marriage with another woman during his first marriage. After Khadija's death, Khawla bint Hakim suggested that Muhammad that should marry Sawda bint Zama, a Muslim widow, or Aisha, daughter of Um Ruman and Abu Bakr of Mecca. Muhammad is said to have asked for arrangements to marry both.

According to a text collected by historian Ibn Ishaq, Muhammad was involved with a well-known story about setting the Black Stone in place in the wall of the Kaaba in 605 CE. The Black Stone, a sacred object, had been removed to facilitate renovations to the Kaaba. The leaders of Mecca could not agree on which clan should have the honor of setting the Black Stone back in its place. They agreed to wait for the next man to come through the gate and ask him to choose. That man was the 35-year-old Muhammad, five years before his first revelation. He asked for a cloth and put the Black Stone in its center. The clan leaders held the corners of the cloth and together carried the Black Stone to the right spot; then Muhammad set the stone in place, satisfying all who were present.

Muhammad and the Black Stone. An illustration from c. 1315 depicting Muhammad's role in re-setting the Black Stone in 605 CE.

Occasionally he would retreat to a cave in the mountains for several nights of seclusion and prayer; it is reported that it was at this spot that he was visited by Gabriel and received his first revelation from God.

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7.10: The Quran

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the origins of the first Muslim converts

Key Points

- Muhammad first received revelations in 609 CE in a cave on Mount Hira, near Mecca.
- Muslims regard the Quran as the most important miracle of Muhammad, the proof of his prophethood, and the culmination of a series of divine messages revealed by the angel Gabriel from 609–632 CE.
- The key themes of the early Quranic verses included the responsibility of man towards his creator; the resurrection of the dead, God's final judgment followed by vivid descriptions of the tortures in Hell and pleasures in Paradise; and the signs of God in all aspects of life. Religious duties included belief in God, asking for forgiveness of sins, offering frequent prayers, assisting others particularly those in need, rejecting cheating and the love of wealth, being chaste, and not killing newborn girls.
- Muhammad's immediate family were the first to believe he was a prophet, followed by three main groups of early converts to Islam: younger brothers and sons of great merchants, people who had fallen out of the first rank in their tribe or failed to attain it, and unprotected foreigners.
- Muslims believe the Quran to be both the unaltered and the final revelation of God. Religious concepts and practices include the five pillars of Islam, which are obligatory acts of worship, and following Islamic law, which touches on virtually every aspect of life and society, from banking and welfare to the status of women and the environment.

Terms

Quran

Literally meaning "the recitation," it is the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be a revelation from God.

Five Pillars of Islam

Five basic acts in Islam, considered mandatory by believers and are the foundation of Muslim life.

Khadijah

The first wife of Muhammad.

Muhammad's First Revelations

When he was nearly 40, Muhammad began spending many hours alone in prayer and speculating over the aspects of creation. He was concerned with the "ignorance of divine guidance" (*Jahiliyyah*), social unrest, injustice, widespread discrimination (particularly against women), fighting among tribes, and abuse of tribal authorities prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia. The moral degeneration of his fellow people, and his own quest for a true religion, further lent fuel to this, with the result that he began to withdraw periodically to a cave called Mount Hira, three miles north of Mecca, for contemplation and reflection. During this period Muhammad began to have dreams replete with spiritual significance that were fulfilled according to their true import; this was the commencement of his divine revelation. Islamic tradition holds that during one of his visits to Mount Hira in the year 609 CE, the angel Gabriel appeared to him and commanded Muhammad to recite verses that would later be included in the Quran. Upon receiving his first revelations, Muhammad was deeply distressed. When he returned home, he was consoled and reassured by Khadijah and her Christian cousin. Muhammad feared that others would dismiss his claims as evidence of him being possessed. On the other hand, Shi'a tradition maintains that Muhammad was neither surprised nor frightened at the appearance of Gabriel, but rather welcomed him as if he was expected.

The cave Hira in the mountain Jabal al-Nour where, according to Muslim belief, Muhammad received his first revelation from the angel Gabriel.

The initial revelation was followed by a pause of three years (a period known as *fatra*) during which Muhammad felt depressed and further gave himself to prayers and spiritual practices. When the revelations resumed, he was reassured and began preaching.

The Quran

Quran Al-Qurʾn ا. Arabic calligraphy for “Quran.”

Muslims believe that the Quran was verbally revealed from God to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel gradually over a period of approximately 23 years, beginning on 22 December 609 CE, when Muhammad was 40, and concluding in 632 CE, the year of his death. At the beginning of these revelations, Muhammad was confident that he could distinguish his own thoughts from the messages. Sahih al-Bukhari narrates Muhammad describing the revelations as, “Sometimes it is (revealed) like the ringing of a bell,” and Aisha reported, “I saw the Prophet being inspired Divinely on a very cold day and noticed the sweat dropping from his forehead (as the Inspiration was over).”

Muhammad’s first revelation, according to the Quran, was accompanied by a vision. The agent of revelation is mentioned as the “one mighty in power,” the one who “grew clear to view when he was on the uppermost horizon. Then he drew nigh and came down till he was (distant) two bows’ length or even nearer.” The Islamic studies scholar Welch states in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* that he believes the graphic descriptions of Muhammad’s condition at these moments may be regarded as genuine, because he was severely disturbed after these revelations. According to Welch, these seizures would have been seen by those around him as evidence for the superhuman origin of Muhammad’s inspirations. However, Muhammad’s critics accused him of being a possessed man, a soothsayer or a magician, since his experiences were similar to those claimed by such figures well known in ancient Arabia. Welch additionally states that it remains uncertain whether these experiences occurred before or after Muhammad’s initial claim of prophethood.

The Quran describes Muhammad as “ummi,” which is traditionally interpreted as “illiterate,” but the meaning is more complex. Medieval commentators such as Al-Tabari maintained that the term induced two meanings: firstly, the inability to read or write in general, and secondly, the inexperience or ignorance of books or scriptures. However, priority was given to the first meaning. Muhammad’s illiteracy was taken as a sign of the genuineness of his prophethood. For example, according to Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, if Muhammad had mastered writing and reading he possibly would have been suspected of having studied the books of the ancestors. Some scholars such as Watt prefer the second meaning.

According to the Quran, one of the main roles of Muhammad is to warn the unbelievers of their punishment at the end of the world. The Quran does not explicitly refer to Judgment Day, but provided examples from the history of extinct communities and warns Muhammad’s contemporaries of similar calamities. Muhammad did not only warn those who rejected God’s revelation, but also dispensed good news for those who abandoned evil, listening to the divine words and serving God. Muhammad’s mission also involves preaching monotheism; the Quran commands Muhammad to proclaim and praise the name of his Lord and instructs him not to worship idols or associate other deities with God.

A depiction of Muhammad receiving his first revelation from the angel Gabriel. Muslims regard the Quran as the most important miracle of Muhammad, the proof of his prophethood, and the culmination of a series of divine messages revealed by the angel Gabriel from 609–632 CE. (From the manuscript Jami' al-tawarikh by Rashid-al-Din Hamadani, 1307, Ilkhanate period)

The key themes of the early Quranic verses included the responsibility of man towards his creator; the resurrection of the dead, God's final judgment followed by vivid descriptions of the tortures in Hell and pleasures in Paradise; and the signs of God in all aspects of life. Religious duties required of the believers at this time were few: belief in God, asking for forgiveness of sins, offering frequent prayers, assisting others, particularly those in need, rejecting cheating and the love of wealth (considered to be significant in the commercial life of Mecca), being chaste, and not killing newborn girls.

Rise of Islam in Mecca

According to Muslim tradition, Muhammad's wife Khadija was the first to believe he was a prophet. She was followed by Muhammad's ten-year-old cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib, close friend Abu Bakr, and adopted son Zaid. Around 613, Muhammad began to preach to the public. Most Meccans ignored and mocked him, but he did begin to gain followers. There were three main groups of early converts to Islam: younger brothers and sons of great merchants; people who had fallen out of the first rank in their tribe or failed to attain it; and the weak, mostly unprotected foreigners.

Basic Tenets and Practices of Islam

Islam is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion articulated by the Quran, which is considered by its adherents to be the verbatim word of God (Allah), and, for the vast majority of adherents, by the teachings and normative example (called the *sunnah*, composed of accounts called *hadith*) of Muhammad. An adherent of Islam is called a Muslim. Muslims believe that God is one and incomparable and that the purpose of existence is to worship God. Nearly all Muslims consider Muhammad to be the last prophet of God.

Muslims also believe that Islam is the complete and universal version of a primordial faith that was revealed many times before through prophets including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Muslims believe the Quran to be both the unaltered and the final revelation of God. Religious concepts and practices include the Five Pillars of Islam and following Islamic law, which touches on virtually every aspect of life and society, from banking and welfare to the status of women and the environment.

The Five Pillars of Islam are five basic acts in Islam; they are considered mandatory by believers and are the foundation of Muslim life. They are summarized in the famous *hadith* of Gabriel. The Five Pillars are:

1. *Shahada* (faith): there is only one God (Allah), and Muhammad is God's messenger. It is a set statement normally recited in Arabic: lā ʾilāha ʾillā-llāhu muḥammadun rasūlu-llāh (لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا الله مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ الله) "There is no god but God (and) Muhammad is the messenger of God."

2. *Salat* (prayer): consists of five daily prayers, the names referring to the prayer times: *Fajr* (dawn), *Dhuhr* (noon), *ʿAṣr* (afternoon), *Maghrib* (evening), and *ʿIshāʾ* (night). All of these prayers are recited while facing in the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca, and are accompanied by a series of set positions including bowing with hands on knees, standing, prostrating, and sitting in a special position.
3. *Zakāt* (charity): the practice of charitable giving based on accumulated wealth. It is the personal responsibility of each Muslim to ease the economic hardship of others and to strive towards eliminating inequality. *Zakāt* consists of spending a portion of one's wealth for the benefit of the poor or needy, like debtors or travelers.
4. *Sawm* (fasting): three types of fasting are recognized by the Quran: ritual fasting, fasting as compensation for repentance, and ascetic fasting. Ritual fasting is an obligatory act during the month of Ramadan. The fast is meant to allow Muslims to seek nearness to and look for forgiveness from God, to express their gratitude to and dependence on him, to atone for their past sins, and to remind them of the needy.
5. *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca): every able-bodied Muslim is obliged to make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his or her life. The main rituals of the *Hajj* include walking seven times around the Kaaba, termed *Tawaf;* touching the Black Stone, termed *Istilam;* traveling seven times between Mount Safa and Mount Marwah, termed *Sa'yee;* and symbolically stoning the Devil in Mina, termed *Ramee*.

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7.11: Flight from Mecca to Medina

Learning Objectives

- Explain the basis for opposition to Muhammad

Key Points

- As Islam spread in Mecca, the ruling tribes began to oppose Muhammad's preaching and his condemnation of idolatry.
- The Quraysh tribe controlled the Kaaba and drew their religious and political power from its polytheistic shrines, so they began to persecute the Muslims and many of Muhammad's followers became martyrs.
- When Muhammad's wife Khadijah and uncle Abu Talib both died in 619 CE, Abu Lahab assumed leadership of the Banu Hashim clan and withdrew the clan's protection from Muhammad.
- In 622 CE, Muhammad and his followers migrated to Yathrib in the Hijra to escape persecution, renaming the city Medina in honor of the prophet.
- Among the first things Muhammad did to ease the longstanding grievances among the tribes of Medina was draft a document known as the Constitution of Medina.

Terms

Banu Hashim clan

One of Mecca's prominent families and part of the Quraysh tribe.

Mecca

The birthplace of Muhammad and the site of Muhammad's first revelation of the Quran, this city is regarded as the holiest city in the religion of Islam.

Hijra

The migration or journey of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in June 622 CE.

Medina

Muhammad's destination during the Hijra, which became the power base of Islam in its first century (renamed from Yathrib).

Muhammad Starts Preaching

During the first three years of his ministry, Muhammad preached Islam privately, mainly among his near relatives and close acquaintances. According to Muslim tradition, Muhammad's wife Khadija was the first to believe he was a prophet. She was followed by Muhammad's ten-year-old cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib, close friend Abu Bakr, and adopted son Zaid. According to Islamic belief, in the fourth year of Muhammad's prophethood, around 613, he was ordered by God to make his propagation of this monotheistic faith public. Muhammad's earliest teachings were marked by his insistence on the oneness of God, the denunciation of polytheism, belief in the last judgment and its recompense, and social and economic justice.

Most Meccans ignored and mocked him, though a few became his followers. There were three main groups of early converts to Islam: younger brothers and sons of great merchants; people who had fallen out of the first rank in their tribe or failed to attain it; and the weak, mostly unprotected foreigners.

Opposition in Mecca

According to Ibn Sad, one of Muhammad's companions, the opposition in Mecca started when Muhammad delivered verses that condemned idol worship and polytheism. However, the Quran maintains that it began when Muhammad started public preaching. As Islam spread, Muhammad threatened the local tribes and Meccan rulers because their wealth depended on the Kaaba. Muhammad's preaching was particularly offensive to his own Quraysh tribe because they guarded the Kaaba and drew their political and religious power from its polytheistic shrines.

The ruling tribes of Mecca perceived Muhammad as a danger that might cause tensions similar to the rivalry of Judaism and Bedouin Polytheism in Yathrib. The powerful merchants in Mecca attempted to convince Muhammad to abandon his preaching by offering him admission into the inner circle of merchants and an advantageous marriage. However, Muhammad turned down both offers.

The last ayah from the sura An-Najm in the Quran. Muhammad's message of monotheism challenged the traditional social order in Mecca. The Quraysh tribe controlled the Kaaba and drew their religious and political power from its polytheistic shrines, so they began to persecute the Muslims and many of Muhammad's followers became martyrs.

At first, the opposition was confined to ridicule and sarcasm, but later morphed into active persecution that forced a section of new converts to migrate to neighboring Abyssinia (present day Ethiopia). Upset by the rate at which Muhammad was gaining new followers, the Quraysh proposed adopting a common form of worship, which was denounced by the Quran.

Muhammad himself was protected from physical harm as long as he belonged to the Banu Hashim clan, but his followers were not so lucky. Sumayyah bint Khabbab, a slave of the prominent Meccan leader Abu Jahl, is famous as the first martyr of Islam; her master killed her with a spear when she refused to give up her faith. Bilal, another Muslim slave, was tortured by Umayyah ibn Khalaf, who placed more and more rocks on his chest to force his conversion, until he died.

Death of Khadijah and Abu Talib in 619 CE

Muhammad's wife Khadijah and uncle Abu Talib both died in 619 CE, the year that became known as the "year of sorrow." With the death of Abu Talib, Abu Lahab assumed leadership of the Banu Hashim clan. Soon after, Abu Lahab withdrew the clan's protection from Muhammad, endangering him and his followers. Muhammad took this opportunity to look for a new home for himself and his followers. After several unsuccessful negotiations, he found hope with some men from Yathrib (later called Medina). The Arab population of Yathrib were familiar with monotheism and were prepared for the appearance of a prophet because a Jewish community existed there as well. They also hoped, by the means of Muhammad and the new faith, to gain supremacy over Mecca; the Yathrib were jealous of its importance as the place of pilgrimage. Converts to Islam came from nearly all Arab tribes in Medina; by June of the subsequent year, seventy-five Muslims came to Mecca for pilgrimage and to meet Muhammad.

The Delegation from Medina

A delegation from Medina, consisting of the representatives of the twelve important clans of Medina, invited Muhammad as a neutral outsider to serve as the chief arbitrator for the entire community. There was fighting in Yathrib (Medina) mainly involving its Arab and Jewish inhabitants for around a hundred years before 620. The recurring slaughters and disagreements over the resulting claims, especially after the battle of Bu'ath, in which all the clans were involved, made it obvious that the tribal

conceptions of blood feud and an eye for an eye were no longer workable unless there was one man with authority to adjudicate in disputed cases. The delegation from Medina pledged themselves and their fellow citizens to accept Muhammad into their community and physically protect him as one of their own.

The Hijra in 622 CE

The Hijra is the migration of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina, 320 kilometers (200 miles) north, in 622 CE. Muhammad instructed his followers to emigrate to Medina until nearly all of them left Mecca. According to tradition, the Meccans, alarmed at the departure, plotted to assassinate Muhammad. In June 622, when he was warned of the plot, Muhammad slipped out of Mecca with his companion, Abu Bakr.

On the night of his departure, Muhammad's house was besieged by the appointed men of Quraysh. It is said that when Muhammad emerged from his house, he recited the a verse from the Quran and threw a handful of dust in the direction of the besiegers, which prevented them seeing him. When the Quraysh learned of Muhammad's escape, they announced a large reward for bringing him back to them, alive or dead, and pursuers scattered in all directions. After eight days' journey, Muhammad entered the outskirts of Medina, but did not enter the city directly. He stopped at a place called Quba, some miles from the main city, and established a mosque there. After a fourteen-days stay at Quba, Muhammad started for Medina, participating in his first Friday prayer on the way, and upon reaching the city was greeted cordially by its people.

The Hijra and other early Muslim migrations. The Hijra is the migration or journey of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Yathrib, which he later renamed Medina, in 622 CE.

Muhammad in Medina

Among the first things Muhammad did to ease the longstanding grievances among the tribes of Medina was draft a document known as the Constitution of Medina, "establishing a kind of alliance or federation" among the eight Medinan tribes and Muslim emigrants from Mecca. The document specified rights and duties of all citizens and the relationship of the different communities in Medina (including between the Muslim community and other communities, specifically the Jews and other "Peoples of the Book"). The community defined in the Constitution of Medina, *Ummah*, had a religious outlook, also shaped by practical considerations, and substantially preserved the legal forms of the old Arab tribes.

The first group of pagan converts to Islam in Medina were the clans who had not produced great leaders for themselves but had suffered from warlike leaders from other clans. This was followed by the general acceptance of Islam by the pagan population of Medina, with some exceptions.

Reconciliation and Consolidation of the Islamic State

Around 628 CE, the nascent Islamic state was somewhat consolidated when Muhammad left Medina to perform pilgrimage at Mecca. The Quraysh intercepted him en route and made a treaty with the Muslims. Though the terms of the Hudaybiyyah treaty may have been unfavorable to the Muslims of Medina, the Quran declared it a clear victory. Muslim historians suggest that the treaty mobilized the contact between the Meccan pagans and the Muslims of Medina. The treaty demonstrated that the Quraysh recognized Muhammad as their equal and Islam as a rising power.

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7.12: Islam Ascendant

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the rise of Islam under Muhammad

Key Points

- Muhammad created the first Islamic state when he wrote the Constitution of Medina, a formal agreement between Muhammad and all of the significant tribes and families of Medina, including Muslims, Jews, Christians, and pagans.
- The Battle of Badr was a key battle in the early days of Islam and a turning point in Muhammad's struggle with his opponents among the Quraysh in Mecca.
- The Battle of Uḥud in 625 CE was the second military encounter between the Meccans and the Muslims, but the Muslims suffered defeat and withdrew.
- After eight years of fighting with the Meccan tribes, Muhammad gathered an army of 10,000 followers and conquered the city of Mecca, destroying the pagan idols in the Kaaba.
- By the time of Muhammad's unexpected death in 632 CE, he had united Arabia into a single Muslim religious polity.

Terms

Ummah

The collective community of Islamic peoples.

Constitution of Medina

A formal agreement between Muhammad and all of the significant tribes and families of Medina, including Muslims, Jews, Christians, and pagans, that formed the basis of the first Islamic state.

Farewell Pilgrimage

The only Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca by the Islamic prophet Muhammad, in 632 CE.

The Constitution of Medina

Upon his arrival in Medina, Muhammad unified the tribes by drafting the Constitution of Medina, which was a formal agreement between Muhammad and all of the significant tribes and families of Medina, including Muslims, Jews, Christians, and pagans. This constitution instituted rights and responsibilities and united the different Medina communities into the first Islamic state, the Ummah.

An important feature of the Constitution of Medina is the redefinition of ties between Muslims. It set faith relationships above blood ties and emphasized individual responsibility. Tribal identities were still important, and were used to refer to different groups, but the constitution declared that the "main binding tie" for the newly created Ummah was religion. This contrasts with the norms of pre-Islamic Arabia, which was a thoroughly tribal society. This was an important event in the development of the small group of Muslims in Medina to the larger Muslim community and empire. While praying in the Masjid al-Qiblatain in Medina in 624 CE, Muhammad received revelations that he should be facing Mecca rather than Jerusalem during prayer. Muhammad adjusted to the new direction, and his companions praying with him followed his lead, beginning the tradition of facing Mecca during prayer.

The Masjid al-Qiblatain, where Muhammad established the new Qibla, or direction of prayer. Muhammad received revelations that he should face Mecca, rather than Jerusalem, in 624 CE.

Beginning of Armed Conflict

Economically uprooted by their Meccan persecutors and with no available profession, the Muslim migrants turned to raiding Meccan caravans. This response to persecution and effort to provide sustenance for Muslim families initiated armed conflict between the Muslims and the pagan Quraysh of Mecca. Muhammad delivered Quranic verses permitting the Muslims, "those who have been expelled from their homes," to fight the Meccans in opposition to persecution. The caravan attacks provoked and pressured Mecca by interfering with trade, and allowed the Muslims to acquire wealth, power, and prestige while working toward their ultimate goal of inducing Mecca's submission to the new faith.

Battle of Badr

In March 624, Muhammad led three hundred warriors in a raid on a Meccan merchant caravan. The Muslims set an ambush for the caravan at Badr, but a Meccan force intervened and the Battle of Badr commenced. Although outnumbered more than three to one, the Muslims won the battle, killing at least forty-five Meccans. Muhammad and his followers saw the victory as confirmation of their faith, and Muhammad said the victory was assisted by an invisible host of angels. The victory strengthened Muhammad's position in Medina and dispelled earlier doubts among his followers.

Battle of Uhud

To maintain economic prosperity, the Meccans needed to restore their prestige after their defeat at Badr. Abu Sufyan, the leader of the ruling Quraysh tribe, gathered an army of 3,000 men and set out for an attack on Medina. Muhammad led his Muslim force to the Meccans to fight the Battle of Uhud on March 23, 625 CE. When the battle seemed close to a decisive Muslim victory, the Muslim archers left their assigned posts to raid the Meccan camp. Meccan war veteran Khalid ibn al-Walid led a surprise attack, which killed many Muslims and injured Muhammad. The Muslims withdrew up the slopes of Uḥud. The Meccans did not pursue the Muslims further, but marched back to Mecca declaring victory.

For the Muslims, the battle was a significant setback. According to the Quran, the loss at Uhud was partly a punishment and partly a test for steadfastness.

Conquest of Mecca and Arabia

After eight years of fighting with the Meccan tribes, Muhammad gathered an army of 10,000 Muslim converts and marched on the city of Mecca. The attack went largely uncontested and Muhammad took over the city with little bloodshed. Most Meccans converted to Islam. Muhammad declared an amnesty for past offenses, except for ten men and women who had mocked and made fun of him in songs and verses. Some of these people were later pardoned. Muhammad destroyed the pagan idols in the Kaaba and then sent his followers out to destroy all of the remaining pagan temples in Eastern Arabia.

Following the conquest of Mecca, Muhammad was alarmed by a military threat from the confederate tribes of Hawazin, who were raising an army twice the size of Muhammad's. The Banu Hawazin were old enemies of the Meccans. They were joined by the Banu Thaqif, who adopted an anti-Meccan policy due to the decline of the prestige of Meccans. Muhammad defeated the Hawazin and Thaqif tribes in the Battle of Hunayn.

At the end of the 10th year after the migration to Medina, Muhammad performed his first truly Islamic pilgrimage, thereby teaching his followers the rules governing the various ceremonies of the annual Great Pilgrimage. In 632, a few months after returning to Medina from the Farewell Pilgrimage, Muhammad fell ill and died. By the time Muhammad died, most of the Arabian Peninsula had converted to Islam, and he had united Arabia into a single Muslim religious polity.

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7.13: Muhammad's Successors

Learning Objectives

- Assess the Caliphates' rise to power

Key Points

- After Muhammad's death in 632 CE, his friend Abu Bakr was named caliph and ruler of the Islamic community, or Ummah.
- Sunni Muslims believe that Abu Bakr was the proper successor, while Shi'a Muslims believe that Ali should have succeed Muhammad as caliph.
- After Muhammad's death and the rebellion of several tribes, Abu Bakr initiated several military campaigns to bring Arabia under Islam and into the caliphate.
- The Rashidun Caliphate (632–661) was led by Abu Bakr, then by Umar ibn Khattab as the second caliph, Uthman Ibn Affan as the third caliph, and Ali as the fourth caliph.
- Muslim armies conquered most of Arabia by 633, followed by north Africa, Mesopotamia, and Persia, significantly shaping the history of the world through the spread of Islam.

Terms

Sunni

The branch of Islam that believes that a caliph should be elected by Muslims or their representatives and that Abu Bakr was the first caliph.

Ummah

An Arabic word meaning "nation" or "community;" usually refers to the collective community of Islamic peoples.

Shi'a

The minority Islamic branch that believes Muhammad appointed his cousin Ali as his successor and that the caliph should be decided based on this family lineage.

caliph

The head of state in a caliphate, and the title for the ruler of the Islamic Ummah; a successor of Muhammad.

Succession after Muhammad's Death

Muhammad united the tribes of Arabia into a single Arab Muslim religious polity in the last years of his life. He established a new unified Arabian Peninsula, which led to the Rashidun and Umayyad Caliphates and the rapid expansion of Muslim power over the next century.

With Muhammad's death in 632 CE, disagreement broke out among his followers over deciding his successor. Muhammad's prominent companion Umar ibn al-Khattab nominated Abu Bakr, Muhammad's friend and collaborator. With additional support, Abu Bakr was confirmed as the first caliph (religious successor to Muhammad) that same year. This choice was disputed by some of Muhammad's companions, who held that Ali ibn Abi Talib, his cousin and son-in-law, had been designated the successor by Muhammad at Ghadir Khumm. Ali was Muhammad's first cousin and closest living male relative, as well as his son-in-law, having married Muhammad's daughter Fatimah. Ali would eventually become the fourth Sunni caliph. These disagreements over Muhammad's true successor led to a major split in Islam between what became the Sunni and Shi'a denominations, a division that still holds to this day.

Sunni Muslims believe and confirm that Abu Bakr was chosen by the community and that this was the proper procedure. Sunnis further argue that a caliph should ideally be chosen by election or community consensus. Shi'a Muslims believe that just as God alone appoints a prophet, only God has the prerogative to appoint the successor to his prophet. They believe God chose Ali to be Muhammad's successor and the first caliph of Islam.

Rise of the Caliphates

After Muhammad's death, many Arabian tribes rejected Islam or withheld the alms tax established by Muhammad. Many tribes claimed that they had submitted to Muhammad and that with Muhammad's death, their allegiance had ended. Caliph Abu Bakr insisted that they had not just submitted to a leader, but joined the Islamic community of Ummah.

To retain the cohesion of the Islamic state, Abu Bakr divided his Muslim army to force the Arabian tribes into submission. After a series of successful campaigns, Abu Bakr's general Khalid ibn Walid defeated a competing prophet and the Arabian peninsula was united under the caliphate in Medina. Once the rebellions had been quelled, Abu Bakr began a war of conquest. In just a few short decades, his campaigns led to one of the largest empires in history. Muslim armies conquered most of Arabia by 633, followed by north Africa, Mesopotamia, and Persia, significantly shaping the history of the world through the spread of Islam.

Rashidun Caliphate (632–661)

Abu Bakr nominated Umar as his successor on his deathbed. Umar ibn Khattab, the second caliph, was killed by a Persian named Piruz Nahavandi. Umar's successor, Uthman Ibn Affan, was elected by a council of electors (Majlis). Uthman was killed by members of a disaffected group. Ali then took control, but was not universally accepted as caliph by the governors of Egypt, and later by some of his own guard. He faced two major rebellions and was assassinated by Abdl-alRahman, a Kharijite. Ali's tumultuous rule lasted only five years. This period is known as the Fitna, or the first Islamic civil war.

The followers of Ali later became the Shi'a minority sect of Islam, which rejects the legitimacy of the first three caliphs. The followers of all four Rashidun caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali) became the majority Sunni sect. Under the Rashidun, each region (Sultanate) of the caliphate had its own governor (Sultan). Muawiyah, a relative of Uthman and governor (Wali) of Syria, became one of Ali's challengers, and after Ali's assassination managed to overcome the other claimants to the caliphate. Muawiyah transformed the caliphate into a hereditary office, thus founding the Umayyad dynasty. In areas that were previously under Sassanid Persian or Byzantine rule, the caliphs lowered taxes, provided greater local autonomy (to their delegated governors), granted greater religious freedom for Jews and some indigenous Christians, and brought peace to peoples demoralized and disaffected by the casualties and heavy taxation that resulted from the decades of Byzantine-Persian warfare.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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8.1: Rurik and the Foundation of Rus’

Learning Objectives

- Understand the key aspects of Rurik’s rise to power and the establishment of Kievan Rus’

Key Points

- Rurik and his followers likely originated in Scandinavia and were related to Norse Vikings.
- The Primary Chronicle is one of the few written documents available that tells us how Rurik came to power.
- Local leaders most likely invited Rurik to establish order in the Ladoga region around 862, beginning a powerful legacy of Varangian leaders.
- The capital of Kievan Rus’ moved from Novgorod to Kiev after Rurik’s successor, Oleg, captured this southern city.

Terms

Primary Chronicle

A text written in the 12th century that relates a detailed history of Rurik’s rise to power.

Varangians

Norse Vikings who established trade routes throughout Eurasia and eventually established a powerful dynasty in Russia.

Rurik Dynasty

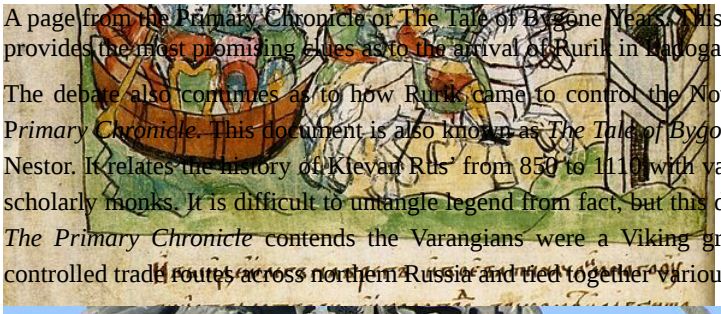
The founders of Kievan Rus’ who stayed in power until 1598 and established the first incarnation of a unified Russia.

Rurik

Rurik (also spelled Riurik) was a Varangian chieftain who arrived in the Ladoga region in modern-day Russia in 862. He built the Holmgard settlement near Novgorod in the 860s and founded the first significant dynasty in Russian history called the Rurik Dynasty. Rurik and his heirs also established a significant geographical and political formation known as Kievan Rus’, the first incarnation of modern Russia. The Rurik rulers continued to rule Russia into the 16th century and the mythology surrounding the man Rurik is often referred to as the official beginning of Russian history.

Primary Chronicle

The identity of the mythic leader Rurik remains obscure and unknown. His original birthplace, family history, and titles are shrouded in mystery with very few historical clues. Some 19th-century scholars attempted to identify him as Rorik of Dorestad (a Viking-Age trading outpost situated in the northern part of modern-day Germany). However, no concrete evidence exists to confirm this particular origin story.



A page from the Primary Chronicle or The Tale of Bygone Years. This rare written document was created in the 12th century and provides the most promising clues as to the arrival of Rurik in Ladoga.

The debate also continues as to how Rurik came to control the Novgorod region. However, some clues are available from the P*rimary Chronicle*. This document is also known as *The Tale of Bygone Yea*rs and was compiled in Kiev around 1113 by the monk Nestor. It relates the history of Kievan Rus' from 850 to 1110, with various updates and edits made throughout the 12th century by scholarly monks. It is difficult to untangle legend from fact, but this document provides the most promising clues regarding Rurik. *The Primary Chronicle* contends the Varangians were a Viking group, most likely from Sweden or northern Germany, who controlled trade routes across northern Russia and tied together various cultures across Eurasia.

A monument celebrating the millennial anniversary of the arrival of Rurik in Russia. This modern interpretation of Rurik illustrates his powerful place in Russian history and lore.

The various tribal groups, including Chuds, Eastern Slavs, Merias, Veses, and Krivichs, along the northern trade routes near Novgorod often cooperated with the Varangian Rus' leaders. But in the late 850s they rose up in rebellion, according to the P*rimary Chronicle*. However, soon after this rebellion, the local tribes near the Novgorod region began to experience internal disorder and conflict. These events prompted local tribal leaders to invite Rurik and his Varangian leaders back to the region in 862 to reinstate peace and order. This moment in history is known as the *Invitation of the Varangians* and is commonly regarded as the starting point of official Russian history.

Development of Kievan Rus’

According to legend, at the call of the local tribal leaders Rurik, along with his brothers Truvor and Sineus, founded the Holmgard settlement in Ladoga. This settlement is supposed to be at the site of modern-day Novgorod. However, newer archeological evidence suggests that Novgorod was not regularly settled until the 10th century, leading some to speculate that Holmgard refers to a smaller settlement just southeast of the city. The founding of Holmgard signaled a new era in Russian history and the three brothers became the famous founders of the first Rus’ ruling dynasty.

Kievan Rus’ in 1015. The expansion and shifting borders of Kievan Rus’ become apparent when looking at this map, which includes the two centers of power in Novgorod and Kiev.

Rurik died in 879 and his successor, Oleg, continued the Varangian Rus’ expansion in 882 by taking the southern city of Kiev from the Khasars and establishing the medieval state of Kievan Rus’. The capital officially moved to Kiev at this point. With this shift in power, there were two distinct capitals in Kievan Rus’, the northern seat of Novgorod and the southern center in Kiev. In Kievan Rus’ tradition, the heir apparent would oversee the northern site of Novgorod while the ruling Rus’ king stayed in Kiev. Over the next 100 years local tribes consolidated and unified under the Rurik Dynasty, although local fractures and cultural differences continued to play a significant role in the attempt to maintain order under Varangian rule.

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8.2: Vladimir I and Christianization

Learning Objectives

- Outline the shift from pagan culture to Orthodox Christianity under the rule of Vladimir I

Key Points

- Vladimir I became the ruler of Kievan Rus' after overthrowing his brother Yaropolk in 978.
- Vladimir I formed an alliance with Basil II of the Byzantine Empire and married his sister Anna in 988.
- After his marriage Vladimir I officially changed the state religion to Orthodox Christianity and destroyed pagan temples and icons.
- He built the first stone church in Kiev in 989, called the Church of the Tithes.

Terms

Constantinople

The capital of the Byzantine Empire.

Perun

The pagan thunder god that many locals, and possibly Vladimir I, worshipped before Christianization.

Basil II

The Byzantine emperor who encouraged Vladimir to convert to Christianity and offered a political marriage alliance with his sister, Anna.

Vladimir I

Vladimir I, also known as Vladimir the Great or Vladimir Sviatoslavich the Great, ruled Kievan Rus' from 980 to 1015 and is famous for Christianizing this territory during his reign. Before he gained the throne in 980, he had been the Prince of Novgorod while his father, Sviatoslav of the Rurik Dynasty, ruled over Kiev. During his rule as the Prince of Novgorod in the 970s, and by the time Vladimir claimed power after his father's death, he had consolidated power between modern-day Ukraine and the Baltic Sea. He also successfully bolstered his frontiers against incursions from Bulgarian, Baltic, and Eastern nomads during his reign.

Early Myths of Christianization

The original Rus' territory was comprised of hundreds of small towns and regions, each with its own beliefs and religious practices. Many of these practices were based on pagan and localized traditions. The first mention of any attempts to bring Christianity to Rus' appears around 860. The Byzantine Patriarch Photius penned a letter in the year 867 that described the Rus' region right after the Rus'-Byzantine War of 860. According to Photius, the people of the region appeared enthusiastic about the new religion and he claims to have sent a bishop to convert the population. However, this low-ranking official did not successfully convert the population of Rus' and it would take another twenty years before a significant change in religious practices would come about.

The stories regarding these first Byzantine missions to Rus' during the 860s vary greatly and there is no official record to substantiate the claims of the Byzantine patriarchs. Any local people in small villages who embraced Christian practices would have had to contend with fears of change from their neighbors.

Vladimir I and His Rise to Power

The major player in the Christianization of the Rus' world is traditionally considered Vladimir I. He was born in 958, the youngest of three sons, to the Rus' king Sviatoslav. He ascended to the position of Prince of Novgorod around 969 while his oldest brother, Yaropolk, became the designated heir to the throne in Kiev. Sviatoslav died in 972, leaving behind a fragile political scene among his three sons. Vladimir was forced to flee to Scandinavia in 976 after Yaropolk murdered their brother Oleg and violently took control of Rus'.

Vladimir I. A Christian representation of Vladimir I, who was the first Rus' leader to officially bring Christianity to the region.

Vladimir fled to his kinsman Haakon Sigurdsson, who ruled Norway at the time. Together they gathered an army with the intent to regain control of Rus' and establish Vladimir as the ruler. In 978, Vladimir returned to Kievan Rus' and successfully recaptured the territory. He also slew his brother Yaropolk in Kiev in the name of treason and, in turn, became the ruler of all of Kievan Rus'.

Constantinople and Conversion

Vladimir spent the next decade expanding his holdings, bolstering his military might, and establishing stronger borders against outside invasions. He also remained a practicing pagan during these first years of his rule. He continued to build shrines to pagan gods, traveled with multiple wives and concubines, and most likely continued to promote the worship of the thunder god Perun. However, the *Primary Chronicle* (one of the few written documents about this time) states that in 987 Vladimir decided to send envoys to investigate the various religions neighboring Kievan Rus'.

According to the limited documentation from the time, the envoys that came back from Constantinople reported that the festivities and the presence of God in the Christian Orthodox faith were more beautiful than anything they had ever seen, convincing Vladimir of his future religion.

Another version of events claims that Basil II of Byzantine needed a military and political ally in the face of a local uprising near Constantinople. In this version of the story, Vladimir demanded a royal marriage in return for his military help. He also announced he would Christianize Kievan Rus' if he was offered a desirable marriage tie. In either version of events, Vladimir vied for the hand of Anna, the sister of the ruling Byzantine emperor, Basil II. In order to marry her he was baptized in the Orthodox faith with the name Basil, a nod to his future brother-in-law.

17th-century Church of the Tithes. The original stone Church of the Tithes collapsed from fire and sacking in the 12th century. However, two later versions were erected and destroyed in the 17th and 19th centuries.

He returned to Kiev with his bride in 988 and proceeded to destroy all pagan temples and monuments. He also built the first stone church in Kiev named the Church of the Tithes starting in 989. These moves confirmed a deep political alliance between the Byzantine Empire and Rus' for years to come.

Baptism of Kiev

On his return in 988, Vladimir baptized his twelve sons and many boyars in official recognition of the new faith. He also sent out a message to all residents of Kiev, both rich and poor, to appear at the Dnieper River the following day. The next day the residents of Kiev who appeared were baptized in the river while Orthodox priests prayed. This event became known as the Baptism of Kiev.

Monument of Saint Vladimir in Kiev. This statue sits close to the site of the original Baptism of Kiev.

Pagan uprisings continued throughout Kievan Rus' for at least another century. Many local populations violently rejected the new religion and a particularly brutal uprising occurred in Novgorod in 1071. However, Vladimir became a symbol of the Russian Orthodox religion, and when he died in 1015 his body parts were distributed throughout the country to serve as holy relics.

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8.3: Yaroslav the Wise

Learning Objectives

- Outline the key elements of Yaroslav the Wise's reign and cultural influence

Key Points

- Yaroslav I came to power after a bloody civil war between brothers.
- He captured the Kievan throne because of the devotion of the Novgorodian and Varangian troops to his cause.
- Grand Prince Yaroslav was the first Kievan ruler to codify legal customs into the Pravda Yaroslava.
- He bolstered borders and encouraged political alliances with other major European powers during his reign.

TERMS

primogeniture

A policy that designates the oldest son as the heir to the throne upon the death of the father.

Novgorod Republic

The northern stronghold of Kievan Rus' where Yaroslav gained early support for his cause.

Yaroslav the Wise

Yaroslav the Wise was the Grand Prince of Kiev from 1016 until his death in 1954. He was also vice-regent of Novgorod from 1010 to 1015 before his father, Vladimir the Great, died. During his reign he was known for spreading Christianity to the people of Rus', founding the first monasteries in the country, encouraging foreign alliances, and translating Greek texts in Church Slavonic. He also created some of the first legal codes in Kievan Rus'. These accomplishments during his lengthy rule granted him the title of Yaroslav the Wise in early chronicles of his life, and his legacy endures in both political and religious Russian history.

Youth and Rise to Power

Yaroslav was the son of the Varangian Grand Prince Vladimir the Great and most likely his second son with Rogneda of Polotsk. His youth remains shrouded in mystery. Evidence from the *Primary Chronicle* and examination of his skeleton suggests he is one of the youngest sons of Vladimir, and possibly a son from a different mother. He was most likely born around the year 978.

Facial reconstruction of Yaroslav I by Mikhail Gerasimov.

He was set as vice-regent of Novgorod in 1010, as befitted a senior heir to the throne. In this same time period Vladimir the Great granted the Kievan throne to his younger son, Boris. Relations were strained in this family. Yaroslav refused to pay Novgorodian tribute to Kiev in 1014, and only Vladimir's death in 1015 prevented a severe war between these two regions. However, the next few years were spent in a bitter civil war between the brothers. Yarsolav was vying for the seat in Kiev against his brother Sviatopolk I, who was supported by Duke Boleslaw I of Chrobry. In the ensuing years of carnage, three of his brothers were murdered (Boris, Gleb, and Svyatoslav). Yaroslav won the first battle at Kiev against Sviatopolk in 1016 and Sviatopolk was forced to flee to Poland.

After this significant triumph Yaroslav's ascent to greatness began, and he granted freedoms and privileges to the Novgorod Republic, who had helped him gain the Kievan throne. These first steps also most likely led to the first legal code in Kievan Rus' under Yaroslav. He was chronicled as Yaroslav the Wise in retellings of these events because of his even-handed dealing with the wars, but it is highly possible he was involved in the murder of his brothers and other gruesome acts of war.

Wise Reign

The civil war did not completely end in 1016. Sviatopolk returned in 1018 and retook Kiev. However, Varangian and Novgorodian troops recaptured the capital and Sviatopolk fled to the West never to return. Another fraternal conflict arose in 1024 when another brother of Yaroslav's, Mstislav of Chernigov, attempted to capture Kiev. After this conflict, the brothers split the Kievan Rus' holdings, with Mstislav ruling over the region left of the Dnieper River.

Yaroslav the Wise was instrumental in defending borders and expanding the holdings of Kievan Rus'. He protected the southern borders from nomadic tribes, such as the Pechenegs, by constructing a line of military forts. He also successfully laid claim to Chersonesus in the Crimea and came to a peaceful agreement with the Byzantine Empire after many years of conflict and disagreements over land holdings.

Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev. This iconic cathedral fell into disrepair and was almost destroyed during the Soviet era, but it was saved and restored to its former glory.

Yaroslav the Wise garnered his thoughtful reputation due to his prolific years in power. He was a ruler that loved literature, religion, and the written language. His many accomplishments included:

- Building the Saint Sophia Cathedral and the first monasteries in Russia, named Saint George and Saint Irene.
- Founding a library and a school at the Saint Sophia Cathedral and encouraging the translation of Greek texts into Church Slavonic.
- Developing a more established hierarchy within the Russian Orthodox Church, including a statute outlining the rights of the clergy and establishing the sobor of bishops.
- Beautifying Kiev with elements of design taken from the Byzantine Empire, including the Golden Gate of Kiev.
- Compiling the first book of laws in Kievan Rus', called the Pravda Yaroslava. This first compilation set down clear laws that reflected the feudal landscape of the 11th century. This initial legal code would live on and be refined into the Russkaya Pravda in the 12th century.

- Establishing primogeniture, which meant that his eldest son would succeed him as Grand Prince over Novgorod and Kiev, hoping that future conflict between his children would be avoided.

Golden Gate of Kiev in 2016. This important monument was one of the great architectural accomplishments created under Yaroslav the Wise, and now features a monument to the ruler, seen in the foreground.

Family and Death

Yaroslav married Ingegerd Olofsdotter, the daughter of the king of Sweden, in 1019. He had many sons and encouraged them to remain on good terms, after all the years of warfare and bloodshed with his own brothers. He also married three of his daughters to European royalty. Elizabeth, Anna, and Anastasia married Harald III of Norway, Henry I of France, and Andrew I of Hungary respectively. These marriages forged powerful alliances with European states.

Daughters of Yaroslav the Wise. This 11th-century fresco in Saint Sophia's Cathedral shows four of Yaroslav's daughter, probably Anne, Anastasia, Elizabeth, and Agatha.

The Grand Prince Yaroslav I died in 1054 and was buried in Saint Sophia's Cathedral. His expansion of culture and military might, along with his unification of Kievan Rus', left a powerful impression on Russian history. Many towns and monuments remain dedicated to this leader.

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8.4: The Mongol Threat

Learning Objectives

- Describe the attacks by th Mongols on the Russian principality

Key Points

- The major principalities of Kievan Rus' became increasingly fractured and independent after the death of Yaroslav the Wise in 1054.
- The first Mongol attempt to capture Kievan territories occurred in 1223 at the Battle of the Kalka River.
- The Mongol forces began a heavy military campaign on Kievan Rus' in 1237 under the rule of Batu Khan.
- Kiev was sacked and taken in 1240, starting a long era of Mongol rule in the region.

Terms

Tatar yoke

The name given to the years of Mongol rule in Kievan Rus', which meant heavy taxation and the possibility of local invasions at any time.

Golden Horde

The western section of the Mongol Empire that included Kievan Rus' and parts of Eastern Europe.

Sarai

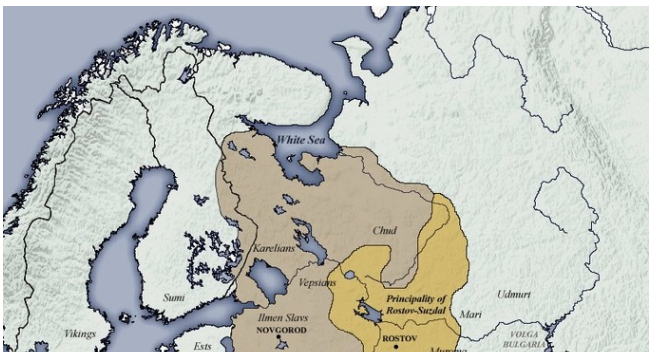
The new capital of the Mongol Empire in the southern part of Kievan Rus'.

Mongol Invasion

The Mongol invasion of the Kievan Rus' principalities began in 1223 at the Battle of the Kalka River. However, the Mongol armies ended up focusing their military might on other regions after this bloody meeting, only to return in 1237. For the next three years the Mongol forces took over the major princely cities of Kievan Rus' and finally forced most principalities to submit to foreign rule and taxation. Rus' became part of what is known as the Golden Horde, the western extension of the Mongol Empire located in the eastern Slavic region. Some of the new taxes and rules of law lasted until 1480 and had a lasting impact on the shape and character of modern Russia.

Fragmented Kievan Rus'

After the end of the unifying reign of Yaroslav the Wise, Kievan Rus' became fragmented and power was focused on smaller polities. The great ruler's death in 1054 brought about major power struggles between his sons and princes in outlying provinces. By the 12th century, after years of fighting amongst the princes, power was centered around smaller principalities. This unsettled trend left Kievan Rus' much more fragmented. Power was passed down to the eldest in the local ruling dynasty and cities were responsible for their own defenses. The Byzantine Empire was also facing major upheaval, which meant a central Russian ally and trading partner was weakened, which, in turn, weakened the strength and wealth of Kievan Rus'.



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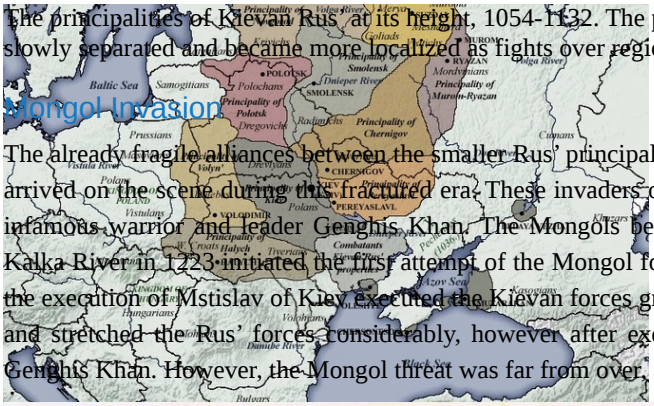


Mongol Invasion

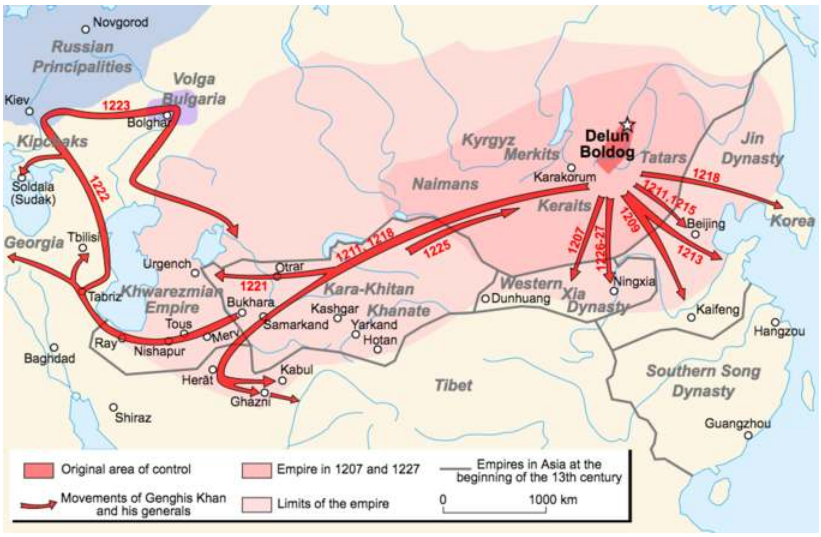
The already fragile alliances between the smaller Rus' principalities faced further tension when the nomadic invaders, the Mongols, arrived on the scene during this fractured era. These invaders originated on the steppes of central Asia and were unified under the infamous warrior and leader Genghis Khan. The Mongols began to expand their power across the continent. The Battle of the Kalka River in 1223 initiated the first attempt of the Mongol forces to capture Kievan Rus'. It was a bloody battle that ended with the execution of Mstislav of Kiev, executed the Kievan forces greatly weakened. The Mongols were superior in their military tactics and stretched the Rus' forces considerably, however after executing the Kievan prince, the forces went back to Asia to rejoin Genghis Khan. However, the Mongol threat was far from over, and they returned in 1237.

The Sacking of Suzdal in 1238 by Batu Khan. This 16th-century depiction of the Mongol invasion highlights the bloodshed and military might of the invaders.

Over the course of the years 1237 and 1238, the Mongol leader, Batu Khan, led his 35,000 mounted archers to burn down Moscow and Kolomna. Then he split his army into smaller units that tackled the princely polities one at a time. Only Novgorod and Pskov were spared major destruction during this time. Refugees from the southern principalities, where destruction was widespread and devastating, were forced to flee to the harsh northern forests, where good soil and resources were scarce. The final victory for Batu Khan came in December 1240 when he stormed the great capital of Kiev and prevailed.

Tatar Rule and the Golden Horde

The Mongols, also known as the Tatars, built their new capital, Sarai, in the south along the Volga River. All the major principalities, such as Novgorod, Smolensk, and Pskov, submitted to Mongol rule. The age of this economic and cultural rule is often called the Tatar yoke, but over the course of 200 years, it was a relatively peaceful rule. The Tatars followed in the footsteps of Genghis Khan and refrained from settling the entire region or forcing local populations to adopt specific religious or cultural traditions. However, Rus' principalities paid tribute and taxes to the Mongol rulers regularly, under the umbrella of the Golden Horde (the western portion of the Mongol Empire). Around 1259 this tribute was organized into a census that was enforced by the locals Rus' princes on a regular schedule, collected, and taken to the capital of Sarai for the Mongol leaders.



A map of the Mongol Empire as it expanded. This illustration shows the rapid expansion of the Mongol Empire as it traveled west into what became known as the Golden Horde.

Effects of Mongol Rule

Despite the fact that the established Tatar rule was relatively peaceful, demanding taxation and the devastation from years of invasion left many major cities in disrepair for decades. It took years to rebuild Kiev and Pskov. However, Novgorod continued to flourish and the relatively new city centers of the Moscow and Tver began to prosper. Another downside to the Tatar presence was the continued threat of invasion and destruction, which happened sporadically during their presence. Each new military invasion meant heavy tolls on the local population and years of reconstruction.

Culturally, the Mongol rule brought about major shifts during the first century of their presence. Extensive postal road systems, military organization, and powerful dynasties were established by Tatar alliances. Capital punishment and torture also became more widespread during the years of Tatar rule. Some noblemen also changed their names and adopted the Tatar language, bringing about a shift in the aesthetic, linguistic, and cultural ties of Russia life. Many scholars also note that the Mongol rule was a major cause of the division of East Slavic people in Rus' into three distinctive modern-day nations, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.

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8.5: Ivan I and the Rise of Moscow

Learning Objectives

- Outline the key points that helped Moscow become so powerful and how Ivan I accomplished these major victories

Key Points

- Moscow was considered a small trading outpost under the principality of Vladimir-Suzdal into the 13th century.
- Power struggles and constant raids under the Mongol Empire's Golden Horde caused once powerful cities, such as Kiev, to struggle financially and culturally.
- Ivan I utilized the relative calm and safety of the northern city of Moscow to entice a larger population and wealth to move there.
- Alliances between Golden Horde leaders and Ivan I saved Moscow from many of the raids and destruction of other centers, like Tver.

Terms

Tver

A rival city to Moscow that eventually lost favor under the Golden Horde.

Grand Prince of Vladimir

The title given to the ruler of this northern province, where Moscow was situated.

The Rise of Moscow

Moscow was only a small trading outpost in the principality of Vladimir-Suzdal in Kievan Rus' before the invasion of Mongol forces during the 13th century. However, due to the unstable environment of the Golden Horde, and the deft leadership of Ivan I at a critical time during the 13th century, Moscow became a safe haven of prosperity during his reign. It also became the new seat of power of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Ivan I

Ivan I (also known as Ivan Kalita) was born around 1288 to the Prince of Moscow, Daniil Aleksandrovich. He was born during a time of devastation and upheaval in Rus'. Kiev had been overtaken by the invading Mongol forces in 1240, and most of the Rus' principalities had been absorbed into the Golden Horde of the Mongol Empire by the time Ivan was born. He ascended to the seat of Prince of Moscow after the death of his father, and then the death of his older brother Yury.

Ivan I. He was born around 1288 and died in either 1340 or 1341, still holding the title of Grand Prince of Vladimir.

Ivan I stepped into a role that had already been expanded by his predecessors. Both his older brother and his father had captured nearby lands, including Kolomna and Mozhaisk. Yury had also made a successful alliance with the Mongol leader Uzbeg Khan and married his sister, securing more power and advantages within the hierarchy of the Golden Horde.

Ivan I continued the family tradition and petitioned the leaders of the Golden Horde to gain the seat of Grand Prince of Vladimir. His other three rivals, all princes of Tver, had previously been granted the title in prior years. However they were all subsequently deprived of the title and all three aspiring princes also eventually ended up murdered. Ivan I, on the other hand, garnered the title from Khan Muhammad Ozbeg in 1328. This new title, which he kept until his death around 1340, meant he could collect taxes from the Russian lands as a ruling prince and position his tiny city as a major player in the Vladimir region.

Moscow's Rise

During this time of upheaval, the tiny outpost of Moscow had multiple advantages that repositioned this town and set it up for future prosperity under Ivan I. Three major contributing factors helped Ivan I relocate power to this area:

- It was situated in between other major principalities on the east and west so it was often protected from the more devastating invasions.
- This relative safety, compared to Tver and Ryazan, for example, started to bring in tax-paying citizens who wanted a safe place to build a home and earn a livelihood.
- Finally, Moscow was set up perfectly along the trade route from Novgorod to the Volga River, giving it an economic advantage from the start.

Ivan I also spurred on the growth of Moscow by actively recruiting people to move to the region. In addition, he bought the freedom of people who had been captured by the extensive Mongol raids. These recruits further bolstered the population of Moscow. Finally, he focused his attention on establishing peace and routing out thieves and raiding parties in the region, making for a safe and calm metaphorical island in a storm of unsettled political and military upsets.

Kievan Rus' 1220-1240. This map illustrates the power dynamics at play during the 13th century shortly before Ivan I was born. Sarai, the capital of the Golden Horde, sat to the southeast, while Moscow (not visible on this map) was tucked up in the northern forests of Vladimir-Suzdal.

Ivan I knew that the peace of his region depended upon keeping up an alliance with the Golden Horde, which he did faithfully. Moscow's increased wealth during this era also allowed him to loan money to neighboring principalities. These regions then became indebted to Moscow, bolstering its political and financial position.

In addition, a few neighboring cities and villages were subsumed into Moscow during the 1320s and 1330s, including Uglich, Belozero, and Galich. These shifts slowly transformed the tiny trading outpost into a bustling city center in the northern forests of what was once Kievan Rus'.

Russian Orthodox Church and The Center of Moscow

Ivan I committed some of Moscow's new wealth to building a splendid city center and creating an iconic religious setting. He built stone churches in the center of Moscow with his newly gained wealth. Ivan I also tempted one of the most important religious leaders in Rus', the Orthodox Metropolitan Peter, to the city of Moscow. Before the rule of the Golden Horde the original Russian Orthodox Church was based in Kiev. After years of devastation, Metropolitan Peter transferred the seat of power to Moscow where a new Renaissance of culture was blossoming. This perfectly timed transformation of Moscow coincided with the decades of devastation in Kiev, effectively transferring power to the north once again.

Peter of Moscow and scenes from his life as depicted in a 15th-century icon. This religious leader helped bring cultural power to Moscow by moving the seat of the Russian Orthodox Church there during Ivan I's reign.

One of the most lasting accomplishments of Ivan I was to petition the Khan based in Sarai to designate his son, who would become Simeon the Proud, as the heir to the title of Grand Prince of Vladimir. This agreement a line of succession that meant the ruling head of Moscow would almost always hold power over the principality of Vladimir, ensuring Moscow held a powerful position for decades to come.

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8.6: The Formation of Russia

Learning Objectives

- Outline the key points that led to a consolidated northern region under Ivan III and Vasili III in Moscow

Key Points

- Moscow had risen to a powerful position in the north due to its location and relative wealth and stability during the height of the Golden Horde.
- Ivan III overtook Novgorod, along with his four brothers' landholdings, which began a process consolidating power under the Grand Prince of Moscow.
- Ivan III was the first prince of Rus' to style himself as the Tsar in the grand tradition of the Orthodox Byzantine Empire.
- Vasili III followed in his father's footsteps and continued a regime of consolidating land and practicing domestic intolerance that suppressed any attempts to disobey the seat of Moscow.

Terms

Muscovite Sudebnik

The legal code crafted by Ivan III that further consolidated his power and outlined harsh punishments for disobedience.

Novgorod

Moscow's most prominent rival in the northern region.

boyars

Members of the highest ruling class in feudal Rus', second only to the princes.

Gathering of the Russian Lands

Ivan III was the first Muscovite prince to consolidate Moscow's position of power and successfully incorporate the rival cities of Tver and Novgorod under the umbrella of Moscow's rule. These shifts in power in the Northern provinces created the first semblance of a "Russian" state (though that name would not be utilized for another century). Ivan the Great was also the first Rus' prince to style himself a Tsar, thereby setting up a strong start for his successor son, Vasili III. Between the two leaders, what would become known as the "Gathering of the Russian Lands" would occur and begin a new era of Russian history after the Mongol Empire's Golden Horde.

Ivan III and the End of the Golden Horde

Ivan III Vasilyevich, also known as Ivan the Great, was born in Moscow in 1440 and became Grand Prince of Moscow in 1462. He ruled from this seat of power until his death in 1505. He came into power when Moscow had many economic and cultural advantages in the norther provinces. His predecessors had expanded Moscow's holdings from a mere 600 miles to 15,000. The seat of the Russian Orthodox Church was also centered in Moscow starting in the 14th century. In addition, Moscow had long been a loyal ally to the ruling Mongol Empire and had an optimal position along major trade routes between Novgorod and the Volga River.

Ivan III. He held the title of Grand Prince of Moscow between 1462 and 1505.

However, one of Ivan the Great's most substantial accomplishments was refusing the Tatar yoke (as the Mongol Empire's stranglehold on Rus' lands has been called) in 1476. Moscow refused to pay its normal Golden Horde taxes starting in that year, which spurred Khan Ahmed to wage war against the city in 1480. It took a number of months before the Khan retreated back to the steppe. During the following year, internal fractures within the Mongol Empire greatly weakened the hold of Mongol rulers on the northeastern Rus' lands, which effectively freed Moscow from its old duties.

Moscow's Land Grab

The other major political change that Ivan III instigated was a major consolidation of power in the northern principalities, often called the "Gathering of the Russian Lands." Moscow's primary rival, Novgorod, became Ivan the Great's first order of business. The two grand cities had been locked in dispute for over a century, but Ivan III waged a harsh war that forced Novgorod to cede its land to Moscow after many uprisings and attempted alliances between Novgorod and Lithuania. The official state document accepting Moscow's rule was signed by Archbishop Feofil of Novgorod in 1478. Any revolts that arose out of Novgorod over the next decade were swiftly put down and any disobedient Novgorodian royal family members were removed to Moscow or other outposts to discourage further outbursts.

In addition to capturing his greatest rival city, Ivan III also collected his four brothers' local lands over the course of his rule, further expanding and consolidating the land under the power of the Grand Prince of Moscow. Ivan III also levied his political, economic, and military might over the course of his reign to gain control of Yaroslavl, Rostov, Tver, and Vyatka, forming one of the most unified political formations in the region since Vladimir the Great. This new political formation was in contrast to centuries of local princes ruling over their regions relatively autonomously.

Palace of Facets pillar. This decadent pillar resides in the Palace of Facets built by Italian architects in stone in the mostly wooden Moscow Kremlin. This banquet hall was only one of many major architectural feats Ivan III built during his reign in Moscow.

Ivan the Great also greatly shaped the future of the Rus' lands. These major shifts included:

- Styling himself the "Tsar and Autocrat" in Byzantine style, essentially stepping into the new leadership position in Orthodoxy after the fall of the Byzantine Empire. These changes also occurred after he married Sophia Paleologue of Constantinople, who had brought court and religious rituals from the Byzantine Empire.
- He stripped the boyars of their localized and state power and essentially created a sovereign state that paid homage to Moscow.
- He oversaw the creation of a new legal code, called Muscovite Sudebnik in 1497, which further consolidated his place as the highest ruler of the northern Rus' lands and instated harsh penalties for disobedience, sacrilege, or attempts to undermine the crown.
- The princes of formerly powerful principalities now under Moscow's rule were placed in the role of service nobility, rather than sovereign rulers as they once were.
- Ivan III's power was partly due to his alliance with Russian Orthodoxy, which created an atmosphere of anti-Catholicism and stifled the chance to build more powerful western alliances.

Vasili III

Vasili III was the son of Sophia Paleologue and Ivan the Great and the Grand Prince of Moscow from 1505 to 1533. He followed in his father's footsteps and continued to expand Moscow's landholdings and political clout. He annexed, Pskov, Volokolamsk,

Ryazan, and Novgorod-Seversky during his reign. His most spectacular grab for power was his capture of Smolensk, the great stronghold of Lithuania. He utilized a rebellious ally in the form of the Lithuanian prince Mikhail Glinski to gain this major victory.

Vasili II. This piece was created by a contemporary artist and depicts Vasili III as a scholar and leader.

Vasili III also followed in his father's oppressive footsteps. He utilized alliances with the Orthodox Church to put down any rebellions or feudal disputes. He limited the power of the boyars and the once-powerful Rurikid dynasties in newly conquered provinces. He also increased the gentry's landholdings, once more consolidating power around Moscow. In general, Vasili III's reign was marked by an oppressive atmosphere; he carried out harsh penalties for speaking out against the power structure or showing the slightest disobedience to the crown.

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8.7: Ivan the Terrible

Learning Objectives

- Outline the key points of Ivan IV's policies and examine the positive and negative aspects of his rule

Key Points

- Ivan IV is often known as Ivan the Terrible, even though the more correct translation is akin to Ivan the Fearsome or Ivan the Awesome.
- Ivan IV was the first Rus' prince to title himself "Tsar of All the Russias" beginning the long tradition of rule under the tsars.
- Lands in the Crimea, Siberia, and modern-day Tatarstan were all subsumed into Russian lands under Ivan IV.
- The persecution of the boyars during Ivan IV's reign began under the harsh regulations of the oprichnina.

Terms

oprichnina

A state policy enacted by Ivan IV that made him absolute monarch of much of the north and hailed in an era of boyar persecution. Ivan IV successfully grabbed large chunks of land from the nobility and created his own personal guard, the oprichniki, during this era.

Moscow Print Yard

The first publishing house in Russia, which was opened in 1553.

boyar

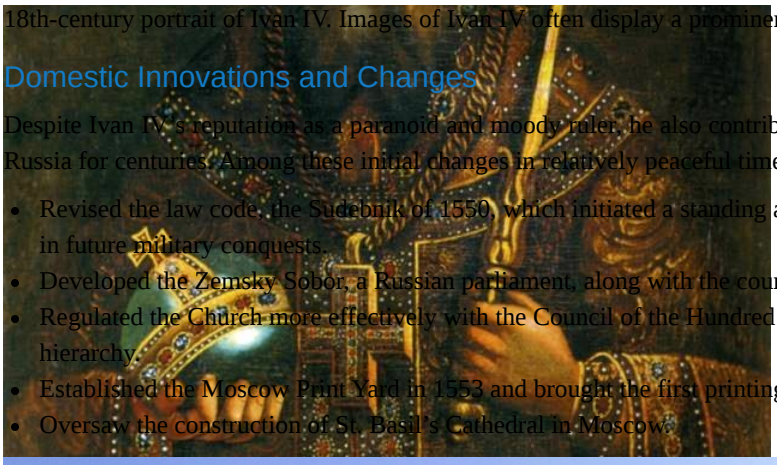
A member of the feudal ruling elite who was second only to the princes in Russian territories.

Ivan IV

Ivan IV Vasileyevich is widely known as Ivan the Terrible or Ivan the Fearsome. He was the Grand Prince of Moscow from 1533 to 1547 and reigned as the "Tsar of all the Russias" from 1547 until he died in 1584. His complex years in power precipitated military conquests, including Kazan and Astrakhan, that changed the shape and demographic character of Russia forever. He also reshaped the political formation of the Russian state, oversaw a cultural Renaissance in Russia, and shifted power to the head of state, the tsar, a title that had never before been given to a prince in the Rus' lands.

Rise to Power

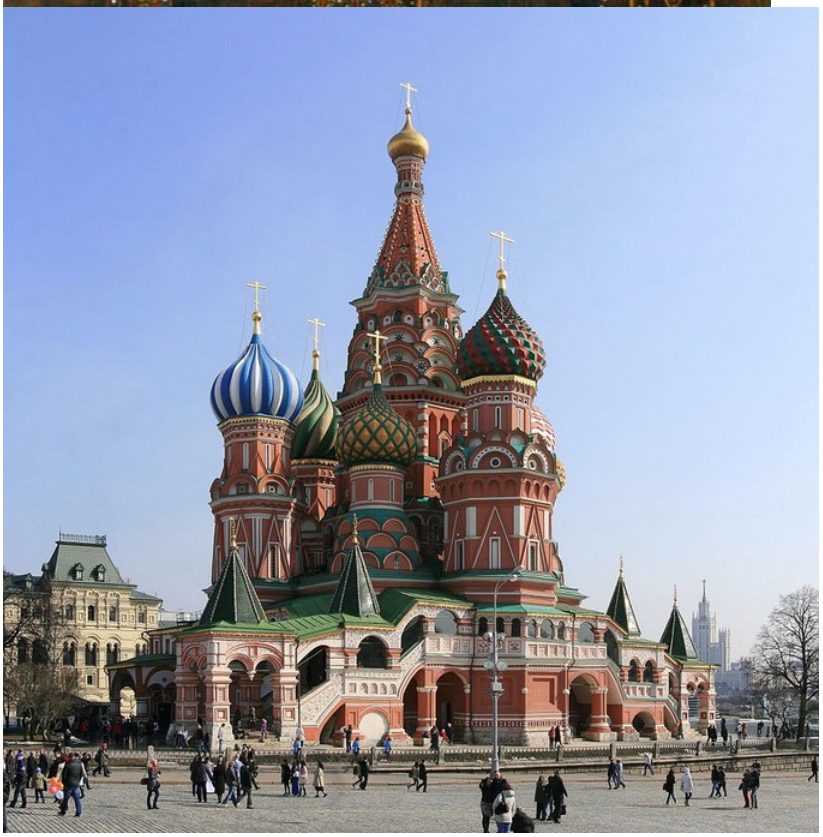
Ivan IV was born in 1530 to Vasili III and Elena Glinskaya. He was three when he was named the Grand Prince of Moscow after his father's death. Some say his years as the child vice-regent of Moscow under manipulative boyar powers shaped his views for life. In 1547, at the age of sixteen, he was crowned "Tsar of All the Russias" and was the first person to be coronated with that title. This title claimed the heritage of Kievan Rus' while firmly establishing a new unified Russian state. He also married Anastasia Romanovna, which tied him to the powerful Romanov family.


18th-century portrait of Ivan IV. Images of Ivan IV often display a prominent brow and a frowning mouth.

Domestic Innovations and Changes

Despite Ivan IV's reputation as a paranoid and moody ruler, he also contributed to the cultural and political shifts that would shape Russia for centuries. Among these initial changes in relatively peaceful times he:

- Revised the law code, the Sudebnik of 1550, which initiated a standing army, known as the streltsy. This army would help him in future military conquests.
- Developed the Zemsky Sobor, a Russian parliament, along with the council of the nobles, known as the Chosen Council.
- Regulated the Church more effectively with the Council of the Hundred Chapters, which regulated Church traditions and the hierarchy.
- Established the Moscow Print Yard in 1553 and brought the first printing press to Russia.
- Oversaw the construction of St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow.


St. Basil's Cathedral. This iconic structure was one cultural accomplishment created under Ivan IV's rule.

Oprichnina and Absolute Monarchy

The 1560s were difficult with Russia facing drought and famine, along with a number of Tatar invasions, and a sea-trading blockade from the Swedes and Poles. Ivan IV's wife, Anastasia, was also likely poisoned and died in 1560, leaving Ivan shaken and, some sources say, mentally unstable. Ivan IV threatened to abdicate and fled from Moscow in 1564. However, a group of boyars went to beg Ivan to return in order to keep the peace. Ivan agreed to return with the understanding he would be granted absolute power and then instituted what is known as the oprichnina.

1911 painting by Apollinary Vasnetsov. This painting represents people fleeing from the Oprichniki, the secret service and military oppressors of Ivan IV's reign.

This agreement changed the way the Russian state worked and began an era of oppression, executions, and state surveillance. It split the Russian lands into two distinct spheres, with the northern region around the former Novgorod Republic placed under the absolute power of Ivan IV. The boyar council oversaw the rest of the Russian lands. This new proclamation also started a wave of persecution and against the boyars. Ivan IV executed, exiled, or forcibly removed hundreds of boyars from power, solidifying his legacy as a paranoid and unstable ruler.

Military Conquests and Foreign Relations

Ivan IV established a powerful trade agreement with England and even asked for asylum, should he need it in his fights with the boyars, from Elizabeth I. However, Ivan IV's greatest legacy remains his conquests, which reshaped Russia and pushed back Tatar powers who had been dominating and invading the region for centuries.

His first conquest was the Kazan Khanate, which had been raiding the northeast region of Russia for decades. This territory sits in modern-day Tatarstan. A faction of Russian supporters were already rising up in the region but Ivan IV led his army of 150,000 to battle in June of 1552. After months of siege and blocking Kazan's water supply, the city fell in October. The conquest of the entire Kazan Khanate reshaped relations between the nomadic people and the Russian state. It also created a more diverse population under the fold of the Russian state and the Church.

Ivan IV also embarked on the Livonian War, which lasted 24 years. The war pitted Russia against the Swedish Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Poland. The Polish leader, Stefan Batory, was an ally of the Ottoman Empire in the south, which was also in a tug-of-war with Russia over territory. These two powerful entities on each edge of Russian lands, and the prolonged wars, left the economy in Moscow strained and Russian resources scarce in the 1570s.

Ivan IV also oversaw two decisive territorial victories during his reign. The first was the defeat of the Crimean horde, which meant the southern lands were once again under Russian leadership. The second expansion of Russian territory was headed by Cossack leader Yermak Timofeyevich. He led expeditions into Siberian territories that had never been under Russian rule. Between 1577 and 1580 many new Siberian regions had reached agreements with Russian leaders, allowing Ivan IV to style himself "Tsar of Siberia" in his last years.

Ivan IV's throne. This decadent throne mirrors Ivan the Terrible's love of power and opulence.

Madness and Legacy

Ivan IV left behind a compelling and contradictory legacy. Even his nickname "terrible" is a source for confusion. In Russian the word *grozny* means "awesome," "powerful" or "thundering," rather than "terrible" or "mad." However, Ivan IV often behaved in ruthless and paranoid ways that favors the less flattering interpretation. He persecuted the long-ruling boyars and often accused people of attempting to murder him (which makes some sense when you look at his family's history). His often reckless foreign policies, such as the drawn out Livonian War, left the economy unstable and fertile lands a wreck. Legend also suggests he murdered his son Ivan Ivanovich, whom he had groomed for the throne, in 1581, leaving the throne to his childless son Feodor Ivanovich. However, his dedication to culture and innovation reshaped Russia and solidified its place in the East.

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8.8: The Time of Troubles

Learning Objectives

- Outline the distinctive features of the Time of Troubles and how they eventually ended

Key Points

- The Time of Troubles started with the death of the childless Tsar Feodor Ivanovich, which spurred an ongoing dynastic dispute.
- Famine between 1601 and 1603 caused massive starvation and further strained Russia.
- Two false heirs to the throne, known as False Dmitris, were backed by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that wanted to grab power in Moscow.
- Rurikid Prince Dmitry Pozharsky and Novgorod merchant Kuzma Minin led the final resistance against Polish invasion that ended the dynastic dispute and reclaimed Moscow in 1613.

Terms

Feodor Ivanovich

The last tsar of the Rurik Dynasty, whose death spurred on a major dynastic dispute.

Dmitry Pozharsky

The Rurikid prince that successfully ousted Polish forces from Moscow.

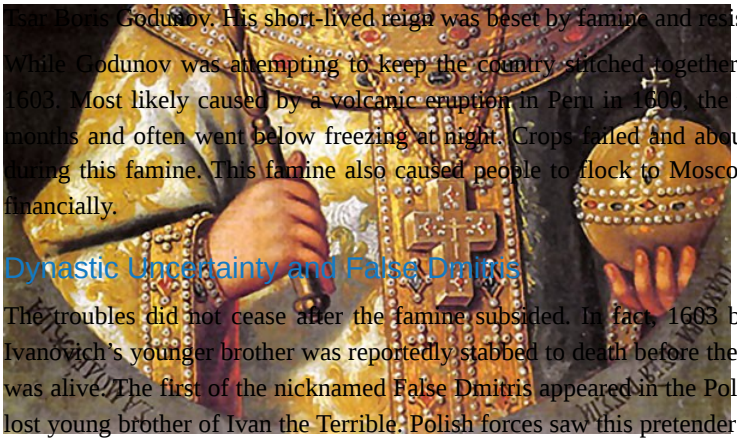
Zemsky Sobor

A form of Russian parliament that met to vote on major state decisions, and was comprised of nobility, Orthodox clergy, and merchant representatives.

The Time of Troubles was an era of Russian history dominated by a dynastic crisis and exacerbated by ongoing wars with Poland and Sweden, as well as a devastating famine. It began with the death of the childless last Russian Tsar of the Rurik Dynasty, Feodor Ivanovich, in 1598 and continued until the establishment of the Romanov Dynasty in 1613. It took another six years to end two of the wars that had started during the Time of Troubles, including the Dymitriads against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Famine and Unrest

At the death of Feodor Ivanovich, the last Rurikid Tsar, in 1598, his brother-in-law and trusted advisor, Boris Godunov, was elected his successor by the Zemsky Sobor (Great National Assembly). Godunov was a leading boyar and had accomplished a great deal under the reign of the mentally-challenged and childless Feodor. However, his position as a boyar caused unrest among the Romanov clan who saw it as an affront to follow a lowly boyar. Due to the political unrest, strained resources, and factions against his rule, he was not able to accomplish much during his short reign, which only lasted until 1605.



Tsar Boris Godunov. His short-lived reign was beset by famine and resistance from the boyars.

While Godunov was attempting to keep the country stitched together, a devastating famine swept across Russian from 1601 to 1603. Most likely caused by a volcanic eruption in Peru in 1600, the temperatures stayed well below normal during the summer months and often went below freezing at night. Crops failed and about two million Russians, a third of the population, perished during this famine. This famine also caused people to flock to Moscow for food supplies, straining the capital both socially and financially.

Dynastic Uncertainty and False Dmitris

The troubles did not cease after the famine subsided. In fact, 1603 brought about new political and dynastic struggles. Feodor Ivanovich's younger brother was reportedly stabbed to death before the Tsar's death, but some people still believed he had fled and was alive. The first of the nicknamed False Dmitris appeared in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1603 claiming he was the lost young brother of Ivan the Terrible. Polish forces saw this pretender's appearance as an opportunity to regain land and influence in Russia and the some 4,000 troops comprised of Russian exiles, Lithuanians, and Cossacks crossed the border and began what is known as the Dymitriad wars.

Vasili IV of Russia. He was the last member of the Rurikid Dynasty to rule in Moscow between 1606 and 1610.

False Dmitri was supported by enough Polish and Russian rebels hoping for a rich reward that he was married to Marina Mniszech and ascended to the throne in Moscow at Boris Godunov's death in 1605. Within a year Vasily Shuisky (a Rurikid prince) staged an uprising against False Dmitri, murdered him, and seized control of power in Moscow for himself. He ruled between 1606 and 1610 and was known as Vasili IV. However, the boyars and mercenaries were still displeased with this new ruler. At the same time as Shuisky's ascent, a new False Dmitri appeared on the scene with the backing of the Polish-Lithuanian magnates.

An Empty Throne and Wars

Shuisky retained power long enough to make a treaty with Sweden, which spurred a worried Poland into officially beginning the Polish-Muscovite War that lasted from 1605 to 1618. The struggle over who would gain control of Moscow became entangled and complex once Poland became an acting participant. Shuisky was still on the throne, both the second False Dmitri and the son of the Polish king, Władysław, were attempting to take control.

None of the three pretenders succeeded, however, when the Polish king himself, Sigismund III, decided he would take the seat in Moscow.

Russia was stretched to its limit by 1611. Within the five years after Boris Godunov's death powers had shifted considerably:

- The boyars quarreled amongst themselves over who should rule Moscow while the throne remained empty.
- Russian Orthodoxy was imperiled and many Orthodox religious leaders were imprisoned.
- Catholic Polish forces occupied the Kremlin in Moscow and Smolensk.
- Swedish forces had taken over Novgorod in retaliation to Polish forces attempting to ally with Russia.
- Tatar raids continued in the south leaving many people dead and stretched for resources.

The End of Troubles

Two strong leaders arose out of the chaos of the first decade of the 17th century to combat the Polish invasion and settle the dynastic dispute. The powerful Novgordian merchant Kuzma Minin along with the Rurikid Prince Dmitry Pozharsky rallied enough forces to push back the Polish forces in Russia. The new Russian rebellion first pushed Polish forces back to the Kremlin, and between November 3rd and 6th (New Style) Prince Pozharsky had forced the garrison to surrender in Moscow. November 4 is known as National Unity Day, however it fell out of favor during Communism, only to be reinstated in 2005.

The dynastic wars finally came to an end when the Grand National Assembly elected Michael Romanov, the son of the metropolitan Philaret, to the throne in 1613. The new Romanov Tsar, Michael I, quickly had the second False Dmitri's son and wife killed, to stifle further uprisings.

Michael I. The first Romanov Tsar to be crowned in 1613.

Despite the end to internal unrest, the wars with Sweden and Poland would last until 1618 and 1619 respectively, when peace treaties were finally enacted. These treaties forced Russia to cede some lands, but the dynastic resolution and the ousting of foreign powers unified most people in Russia behind the new Romanov Tsar and started a new era.

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8.9: The Romanovs

Learning Objectives

- Explain the rise of power of the House of Romanov and the first major Russian Tsars of this dynasty

Key Points

- The Romanovs were exiled during the Time of Troubles but brought back when Romanovs Patriarch Philaret and his son Michael were politically advantageous.
- Michael I was the first Romanov Tsar and began a long line of powerful rulers.
- Alexis I successfully navigated Russia through multiple uprisings and wars and created long-lasting political bureaus.
- After a long dynastic dispute, Peter the Great rose to power and changed Russia with the new capital of St. Petersburg and western influences.

Terms

Old Believers

Followers of the Orthodox faith the way it was practiced before Alexis I convened the Great Moscow Synod and changed the traditions.

Duma chancellory

The first provincial administrative bureau created under Alexis I. In Russian it is called Razryadny Prikaz.

Rurikid

A descendent of the Rurik Dynasty, which dominated seats of power throughout Russian lands for over six centuries before the Romanov Dynasty began.

The House of Romanov

The House of Romanov was the second major royal dynasty in Russia, and arose after the Rurikid Dynasty. It was founded in 1613 with the coronation of Michael I and ended in 1917 with the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II. However, the direct male blood line of the Romanov Dynasty ended when Elizabeth of Russia died in 1762, and Peter III, followed by Catherine the Great, were placed in power, both German-born royalty.

Roots of the Romanovs

The earliest common ancestor for the Romanov clan goes back to Andrei Kobyla. Sources say he was a boyar under the leadership of the Rurikid prince Semyon I of Moscow in 1347. This figure remains somewhat mysterious with some sources claiming he was the high-born son of a Rus' prince. Others point to the name Kobyla, which means horse, suggesting he was descended from the Master of Horse in the royal household.

Whatever the real origins of this patriarch-like figure, his descendants split into about a dozen different branches over the next couple of centuries. One such descendent, Roman Yurievich Zakharyin-Yuriev, gave the Romanov Dynasty its name. Grandchildren of this patriarch changed their name to Romanov and it remained there until they rose to power.

Michael I

The Romanov Dynasty proper was founded after the Time of Troubles, an era between 1598 and 1613, which included a dynastic struggle, wars with Sweden and Poland, and severe famine. Tsar Boris Godunov's rule, which lasted until 1605, saw the Romanov families exiled to the Urals and other remote areas. Michael I's father was forced to take monastic vows and adopt the name Philaret. Two impostors attempting to gain the throne in Moscow attempted to leverage Romanov power after Godunov died in 1605. And by 1613, the Romanov family had again become a popular name in the running for power.

Patriarch Philaret's son, Michael I, was voted into power by the zemsky sober in July 1613, ending a long dynastic dispute. He unified the boyars and satisfied the Moscow royalty as the son of Feodor Nikitich Romanov (now Patriarch Philaret) and the nephew of the Rurikid Tsar Feodor I. He was only sixteen at his coronation, and both he and his mother were afraid of his future in such a difficult political position.

Representation of a young Michael I. He rose to power in Moscow when he was just sixteen and went on to become an influential leader in Russian history.

Michael I reinstated order in Moscow over his first years in power and also developed two major government offices, the Posolsky Prikaz (Foreign Office) and the Razryadny Prikaz (Duma chancellory, or provincial administration office). These two offices remained essential to Russian order for a many decades.

Alexis I

Michael I ruled until his death in 1645 and his son, Alexis, took over the throne at the age of sixteen, just like his father. His reign would last over 30 years and ended at his death in 1676. His reign was marked by riots in cities such Pskov and Novgorod, as well as continued wars with Sweden and Poland.

Alexis I of Russian in the 1670s. His policies toward the Church and peasant uprisings created new legal codes and traditions that lasted well into the 19th century.

However, Alexis I established a new legal code called Subornoye Ulozheniye, which created a serf class, made hereditary class unchangeable, and required official state documentation to travel between towns. These codes stayed in effect well into the 19th century. Under Alexis I's rule, the Orthodox Church also convened the Great Moscow Synod, which created new customs and traditions. This historic moment created a schism between what are termed Old Believers (those attached to the previous hierarchy and traditions of the Church) and the new Church traditions. Alexis I's legacy paints him as a peaceful and reflective ruler, with a propensity for progressive ideas.

Dynastic Dispute and Peter the Great

At the death of Alexis I in 1676, a dynastic dispute erupted between the children of his first wife, namely Fyodor III, Sofia Alexeyevna, Ivan V, and the son of his second wife, Peter Alexeyevich (later Peter the Great). The crown was quickly passed down through the children of his first wife. Fyodor III died from illness after ruling for only six years. Between 1682 and 1689 power was contested between Sofia Alexeyevna, Ivan V, and Peter. Sofia served as regent from 1682 to 1689. She actively opposed Peter's claim to the throne in favor of her own brother, Ivan. However, Ivan V and Peter shared the throne until Ivan's death in 1696.

Peter the Great as a young ruler in 1698. This portrait was a gift to the King of England and displays a western style that was rarely scene in royal portraits before this time. He is not wearing a beard or the traditional caps and robes that marked Russian nobility before his rule.

Peter went on to rule over Russia, and even style himself Emperor of all Russia in 1721, and ruled until his death in 1725. He built a new capital in St. Petersburg, where he built a navy and attempted to wrest control of the Baltic Sea. He is also remembered for bringing western culture and Enlightenment ideas to Russia, as well as limiting the control of the Church.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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9.2: Genghis Khan
9.3: Expansion Throughout Eastern Asia
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9.1: Overview of the Mongol Empire

Learning Objectives

- Define the significance of the Pax Mongolica

Key Points

- The Mongol Empire existed during the 13th and 14th centuries and was the largest land empire in history.
- The empire unified the nomadic Mongol and Turkic tribes of historical Mongolia.
- The empire sent invasions in every direction, ultimately connecting the East with the West with the *Pax Mongolica*, or Mongol Peace, which allowed trade, technologies, commodities, and ideologies to be disseminated and exchanged across Eurasia.
- The Mongol raids and invasions were some of the deadliest and most terrifying conflicts in human history.
- Ultimately, the empire started to fragment; it dissolved in 1368, at which point the Han Chinese Ming Dynasty took control.

Terms

tributary states

Pre-modern states subordinate to a more powerful state.

Pax Mongolica

Also known as the Mongol Peace, this agreement allowed trade, technologies, commodities, and ideologies to be disseminated and exchanged across Eurasia.

High Middle Ages

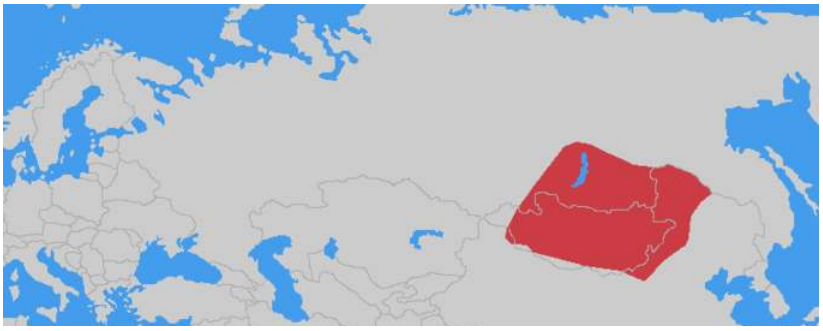
A time between the 10th and 12th centuries when the core cultural and social characteristics of the Middle Ages were firmly set.

Rise of the Mongol Empire

During Europe's High Middle Ages the Mongol Empire, the largest contiguous land empire in history, began to emerge. The Mongol Empire began in the Central Asian steppes and lasted throughout the 13th and 14th centuries. At its greatest extent it included all of modern-day Mongolia, China, parts of Burma, Romania, Pakistan, Siberia, Ukraine, Belarus, Cilicia, Anatolia, Georgia, Armenia, Persia, Iraq, Central Asia, and much or all of Russia. Many additional countries became tributary states of the Mongol Empire.

The empire unified the nomadic Mongol and Turkic tribes of historical Mongolia under the leadership of Genghis Khan, who was proclaimed ruler of all Mongols in 1206. The empire grew rapidly under his rule and then under his descendants, who sent invasions in every direction. The vast transcontinental empire connected the east with the west with an enforced *Pax Mongolica*, or Mongol Peace, allowing trade, technologies, commodities, and ideologies to be disseminated and exchanged across Eurasia.

Mongol invasions and conquests progressed over the next century, until 1300, by which time the vast empire covered much of Asia and Eastern Europe. Historians regard the Mongol raids and invasions as some of the deadliest and most terrifying conflicts in human history. The Mongols spread panic ahead of them and induced population displacement on an unprecedented scale.



The Mongol Empire. Expansion of the Mongol empire from 1206 CE-1294 CE.

Impact of the Pax Mongolica

The Pax Mongolica refers to the relative stabilization of the regions under Mongol control during the height of the empire in the 13th and 14th centuries. The Mongol rulers maintained peace and relative stability in such varied regions because they did not force subjects to adopt religious or cultural traditions. However, they still enforced a legal code known as the Yassa (Great Law), which stopped feudal disagreements at local levels and made outright disobedience a dubious prospect. It also ensured that it was easy to create an army in short time and gave the khans access to the daughters of local leaders.

The Silk Road. At its height these trade routes stretched between Europe, Persia, and China. They connected ideas, materials, and people in new and exciting ways that allowed for innovations.

The constant presence of troops across the empire also ensured that people followed Yassa edicts and maintained enough stability for goods and for people to travel long distances along these routes. In this environment the largest empire to ever exist helped one of the most influential trade routes in the world, known as the Silk Road, to flourish. This route allowed commodities such as silk, pepper, cinnamon, precious stones, linen, and leather goods to travel between Europe, the Steppe, India, and China.

Marco Polo in a Tatar costume. This style of dress, with the fur hat, long coat, and saber, would have been popular in regions in and around Russian, Eurasia, and Turkey.

Ideas also traveled along the trade route, including major discoveries and innovations in mathematics, astronomy, paper-making, and banking systems from various parts of the world. Famous explorers, such as Marco Polo, also enjoyed the freedom and stability the Pax Mongolica provided, and were able to bring back valuable information about the East and the Mongol Empire to Europe.

The Empire Starts to Fragment

Tatar and Mongol raids against Russian states continued well into the later 1200's. Elsewhere, the Mongols' territorial gains in China persisted into the 14th century under the Yuan Dynasty, while those in Persia persisted into the 15th century under the Timurid Dynasty. In India, the Mongols' gains survived into the 19th century as the Mughal Empire.

However, the Battle of Ain Jalut in 1260 was a turning point. It was the first time a Mongol advance had ever been beaten back in direct combat on the battlefield, and it marked the beginning of the fragmentation of the empire due to wars over succession. The grandchildren of Genghis Khan disputed whether the royal line should follow from his son and initial heir Ögedei or one of his other sons. After long rivalries and civil war, Kublai Khan took power in 1271 when he established the Yuan Dynasty, but civil war ensued again as he sought unsuccessfully to regain control of the followers of Genghis Khan's other descendants.

By the time of Kublai's death in 1294, the Mongol Empire had fractured into four separate empires, or khanates. This weakness allowed the Han Chinese Ming Dynasty to take control in 1368, while Russian princes also slowly developed independence over the 14th and 15th centuries, and the Mongol Empire finally dissolved.

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9.2: Genghis Khan

Learning Objectives

- Outline the major cultural contributions and complex role played by Genghis Khan in the development of the Mongol Empire

Key Points

- Genghis Khan was the first leader, or Khan, of the Mongol Empire, from 1206 CE–1227 CE.
- Genghis Khan generally advocated literacy, religious freedom, and trade, although many local customs were frowned upon or discarded once Mongol rule was implemented.
- In terms of social policy, he forbade selling of women, theft of property, and fighting.
- This ruler used groundbreaking siege warfare and spy techniques to understand his enemies and more successfully conquer and subsume them under his rule.
- Genghis Khan led merciless conquests of the Western Xia Dynasty, the Jin Dynasty in 1234, the Kara-Khitan Khanate, and the Khwarazmian Empire. Many local people across Asia considered Genghis Khan a dark historical figure.

Terms

Khan

The universal leader of the Mongol tribes.

Temujin

Ghengis Khan's birth name.

Uyghur-Mongolian script

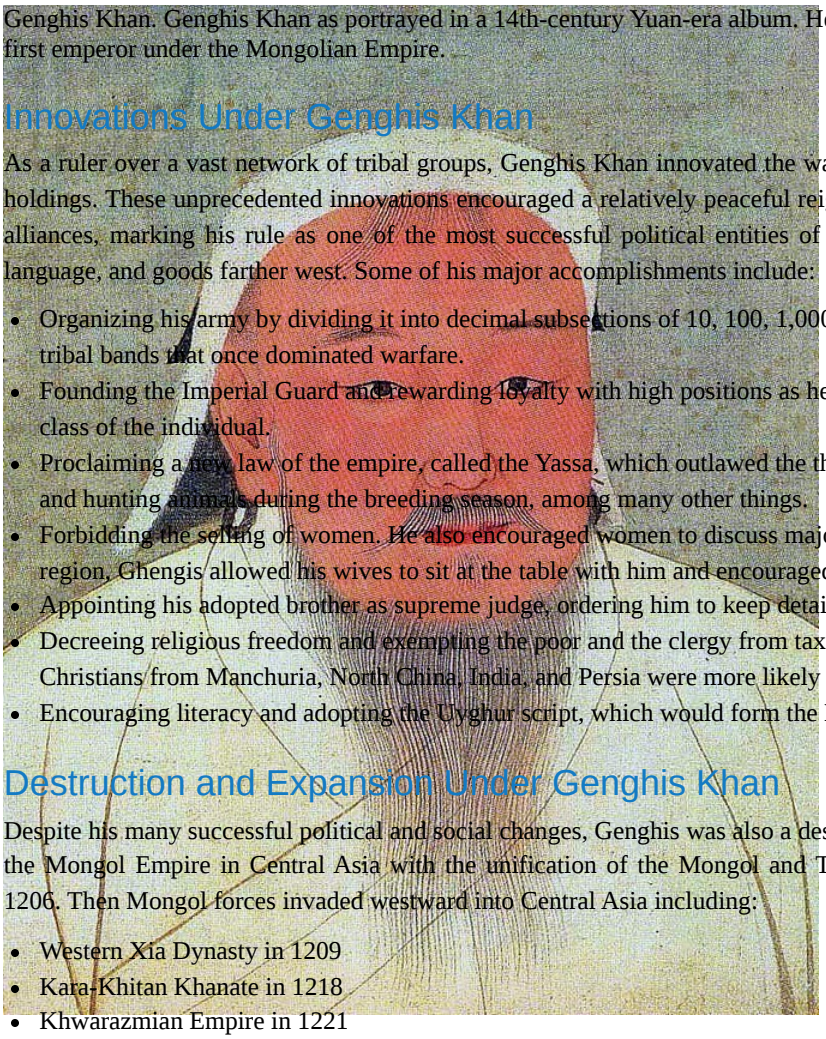
The first writing system created specifically for the Mongolian language and the most successful until the introduction of Cyrillic in 1946. This is a true alphabet with separate letters for consonants and vowels, alphabets based on this script are used in Inner Mongolia and other parts of China to this day.

The First Khan and the Mongol Empire

Before Genghis Khan became the leader of Mongolia, he was known as Temujin. He was born around 1162 in modern-day northern Mongolia into a nomadic tribe with noble ties and powerful alliances. These fortunate circumstances helped him unite dozens of tribes in his adulthood via alliances. In his early 20s he married his young wife Börte, a bride from another powerful tribe. Soon, bubbling tensions erupted and she was kidnapped by a rival tribe. During this era, and possibly spurred by the capture of his wife, Temujin united the nomadic, previously ever-rivaling Mongol tribes under his rule through political manipulation and military might, and also reclaimed his bride from the rebellious tribe.

As Temujin gained power, he forbade looting of his enemies without permission, and he implemented a policy of sharing spoils with his warriors and their families instead of giving it all to the aristocrats. His meritocratic policies tended to gain a broader range of followers, compared to his rival brother, Jamukha, who also hoped to rule over greater swaths of Mongolian territory. This split in policies created conflict with his uncles and brothers, who were also legitimate heirs to Mongol succession, as well as his generals.

War ensued, and Temujin prevailed, destroying all the remaining rival tribes from 1203–1205 and bringing them under his sway. In 1206, Temujin was crowned as the leader of the Great Mongol Nation. It was then that he assumed the title of Genghis Khan, meaning universal leader, marking the start of the Mongol Empire. The first great khan was able to grasp power over such varied populations through bloody siege warfare and elaborate spy systems, which allowed him to better understand his enemy. He also utilized a lenient policy toward religious and local traditions, which convinced many people to follow his lead with promises of amnesty and neutrality.



Genghis Khan. Genghis Khan as portrayed in a 14th-century Yuan-era album. He was the first leader of the unified Mongols and first emperor under the Mongolian Empire.

Innovations Under Genghis Khan

As a ruler over a vast network of tribal groups, Genghis Khan innovated the way he ruled and garnered power as he expanded his holdings. These unprecedented innovations encouraged a relatively peaceful reign and helped to develop stabler trading routes and alliances, marking his rule as one of the most successful political entities of the era. He also successfully brought technology, language, and goods farther west. Some of his major accomplishments include:

- Organizing his army by dividing it into decimal subsections of 10, 100, 1,000, and 10,000, and discarded the lineage-based, tribal bands that once dominated warfare.
- Founding the Imperial Guard and rewarding loyalty with high positions as heads of army units and households no matter the class of the individual.
- Proclaiming a new law of the empire, called the Yassa, which outlawed the theft of property, fighting amongst the population, and hunting animals during the breeding season, among many other things.
- Forbidding the selling of women. He also encouraged women to discuss major, public decisions. Unlike other leaders in the region, Ghengis allowed his wives to sit at the table with him and encouraged them to voice their opinions.
- Appointing his adopted brother as supreme judge, ordering him to keep detailed records of the empire.
- Decreeing religious freedom and exempting the poor and the clergy from taxation. Because of this, Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians from Manchuria, North China, India, and Persia were more likely to acquiesce to Mongol intrusions and takeovers.
- Encouraging literacy and adopting the Uyghur script, which would form the Empire's Uyghur-Mongolian script.

Destruction and Expansion Under Genghis Khan

Despite his many successful political and social changes, Genghis was also a destructive and intimidating leader. He initially forged the Mongol Empire in Central Asia with the unification of the Mongol and Turkic confederations on the Mongolian plateau in 1206. Then Mongol forces invaded westward into Central Asia including:

- Western Xia Dynasty in 1209
- Kara-Khitan Khanate in 1218
- Khwarazmian Empire in 1221

These conquests seriously depopulated large areas of central Asia and northeastern Iran, complicating the image of Genghis Khan as a peaceful ruler practicing religious tolerance. Any city or town that resisted the Mongols was subject to destruction. Each soldier was required to execute a certain number of persons in cities that did not cooperate. For example, after the conquest of the city of Urgench, each Mongol warrior, in an army that might have consisted of 20,000 soldiers, was required to execute 24 people.

Sack of Baghdad. Illustrations of Mongol advances show the deeply militaristic reality of this empire's success, and the darker side of Genghis Khan's rule.

By 1260, the armies of the Mongol Empire had swept across and outward from the Asian steppes. The dark side of Genghis Khan's rule can be seen in the destruction of ancient and powerful kingdoms in the Middle East, Egypt, and Poland. During the same period, Mongol assaults on China replaced the Sung Dynasty with the Yuan Dynasty. Many local populations in what is now India, Pakistan, and Iran considered the great khan to be a blood-thirsty warlord set on destruction.

The Mongols' military tactics, based on the swift and ferocious use of mounted cavalry, cannons, and siege warfare crushed even the strongest European and Islamic forces and left a trail of devastation behind. Even populations that appreciated the new legal code and relative religious tolerance did not have much free will when it came to Mongol advances. Many times Jewish kosher traditions and Muslim halal traditions were also cast aside in favor of Mongol dining and social customs.

Genghis Khan died in 1227 under mysterious circumstances in possession of one of the largest empires in history. He left these vast holdings in the hands of his sons and heirs, Ögedei and Jochi, who continued to expand outward with attacks and political alliances in every direction.

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9.3: Expansion Throughout Eastern Asia

Learning Objectives

- Recall the significance and consequences of the Mongol Empire's battles with the Western Xia and Jin Dynasties.

Key Points

- Under Genghis Khan, the Mongol Empire conquered the Tanguts' Western Xia Dynasty in 1209.
- Afterward, Genghis Khan began the conquest of the neighboring Jin Dynasty in 1211.
- The Jin Dynasty would finally be successfully conquered by Genghis' son, Ögedei Khan, in 1234.

Terms

Zhongdu

The capital of the Jin Dynasty before the Mongol attacks, situated where modern-day Beijing sits.

ethnocide

The destruction of a national or localized culture in the wake of a population's destruction.

Badger Pass

The location of the battle between Genghis Khan's Mongol Empire and the Jin Dynasty, where the Mongols massacred thousands of Jin troops.

At the time of the political rise of Genghis Khan in 1206 CE, the Mongol Empire shared its western borders with the Western Xia Dynasty of the Tanguts. To the east and south was the Jin Dynasty of northern China. These two regions offered valuable resources and would serve as vassal-states over time as Genghis gained power over these two large territories. His relentless battle tactics also revealed his ruthless viewpoints when it came to disobedient enemy forces and gaining complete control of a region.

Map illustrating the neighboring Xia and Jin regions. These two regions were directly adjacent to Genghis Khan's newly unified Mongol territories in the late 12th and early 13th centuries.

Conquest of the Western Xia Dynasty

The Western Xia Dynasty (also known as the Xi-Xia Dynasty) was located in what is modern-day northern China and sat along the southern border of the Mongol territories. It emerged in 1038 but often struggled to retain independent status from neighboring dynasties. The Xia Dynasty also shared a complex history with the neighboring Jin Dynasty, even serving as a vassal state to the Jin for a period before the arrival of Mongol forces.

Genghis Khan first planned for war with the Western Xia, correctly believing that the young, more powerful ruler of the Jin Dynasty would not come to the Western Xia Dynasty's aid. His very first attempt to gain power started in 1205, the year before he was named supreme ruler on Mongol lands, and his initial attacks were based on a flimsy political pretext. However, he realized that this region would be an ideal gateway to conquering the Jin Dynasty to the south and east. Despite initial difficulties in capturing the Western Xia's well-defended cities, Genghis Khan forced their surrender with multiple siege battles in 1209 and 1210.

Genghis's relentless battle tactics showed to great effect in the Xia territory. While he initially gained territory in 1209, the second invasion in Western Xia in the 1220s was an example of the bloodshed and slaughter he practiced on cities and populations that did not obey his orders. The population was relatively demolished before his death in 1227 and subsequently under the rule of his son and heir, Ögedei. Some scholars even say this is the first example of ethnocide in history.

Conquest of the Jin Dynasty

The tactics and military might Genghis used in the Western Xia region continued as he went on to conquer the larger and more powerful Jin Dynasty in 1211 CE, beginning a 23-year war known as the Mongol-Jin War. Long before the Mongol invasions, Jin leaders took vassal tribute from the Mongolian tribes along their shared border. These leaders even encouraged disputes between these nomadic tribes in order to bolster their own power along their northern border.

However, the tides for this powerful dynasty decidedly shifted when the war started during the first Mongol invasion. Jin's army commander made a tactical mistake in not attacking the Mongols at the first opportunity. Instead, he sent a messenger to Mongols. But the messenger defected and told the Mongols that the Jin Dynasty army was waiting for them on the other side of the Badger Pass. This was where the Mongols massacred thousands of Jin troops and began a long and arduous war that would take a heavy toll on the region.

In 1215 CE Genghis captured and sacked the Jin capital of Zhongdu (modern-day Beijing). This forced the Emperor Xuanzong to move his capital south, abandoning the northern half of his kingdom to the Mongols. Between 1232 CE and 1233 CE, Kaifeng fell to the Mongols under the reign of Genghis' third son, Ögedei Khan. The last major battle between the Jin and the Mongols was the siege of Caizhou in 1234 CE, which marked the collapse of the Jin Dynasty.

The years of war took a heavy toll on the population of the Jin Dynasty, as it had in the Western Xia. Mongol warriors were reported to take the livestock from the small towns and villages along their path and kill the owners.

Despite the hardship of war and the siege and heavy cavalry tactics utilized by Mongol forces, the unifying and centralizing effects of the Mongol Empire created an expansive trade route and opened up these far eastern regions to western influence and goods. More stability along the trade route known as the Silk Road allowed goods and ideas to travel long distances and established a connection between eastern European principalities like the Russian territories.

Jar from the Jin Dynasty. Hunping jar of the Jin Dynasty, with Buddhist figures.

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9.4: Expansion Throughout Central and Western Asia

Learning Objectives

- Assess the factors in Genghis Khan's successful conquest of the Khwarazmian Empire and the Kara-Khitan

Key Points

- Under Genghis Khan, the Mongol Empire conquered the Kara-Khitan Khanate in Central Asia in 1218 CE. This was a relatively easy conquest because the prince of Kara-Khitan, Küchlüg, had become unpopular with his people due to his persecution of Islam.
- The empire now had a border with the Khwarazmian Empire, which they proceeded to conquer as well in 1221 CE.
- The Mongol Empire's conquest of the Khwarazmian Empire saw huge numbers of civilians massacred and enslaved.
- During this time, the empire used catapults to hurl gunpowder bombs. The Mongol Empire is often given credit for introducing gunpowder to Europe.
- By the time of Genghis Khan's death in 1227 CE, the Mongol Empire was twice the size of the Roman Empire and the Muslim Caliphate.

Terms

catapult

A device or weapon for throwing or launching large objects. Used by Genghis Khan during the Mongol invasion of the Khwarazmian Empire.

Samarkand

The capital of the Khwarazm region, which was captured by Mongol forces around 1221.

gunpowder

An explosive substance; can be used to form bombs. Was introduced to Europe by the Mongols.

huochong

A Chinese mortar used in the Central Asia campaign.

Genghis Khan created an efficient military regime after his unifying rise to power in the nomadic Mongol territories of northeastern Asia in 1206 CE. These forces were no longer grouped by tribe or familial affiliation, but rather were organized into armies of multiples of ten soldiers that could be sent where needed in the name of Mongol expansion. Genghis Khan sent forces in every direction, including westward into central Asia. While he was fighting the Western Xia and Jin Dynasties in the east, he was also attempting to gain more land to the west in the Kara-Khitan Khanate and the Khwarazmian Empire, regions that comprise modern-day Iran, Iraq, and Uzbekistan.

Conquest of the Kara-Khitan Khanate

The Mongol Empire conquered the Kara-Khitan Khanate, an empire comprised of former nomads in Central Asia, in the years 1216-1218 CE. The khanate was under the rule of Prince Küchlüg, who had converted to Buddhism and had been persecuting the Muslim majority among the Khitan. This alienated him from most of his people, creating ideal circumstances for a takeover by Genghis Khan.

The Kara-Khitai attracted Genghis Khan's attention when they besieged Almaliq, a city belonging to vassals of the Mongol Empire. Genghis Khan dispatched an army, who, under the command of General Jebe, defeated the Kara-Khitai at their capital, Balasagun, and Küchlüg fled. Jebe gained support from the Kara-Khitan populace by announcing that Küchlüg's oppressive policy of religious persecution had ended. When his army followed Küchlüg to Kashgar in 1217, the populace revolted and turned on Küchlüg, forcing him to flee again for his life. Jebe pursued Küchlüg into modern Afghanistan. According to Persian historian Ata-Malik Juvayni, a group of hunters caught Küchlüg in 1218 and handed him over to the Mongols, who promptly beheaded him.

With Küchlüg's death, the Mongol Empire secured control over the Kara-Khitai and surrounding areas. The Mongols now had a firm outpost in Central Asia directly bordering the Khwarazmian Empire, in Greater Iran. Relations with the Khwarazms would quickly break down, leading to the Mongol invasion of that territory in 1219.

Kara-Khitans Hunting. Kara-Khitans using eagles to hunt, painted during the Chinese Song Dynasty.

Conquest of the Khwarazmian Empire

In the early 13th century, the Khwarazmian Empire was governed by Shah Ala ad-Din Muhammad. Genghis Khan saw the potential advantage in Khwarazmia as a commercial trading partner using the Silk Road, and he sent a caravan to establish official trade ties with the empire. However, a Khwarazmian governor attacked the caravan, claiming that it contained spies. Genghis Khan sent a second group of ambassadors to meet the Shah himself instead of the governor. The Shah had all the men shaved and the Muslim ambassador beheaded and sent his head back with the two remaining ambassadors.

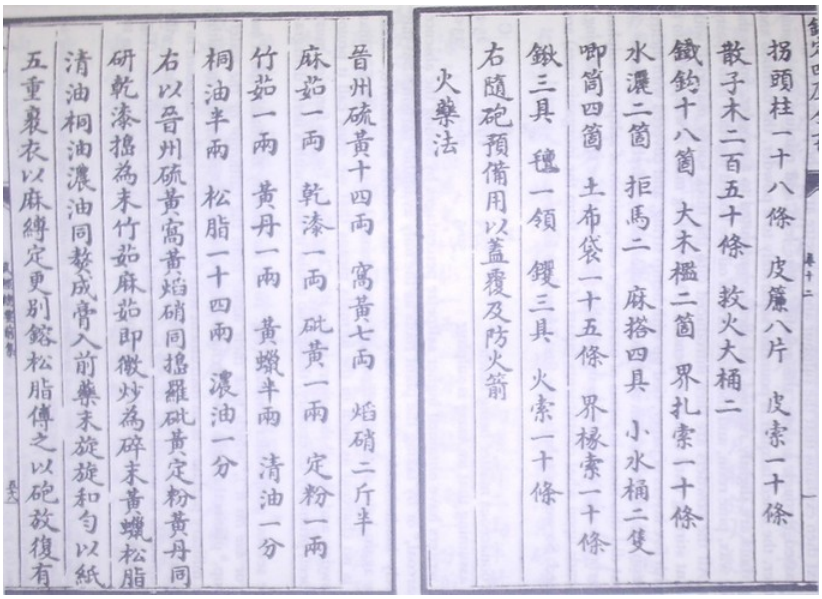
Outraged, Genghis Khan organized one of his largest and most brutal invasion campaigns, fought by 200,000 soldiers in three divisions. He left a commander and troops in China, designated his successors to be his family members, and set out for Khwarazmia. Before he left, he divided his empire among his sons and immediate family and declared that his heir should be his charismatic third son, Ögedei. His invasion of Khwarazmia would last from 1219-1221 CE. His son Jochi led the first division into the northeast, and the second division under Jebe marched secretly to the southeast to form, with the first division, a pincer attack on Samarkand. The third division under Genghis Khan and Tolui moved in from the northwest. The Shah's army, in contrast, was fragmented, a decisive factor in their defeat—the Mongols were not facing a unified defense.

The Mongol tactics were precise and often brutally efficient, including heavy cavalry, siege tactics, and even gunpowder weapons. The attack on the Khwarazm capital, Samarkand, was decisive and left the local population depleted and in tatters. Generally speaking, Mongol forces would enslave or massacre populations after a victorious capture of a city or region, establishing a new rule of law and highlighting Mongol dominance. Legend tells that the often flamboyant Genghis Khan executed the Khwarazm governor by pouring molten silver into his ears and eyes. Eventually the Shah fled rather than surrender, and he died shortly after, possibly killed by the Mongols. After their victory, Genghis Khan ordered two of his generals and their forces to completely destroy the remnants of the empire, including not only royal buildings but entire towns, populations, and even vast swaths of farmland.

The assault on the wealthy trading city of Urgench proved to be the most difficult battle of the Mongol invasion. Mongolian casualties were higher than normal because most battles they fought were in less densely packed urban settings. However, they were successful, and after an extensive invasion such as this one, young women and children were often given to the Mongol

soldiers as slaves. Persian scholar Juvayni states that 50,000 Mongol soldiers were given the task of executing 24 Urgench citizens each. If Juvanyi's estimation is true, 1.2 million people were killed, making it one of the bloodiest invasions in history.

During the invasion of Transoxania in 1219, along with the main Mongol force, Genghis Khan used a Chinese specialist catapult unit in battle, adding to the powerful tactics already in use by Mongol forces. They were used again in 1220 in Transoxania. The Chinese may have used these same catapults to hurl gunpowder bombs. In fact, historians have suggested that the Mongol invasion brought Chinese gunpowder weapons to Central Asia. One of these was the huochong, a Chinese mortar. By the time of Genghis Khan's death in 1227, the Mongol Empire ruled from the Pacific Ocean to the Caspian Sea, an empire twice the size of the Roman Empire and Muslim Caliphate.


拐頭柱一十八條 皮簾八片 皮索一十條
散子木二百五十條 救火大桶二
鐵鈎十八箇 大木檻二箇 界扎索一十條
水灑二箇 拒馬二 麻搭四具 小水桶二隻
唧筒四箇 土布袋一十五條 界椽索一十條
鍬三具 氊一領 钁三具 火索一十條
右隨砲預備用以蓋覆及防火箭
火藥法
晉州硫黃十四兩 窩黃七兩 焰硝二斤半
麻茹一兩 乾漆一兩 砒黃一兩 定粉一兩
竹茹一兩 黃丹一兩 黃蠟半兩 清油一分
桐油半兩 松脂一十四兩 濃油一分
右以晉州硫黃窩黃焰硝同搗羅砒黃定粉黃丹同
研乾漆搗為末竹茹麻茹即微炒為碎末黃蠟松脂
清油桐油濃油同熬成膏入前藥末旋旋和勻以紙
五重裹衣以麻縛定更別鎔松脂傅之以砲放復有

Chinese Formula for Gunpowder. The earliest known written formula for gunpowder, from the Chinese Wujing Zongyao, a military compendium, of 1044 CE.

Pushing Farther West

The Mongols conquered the areas today known as Iran, Iraq, Syria, Caucasus and parts of Turkey. Further Mongol raids reached southwards as far as Gaza into the Palestine region in 1260 and 1300. The major battles were the Siege of Baghdad in 1258, when the Mongols sacked the city that for 500 years had been the center of Islamic power, and the Battle of Ain Jalut in 1260, when the Muslim Egyptians were for the first time able to stop the Mongol advance.

The Mongols were never able to expand farther west than the Middle East due to a combination of political and environmental factors, such as lack of sufficient grazing room for their horses.

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9.5: The Mongols in Eastern Europe

Learning Objectives

- Recognize the European territories conquered by Ögedei and why the Mongols halted their expansion into Western Europe

Key Points

- Ögedei Khan, Genghis Khan's third son, ruled the Mongol Empire from 1227 CE-1241 CE.
- Under Ögedei, the Mongol Empire conquered Eastern Europe by invading Russia and Bulgaria; Poland, at the Battle of Legnica; and Hungary, at the Battle of Mohi.
- Changes in the terrain and resources, which limited their cavalry abilities, along with the death of a charismatic leader Ögedei in 1241, brought these forces to a halt before they reached Western Europe.

Terms

steppe

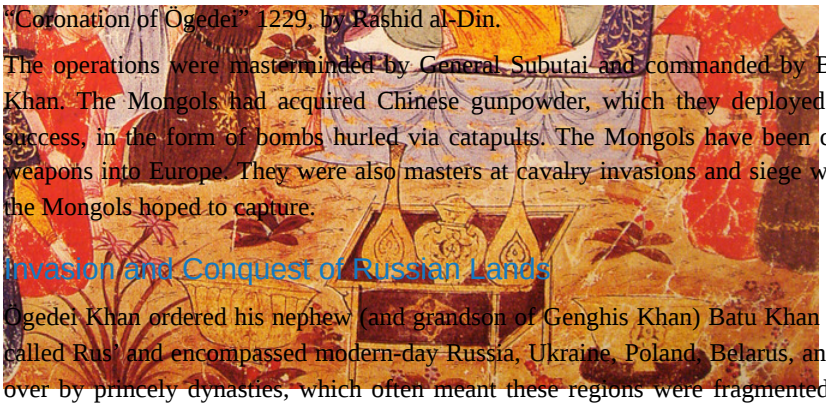
The grasslands of Eastern Europe and Asia. Similar to the North American prairie and the African savannah.

Rus'

Early Russia; encompassed modern-day Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, and the Baltic states.

Expansion of the Mongol Empire Under Ögedei

Ögedei, Genghis Khan's third son, took over from his father and ruled the Mongol Empire from 1227 CE-1241 CE. One of his most important contributions to the empire was his conquest of Eastern Europe. These conquests involved invasions of Russia, Hungary, Volga Bulgaria, Poland, Dalmatia, and Wallachia. Over the course of four years (1237–1241), the Mongols quickly overtook most of the major eastern European cities, only sparing Novgorod and Pskov. As a result of the successful invasions, many of the conquered territories would become part of the Mongol Empire. This conquered region is sometimes referred to as the Golden Horde.


"Coronation of Ögedei" 1229, by Rashid al-Din.

The operations were masterminded by General Subutai and commanded by Batu Khan and Kadan, both grandsons of Genghis Khan. The Mongols had acquired Chinese gunpowder, which they deployed in battle during the invasion of Europe to great success, in the form of bombs hurled via catapults. The Mongols have been credited for introducing gunpowder and associated weapons into Europe. They were also masters at cavalry invasions and siege warfare, which threatened many of the principalities the Mongols hoped to capture.

Invasion and Conquest of Russian Lands

Ögedei Khan ordered his nephew (and grandson of Genghis Khan) Batu Khan to conquer Russia in 1235. (The territory was then called Rus' and encompassed modern-day Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, and the Baltic states. Territories and cities were ruled over by princely dynasties, which often meant these regions were fragmented politically.) The main force arrived at Ryazan in December 1237. Ryazan refused to surrender, and the Mongols sacked it and then stormed through other Russian cities, including Vladimir Suzdal in the north, and Pereyaslav and Chernihiv in the south. Other major Russian cities—such as Torzhok, and Kozelsk—were captured between 1238 and 1240. Some cities, such as Novgorod in the north, were not attacked due to the dense march and forest land surrounding it. However, the princes ruling Novgorod acted as tax collectors for the Mongol Empire in the coming decades.

Afterward, the Mongols turned their attention to the steppe, crushing various tribes and sacking Crimea to the west. They returned to Russia in 1239 and sacked several more cities and finally took the southern Rus' capital of Kiev, leaving behind their trademark destruction of both the population and city structures. This final attack sealed the Rus' principalities' fate, forcing princes to flee their regions or capitulate to Mongol taxation and rule.

Invasion into Central Europe

The Mongols continued to invade Central Europe with three armies. One army defeated the fragmented Poland at the Battle of Legnica in 1241. Two days later the armies regrouped and crushed the Hungarian army at the Battle of Mohi, killing up to a quarter of the population and destroying as much as half of the habitable dwellings. This decisive victory was partially due to the fact that Hungary was unprepared for an invasion and did not having a standing army ready to fight. It took a number of months for the Mongol army to subdue various power centers in Hungary. A major battle called the Mongol's Siege of Esztergom in the capital of Hungary forced people to flee and a new capital was moved to Budapest. However, the Mongols had a difficult time capturing fortified cities throughout Hungarian territories, which kept a total takeover from occurring. The Hungarian king Bela IV fled to Croatia during the initial attacks on his cities, and fortified structures throughout this territory helped keep the king and the local populations safe. However, Zagreb was sacked and destroyed in pursuit of the fugitive king and further territorial gains.

While the Mongol armies were fighting in Hungary and Croatia, they also pushed their forces into Austria, Dalmatia, and Moravia. Where they found local resistance, they ruthlessly killed the population. Where the locale offered no resistance, they forced the men into servitude in the Mongol army. They also ransacked Moldavia and Wallachia, plundering food stores and leaving the population in a precarious state.

The Battle of Legnica. A depiction of the Battle of Legnica by Matthäus Merian the Elder, painted 1630.

End of the Mongol Advance

Although the Mongol forces were well-versed in cavalry and siege attacks, these two strategies also served as their weak points as they went farther westward. Many people in Hungary, Croatia, and Dalmatia had food stores at the ready for the long siege battles of the Mongol armies. Fortified cities and boggy or mountainous terrain also slowed down the light cavalry of the Mongol forces and gave European cities an advantage. Although politically fractured, European powers were uniting; even Hungarians who had survived the initial attack, or never engaged in battle, had begun a guerilla attack lead by survivors of the Hungarian royal family.

The Klis Fortress in Croatia. This type of rocky, fortified city posed a serious challenge to Mongol forces who were often mounted on horses. This particular city defeated the Mongol army in 1242.

Along with all of these tactical challenges the charismatic Mongol leader, Ögedei, died in December 1241. His death forced the Mongol armies to halt their westward expansion, especially in the face of mounting difficulties, and hasten back the thousands of miles to Karakorum, their capital in Mongolia, to elect his successor. Although the expansion did not extend into Western Europe, the Mongol forces retained power over many major Eastern European cities for many decades. However, after Ögedei's death, power disputes plagued the Mongol Empire and eventually weakened their extensive hold on such vast territories.

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9.6: Administrative Reform in the Mongol Empire

Learning Objectives

- Choose the best summary of Möngke's achievements

Key Points

- After Ögedei's death, Genghis Khan's descendants Güyük and Batu Khan fought about who would rule until Batu Khan's death, at which point Genghis' grandson Möngke took control.
- Möngke was generally a popular ruler. He generously met all Güyük's outstanding debts, an unprecedented move.
- Möngke also forbade extravagant spending, imposed taxes (which incited some rebellions), and punished the unauthorized plundering of civilians. He established the Department of Monetary Affairs and standardized a system of measurement.
- Möngke conducted a census of the Mongol Empire and its land.

Terms

ingot

A block of steel, gold, or other metal oblong in shape and used for currency.

Department of Monetary Affairs

Möngke established this body to control the issuance of paper money in order to eliminate the overissue of currency that had been a problem since Ögedei's reign.

From Ögedei's death in 1241 CE until 1246 CE the Mongol Empire was ruled under the regency of Ögedei's widow, Töregene Khatun. She set the stage for the ascension of her son, Güyük, as Great Khan, and he would take control in 1246. He and Ögedei's nephew Batu Khan (both grandsons of Genghis Khan) fought bitterly for power; Güyük died in 1248 on the way to confront Batu.

Another nephew of Ögedei's (and so a third grandson of Genghis Khan's), Möngke, then took the throne in 1251 with Batu's approval. In 1255, well into Möngke's reign, Batu had repaired his relationship with the Great Khan and so finally felt secure enough to prepare invasions westward into Europe. Fortunately for the Europeans, however, he died before his plans could be implemented.

The Mongol Empire Under Möngke

Möngke's rule established some of the most consistent monetary and administrative policies since Genghis Khan. In the mercantile department he:

- Forbade extravagant spending and limited gifts to the princes.
- Made merchants subject to taxes.
- Prohibited the demanding of goods and services from civilian populations by merchants.
- Punished the unauthorized plundering of civilians by generals and princes (including his own son).

In 1253, Möngke established the Department of Monetary Affairs to control the issuance of paper money. This new department contributed to better econimic stability including:

- Limiting the overissue of currency, which had been a problem since Ögedei's reign.
- Standardizing a system of measurement based on the silver ingot.
- Paying out all debts drawn by high-rank Mongol elites to important foreign and local merchants.

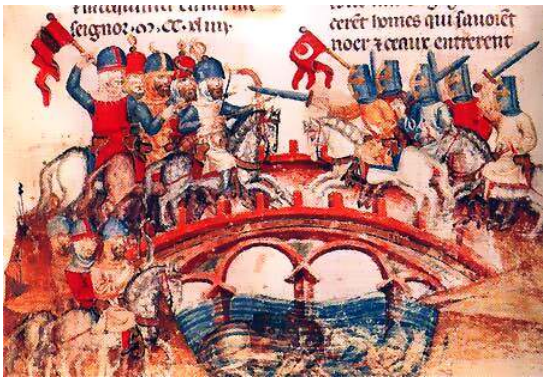
Möngke recognized that if he did not meet his predecessor's, Güyük's, financial obligations, it would make merchants reluctant to continue business with the Mongols. Like many other rules around the world at this time, his hope was to take advantage of the budding commercial revolution in Europe and the Middle East. Ata-Malik Juvaini, a 13th-century Persian historian, commented on the virtue of this move, saying, "And from what book of history has it been read or heard…that a king paid the debt of another king? "

The Mongol Empire's administration followed a trend that was occurring in the Western Europe, in which kings and emperors were finding efficient ways to manage their administrative and legals systems and fund crusades, conquests, and wars. From 1252–1259, Möngke conducted a census of the Mongol Empire including Iran, Afghanistan, Georgia, Armenia, Russia, Central Asia and North China. The new census counted not only households but also the number of men aged 15–60 and the number of fields, livestock, vineyards, and orchards.

Möngke also tried to create a fixed poll tax collected by imperial agents, which could be forwarded to the needy units. He taxed the wealthiest people most severely. But the census and taxation sparked popular riots and resistance in the western districts and in the more independent regions under the Mongol umbrella. These rebellions were ultimately put down, and Möngke would continue to rule.

Expansion and Khanates

At the death of Genghis Khan in 1226, the empire was already large enough that one ruler could not oversee the administrative aspects of each region. Genghis realized this and created appanages, or khanates, for his sons, daughters, and grandsons to rule over in order to keep a consistent rule of law. Möngke's administrative policies extended to these regions during his reign, often causing local unrest due to Mongol occupation and taxation. Some khanates were more closely linked to centralized Mongol policies than others, depending on their location, who oversaw them, and the amount of resistance in each region.



Painting of the Battle of Mohi in 1241. Möngke might have been present at this battle, which took place in the kingdom of Hungary, during one of the many Mongol invasions and attacks that expanded the Mongol Empire.

It should also be noted that the vast religious and cultural traditions of these khanates, including Islam, Judaism, Taoism, Orthodoxy, and Buddhism, were often at odds with the khanate rulers and their demands. Some of the most essential khanates to exist under Möngke's administrative years included:

- The Golden Horde, which contained the Rus' principalities and large chunks of modern-day Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, Belarus, and Romania. Many Russian princes capitulated with Mongol rule and a relatively stable alliance existed in the 1250s in some principalities.
- Chagatai Khanate was a Turkic region which was ruled over by Chagatai, Odegei's second son, until 1242 at his death. This region was clearly Islamic and functioned as an outlying region of the central Mongol government until 1259, when Möngke died.
- Ilkhanate was the major southwestern khanate of the Mongol Empire and encompassed parts of modern-day Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Turkey and the heartland of Persian culture. Möngke's brother, Hulagu, ruled over this region and his descendants continued to oversee this khanate into the 14th century.

Möngke's Death

Möngke died while conducting war in China on August 11, 1259. He was possibly a victim of cholera or dysentery, however there is no confirmed record of the cause of his death. His son Asutai conducted him back to Mongolia to be buried. The ruler's death sparked the four-year Toluid Civil War between his two younger brothers, Kublai and Ariq Böke, and also spurred on the division of the Mongol Empire.

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9.7: Kublai Khan

Learning Objectives

- Identify Kublai Khan's most significant achievements

Key Points

- Möngke's death led to civil war (or Toluid Civil War) between his two younger brothers; ultimately, Kublai Khan emerged victorious and renamed the empire as the Yuan Dynasty in 1271.
- Kublai also renamed himself Emperor of China in order to win over millions of Chinese subjects.
- Ultimately, under Kublai Khan, the Mongols were the first non-Chinese people to conquer all of China. However, their conquests of Japan and Java failed.
- At the time of Kublai's death, the Mongol Empire fractured into four separate empires; this made it easy for the Han Chinese to overthrow them in 1368 and establish the Ming Dynasty.

Möngke's death in 1259 led to civil war (often referred to as the Toluid Civil War) between his two younger brothers, Kublai Khan and Ariq Böke. Kublai Khan emerged victorious and established the Yuan Dynasty in China in 1271, perhaps the Mongols' greatest triumph, though it would eventually be overthrown in 1368 by the native Han Chinese, who would launch their own Ming Dynasty.

Kublai Khan. A portrait of a young Kublai Khan by Anige, a Nepali artist in Kublai's court.

Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty

After Kublai took over control of the Chinese territories with the blessings of Möngke Khan around 1251, he sought to establish a firmer hold on these vast regions. Rivaling dynasties loomed throughout the Chinese territories making for a contentious political background to Kublai's rule. His greatest obstacle was the powerful Song dynasty in the south. He stabilized the northern regions by placing a hostage puppet leader in Korea named Wonjong in 1259. After the death of Möngke in that same year, and the following civil war, Kublai was named the Great Khan and successor of Möngke. This new powerful position allowed Kublai to oversee uprisings and wars between the western khanates and assist rulers (often family members) to oversee these regions. However, his tenuous hold in the east occupied most of his resources.

In 1271, as he continued to consolidate his power over the vast and varying Chinese subjects and outlying regions, Kublai Khan renamed his khanate the Yuan Dynasty. His newly named dynasty appeared to be successful after the fall of the major southern center Xiangyang in 1273 to Mongol forces after five years of struggle. The final piece of the puzzle for Kublai was the conquest of the Song Dynasty in southern China. He finally garnered this sought-after southern region in 1276 and the last Song emperor died in 1279 after years of costly battles. With this success, the Mongols became the first non-Chinese people to conquer all of the

Chinese territories. Kublai moved his headquarters to Dadu, what later became the modern city of Beijing. His establishment of a capital there was a controversial move to many Mongols who accused him of being too closely tied to Chinese culture. However, the Yuan Dynasty often functioned as an independent khanate from the rest of the western Mongol-dominated regions.

Yuan Dynasty circa 1292.The sheer scale of this khanate required extensive military support and often strained the Mongol treasury in order to keep populations under its influence.

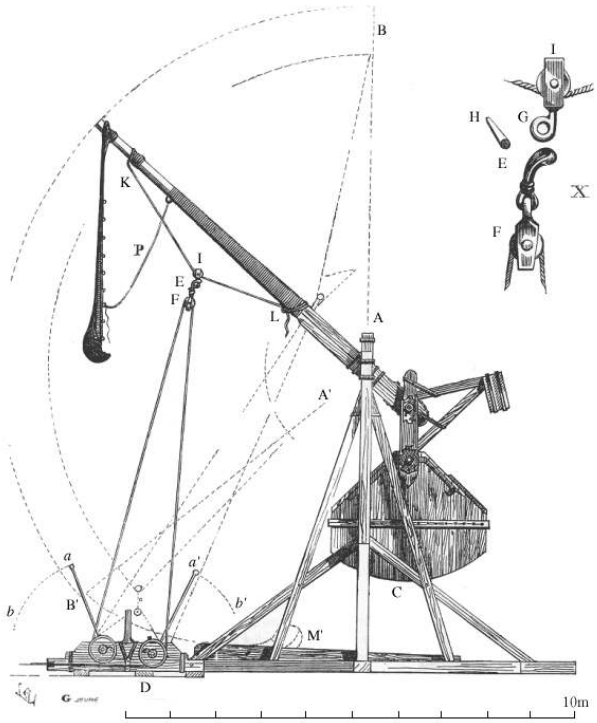
Extended Invasions

Kublai Khan's costly invasions of many territories in the east did not go smoothly and some went on for many years, draining the Mongol treasury and utilizing precious resources. Although the invasions of Burma in 1277, 1283, and 1287 forced the population to eventually capitulate, they were never more than a vassal state. Similarly, the Yuan forces invaded Sakhalin Island off the coast of modern-day Russia multiple times between 1264 and 1308, and the various tribal groups also eventually became a vassals after long years of turmoil. Southern Asian regions often agreed to Yuan rule and taxation only in the face of more bloodshed and terror. Conversely, Mongol invasions of Japan (1274 and 1280) and Java (1293) under Kublai Khan ultimately failed and illustrated the costly effects of constant invasive military tactics.

Yuan Dynasty Administration

Kublai Khan made significant reforms to existing institutions under the Yuan Dynasty. He divided the Dynasty's territory into a central region and peripheral regions that were under the control of various officials. He created an academy, offices, trade ports and canals, and sponsored arts and science. Mongol records also list 20,166 public schools created during his reign. He also, along with engineers, invented the Muslim trebuchet (hui-hui pao), a counterweight-based weapon that was highly successful in battle.

He also continued to welcome trade and travel throughout his empire. Marco Polo, Marco Polo's father (an Italian merchant), and his father's trade partner traveled to China during this time. They met Kublai Khan and lived amongst his court to establish trade relations. Polo generally praised the wealth and extravagance of Khan and the Mongol Empire. Some historians also speculate that trade was so accessible between the empire and Europe, that it may have contributed to the flow of disease, especially the black plague in the mid-1300s.



Trebuchet. The scheme of the “Muslim trebuchet” (hui-hui pao), invented during Kublai Khan’s rule.

By the time of Kublai’s death in 1294, the Mongol Empire had fractured into four separate empires, which were based on administrative zones Genghis had created. The four empires were known as khanates, each pursuing its own separate interests and objectives: the Golden Horde Khanate in the northwest, the Chagatai Khanate in the west, the Ilkhanate in the southwest, and the Yuan Dynasty, based in modern-day Beijing. In 1304, the three western khanates briefly accepted the rule of the Yuan Dynasty in name, but when the Dynasty was overthrown by the Han Chinese Ming Dynasty in 1368, and with increasing local unrest in the Golden Horde, the Mongol Empire finally dissolved.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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10.1: Technological Advancements under the Song

Learning Objectives

- Identify some of the technological advancements made under the Song

Key Points

- Notable advances in civil engineering, nautics, and metallurgy were made in Song China.
- Advances in moveable type made the printing of texts easier and faster, thereby making the dissemination of ideas and learning more widespread.
- The application of new weapons using gunpowder enabled the Song to ward off its militant enemies.
- In Song China, topographical elevation, a formal rectangular grid system, and use of a standard graduated scale of distances were applied to terrain maps.

Terms

Cartography

The study and practice of making maps.

metallurgy

The branch of science and technology concerned with the properties of metals and their production and purification.

Overview

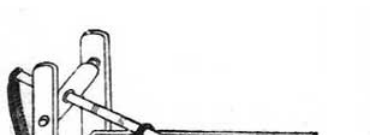
The Song dynasty provided some of the most significant technological advances in Chinese history, many of which came from talented statesmen drafted by the government through imperial examinations.

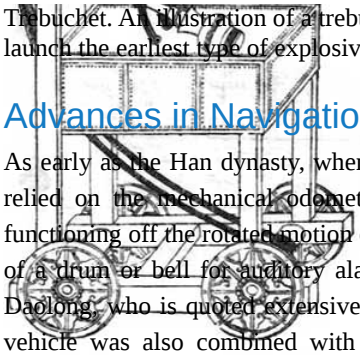
The ingenuity of advanced mechanical engineering has a long tradition in China. The Song engineer Su Song admitted that he and his contemporaries were building upon the achievements of the ancients such as Zhang Heng (78–139), an astronomer, inventor, and early master of mechanical gears. The application of movable type printing advanced the already widespread use of woodblock printing to educate and amuse Confucian students and the masses. The application of new weapons using gunpowder enabled the Song to ward off its militant enemies—the Liao, Western Xia, and Jin—with weapons such as cannons until its collapse to the Mongol forces of Kublai Khan in the late 13th century.

Notable advances in civil engineering, nautics, and metallurgy were made in Song China, and the windmill was introduced in China during the 13th century. These advances, along with the introduction of paper-printed money, helped revolutionize and sustain the economy of the Song dynasty.

Gunpowder and New Weaponry

Advancements in weapons technology enhanced by gunpowder, including the evolution of the early flamethrower, explosive grenade, firearm, cannon, and land mine, enabled the Song Chinese to ward off their militant enemies until the Song's ultimate collapse in the late 13th century. The *Wujing Zongyao* manuscript of 1044 was the first book in history to provide formulas for gunpowder and their specified use in different types of bombs. While engaged in a war with the Mongols, in 1259 the official Li Zengbo wrote in his *Kezhai Zagao*, *Xugaohou* that the city of Qingzhou was manufacturing one- to two-thousand strong iron-cased bomb shells a month, dispatching to Xiangyang and Yingzhou about ten- to twenty-thousand such bombs at a time. In turn, the invading Mongols employed northern Chinese soldiers and used this same type of gunpowder weapons against the Song. By the 14th century the firearm and cannon could also be found in Europe, India, and the Islamic Middle East, during the early age of gunpowder warfare.





Trebuchet. An illustration of a trebuchet catapult from the Wujing Zongyao manuscript of 1044. Trebuchets like this were used to launch the earliest type of explosive bombs.

Advances in Navigation

As early as the Han dynasty, when the state needed to effectively measure distances traveled throughout the empire, the Chinese relied on the mechanical odometer device. The Chinese odometer came in the form of a wheeled-carriage, its inner gears functioning off the rotated motion of the wheels, and specific units of distance—the Chinese li—marked by the mechanical striking of a drum or bell for auditory alarm. The specifications for the 11th century odometer were written by Chief Chamberlain Lu Daolong, who is quoted extensively in the historical text of the Song Shi (compiled by 1345). In the Song period, the odometer vehicle was also combined with another old complex mechanical device known as the south-pointing chariot. This device, originally crafted by Ma Jun in the 3rd century, incorporated a differential gear that allowed a figure mounted on the vehicle to always point south, no matter how the vehicle's wheels turned about. The device concept of the differential gear for this navigational vehicle is now found in modern automobiles in order to apply the equal amount of torque to wheels rotating at different speeds.

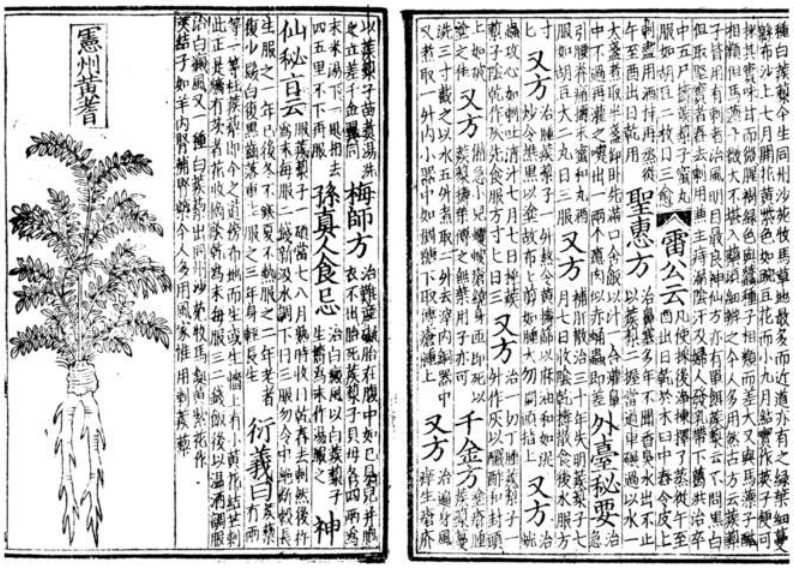
Mathematics and Cartography

There were many notable improvements to Chinese mathematics during the Song era. Mathematician Yang Hui's 1261 book provided the earliest Chinese illustration of Pascal's triangle, although it had earlier been described by Jia Xian in around 1100. Yang Hui also provided rules for constructing combinatorial arrangements in magic squares, provided theoretical proof for Euclid's forty-third proposition about parallelograms, and was the first to use negative coefficients of "x" in quadratic equations. Yang's contemporary Qin Jiushao (c. 1202–1261) was the first to introduce the zero symbol into Chinese mathematics; before this blank spaces were used instead of zeroes in the system of counting rods.

Geometry was essential to surveying and cartography. The earliest extant Chinese maps date to the 4th century BCE, yet it was not until the time of Pei Xiu (224–271) that topographical elevation, a formal rectangular grid system, and use of a standard graduated scale of distances were applied to terrain maps. Following a long tradition, Shen Kuo created a raised-relief map, while his other maps featured a uniform graduated scale of 1:900,000. A 3-ft squared map of 1137—carved into a stone block—followed a uniform grid scale of 100 li for each gridded square, and accurately mapped the outline of the coasts and river systems of China, extending all the way to India. Furthermore, the world's oldest known terrain map in printed form comes from the edited encyclopedia of Yang Jia in 1155, which displays western China without the formal grid system that was characteristic of more professionally made Chinese maps.

Moveable Type Printing

The innovation of movable type printing was made by the artisan Bi Sheng (990–1051), first described by the scientist and statesman Shen Kuo in his *Dream Pool Essays* of 1088. Movable type enhanced the already widespread use of woodblock methods of printing thousands of documents and volumes of written literature, which were then consumed eagerly by an increasingly literate public. The advancement of printing deeply affected education and the scholar-official class; since more books could be made faster, printed books were cheaper than laboriously handwritten copies. The enhancement of widespread printing and print culture in the Song period was thus a direct catalyst in the rise of social mobility and expansion of the educated class of scholar elites, the latter of which expanded dramatically in size from the 11th to 13th centuries.



Woodblock printing. The Bencao on traditional Chinese medicine; printed with woodblock in 1249, Song dynasty.

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10.2: The Mongol Invasions

Learning Objectives

- Connect the Mongol invasions to the establishment of the Yuan dynasty

Key Points

- Established by Kublai Kha, the Yuan dynasty was the ruling dynasty of China and Mongolia and a khanate of the Mongol Empire.
- Genghis Khan and his successors expanded the Mongol Empire across Asia, eventually conquering northern China.
- Möngke Khan commenced a military campaign against the Chinese Song dynasty in southern China, during which time Kublai Khan rose to power and took on the title of Great Khan.
- Instability, including civil war with the Mongol clans and continued fighting with the Song, troubled the early years of Kublai Khan's reign.
- In 1272, Kublai Khan founded the Yuan dynasty in the style of a traditional Chinese dynasty.
- Eventually, Kublai won over the Song, both militarily and through adopting Chinese customs and practices.
- The Yuan dynasty is traditionally given credit for reuniting China after several hundred years of fragmentation following the fall of the Tang dynasty.

Terms

Great Khan

A Mongolian title equal to the status of an emperor and used to refer to someone who rules a khanate, or empire.

I Ching

An ancient divination text and the oldest of the Chinese classics, which uses hexagrams to provide guidance for moral decision making and upright living.

Mandate of Heaven

An ancient Chinese belief/theory and philosophical idea that tiān (heaven) granted emperors the right to rule based on their ability to govern well, appropriately, and fairly.

Overview

The Yuan dynasty was the ruling dynasty of China established by Kublai Khan, leader of the Mongolian Borjigin clan. Although the Mongols had ruled territories including today's North China for decades, it was not until 1271 that Kublai Khan officially proclaimed the dynasty in the traditional Chinese style. His realm was, by this point, isolated from the other khanates, and he controlled most of present-day China and its surrounding areas, including modern Mongolia and Korea. It was the first foreign dynasty to rule all of China and lasted until 1368, after which its Genghisid rulers returned to their Mongolian homeland and continued to rule the Northern Yuan dynasty. Some of the Mongolian emperors of the Yuan mastered the Chinese language, while others used only their native language, Mongolian.

The Yuan dynasty is considered both a successor to the Mongol Empire and an imperial Chinese dynasty. It was the khanate ruled by the successors of Möngke Khan after the division of the Mongol Empire. In official Chinese histories, the Yuan dynasty bore the Mandate of Heaven, following the Song dynasty and preceding the Ming dynasty. The dynasty was established by Kublai Khan, yet he placed his grandfather Genghis Khan on the imperial records as the official founder of the dynasty as "Taizu." In the Proclamation of the Dynastic Name, Kublai announced the name of the new dynasty as Great Yuan and claimed the succession of former Chinese dynasties from the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors to the Tang dynasty.

In addition to Emperor of China, Kublai Khan also claimed the title of Great Khan, supreme over the other successor khanates: the Chagatai, the Golden Horde, and the Ilkhanate. As such, the Yuan was also sometimes referred to as the Empire of the Great Khan.

However, while the wester khans at times recognized the claim of supremacy by the Yuan emperors, their subservience was nominal and each continued his own separate development.

The Rise of Kublai Khan and the the Mongol Invasions of China

Genghis Khan united the Mongol and Turkic tribes of the steppes and became Great Khan in 1206. He and his successors expanded the Mongol Empire across Asia. Under the reign of Genghis's third son, Ögedei Khan, the Mongols destroyed the weakened Jin dynasty in 1234, conquering most of northern China. Ögedei offered his nephew Kublai a position in Xingzhou, Hebei. Kublai was unable to read Chinese but had had several Han Chinese teachers attached to him since his early years by his mother Sorghaghtani. He sought the counsel of Chinese Buddhist and Confucian advisers. Möngke Khan succeeded Ögedei's son Güyük as Great Khan in 1251, and he granted his brother Kublai control over Mongol-held territories in China. Kublai built schools for Confucian scholars, issued paper money, revived Chinese rituals, and endorsed policies that stimulated agricultural and commercial growth. He adopted as his capital city Kaiping in Inner Mongolia, later renamed Shangdu.

Möngke Khan commenced a military campaign against the Chinese Song dynasty in southern China. The Mongol force that invaded southern China was far greater than the force they sent to invade the Middle East in 1256. Möngke died in 1259 without a successor. Kublai returned from fighting the Song in 1260 and learned that his brother, Ariq Böke, was challenging his claim to the throne. Kublai convened a kurultai in Kaiping that elected him Great Khan, but a rival kurultai in Mongolia proclaimed Ariq Böke Great Khan, beginning a civil war. Kublai depended on the cooperation of his Chinese subjects to ensure that his army received ample resources. He bolstered his popularity among his subjects by modeling his government on the bureaucracy of traditional Chinese dynasties and adopting the Chinese era name of Zhongtong. Ariq Böke was hampered by inadequate supplies and surrendered in 1264. All of the three western khanates (Golden Horde, Chagatai Khanate, and Ilkhanate) became functionally autonomous; only the Ilkhans truly recognized Kublai as Great Khan. Civil strife had permanently divided the Mongol Empire.

Kublai Khan. A portrait of the founder of Yuan dynasty, the Mongolian Kublai Khan.

The Rule of Kublai Khan

Instability troubled the early years of Kublai Khan's reign. Ogedei's grandson Kaidu refused to submit to Kublai and threatened the western frontier of Kublai's domain, and the hostile but weakened Song dynasty remained an obstacle in the south. Kublai secured the northeast border in 1259 by installing the hostage prince Wonjong as the ruler of Korea, making it a Mongol tributary state. Kublai was also threatened by domestic unrest. Li Tan, the son-in-law of a powerful official, instigated a revolt against Mongol rule in 1262. After successfully suppressing the revolt, Kublai curbed the influence of the Han Chinese advisers in his court. He feared that his dependence on Chinese officials left him vulnerable to future revolts and defections to the Song.

Kublai's government after 1262 was a compromise between preserving Mongol interests in China and satisfying the demands of his Chinese subjects. He instituted the reforms proposed by his Chinese advisers by centralizing the bureaucracy, expanding the circulation of paper money, and maintaining the traditional monopolies on salt and iron. He restored the Imperial Secretariat and left the local administrative structure of past Chinese dynasties unchanged. However, Kublai rejected plans to revive the Confucian imperial examinations and divided Yuan society into three, later four, classes, with the Han Chinese occupying the lowest rank. Kublai's Chinese advisers still wielded significant power in the government, but their official rank was nebulous.

Founding of the Yuan Dynasty

Kublai readied the move of the Mongol capital from Karakorum in Mongolia to Khanbaliq in 1264, constructing a new city near the former Jurchen capital Zhongdu, now modern Beijing, in 1266. In 1271, Kublai formally claimed the Mandate of Heaven and declared that 1272 was the first year of the Great Yuan in the style of a traditional Chinese dynasty. The name of the dynasty originated from the *I Ching* and describes the "origin of the universe" or a "primal force." Kublai proclaimed Khanbaliq the "Great Capital" or Daidu of the dynasty. The era name was changed to Zhiyuan to herald a new era of Chinese history. The adoption of a dynastic name legitimized Mongol rule by integrating the government into the narrative of traditional Chinese political succession. Khublai evoked his public image as a sage emperor by following the rituals of Confucian propriety and ancestor veneration, while simultaneously retaining his roots as a leader from the steppes. The Yuan dynasty is traditionally given credit for reuniting China after several hundred years of fragmentation following the fall of the Tang dynasty.

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10.3: Trade and Currency under the Yuan

Learning Objectives

- Describe the trade and monetary policies of the Yuan dynasty

Key Points

- Kublai Khan, who established the Yuan dynasty in China as an extension of the already dominant Mongolian Empire, promoted progressive policies that allowed trade and prosperity to flourish.
- The Mongolians revived the Silk Road and established peace throughout their extensive trade routes, leading to the so-called *Pax Mongolia.*
- Many Europeans, most famously Marco Polo, travelled to Yuan China and observed Chinese cultural and technological innovations.
- One of the more notable applications of printing technology in China was the *chao*, the paper money of the Yuan, which became one of the first instances of a unified paper money economy in the world.

Terms

Marco Polo

A Venetian merchant traveller whose travels, especially to Mongolian-ruled China, are recorded in The Travels of Marco Polo, a book that introduced Europeans to Central Asia and China.

Chao

The official banknote of the Yuan dynasty in China.

Silk Road

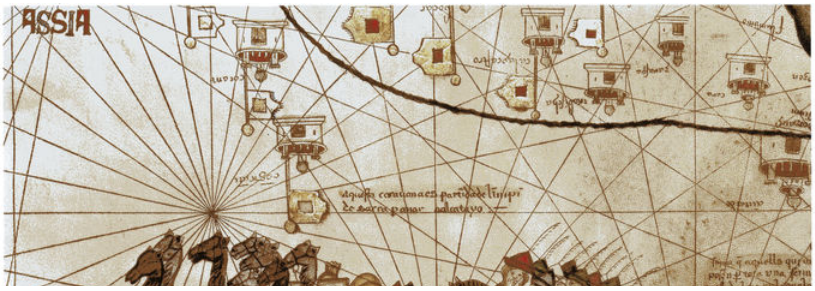
An ancient network of trade routes that for centuries were central to cultural interaction through regions of the Asian continent connecting the East and West from China to the Mediterranean Sea.

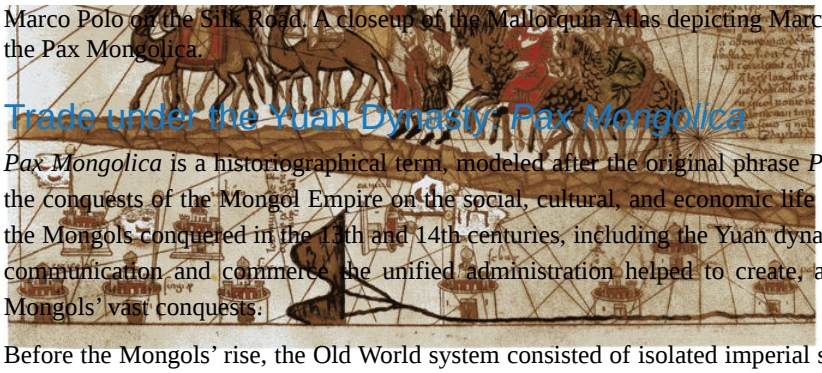
Pax Mongolica

A historiographical term, modeled after the original phrase Pax Romana, that describes the stabilizing effects of the conquests of the Mongol Empire on the social, cultural, and economic life of the inhabitants of the vast Eurasian territory that the Mongols conquered in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Overview

Kublai Khan promoted commercial, scientific, and cultural growth. He supported the merchants of the Silk Road trade network by protecting the Mongol postal system, constructing infrastructure, providing loans that financed trade caravans, and encouraging the circulation of paper banknotes. *Pax Mongolica*, Mongol peace, enabled the spread of technologies, commodities, and culture between China and the West. Kublai expanded the Grand Canal from southern China to Daidu in the north. Mongol rule was cosmopolitan under Kublai Khan. He welcomed foreign visitors to his court, such as the Venetian merchant Marco Polo, who wrote the most influential European account of Yuan China. Marco Polo's travels would later inspire many others, like Christopher Columbus, to chart a passage to the Far East in search of its legendary wealth.





Marco Polo on the Silk Road. A closeup of the Mallorquin Atlas depicting Marco Polo traveling to the East on the Silk Road during the Pax Mongolica.

Trade under the Yuan Dynasty: *Pax Mongolica*

Pax Mongolica is a historiographical term, modeled after the original phrase *Pax Romana*, that describes the stabilizing effects of the conquests of the Mongol Empire on the social, cultural, and economic life of the inhabitants of the vast Eurasian territory that the Mongols conquered in the 13th and 14th centuries, including the Yuan dynasty in China. The term is used to describe the eased communication and commerce the unified administration helped to create, and the period of relative peace that followed the Mongols' vast conquests.

Before the Mongols' rise, the Old World system consisted of isolated imperial systems. The new Mongol Empire amalgamated the once-isolated civilizations into a new continental system and re-established the Silk Road as a dominant method of transportation. The unification of Eurasia under the Mongols greatly diminished the amount of competing tribute gatherers throughout the trade network and assured greater safety and security in travel. During the *Pax Mongolica*, European merchants like Marco Polo made their way from Europe to China on the well-maintained and well-traveled roads that linked Anatolia to China.

On the Silk Road, caravans with Chinese silk and spices such as pepper, ginger, cinnamon, and nutmeg from the Spice Islands came to the West via the transcontinental trade routes. Eastern diets were thus introduced to Europeans. Indian muslins, cotton, pearls, and precious stones were sold in Europe, as were weapons, carpets, and leather goods from Iran. Gunpowder was also introduced to Europe from China. In the opposite direction, Europeans sent silver, fine cloth, horses, linen, and other goods to the near and far East. Increasing trade and commerce meant that the respective nations and societies increased their exposure to new goods and markets, thus increasing the GDP of each nation or society that was involved in the trade system. Many of the cities participating in the 13th century world trade system grew rapidly in size.

Along with land trade routes, a Maritime Silk Road contributed to the flow of goods and establishment of a *Pax Mongolica*. This Maritime Silk Road started with short coastal routes in Southern China. As technology and navigation progressed, these routes developed into a high-seas route into the Indian Ocean. Eventually these routes further developed to encompass the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the sea off East Africa.

Along with tangible goods, people, techniques, information, and ideas moved lucidly across the Eurasian landmass for the first time. For example, John of Montecorvino, archbishop of Peking, founded Roman Catholic missions in India and China and also translated the New Testament into the Mongolian language. Long-distance trade brought new methods of doing business from the Far East to Europe; bills of exchange, deposit banking, and insurance were introduced to Europe during the *Pax Mongolica*. Bills of exchange made it significantly easier to travel long distances because a traveler would not be burdened by the weight of metal coins.

Monetary Policies and Paper Money

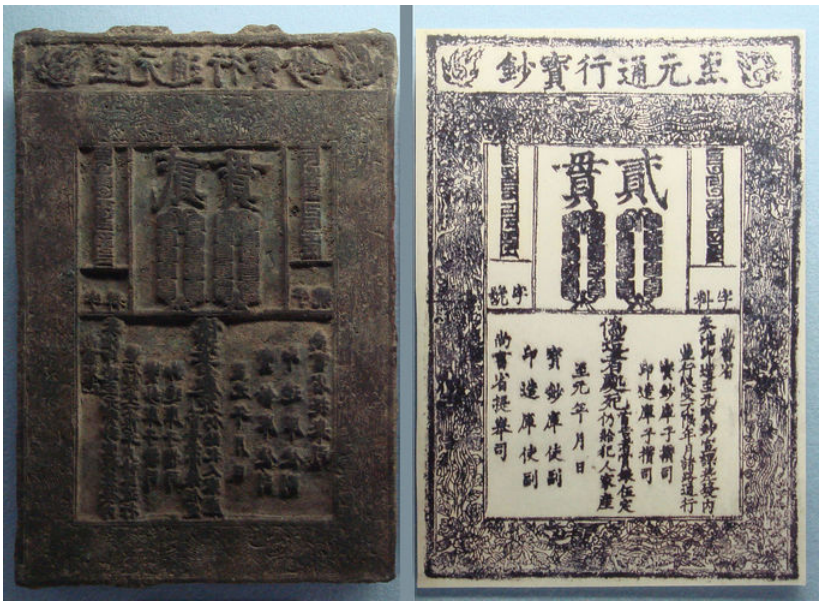
One of the more notable applications of printing technology in China was the *chao*, the paper money of the Yuan, made from the bark of mulberry trees. The Yuan government first used woodblocks to print paper money, but switched to bronze plates in 1275. The Mongols experimented with establishing the Chinese-style paper monetary system in Mongol-controlled territories outside of China. The Yuan minister Bolad was sent to Iran, where he explained Yuan paper money to the Il-khanate court of Gaykhatu. The Il-khanate government issued paper money in 1294, but public distrust of the exotic new currency doomed the experiment.

Foreign observers took note of Yuan printing technology. Marco Polo documented the Yuan printing of paper money and almanac pamphlets called "tacuini." The vizier Rashid-al-Din recognized that printing was a valuable technological breakthrough, and expressed regret that the Mongol experiment with printing paper money had failed in the Muslim world. Rashid-al-Din's view was not shared by other chroniclers in the Middle East, who were critical of the experiment's disruptive impact on the Il-khanate.

In 1253, Möngke established a Department of Monetary affairs to control the issuance of paper money in order to eliminate the overissue of the currency by Mongol and non-Mongol nobles since the reign of Great Khan Ögedei. His authority established united measure based on sukhe or silver ingot; however, the Mongols allowed their foreign subjects to mint coins in the

denominations and weight they traditionally used. During the reigns of Ögedei, Güyük, and Möngke, Mongol coinage increased with gold and silver coinage in Central Asia and copper and silver coins in Caucasus, Iran, and southern Russia.

The Yuan dynasty under Kublai Khan issued paper money backed by silver, and again banknotes supplemented by cash and copper cash. The standardization of paper currency allowed the Yuan court to monetize taxes and reduce carrying costs of taxes in goods, as did the policy of Möngke Khan. But the forest nations of Siberia and Manchuria still paid their taxes in goods or commodities to the Mongols; *chao* was used only within the Yuan dynasty. Ghazan's fiscal reforms enabled the inauguration of a unified bimetallic currency in the Ilkhanate. Chagatai Khan Kebek renewed the coinage backed by silver reserves and created a unified monetary system throughout the realm.



Yuan dynasty money. Yuan dynasty banknote, the chao, with its printing plate (1287)

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10.4: Decline of the Yuan Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Explain the events that led to the fall of the Yuan dynasty

Key Points

- The final years of the Yuan dynasty were marked by struggle, famine, and bitterness among the populace, with Kublai Khan's successors losing all influence on other Mongol lands across Asia.
- From the late 1340s onward, people in the countryside suffered from frequent natural disasters such as droughts, floods, and the resulting famines, and the government's lack of effective policy led to a loss of popular support, eventually leading to the Red Turban Rebellion, which weakened the Yuan's power.
- Emperor Toghun Temür defeated the Red Turban Rebellion, but was weakened and needed to rely more heavily on local warlords, and therefore central government control dissipated.
- Toghun fled north to Shangdu from Khanbaliq (present-day Beijing) in 1368 after the approach of the forces of the Míng dynasty (1368–1644), founded by Zhu Yuanzhang in the south, thereby ending the Yuan.
- The Yuan remnants retreated to Mongolia after the fall of Yingchang in 1370, and there formally carried on the name Great Yuan in what is known as the Northern Yuan dynasty.

Terms

Northern Yuan

The Mongol regime based in the Mongolian homeland after the fall of the Yuan dynasty in China in 1368.

Red Turban Rebellion

An uprising influenced by White Lotus Society members that, between 1351 and 1368, targeted the ruling Yuan dynasty of China, eventually leading to its overthrow.

Decline of the Yuan Dynasty

The final years of the Yuan dynasty were marked by struggle, famine, and bitterness among the populace. In time, Kublai Khan's successors lost all influence on other Mongol lands across Asia, as the Mongols beyond the Middle Kingdom saw them as too Chinese. Gradually, they lost influence in China as well. The reigns of the later Yuan emperors were short and marked by intrigues and rivalries. Uninterested in administration, they were separated from both the army and the populace, and China was torn by dissension and unrest. Outlaws ravaged the country without interference from the weakening Yuan armies.

From the late 1340s onwards, people in the countryside suffered from frequent natural disasters such as droughts, floods, and the resulting famines, and the government's lack of effective policy led to a loss of popular support. In 1351, the Red Turban Rebellion started and grew into a nationwide uprising. In 1354, when Toghtogha led a large army to crush the Red Turban rebels, Toghun Temür suddenly dismissed him for fear of betrayal. This resulted in Toghun Temür's restoration of power on the one hand and a rapid weakening of the central government on the other. He had no choice but to rely on local warlords' military power, and gradually lost his interest in politics and ceased to intervene in political struggles, all of which led to the official end of the Yuan dynasty in China. After trying to regain Khanbaliq, an effort that failed, he died in Yingchang (located in present-day Inner Mongolia) in 1370. Yingchang was seized by the Ming shortly after his death. Some Yuan royal family members still live in Henan today.

Prince Basalawarmi of Liang established a separate pocket of resistance to the Ming in Yunnan and Guizhou, but his forces were decisively defeated by the Ming in 1381. By 1387 the remaining Yuan forces in Manchuria under Naghachu had also surrendered to the Ming dynasty.

Northern Yuan

The Yuan remnants retreated to Mongolia after Yingchang fell to the Ming in 1370, and there formally carried on the name Great Yuan in what is known as the Northern Yuan dynasty. According to Chinese political orthodoxy, there could be only one legitimate dynasty whose rulers were blessed by Heaven to rule as emperors of China, and so the Ming and the Northern Yuan denied each other's legitimacy as emperors of China, although the Ming did consider the previous Yuan it had succeeded to have been a legitimate dynasty. Historians generally regard Ming dynasty rulers as the legitimate emperors of China after the Yuan dynasty.

The Ming army pursued the ex-Yuan Mongol forces into Mongolia in 1372, but were defeated by the Mongol forces under Biligtü Khan Ayushiridara and his general Köke Temür. They tried again in 1380, ultimately winning a decisive victory over the Northern Yuan in 1388. About 70,000 Mongols were taken prisoner, and Karakorum (the Northern Yuan capital) was sacked. Eight years later, the Northern Yuan throne was taken over by Biligtü Khan Ayushiridara, a descendant of Ariq Böke, instead of the descendants of Kublai Khan. The following centuries saw a succession of Genghisid rulers, many of whom were mere figureheads put on the throne by those warlords who happened to be the most powerful. Periods of conflict with the Ming dynasty intermingled with periods of peaceful relations with border trade.

Northern Yuan. The Northern Yuan at its greatest territorial extent.

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10.5: Rise of the Ming Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Describe the origins and rise of the Ming dynasty

Key Points

- The Ming dynasty was the ruling dynasty of China for 276 years (1368–1644) following the collapse of the Mongol-led Yuan dynasty.
- Explanations for the demise of the Yuan include institutionalized ethnic discrimination against Han Chinese that stirred resentment and rebellion, overtaxation of areas hard-hit by inflation, and massive flooding of the Yellow River caused by the abandonment of irrigation projects.
- These issues led to a popular revolt called the Red Turban Rebellion, led in part by a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang.
- With the Yuan dynasty crumbling, competing rebel groups began fighting for control of the country and thus the right to establish a new dynasty, which Zhu did in 1368 after defeating his rivals in the largest naval battle in history and marching toward Beijing, the capital of the Yuan, causing Yuan leaders to flee.

Terms

White Lotus Society

A Buddhist secret society associated with the Red Turban Rebellion.

Zhu Yuanzhang

A poor peasant who rose through the ranks of a rebel army and later founded the Ming dynasty.

Overview

The Ming dynasty (January 23, 1368–April 25, 1644), officially the Great Ming, was an imperial dynasty of China founded by the peasant rebel leader Zhu Yuanzhang (known posthumously as Emperor Taizu). It succeeded the Yuan dynasty and preceded the short-lived Shun dynasty, which was in turn succeeded by the Qing dynasty. At its height, the Ming dynasty had a population of at least 160 million people, but some assert that the population could actually have been as large as 200 million.

Ming rule saw the construction of a vast navy and a standing army of one million troops. Although private maritime trade and official tribute missions from China had taken place in previous dynasties, the size of the tributary fleet under the Muslim eunuch admiral Zheng He in the 15th century surpassed all others in grandeur. There were enormous construction projects, including the restoration of the Grand Canal, the restoration of the Great Wall as it is seen today, and the establishment of the Forbidden City in Beijing during the first quarter of the 15th century. The Ming dynasty is, for many reasons, generally known as a period of stable, effective government. It is seen as the most secure and unchallenged ruling house that China had known up until that time. Its institutions were generally preserved by the following Qing dynasty. Civil service dominated government to an unprecedented degree at this time. During the Ming dynasty, the territory of China expanded (and in some cases also retracted) greatly. For a brief period during the dynasty northern Vietnam was included in Ming territory. Other important developments included the moving of the capital from Nanjing to Beijing.

Founding of the Ming Dynasty

The Mongol-led Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) ruled before the establishment of the Ming dynasty. Alongside institutionalized ethnic discrimination against Han Chinese that stirred resentment and rebellion, other explanations for the Yuan's demise included overtaxing areas hard-hit by crop failure, inflation, and massive flooding of the Yellow River caused by abandonment of irrigation projects. Consequently, agriculture and the economy were in shambles, and rebellion broke out among the hundreds of thousands of peasants called upon to work on repairing the dikes of the Yellow River.

A number of Han Chinese groups revolted, including the Red Turbans in 1351. Zhu Yuanzhang was a penniless peasant and Buddhist monk who joined the Red Turbans in 1352, but soon gained a reputation after marrying the foster daughter of a rebel commander.

Zhu was a born into a desperately poor tenant farmer family in Zhongli Village in the Huai River plain, which is in present-day Fengyang, Anhui Province. When he was sixteen, the Huai River broke its banks and flooded the lands where his family lived. Subsequently, a plague killed his entire family, except one of his brothers. He buried them by wrapping them in white clothes. Destitute, Zhu accepted a suggestion to take up a pledge made by his late father and became a novice monk at the Huangjue Temple, a local Buddhist monastery. He did not remain there for long, as the monastery ran short of funds and he was forced to leave. For the next few years, Zhu led the life of a wandering beggar and personally experienced and saw the hardships of the common people. After about three years, he returned to the monastery and stayed there until he was around twenty-four years old. He learned to read and write during the time he spent with the Buddhist monks.

The monastery where Zhu lived was eventually destroyed by an army that was suppressing a local rebellion. In 1352, Zhu joined one of the many insurgent forces that had risen in rebellion against the Mongol-led Yuan dynasty. He rose rapidly through the ranks and became a commander. His rebel force later joined the Red Turbans, a millenarian sect related to the White Lotus Society, and one that followed cultural and religious traditions of Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and other religions. Widely seen as a defender of Confucianism and neo-Confucianism among the predominantly Han Chinese population in China, Zhu emerged as a leader of the rebels that were struggling to overthrow the Yuan dynasty.

In 1356 Zhu's rebel force captured the city of Nanjing, which he would later establish as the capital of the Ming dynasty. Zhu enlisted the aid of many able advisors, including the artillery specialists Jiao Yu and Liu Bowen.

Zhu cemented his power in the south by eliminating his arch rival, rebel leader Chen Youliang, in the Battle of Lake Poyang in 1363. This battle was—in terms of personnel—one of the largest naval battles in history. After the dynastic head of the Red Turbans suspiciously died in 1367 while a guest of Zhu, Zhu made his imperial ambitions known by sending an army toward the Yuan capital in 1368. The last Yuan emperor fled north into Mongolia and Zhu declared the founding of the Ming dynasty after razing the Yuan palaces in Dadu (present-day Beijing) to the ground.

Hongwu Emperor of the Ming dynasty. Zhu Yuanzhang, later Hongwu Emperor, was the founder and first emperor of China's Ming dynasty. Born a poor peasant, he later rose through the ranks of a rebel army and eventually overthrew the Yuan leaders and established the Ming dynasty.

Instead of following the traditional way of naming a dynasty after the first ruler's home district, Zhu Yuanzhang's choice of "Ming," or "Brilliant," for his dynasty followed a Mongol precedent of choosing an uplifting title. Zhu Yuanzhang also took "Hongwu," or "Vastly Martial,"' as his reign title. Although the White Lotus had instigated his rise to power, the emperor later denied that he had ever been a member of the organization, and suppressed the religious movement after he became emperor.

Zhu Yuanzhang drew on both past institutions and new approaches in order to create *jiaohua* (civilization) as an organic Chinese governing process. This included building schools at all levels and increasing study of the classics as well as books on morality. There was also a distribution of Neo-Confucian ritual manuals and a new civil service examination system for recruitment into the bureaucracy.

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10.6: The Economy under the Ming Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Explain why the Ming dynasty supported the agricultural classes

Key Points

- The economy of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) of China was the largest in the world during that period, but suffered many inflations and contractions of currency.
- Because of hyperinflation of paper currency, the government returned to using silver as currency, which saw a major boom but later crashed, giving rise to widespread smuggling.
- Both because of his upbringing as a poor peasant and in order to recover from the rule of the Mongols and the wars that followed, the Hongwu Emperor enacted pro-agricultural policies.
- The Ming saw the rise of large commercial plantations, cash crops, and expanded markets.
- Hongwu Emperor initiated extensive land reform, including the distribution of land to peasants.

Terms

autarkic

The quality of being self-sufficient, especially in economic or political systems.

bullion

Gold bars, silver bars, and other bars or ingots of precious metal used as currency.

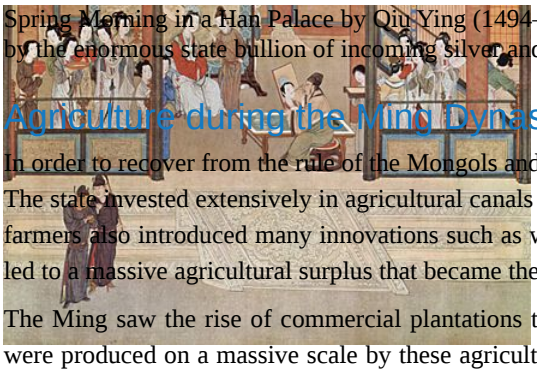
Overview

The economy of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) of China was the largest in the world during that period. It is regarded as one of China's three golden ages (the other two being the Han and Song periods). The period was marked by the increasing political influence of the merchants, the gradual weakening of imperial rule, and technological advances.

Currency during the Ming Dynasty

The early Ming dynasty attempted to use paper currency, with outflows of bullion limited by its ban on private foreign commerce. Like its forebears, paper currency experienced massive counterfeiting and hyperinflation. In 1425, Ming notes were trading at about 0.014% of their original value under the Hongwu Emperor. The notes remained in circulation as late as 1573, but their printing ceased in 1450. Minor coins were minted in base metals, but trade mostly occurred using silver ingots. As their purity and exact weight varied, they were treated as bullion and measured in tael. These privately made "sycee" first came into use in Guangdong, spreading to the lower Yangtze sometime before 1423, the year sycee became acceptable for payment of tax obligations.

In the mid-15th century, the paucity of circulating silver caused a monetary contraction and an extensive reversion to barter. The problem was met through smuggled, then legal, importation of Japanese silver, mostly through the Portuguese and Dutch, and Spanish silver from Potosí carried on the Manila galleons. Silver was required to pay provincial taxes in 1465, the salt tax in 1475, and corvée exemptions in 1485. By the late Ming, the amount of silver being used was extraordinary; at a time when English traders considered tens of thousands of pounds an exceptional fortune, the Zheng clan of merchants regularly engaged in transactions valued at millions of taels. However, a second silver contraction occurred in the mid-17th century when King Philip IV of Spain began enforcing laws limiting direct trade between Spanish South America and China at about the same time the new Tokugawa shogunate in Japan restricted most of its foreign exports, cutting off Dutch and Portuguese access to its silver. The dramatic spike in silver's value in China made payment of taxes nearly impossible for most provinces. The government even resumed use of paper currency amid Li Zicheng's rebellion.



Spring Morning in a Han Palace by Qiu Ying (1494–1552). Excessive luxury and decadence marked the late Ming period, spurred by the enormous state bullion of incoming silver and by private transactions involving silver.

Agriculture during the Ming Dynasty

In order to recover from the rule of the Mongols and the wars that followed, the Hongwu Emperor enacted pro-agricultural policies. The state invested extensively in agricultural canals and reduced taxes on agriculture to 3.3% of the output, and later to 1.5%. Ming farmers also introduced many innovations such as water-powered plows, and new agricultural methods such as crop rotation. This led to a massive agricultural surplus that became the basis of a market economy.

The Ming saw the rise of commercial plantations that produced crops suitable to their regions. Tea, fruit, paint, and other goods were produced on a massive scale by these agricultural plantations. Regional patterns of production established during this period continued into the Qing dynasty. The Columbian exchange brought crops such as corn. Still, large numbers of peasants abandoned the land to become artisans. The population of the Ming boomed; estimates for the population of the Ming range from 160 to 200 million.

Agriculture during the Ming changed significantly. Firstly, gigantic areas devoted to cash crops sprung up, and there was demand for the crops in the new market economy. Secondly, agricultural tools and carts, some water powered, help to create a large agricultural surplus that formed the basis of the rural economy. Besides rice, other crops were grown on a large scale.

Although images of autarkic farmers who had no connection to the rest of China may have some merit for the earlier Han and Tang dynasties, this was certainly not the case for the Ming dynasty. During the Ming dynasty, the increase in population and the decrease in quality land made it necessary for farmers to make a living off cash crops. Markets for these crops appeared in the rural countryside, where goods were exchanged and bartered.

A second type of market that developed in China was the urban-rural type, in which rural goods were sold to urban dwellers. This was common when landlords decided to reside in the cities and use income from rural land holdings to facilitate exchange in those urban areas. Professional merchants used this type of market to buy rural goods in large quantities.

The third type of market was the “national market,” which was developed during the Song dynasty but particularly enhanced during the Ming. This market involved not only the exchanges described above, but also products produced directly for the market. Unlike earlier dynasties, many Ming peasants were no longer generating only products they needed; many of them produced goods for the market, which they then sold at a profit.

Land Reform

As the Hongwu Emperor came from a peasant family, he was aware of how peasants used to suffer under the oppression of the scholar-bureaucrats and the wealthy. Many of the latter, relying on their connections with government officials, encroached unscrupulously on peasants’ lands and bribed the officials to transfer the burden of taxation to the poor. To prevent such abuse, the Hongwu Emperor instituted two systems: Yellow Records and Fish Scale Records. These systems served both to secure the government’s income from land taxes and to affirm that peasants would not lose their lands.

However, the reforms did not eliminate the threat of the bureaucrats to peasants. Instead, the expansion of the bureaucrats and their growing prestige translated into more wealth and tax exemption for those in government service. The bureaucrats gained new privileges and some became illegal money-lenders and managers of gambling rings. Using their power, the bureaucrats expanded their estates at the expense of peasants’ land through outright purchase of those lands and foreclosure on their mortgages whenever they wanted the lands. The peasants often became either tenants or workers, or sought employment elsewhere.

Since the beginning of the Ming dynasty in 1357, great care was taken by the Hongwu Emperor to distribute land to peasants. One way was through forced migration to less dense areas; some people were tied to a pagoda tree in Hongdong and moved. Public works projects, such as the construction of irrigation systems and dikes, were undertaken in an attempt to help farmers. In addition, the Hongwu Emperor also reduced the demands for forced labour on the peasantry. In 1370, the Hongwu Emperor ordered that some lands in Hunan and Anhui should be given to young farmers who had reached adulthood. The order was intended to prevent landlords from seizing the land, as it also decreed that the titles to the lands were not transferable. During the middle part of his reign, the Hongwu Emperor passed an edict stating that those who brought fallow land under cultivation could keep it as their property without being taxed.

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10.7: The Role of Foreign Trade

Learning Objectives

- Explain the significant role foreign trade played under Ming dynasty

Key Points

- In the early Ming, after the devastation of the war that expelled the Mongols, the Hongwu Emperor imposed severe restrictions on trade, called the *haijin*.
- The trade ban was completely counterproductive; by the 16th century, piracy and smuggling were widespread.
- After Hongwu Emperor's death, most of his policies were reversed by his successors.
- After the Chinese banned direct trade with Japan, the Portuguese filled this commercial vacuum as intermediaries between China and Japan.
- Although the bulk of imports to China were silver, the Chinese also purchased New World crops from the Spanish Empire, many of which became staple crops.
- The thriving of trade and commerce was aided by the construction of canals, roads, and bridges by the Ming government.

Terms

Matteo Ricci

An Italian Jesuit priest and one of the founding figures of the Jesuit China missions. His 1602 map of the world in Chinese characters introduced the findings of European exploration to East Asia.

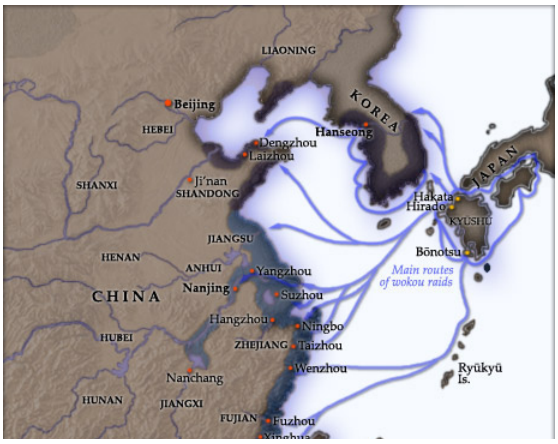
haijin

A series of related isolationist Chinese policies restricting private maritime trade and coastal settlement during most of the Ming dynasty.

Trade Restrictions

In the early Ming, after the devastation of the war that expelled the Mongols, the Hongwu Emperor imposed severe restrictions on trade (the "*haijin*" or "sea ban"). Believing that agriculture was the basis of the economy, Hongwu favored that industry over all else, including the merchant industry. Partly imposed to deal with Japanese piracy amid the mopping up of Yuan partisans, the sea ban was completely counterproductive; by the 16th century, piracy and smuggling were endemic and mostly consisted of Chinese who had been dispossessed by the policies. China's foreign trade was limited to irregular and expensive tribute missions, and resistance to them among the Chinese bureaucracy led to the scrapping of Zheng He's fleets. Piracy dropped to negligible levels only upon the ending of the policy in 1567.

After Hongwu Emperor's death, most of his policies were reversed by his successors. By the late Ming, the state was losing power to the very merchants Hongwu had wanted to restrict.



Japanese pirates. A map of 16th-century Japanese pirate raids, a phenomenon that gave rise to severe trade restrictions in the Ming.

Trade Expands

After the Chinese banned direct trade with Japan, the Portuguese filled this commercial vacuum as intermediaries between China and Japan. The Portuguese bought Chinese silk and sold it to the Japanese in return for Japanese-mined silver; since silver was more highly valued in China, the Portuguese could then use Japanese silver to buy even larger stocks of Chinese silk. However, by 1573—after the Spanish established a trading base in Manila—the Portuguese intermediary trade was trumped by the prime source of incoming silver to China from the Spanish Americas. Although it is unknown just how much silver flowed from the Philippines to China, it is known that the main port for the Mexican silver trade—Acapulco—shipped between 150,000 and 345,000 kg (4 to 9 million taels) of silver annually from 1597 to 1602.

Although the bulk of imports to China were silver, the Chinese also purchased New World crops from the Spanish Empire. This included sweet potatoes, maize, and peanuts, foods that could be cultivated in lands where traditional Chinese staple crops—wheat, millet, and rice—couldn't grow, hence facilitating a rise in the population of China. In the Song dynasty (960–1279), rice had become the major staple crop of the poor; after sweet potatoes were introduced to China around 1560, they gradually became the traditional food of the lower classes. The Ming also imported many European firearms in order to ensure the modernness of their weapons.

The beginning of relations between the Spanish and Chinese were much warmer than when the Portuguese were first given a reception in China. In the Philippines, the Spanish defeated the fleet of the infamous Chinese pirate Limahong in 1575, an act greatly appreciated by the Ming admiral who had been sent to capture Limahong. In fact, the Chinese admiral invited the Spanish to board his vessel and travel back to China, beginning a trip that included two Spanish soldiers and two Christian friars eager to spread the faith. However, the friars returned to the Philippines after it became apparent that their preaching was unwelcome; Matteo Ricci would fare better in his trip of 1582. The Augustinian monk Juan Gonzáles de Mendoza wrote an influential work on China in 1585, remarking that the Ming dynasty was the best-governed kingdom he was aware of in the known world.

The thriving of trade and commerce was aided by the construction of canals, roads, and bridges by the Ming government. The Ming saw the rise of several merchant clans such as the Huai and Jin, who disposed of large amounts of wealth. The gentry and merchant classes started to fuse, and the merchants gained power at the expense of the state. Some merchants were reputed to have a treasure of 30 million taels.

Matteo Ricci map. Map of East Asia by the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci in 1602; Ricci (1552–1610) was the first European allowed into the Forbidden City. He taught the Chinese how to construct and play the spinet, translated Chinese texts into Latin and vice versa, and worked closely with his Chinese associate Xu Guangqi (1562–1633) on mathematical work.

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10.8: Art under the Ming Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Describe some of the artwork characteristic of the Ming dynasty

Key Points

- One major innovation during the Ming period was the vernacular novel, written in a form of Chinese readable to an audience much larger than the elite literati and incorporating themes outside the norms of Confucian court styles.
- Informal essays, travel writing, and private newspapers also thrived during the Ming period.
- During the Ming, classical forms of painting continued, and new schools of painting flourished.
- Well-known Ming artists could make a living simply by painting due to the high prices they charged for their artworks and the great demand by the highly cultured community to collect precious works of art.
- The period was also renowned for ceramics and porcelains, which were sought around the world, and gave rise to many scammers and imitators.

Terms

calligraphy

A visual art related to writing; the design and execution of lettering with a broad-tip brush, among other writing instruments.

vernacular

The native language or native dialect of a specific population, especially as distinguished from a literary, national, or standard variety of the language.

Literature and Poetry

Short fiction had been popular in China as far back as the Tang dynasty (618–907), and the works of contemporaneous Ming authors such as Xu Guangqi, Xu Xiake, and Song Yingxing were often technical and encyclopedic, but the most striking literary development during the Ming period was the vernacular novel. While the gentry elite were educated enough to fully comprehend the language of classical Chinese, those with rudimentary educations—such as women in educated families, merchants, and shop clerks—became a large potential audience for literature and performing arts that employed vernacular Chinese. Literati scholars edited or developed major Chinese novels into mature form in this period, such as *Water Margin* and *Journey to the West*. *Jin Ping Mei*, published in 1610, though it incorporated earlier material, exemplifies the trend toward independent composition and concern with psychology. In the later years of the dynasty, Feng Menglong and Ling Mengchu innovated with vernacular short fiction. Theater scripts were equally imaginative. The most famous script, *The Peony Pavilion*, was written by Tang Xianzu (1550–1616), and had its first performance at the Pavilion of Prince Teng in 1598.

Informal essay and travel writing was another highlight of Ming literature. Xu Xiake (1587–1641), a travel literature author, published his *Travel Diaries* in 404,000 written characters, with information on everything from local geography to mineralogy. In contrast to Xu Xiake, who focused on technical aspects in his travel literature, the Chinese poet and official Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610) used travel literature to express his desires for individualism, as well as autonomy from and frustration with Confucian court politics. Yuan desired to free himself from the ethical compromises that were inseparable from the career of a scholar-official. This anti-official sentiment in Yuan's travel literature and poetry was actually following in the tradition of the Song dynasty poet and official Su Shi (1037–1101). Yuan Hongdao and his two brothers, Yuan Zongdao (1560–1600) and Yuan Zhongdao (1570–1623), were the founders of the Gong'an School of letters. This highly individualistic school of poetry and prose was criticized by the Confucian establishment for its association with intense sensual lyricism, which was also apparent in Ming vernacular novels such as the *Jin Ping Mei*. Yet even the gentry and scholar-officials were affected by the new popular romantic literature, seeking courtesans as soulmates to reenact the heroic love stories that arranged marriages often could not provide or accommodate.

The first reference to the publishing of private newspapers in Beijing was in 1582; by 1638 the *Beijing Gazette* switched from using woodblock print to movable type printing. The new literary field of the moral guide to business ethics was developed during

the late Ming period for the readership of the merchant class.

Painting

Famous painters included Ni Zan and Dong Qichang, as well as the Four Masters of the Ming dynasty, Shen Zhou, Tang Yin, Wen Zhengming, and Qiu Ying. They drew upon the techniques, styles, and complexity in painting achieved by their Song and Yuan predecessors, but added techniques and styles. Well-known Ming artists could make a living simply by painting due to the high prices they charged for their artworks and the great demand by the highly cultured community to collect precious works of art. The artist Qiu Ying was once paid 100 oz of silver to paint a long hand-scroll for the eightieth birthday celebration of the mother of a wealthy patron. Renowned artists often gathered an entourage of followers, some who were amateurs who painted while pursuing an official career, and others who were full-time painters.

The painting techniques that were invented and developed before the Ming period became classical during it. More colors were used in painting during the Ming dynasty; seal brown became much more widely used, and even over-used. Many new painting skills and techniques were innovated and developed; calligraphy was much more closely and perfectly combined with the art of painting. Chinese painting reached another climax in the mid- and late-Ming. Painting was derived in a broad scale, many new schools were born, and many outstanding masters emerged.

Chen Hongshou painting from the Ming period. Painting of flowers, a butterfly, and rock sculpture by Chen Hongshou (1598–1652); small leaf album paintings like this one first became popular in the Song dynasty.

Pottery

The period was also renowned for ceramics and porcelains. The major production centers for porcelain were the imperial kilns at Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province and Dehua in Fujian province. The Dehua porcelain factories catered to European tastes by creating Chinese export porcelain by the 16th century. Individual potters also became known, such as He Chaozong, who became famous in the early 17th century for his style of white porcelain sculpture. The ceramic trade thrived in Asia; Chuimei Ho estimates that about 16% of late Ming era Chinese ceramic exports were sent to Europe, while the rest were destined for Japan and South East Asia.

Carved designs in lacquerware and designs glazed onto porcelain wares displayed intricate scenes similar in complexity to those in painting. These items could be found in the homes of the wealthy, alongside embroidered silks and wares in jade, ivory, and cloisonné. The houses of the rich were also furnished with rosewood furniture and feathery latticework. The writing materials in a scholar's private study, including elaborately carved brush holders made of stone or wood, were designed and arranged ritually to give an aesthetic appeal.

Connoisseurship in the late Ming period centered on these items of refined artistic taste, which provided work for art dealers and even underground scammers who themselves made imitations and false attributions. The Jesuit Matteo Ricci, while staying in Nanjing, wrote that Chinese scam artists were ingenious at making forgeries and thus huge profits. However, there were guides to help the wary new connoisseurs; Liu Tong (d. 1637) wrote a book printed in 1635 that told his readers how to spot fake and authentic pieces of art. He revealed that a Xuande-era (1426–1435) bronzework could be authenticated by judging its sheen; porcelain wares from the Yongle era (1402–1424) could be judged authentic by their thickness.

Ming pottery. Ming dynasty Xuande mark and period (1426–35) imperial blue and white vase. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

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10.9: Fall of the Ming Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Explain why the Ming dynasty eventually fell from power

Key Points

- During the last years of the Wanli Emperor's reign and the reigns of his two successors, an economic crisis developed that was centered around a sudden widespread lack of the empire's chief medium of exchange: silver.
- In this early half of the 17th century, famines became common in northern China, and the central government did little to relieve the populations, leading to widespread discontent among the people.
- The Manchu, formerly called the Jurchen people, rose to power under the leadership of a tribal leader named Nurhaci, who commissioned a document titled the Seven Grievances, essentially a declaration of war against the Ming.
- Peasant and soldier uprising under the leadership of Li Zicheng weakened the government and army of the Ming.
- The last Ming emperor, the Chongzhen Emperor, hanged himself on a tree in the imperial garden outside the Forbidden City.
- Li Zicheng, who had attempted to start a new Shun dynasty, was eventually defeated by the Manchu army, who founded the Qing dynasty.

Terms

Forbidden City

The Chinese imperial palace from the Ming dynasty to the end of the Qing dynasty—the years 1420 to 1912—in Beijing.

Wanli Emperor

The 13th emperor of the Ming dynasty of China; his reign of forty-eight years (1572–1620) was the longest of the Ming dynasty, and it witnessed the steady decline of the dynasty.

Manchu

A Chinese ethnic minority, formerly the Jurchen people, who founded the Qing dynasty.

Economic Breakdown

During the last years of the Wanli Emperor's reign and the reigns of his two successors, an economic crisis developed that was centered around a sudden widespread lack of the empire's chief medium of exchange: silver. The Protestant powers of the Dutch Republic and the Kingdom of England were staging frequent raids and acts of piracy against the Catholic-based empires of Spain and Portugal in order to weaken their global economic power. Meanwhile, Philip IV of Spain (r. 1621–1665) began cracking down on illegal smuggling of silver from Mexico and Peru across the Pacific towards China, in favor of shipping American-mined silver directly from Spain to Manila. In 1639, the new Tokugawa regime of Japan shut down most of its foreign trade with European powers, causing a halt of yet another source of silver coming into China. However, while Japanese silver still came into China in limited amounts, the greatest stunt to the flow of silver came from the Americas.

These events occurring at roughly the same time caused a dramatic spike in the value of silver and made paying taxes nearly impossible for most provinces. People began hoarding precious silver, forcing the ratio of the value of copper to silver into a steep decline. In the 1630s, a string of one thousand copper coins was worth an ounce of silver; by 1640 it was reduced to the value of half an ounce; by 1643 it was worth roughly one-third of an ounce. For peasants this was an economic disaster, since they paid taxes in silver while conducting local trade and selling their crops with copper coins.

Natural Disasters

In this early half of the 17th century, famines became common in northern China because of unusual dry and cold weather that shortened the growing season; these were effects of a larger ecological event now known as the Little Ice Age. Famine, alongside tax increases, widespread military desertions, a declining relief system, natural disasters such as flooding, and the inability of the

government to properly manage irrigation and flood-control projects, caused widespread loss of life and normal civility. The central government was starved of resources and could do very little to mitigate the effects of these calamities. Making matters worse, a widespread epidemic spread across China from Zhejiang to Henan, killing a large but unknown number of people. The famine and drought in the late 1620s and the 1630s contributed to the rebellions that broke out in Shaanxi led by rebel leaders such as Li Zicheng and Zhang Xianzhong.

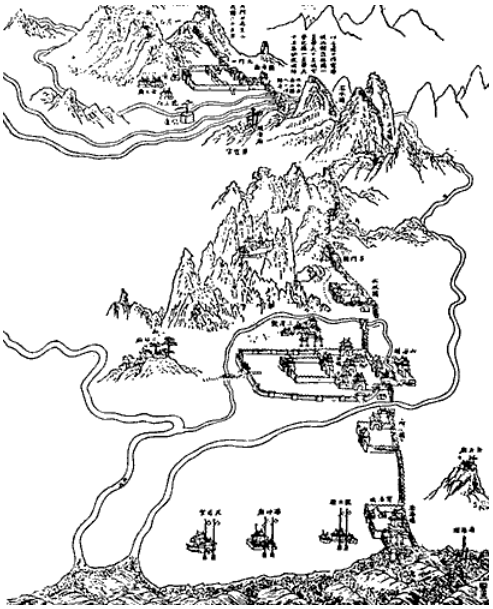
The Qing Conquest of Ming: Rebellion, Invasion, Collapse

The Qing conquest of the Ming was a period of conflict between the Qing dynasty, established by the Manchu clan Aisin Gioro in Manchuria (contemporary Northeastern China), and the ruling Ming dynasty of China. The Manchu, formerly called the Jurchen people, had risen to power under the leadership of a tribal leader named Nurhaci. Leading up to the Qing conquest, in 1618 Nurhaci commissioned a document titled the Seven Grievances, which enumerated resentments against the Ming and bespoke rebellion against their domination. Many of the grievances dealt with conflicts against Yehe, which was a major Manchu clan, and Ming favoritism of Yehe. Nurhaci's demand that the Ming pay tribute to him to redress the Seven Grievances was effectively a declaration of war, as the Ming were not willing to pay money to a former tributary. Shortly afterwards, Nurhaci began to force the Ming out of Liaoning in southern Manchuria.

Nurhaci of the Manchu. Nurhaci's conquest of Ming China's northeastern Liaoning province laid the groundwork for the conquest of the rest of China by his descendants, who founded the Qing dynasty in 1644.

At the same time, the Ming dynasty was fighting for its survival against fiscal turmoil and peasant rebellions. In 1640, masses of Chinese peasants who were starving, unable to pay their taxes, and no longer in fear of the frequently defeated Chinese army, began to form into huge bands of rebels. The Chinese military, caught between fruitless efforts to defeat the Manchu raiders from the north and huge peasant revolts in the provinces, essentially fell apart. On April 24, 1644, Beijing fell to a rebel army led by Li Zicheng, a former minor Ming official who became the leader of the peasant revolt and then proclaimed the Shun dynasty. The last Ming emperor, the Chongzhen Emperor, hanged himself on a tree in the imperial garden outside the Forbidden City. When Li

Zicheng moved against him, the Ming general Wu Sangui shifted his alliance to the Manchus. Li Zicheng was defeated at the Battle of Shanhai Pass by the joint forces of Wu Sangui and the Manchu Prince Dorgon. On June 6, the Manchus and Wu entered the capital and proclaimed the young Shunzhi Emperor as Emperor of China.



A drawing of the mountainous battlegrounds of the decisive Battle of Shanhai Pass.

The Kangxi Emperor ascended the throne in 1661, and in 1662 his regents launched the Great Clearance to defeat the resistance of Ming loyalists in South China. He fought off several rebellions, such as the Revolt of the Three Feudatories led by Wu Sangui in southern China starting in 1673, and then countered by launching a series of campaigns that expanded his empire. In 1662, Zheng Chenggong founded the Kingdom of Tungning in Taiwan, a pro-Ming dynasty state with a goal of reconquering China. However, the Kingdom of Tungning was defeated in the Battle of Penghu by Han Chinese admiral Shi Lang, who had also served under the Ming.

The fall of the Ming dynasty was caused by a combination of factors. Kenneth Swope argues that one key factor was deteriorating relations between Ming royalty and the Ming empire's military leadership. Other factors include repeated military expeditions to the North, inflationary pressures caused by spending too much from the imperial treasury, natural disasters, and epidemics of disease. Contributing further to the chaos was the peasant rebellion in Beijing in 1644 and a series of weak emperors. Ming power would hold out in what is now southern China for years, but eventually would be overtaken by the Manchus.

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10.10: Rise of the Tang Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Explain the events that led to the Tang dynasty coming to power

Key Points

- The short-lived Sui dynasty had profound effects on the development of China as an imperial power, consolidating the ethnic and cultural character of the people and uniting the Northern and Southern dynasties.
- After a series of costly and disastrous military campaigns against one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, the Sui dynasty disintegrated under a sequence of popular revolts culminating in the assassination of Emperor Yang by his ministers in 618.
- The Tang dynasty was founded by the Li Yuan, a duke who seized power during the decline and collapse of the Sui dynasty.
- For the next hundred years, several Tang leaders ruled, including a woman, Empress Wu, whose rise to power was achieved through cruel and calculating tactics but made room for the prominent role of women in the imperial court.
- During the forty-four-year reign of Emperor Xuanzong, who came to power in 712, the Tang dynasty reached its height, a golden age with low economic inflation and a toned down lifestyle for the imperial court.

Terms

Confucianism

A tradition, philosophy, religion, humanistic, or rationalistic religion, a way of governing, and a way of life based on the teachings of Confucius.

Han Chinese

An ethnic group native to East Asia; the Chinese peoples especially as distinguished from non-Chinese (such as Mongolian) people in the population.

sinicization

A process whereby non-Han Chinese societies come under the influence of Han Chinese state and society.

Overview of the Tang Dynasty

The Tang dynasty (Chinese: 唐朝) was an imperial dynasty of China preceded by the Sui dynasty and followed by the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period. It is generally regarded as a high point in Chinese civilization and a golden age of cosmopolitan culture. Its territory, acquired through the military campaigns of its early rulers, rivaled that of the Han dynasty, and the Tang capital at Chang'an (present-day Xi'an) was the most populous city in the world.

With its large population base, the dynasty was able to raise professional and conscripted armies of hundreds of thousands of troops to contend with nomadic powers in dominating Inner Asia and the lucrative trade routes along the Silk Road. Various kingdoms and states paid tribute to the Tang court, and the Tang also conquered or subdued several regions that it indirectly controlled through a protectorate system. Besides political hegemony, the Tang also exerted a powerful cultural influence over neighboring states such as those in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

The Tang dynasty was largely a period of progress and stability in the first half of its rule, followed by the An Lushan Rebellion and the decline of central authority in the later half of the dynasty. Like the previous Sui dynasty, the Tang dynasty maintained a civil service system by recruiting scholar-officials through standardized examinations and recommendations to office. Chinese culture flourished and further matured during the Tang era; it is considered the greatest age for Chinese poetry. Two of China's most famous poets, Li Bai and Du Fu, belonged to this age, as did many famous painters such as Han Gan, Zhang Xuan, and Zhou Fang. There were many notable innovations during the Tang, including the development of woodblock printing.

Decline of the Sui Dynasty and the Founding of the Tang

The Sui dynasty was a short-lived imperial dynasty of pivotal significance. The Sui unified the Northern and Southern dynasties and reinstalled the rule of ethnic Han Chinese in the entirety of China proper, as well as sinicized former nomadic ethnic minorities within its territory. By the middle of the Sui dynasty, the newly unified empire entered an age of prosperity with vast agricultural surplus that supported acute population growth. Wide-ranging reforms and construction projects were undertaken to consolidate the newly unified state, with long-lasting influences beyond the short dynastic reign. The Sui dynasty was succeeded by the Tang dynasty, which largely inherited its foundation.

After a series of costly and disastrous military campaigns against Goguryeo, one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, ended in defeat by 614, the Sui dynasty disintegrated under a sequence of popular revolts culminating in the assassination of Emperor Yang by his ministers in 618. The dynasty, which lasted only thirty-seven years, was undermined by ambitious wars and construction projects, which overstretched its resources. Particularly under Emperor Yang, heavy taxation and compulsory labor duties eventually induced widespread revolts and a brief civil war following the fall of the dynasty.

After Yang's death, the Sui dynasty's territories were carved into a handful of short-lived states by its officials, generals, and agrarian rebel leaders, and the process of elimination and annexation that followed ultimately culminated in the consolidation of the Tang dynasty by the former Sui general Li Yuan.

Emperor Yang of Sui. Portrait painting of Emperor Yang of Sui, the last emperor of the Sui dynasty, commissioned in 643 by Taizong, painted by Yan Liben (600–673).

Li Yuan was duke of Tang and governor of Taiyuan during the Sui dynasty's collapse. He had prestige and military experience, and was a first cousin of Emperor Yang of Sui. Li Yuan rose in rebellion in 617, along with his son and his equally militant daughter Princess Pingyang, who raised and commanded her own troops. In the winter of 617, Li Yuan occupied Chang'an, relegated Emperor Yang to the position of Taishang Huang or retired emperor, and acted as regent to the puppet child-emperor, Emperor Gong of Sui. On the news of Emperor Yang's murder by General Yuwen Huaji on June 18, 618, Li Yuan declared himself the emperor of a new dynasty, the Tang.

Early Tang Dynasty and the Rise to Prosperity

Li Yuan, known as Emperor Gaozu of Tang, ruled until 626, when he was forcefully deposed by his son Li Shimin, the Prince of Qin, conventionally known by his temple name Taizong. Although killing two brothers and deposing his father contradicted the Confucian value of filial piety, Taizong showed himself to be a capable leader who listened to the advice of the wisest members of his council.

Emperor Taizong. Emperor Taizong (r. 626–649) receives Gar Tongtsen Yülsung, ambassador of Tibet, at his court; painted in 641 by Yan Liben (600–673).

For the next hundred years, several Tang leaders ruled, including a woman, Empress Wu, whose rise to power was achieved through cruel and calculating tactics but made room for the prominent role of women in the imperial court. Wu's rule was actually a short break in the Tang dynasty, as she established the short-lived Zhou dynasty; the Tang dynasty was restored after her rule. In 706 the wife of Emperor Zhongzong of Tang, Empress Wei, persuaded her husband to staff government offices with his sister and her daughters, and in 709 requested that he grant women the right to bequeath hereditary privileges to their sons (which before was a male right only). Just as Emperor Zhongzong was dominated by Empress Wei, so too was Ruizong dominated by Princess Taiping. This was finally ended when Princess Taiping's coup failed in 712 (she later hanged herself in 713) and Emperor Ruizong abdicated to Emperor Xuanzong.

During the forty-four-year reign of Emperor Xuanzong, the Tang dynasty reached its height, a golden age with low economic inflation and a toned down lifestyle for the imperial court. Seen as a progressive and benevolent ruler, Xuanzong even abolished the death penalty in the year 747; all executions had to be approved beforehand by the emperor himself. Xuanzong bowed to the consensus of his ministers on policy decisions and made efforts to staff government ministries fairly with different political factions. His staunch Confucian chancellor Zhang Jiuling (673–740) worked to reduce deflation and increase the money supply by upholding the use of private coinage, while his aristocratic and technocratic successor, Li Linfu (d. 753) favored government monopoly over the issuance of coinage. After 737 most of Xuanzong's confidence rested in his long-standing chancellor Li Linfu, who championed a more aggressive foreign policy employing non-Chinese generals. This policy ultimately created the conditions for a massive rebellion against Xuanzong.

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10.11: Trade Under the Tang Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Describe how the Tang dynasty prospered from trade

Key Points

- Although the Silk Road from China to the West was initially formulated during the reign of Emperor Wu of Han (141–87 BCE), it was reopened by the Tang Empire in 639 CE when Hou Junji conquered the West, and remained open for almost four decades.
- The Silk Road was the most important pre-modern Eurasian trade route, opening long-distance political and economic relations between the civilizations.
- Though silk was certainly the major trade item exported from China, many other goods were traded, and religions, syncretic philosophies, and various technologies, as well as diseases, also spread along the Silk Road.
- In addition to economic trade, the Silk Road served as a means of carrying out cultural trade among the civilizations along its network.
- Chinese maritime presence increased dramatically during the Tang period, giving rise to large seaports and trade relations with Africa, India, and beyond.

Terms

Pax Sinica

A period of peace in East Asia, maintained by Chinese hegemony, during which long-distance trade flourished, cities ballooned, standards of living rose, and the population surged.

Silk Road

An ancient network of trade routes that for centuries were central to cultural interaction through regions of the Asian continent connecting the West and East from China to the Mediterranean Sea.

Overview

Through use of land trade along the Silk Road and maritime trade by sail at sea, the Tang were able to gain many new technologies, cultural practices, rare luxuries, and contemporary items. From the Middle East, India, Persia, and Central Asia the Tang were able to acquire new ideas in fashion, new types of ceramics, and improved silver-smithing. The Chinese also gradually adopted the foreign concept of stools and chairs as seating, whereas before they had always sat on mats placed on the floor. In the Middle East, the Islamic world coveted and purchased in bulk Chinese goods such as silks, lacquerwares, and porcelain wares. Songs, dances, and musical instruments from foreign regions became popular in China during the Tang dynasty. These musical instruments included oboes, flutes, and small lacquered drums from Kucha in the Tarim Basin, and percussion instruments from India such as cymbals. At the court there were nine musical ensembles (expanded from seven in the Sui dynasty) representing music from throughout Asia.

There was great contact with and interest in India as a hub for Buddhist knowledge, with famous travelers such as Xuanzang (d. 664) visiting the South Asian subcontinent. After a seventeen-year-long trip, Xuanzang managed to bring back valuable Sanskrit texts to be translated into Chinese. There was also a Turkic–Chinese dictionary available for serious scholars and students, and Turkic folksongs gave inspiration to some Chinese poetry. In the interior of China, trade was facilitated by the Grand Canal and the Tang government's rationalization of the greater canal system that reduced costs of transporting grain and other commodities. The state also managed roughly 32,100 km (19,900 mi) of postal service routes by horse and boat.

The Silk Road

Although the Silk Road from China to the West was initially formulated during the reign of Emperor Wu (141–87 BCE) during the Han dynasty, it was reopened by the Tang in 639 CE when Hou Junji (d. 643) conquered the West, and remained open for almost

four decades. It was closed after the Tibetans captured it in 678, but in 699, during Empress Wu's period, it reopened when the Tang reconquered the Four Garrisons of Anxi originally installed in 640, once again connecting China directly to the West for land-based trade.

The Silk Road was the most important pre-modern Eurasian trade route. The Tang dynasty established a second Pax Sinica and the Silk Road reached its golden age, whereby Persian and Sogdian merchants benefited from the commerce between East and West. At the same time, the Chinese empire welcomed foreign cultures, making it very cosmopolitan in its urban centers.

The Tang captured the vital route through the Gilgit Valley from Tibet in 722, lost it to the Tibetans in 737, and regained it under the command of the Goguryeo-Korean General Gao Xianzhi. When the An Lushan Rebellion ended in 763, the Tang Empire had once again lost control over its western lands, as the Tibetan Empire largely cut off China's direct access to the Silk Road. An internal rebellion in 848 ousted the Tibetan rulers, and Tang China regained its northwestern prefectures from Tibet in 851. These lands contained crucial grazing areas and pastures for raising horses that the Tang dynasty desperately needed.

Despite the many western travelers coming into China to live and trade, many travelers, mainly religious monks, recorded the strict border laws that the Chinese enforced. As the monk Xuanzang and many other monk travelers attested to, there were many Chinese government checkpoints along the Silk Road where travel permits into the Tang Empire were examined. Furthermore, banditry was a problem along the checkpoints and oasis towns, as Xuanzang also recorded that his group of travelers was assaulted by bandits on multiple occasions.

The Silk Road also affected Tang dynasty art. Horses became a significant symbol of prosperity and power as well as an instrument of military and diplomatic policy. Horses were also revered as a relative of the dragon.

Tang period jar. A Tang period gilt-silver jar, shaped in the style of northern nomad's leather bag, decorated with a horse dancing with a cup of wine in its mouth, as the horses of Emperor Xuanzong were trained to do.

Seaports and Maritime Trade

Chinese envoys had been sailing through the Indian Ocean to India since perhaps the 2nd century BC, but it was during the Tang dynasty that a strong Chinese maritime presence was found in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, into Persia, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Egypt, Aksum (Ethiopia), and Somalia in the Horn of Africa.

During the Tang dynasty, thousands of foreigners came and lived in numerous Chinese cities for trade and commercial ties with China, including Persians, Arabs, Hindu Indians, Malays, Bengalis, Sinhalese, Khmers, Chams, Jews and Nestorian Christians of the Near East, and many others. In 748, the Buddhist monk Jian Zhen described Guangzhou as a bustling mercantile center where many large and impressive foreign ships came to dock.

During the An Lushan Rebellion Arab and Persian pirates burned and looted Guangzhou in 758, and foreigners were massacred at Yangzhou in 760. The Tang government reacted by shutting the port of Canton down for roughly five decades, and foreign vessels docked at Hanoi instead. However, when the port reopened it thrived. In 851 the Arab merchant Sulaiman al-Tajir observed the manufacturing of Chinese porcelain in Guangzhou and admired its transparent quality. He also provided a description of Guangzhou's mosque, its granaries, its local government administration, some of its written records, and the treatment of travelers, along with the use of ceramics, rice-wine, and tea. However, in another bloody episode at Guangzhou in 879, the Chinese rebel Huang Chao sacked the city and purportedly slaughtered thousands of native Chinese, along with foreign Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and Muslims in the process. Huang's rebellion was eventually suppressed in 884.

The Chinese engaged in large-scale production for overseas export by at least the time of the Tang. This was proven by the discovery of the Belitung shipwreck, a silt-preserved shipwrecked Arabian dhow in the Gaspar Strait near Belitung, which contained 63,000 pieces of Tang ceramics, silver, and gold. Beginning in 785, the Chinese began to call regularly at Sufala on the East African coast in order to cut out Arab middlemen, with various contemporary Chinese sources giving detailed descriptions of trade in Africa. In 863 the Chinese author Duan Chengshi (d. 863) provided a detailed description of the slave trade, ivory trade, and ambergris trade in a country called Bobali, which historians suggest was Berbera in Somalia. In Fustat (old Cairo), Egypt, the fame of Chinese ceramics there led to an enormous demand for Chinese goods; hence Chinese often traveled there. During this time period, the Arab merchant Shulama wrote of his admiration for Chinese seafaring junks, but noted that their draft was too deep for them to enter the Euphrates River, which forced them to ferry passengers and cargo in small boats. Shulama also noted that Chinese ships were often very large, with capacities of up to 600–700 passengers.

Foreign merchant. Figurine of a Sogdian merchant of the Tang dynasty, 7th-century.

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10.12: Religion Under the Tang Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Analyze why the emperors of the Tang dynasty were interested in the promotion of certain religions

Key Points

- Taoism was the official religion of the Tang; it is a native Chinese religious and philosophical tradition, based on the writings of Laozi.
- Taoism was combined with ancient Chinese folk religions, medical practices, Buddhism, and martial arts to create a complex and syncretic spirituality.
- Li Yuan, the founder of the Tang dynasty, had attracted a following by claiming descent from the Taoist sage Laozi.
- Buddhism, originating in India around the time of Confucius, continued its influence during the Tang period and was accepted by some members of the imperial family, becoming thoroughly sinicized and a permanent part of Chinese traditional culture.
- The prominent status of Buddhism in Chinese culture began to decline as the dynasty and central government declined during the late-8th century and 9th century, and many Buddhists experienced persecution.
- The Tang dynasty also officially recognized various foreign religions, such as the Nestorian Christian Church.

Terms

Chan Buddhism

A school of Mahayana Buddhism that originated in China during the Tang dynasty, was strongly influenced by Taoism, and later became Zen when it travelled to Japan.

Confucianism

A Chinese humanistic religion that teaches that human beings are fundamentally good, and teachable, improvable, and perfectible through personal and communal endeavors, especially self-cultivation and self-creation; focuses on the cultivation of virtue, maintenance of ethics, and familial and social harmony.

Taoism

A religious or philosophical tradition of Chinese origin with an emphasis on living in harmony and accordance with the natural flow or cosmic structural order of the universe.

Taoism

Taoism was the official religion of the Tang. It is a native Chinese religious and philosophical tradition with an emphasis on living in harmony and accordance with the natural flow or cosmic structural order of the universe commonly referred to as the *Tao*. It has its roots in the book of the *Tao Te Ching* (attributed to Laozi in the 6th century BCE) and the *Zhuangzi*. The ruling Li family of the Tang dynasty actually claimed descent from the ancient Laozi.

Taoism has had a profound influence on Chinese culture, and clerics of institutionalized Taoism usually take care to note distinctions between their ritual tradition and the customs and practices found in Chinese folk religion, as these distinctions sometimes appear blurred. Chinese alchemy, Chinese astrology, Chan Buddhism, several martial arts, traditional Chinese medicine, feng shui, and many styles of qigong have been intertwined with Taoism throughout history.

During the Tang dynasty, the Chinese continued to combine their ancient folk religion with Taoism and incorporated many deities into religious practice. The Chinese believed the Tao and the afterlife were a reality parallel to the living world, complete with a bureaucracy and an afterlife currency needed by dead ancestors. Funerary practices included providing the deceased with everything they might need in the afterlife, including animals, servants, entertainers, hunters, homes, and officials. This is reflected in Tang dynasty art and in many short stories written in the Tang about people accidentally winding up in the realm of the dead, only to come back and report their experiences.

Buddhism

Buddhism, originating in India around the time of Confucius, continued its influence during the Tang period and was accepted by some members of the imperial family, becoming thoroughly sinicized and a permanent part of Chinese traditional culture. In an age before Neo-Confucianism and figures such as Zhu Xi (1130–1200), Buddhism began to flourish in China during the Northern and Southern dynasties, and became the dominant ideology during the prosperous Tang. Buddhist monasteries played an integral role in Chinese society, offering lodging for travelers in remote areas, schools for children throughout the country, and a place for urban literati to stage social events and gatherings such as going-away parties. Buddhist monasteries were also engaged in the economy, since their land and serfs gave them enough revenue to set up mills, oil presses, and other enterprises. Although the monasteries retained "serfs," these monastery dependents could actually own property and employ others to help them in their work, and could even own slaves.

Tang period Bodhisattva. A Tang dynasty sculpture of a Bodhisattva, a being who, motivated by great compassion, has generated bodhicitta, a spontaneous wish to attain buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

The prominent status of Buddhism in Chinese culture began to decline as the dynasty and central government declined during the late 8th century and 9th century. Buddhist convents and temples that had been exempt from state taxes were targeted for taxation. In 845 Emperor Wuzong of Tang finally shut down 4,600 Buddhist monasteries and 40,000 temples and shrines, forcing 260,000 Buddhist monks and nuns to return to secular life. This episode would later be dubbed one of the Four Buddhist Persecutions in China. Although the ban would be lifted just a few years later, Buddhism never regained its once dominant status in Chinese culture.

This situation also came about through a revival of interest in native Chinese philosophies, such as Confucianism and Taoism. Han Yu (786–824)—who Arthur F. Wright stated was a "brilliant polemicist and ardent xenophobe"—was one of the first men of the Tang to denounce Buddhism. Although his contemporaries found him crude and obnoxious, he foreshadowed the later persecution of Buddhism in the Tang, as well as the revival of Confucian theory with the rise of Neo-Confucianism of the Song dynasty. Nonetheless, Chan Buddhism gained popularity amongst the educated elite. There were also many famous Chan monks from the

Tang era, such as Mazu Daoyi, Baizhang, and Huangbo Xiyun. The sect of Pure Land Buddhism initiated by the Chinese monk Huiyuan (334–416) was also just as popular as Chan Buddhism during the Tang.

Christianity

The Tang dynasty also officially recognized various foreign religions. The Assyrian Church of the East, otherwise known as the Nestorian Christian Church, was given recognition by the Tang court. In 781, the Nestorian Stele was created in order to honor the achievements of their community in China. The stele contains a long inscription in Chinese with Syriac glosses, composed by the cleric Adam, probably the metropolitan of Beth Sinaye. The inscription describes the eventful progress of the Nestorian mission in China since Alopen's arrival. A Christian monastery was established in Shaanxi province where the Daqin Pagoda still stands, and inside the pagoda there is Christian-themed artwork. Although the religion largely died out after the Tang, it was revived in China following the Mongol invasions of the 13th century.

Nestorian Stele. The Nestorian Stele, erected in Chang'an 781.

Religion and Politics

From the outset, religion played a role in Tang politics. In his bid for power, Li Yuan had attracted a following by claiming descent from the Taoist sage Laozi (6th century BCE). People bidding for office would have monks from Buddhist temples pray for them in public in return for cash donations or gifts if the person was selected. Before the persecution of Buddhism in the 9th century, Buddhism and Taoism were accepted side by side, and Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–56) invited monks and clerics of both religions to his court. At the same time Xuanzong exalted the ancient Laozi by granting him grand titles and writing commentary on him, set up a school to prepare candidates for examinations on Taoist scriptures, and called upon the Indian monk Vajrabodhi (671–741) to perform Tantric rites to avert a drought in the year 726. In 742 Emperor Xuanzong personally held the incense burner during a ceremony led by Amoghavajra (705–74, patriarch of the Shingon school) reciting "mystical incantations to secure the victory of Tang forces."

While religion played a role in politics, politics also played a role in religion. In the year 714, Emperor Xuanzong forbade shops and vendors in the city of Chang'an to sell copied Buddhist sutras, instead giving the Buddhist clergy of the monasteries the sole right to distribute sutras to the laity. In the previous year of 713, Emperor Xuanzong had liquidated the highly lucrative Inexhaustible Treasury, which was run by a prominent Buddhist monastery in Chang'an. This monastery collected vast amounts of money, silk, and treasures through multitudes of anonymous people's repentances, leaving the donations on the monastery's premise. Although the monastery was generous in donations, Emperor Xuanzong issued a decree abolishing their treasury on grounds that their banking practices were fraudulent. He collected their riches and distributed the wealth to various other Buddhist monasteries and Taoist abbeys, and used it to repair statues, halls, and bridges in the city.

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10.13: The Literati

Learning Objectives

- Describe the role of the literati in the Tang dynasty's administration

Key Points

- The Tang dynasty was largely a period of progress and stability in the first half of the dynasty's rule, which was established as a civil service system by recruiting scholar-officials through standardized examinations and recommendations to office.
- These scholar-officials, also known as the literati, performed the day-to-day governance of the state from the Han dynasty to the end of the Qing dynasty, China's last imperial dynasty, in 1912, but came to special prominence during the Tang period.
- Since only a limited number could become court or local officials, the majority of scholar-officials stayed in villages or cities as social leaders and teachers.
- The imperial examinations were a civil service examination system to select scholar-officials in imperial China.
- Wu Zetian, later Empress Wu, reformed the imperial examinations to include a new class of elite bureaucrats derived from humbler origins.

Terms

Wu Zetian

A Chinese sovereign who ruled unofficially as empress consort and empress dowager, and then officially as empress regnan during the brief Zhou dynasty, which interrupted the Tang dynasty.

literati

Also known as scholar-officials, they were civil servants appointed by the emperor of China to perform day-to-day governance.

Scholar-Officials

The first half of the Tang dynasty was largely a period of progress and stability. Like the previous Sui dynasty, the Tang dynasty maintained a civil service system by recruiting scholar-officials through standardized examinations and recommendations to office. These scholar-officials, also known as the literati, performed the day-to-day governance of the state from the Han dynasty to the end of the Qing dynasty, China's last imperial dynasty, in 1912, but came to special prominence during the Tang period. The scholar-officials were schooled in calligraphy and Confucian texts.

Since only a limited number could become court or local officials, the majority of scholar-officials stayed in villages or cities as social leaders. The scholar-officials carried out social welfare measures, taught in private schools, helped negotiate minor legal disputes, supervised community projects, maintained local law and order, conducted Confucian ceremonies, assisted in the government's collection of taxes, and preached Confucian moral teachings. As a class, these scholars claimed to represent morality and virtue. The district magistrate, who by regulation was not allowed to serve in his home district, depended on local scholars for advice and for carrying out projects, giving them power to benefit themselves and their clients.

Imperial Examinations

The imperial examinations were a civil service examination system to select scholar-officials for the state bureaucracy in imperial China. Although there were imperial exams as early as the Han dynasty, the system became the major path to office only in the mid-Tang dynasty, and remained so until its abolition in 1905. Since the exams were based on knowledge of the classics and literary style, not technical expertise, successful candidates, and even those who failed, were generalists who shared a common language and culture. This common culture helped to unify the empire and the ideal of achievement by merit gave legitimacy to imperial rule.

Imperial exam results. Candidates gathering around the wall where the results are posted. This announcement was known as "releasing the roll."

The examination system helped to shape China's intellectual, cultural, and political life. The increased reliance on the exam system was in part responsible for the Tang dynasty shifting from a military aristocracy to a gentry class of scholar-bureaucrats.

The entire premise of the scholarly meritocracy was based on mastery of the Confucian classics. This had important effects on Chinese society. Theoretically, this system would result in a highly meritocratic ruling class, with the best students running the country. The examinations gave many people the opportunity to pursue political power and honor, and thus encouraged serious pursuit of formal education. Since the system did not formally discriminate based on social status, it provided an avenue for upward social mobility regardless of age or social class.

However, even though the examination-based bureaucracy's heavy emphasis on Confucian literature ensured that the most eloquent writers and erudite scholars achieved high positions, the system lacked formal safeguards against political corruption, besides the Confucian moral teachings tested by the examinations. Once their political futures were secured by success in the examinations, high-ranking officials were often tempted to corruption and abuse of power. Moreover, the relatively low status of military professionals in Confucian society discouraged similar efficiency and meritocracy within the military.

Examination cells. Chinese examination cells at the South River School (Nanjiangxue) Nanjing (China). Shown without curtains or other furnishings.

Wu Zetian's Reforms

A pivotal point in the development of imperial examinations emerged with the rise of Wu Zetian, later Empress Wu. Up until that point, the rulers of the Tang dynasty were all male members of the Li family. Wu Zetian was exceptional; a woman not of the Li family, she came to occupy the seat of the emperor in an official manner in 690, and even before that she had begun to stretch her power within the imperial courts behind the scenes. Reform of the imperial examinations to include a new class of elite bureaucrats derived from humbler origins became a keystone of Wu's gamble to retain power.

In 655, Wu Zetian graduated forty-four candidates with the *jinshi* degree, and during one seven-year period the annual average of exam takers graduated with a *jinshi* degree was greater than fifty-eight persons per year. Wu lavished favors on the newly graduated *jinshi* degree-holders, increasing the prestige associated with this path of attaining a government career. This clearly began a process of opening up opportunities to success for a wider population pool, including inhabitants of China's less prestigious southeast area. Most of the Li family's supporters were located to the northwest, particularly around the capital city of Chang'an. Wu's progressive accumulation of political power through enhancement of the examination system involved attaining the allegiance of previously under-represented regions, alleviating frustrations of the literati, and encouraging education in various locales so even people in the remote corners of the empire would work on their studies in order to pass the imperial exams. Wu thus developed a nucleus of elite bureaucrats useful from the perspective of control by the central government.

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10.14: Decline of the Tang Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Describe the reasons for the eventual fall of the Tang dynasty

Key Points

- The An Lushan Rebellion was a devastating rebellion against the Tang dynasty of China; it significantly weakened the dynasty.
- The power of the *jiedushi*, or provincial military governors, increased greatly after imperial troops crushed the rebels, taking administrative power away from the scholar-officials.
- In addition to natural calamities and *jiedushi* amassing autonomous control, the Huang Chao Rebellion resulted in the sacking of both Chang'an and Luoyang, and took an entire decade to suppress; although the rebellion was defeated by the Tang, the dynasty never recovered from that crucial blow, weakening it for future military powers to take over.
- Eventually the *jiedushi* ushered in the political division of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, a period marked by continuous infighting among the rival kingdoms, dynasties, and regional regimes established by rival *jiedushi*.

Terms

An Lushan Rebellion

A devastating rebellion against the Tang dynasty of China that began on December 16, 755, when general An Lushan declared himself emperor in Northern China, thus establishing a rival Yan dynasty, and ended when the Yan fell on February 17, 763.

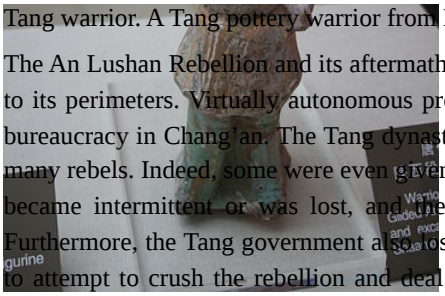
jiedushi

Regional military governors in China during the Tang dynasty and the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period.

An Lushan Rebellion

The Tang dynasty, established in 618 CE, after experiencing its golden age entered its long decline, beginning with the An Lushan Rebellion by Sogdian general An Lushan. The rebellion spanned the reigns of three Tang emperors before it was finally quashed, and involved a wide range of regional powers; besides the Tang dynasty loyalists, others involved were anti-Tang families, especially in An Lushan's base area in Hebei, and Arab, Uyghur, and Sogdian forces or influences, among others. The rebellion and subsequent disorder resulted in a huge loss of life and large-scale destruction. It significantly weakened the Tang dynasty and led to the loss of the Western Regions.

The power of the *jiedushi*, or provincial military governors, increased greatly after imperial troops crushed the rebels, taking administrative power away from the scholar-officials. The discipline of these generals also decayed as their power increased and the resentment of common people against the incapacity of the government grew, and their grievances exploded into several rebellions during the mid-9th century. Eventually the *jiedushi* ushered in the political division of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, a period marked by continuous infighting among the rival kingdoms, dynasties, and regional regimes established by rival *jiedushi*. Many impoverished farmers, tax-burdened landowners, and merchants, as well as many large salt smuggling operations, formed the base of the anti-government rebellions of this period.



Tang warrior. A Tang pottery warrior from Duan's Tomb, Shaanxi.

The An Lushan Rebellion and its aftermath greatly weakened the centralized bureaucracy of the Tang dynasty, especially in regards to its perimeters. Virtually autonomous provinces and ad hoc financial organizations arose, reducing the influence of the regular bureaucracy in Chang'an. The Tang dynasty's desire for political stability in this turbulent period also resulted in the pardoning of many rebels. Indeed, some were even given their own garrisons to command. Political and economic control of the northeast region became intermittent or was lost, and the emperor became a sort of puppet, set to do the bidding of the strongest garrison. Furthermore, the Tang government also lost most of its control over the Western Regions due to troop withdrawal to central China to attempt to crush the rebellion and deal with subsequent disturbances. Continued military and economic weakness resulted in further erosions of Tang territorial control during the ensuing years, particularly in regard to the Uighur and Tibetan empires. By 790 Chinese control over the Tarim Basin area was completely lost.

The political decline was paralleled by economic decline, including large Tang governmental debt to Uighur money lenders. In addition to being politically and economically detrimental to the empire, the An Lushan Rebellion also affected the intellectual culture of the Tang dynasty. Many intellectuals had their careers interrupted, giving them time to ponder the causes of the unrest. Some lost faith in themselves, concluding that a lack of moral seriousness in intellectual culture had been the cause of the rebellion.

Collapse of the Tang Dynasty

In addition to natural calamities and *jiedushi* amassing autonomous control, the Huang Chao Rebellion (874–884) resulted in the sacking of both Chang'an and Luoyang, and took an entire decade to suppress. Although the rebellion was defeated by the Tang, the dynasty never recovered from that crucial blow, weakening it for future military powers to take over. There were also groups of bandits, the size of small armies, that ravaged the countryside in the last years of the Tang. These bandits smuggled illicit salt, ambushed merchants and convoys, and even besieged several walled cities.

Zhu Wen, originally a salt smuggler who had served under the rebel Huang, surrendered to Tang forces. For helping to defeat Huang, he was granted a series of rapid military promotions. In 907 the Tang dynasty was ended when Zhu Wen, now a military governor, deposed the last emperor of Tang, Emperor Ai of Tang, and took the throne for himself. A year later the deposed Emperor Ai was poisoned by Zhu Wen, and died. Zhu Wen was known posthumously as Emperor Taizu of Later Liang. He established the Later Liang, which inaugurated the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period.

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10.15: Origins of the Song Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Describe who the Song were and how they rose to power

Key Points

- The Song dynasty was an era of Chinese history that began in 960, directly after the chaotic Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period.
- It was the first government in world history to issue banknotes and the first Chinese government to establish a permanent standing navy; it saw the first known use of gunpowder and the first recognition of true north using a compass.
- The Song dynasty was divided into two distinct periods, Northern (960–1127) and Southern (1127–1279).
- Social life during the Song was vibrant, and included public artworks, the spread of literature, and the growth of philosophy.
- Zhao Kuangyin, later known as Emperor Taizu (r. 960–976), usurped the throne from the Zhou dynasty with the support of military commanders in 960, initiating the Song dynasty and ending the Five Dynasties period.
- Upon taking the throne, his first goal was the reunification of China after half a century of political division.

Terms

Emperor Taizu

Personal name Zhao Kuangyin; he was the founder and first emperor of the Song dynasty in China.

Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms

An era of political upheaval in 10th-century imperial China; during this period, five states quickly succeeded one another in the Chinese Central Plain, while more than a dozen concurrent states were established elsewhere, mainly in south China.

Overview

The Song dynasty was an era of Chinese history that began in 960 and continued until 1279. It succeeded the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, and was followed by the Yuan dynasty. It was the first government in world history to issue banknotes or true paper money nationally and the first Chinese government to establish a permanent standing navy. This dynasty also saw the first known use of gunpowder as well as the first discernment of true north using a compass.

The Song dynasty was divided into two distinct periods, Northern and Southern. During the Northern Song (960–1127), the Song capital was in the northern city of Bianjing (now Kaifeng), and the dynasty controlled most of what is now Eastern China. The Southern Song (1127–1279) refers to the period after the Song lost control of its northern half to the Jurchen Jin dynasty in the Jin-Song Wars. During this time, the Song court retreated south of the Yangtze and established its capital at Lin'an (now Hangzhou). Although the Song dynasty had lost control of the traditional "birthplace of Chinese civilization" along the Yellow River, the Song economy was still strong, as the Southern Song empire contained a large population and productive agricultural land. The Southern Song dynasty considerably bolstered its naval strength to defend its waters and land borders and to conduct maritime missions abroad.

Social life during the Song was vibrant. Citizens gathered to view and trade precious artworks, the populace intermingled at public festivals and private clubs, and cities had lively entertainment quarters. The spread of literature and knowledge was enhanced by the rapid expansion of woodblock printing and the 11th-century invention of movable-type printing. Technology, science, philosophy, mathematics, and engineering flourished over the course of the Song. Philosophers such as Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi reinvigorated Confucianism with new commentary infused with Buddhist ideals, and emphasized a new organization of classic texts that brought out the core doctrine of Neo-Confucianism. Although the institution of the civil service examinations had existed since the Sui dynasty, it became much more prominent in the Song period. The officials who gained power by succeeding in the exams became a leading factor in the shift from a military-aristocratic elite to a bureaucratic elite.

Founding of the Song Dynasty

The Later Zhou was the last of the Five Dynasties that had controlled northern China after the fall of the Tang dynasty in 907. Zhao Kuangyin, later known as Emperor Taizu (r. 960–976), usurped the throne from the Zhou with the support of military commanders in 960, initiating the Song dynasty. Upon taking the throne, his first goal was the reunification of China after half a century of political division. This included the conquests of Nanping, Wu-Yue, Southern Han, Later Shu, and Southern Tang in the south as well as the Northern Han and the Sixteen Prefectures in the north. With capable military officers such as Yang Ye (d. 986), Liu Tingrang (929–987), Cao Bin (931–999) and Huyan Zan (d. 1000), the early Song military became the dominant force in China. Innovative military tactics, such as defending supply lines across floating pontoon bridges, led to success in battle. One such success was the Song assault against the Southern Tang state while crossing the Yangtze River in 974. Using a mass of arrow fire from crossbowmen, Song forces were able to defeat the renowned war elephant corps of the Southern Han on January 23, 971, thus forcing the submission of Southern Han and terminating the first and last elephant corps to make up a regular division within a Chinese army.

Consolidation in the south was completed in 978, with the conquest of Wu-Yue. Song military forces then turned north against the Northern Han, which fell to Song forces in 979. However, efforts to take the Sixteen Prefectures were unsuccessful, and they were incorporated into the Liao state based in Manchuria to the immediate north instead. To the far northwest, the Tanguts had been in power over northern Shaanxi since 881, after the earlier Tang court appointed a Tangut chief as a military governor (*jiedushi*) over the region, a seat that became hereditary (forming the Xi-Xia dynasty). Although the Song state was evenly matched against the Liao dynasty, the Song gained significant military victories against the Western Xia (who would eventually fall to the Mongol conquest of Genghis Khan in 1227).

Emperor Taizu. A court painting of Emperor Taizu of Song (r. 960–976), who founded the Song dynasty and unified China.

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10.16: The Northern Song Era

Learning Objectives

- Describe the successes and setbacks of the Northern Song Dynasty

Key Points

- Emperor Taizu of Song unified the empire by conquering other lands during his reign, ending the upheaval of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period and beginning the Song dynasty.
- The Song court maintained diplomatic relations with Chola India, the Fatimid Caliphate, Srivijaya, the Kara-Khanid Khanate of Central Asia, and other countries that were also trade partners with Japan.
- From its inception under Taizu, the Song dynasty alternated between warfare and diplomacy with the ethnic Khitans of the Liao dynasty in the northeast and with the Tanguts of the Western Xia in the northwest.
- During the 11th century, political rivalries divided members of the court due to the ministers' differing approaches, opinions, and policies regarding the handling of the Song's complex society and thriving economy.
- After the Jurchen conquest of North China and a shift of capitals from Kaifeng to Lin'an, the Northern Song transitioned into the Southern Song dynasty.

Terms

Jin dynasty

This dynasty lasted from 1115–1234 as one of the last dynasties in Chinese history to predate the Mongol invasion of China; they warred with the Song dynasty.

New Policies

A series of reforms initiated by the Northern Song dynasty reformer Wang Anshi when he served as minister under Emperor Shenzong from 1069–1076.

Beginning of the Song Dynasty

Emperor Taizu of Song (r. 960–976) had unified the empire by conquering other lands during his reign, ending the upheaval of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period. In Kaifeng he established a strong central government over the empire. He ensured administrative stability by promoting the civil service examination system of drafting state bureaucrats by skill and merit (instead of aristocratic or military position) and promoted projects that ensured efficiency in communication throughout the empire. In one such project, cartographers created detailed maps of each province and city that were then collected in a large atlas. Emperor Taizu also promoted groundbreaking scientific and technological innovations by supporting such works as the astronomical clock tower designed and built by the engineer Zhang Sixun.

Diplomacy and War

The Song court maintained diplomatic relations with Chola India, the Fatimid Caliphate, Srivijaya, the Kara-Khanid Khanate of Central Asia, and other countries that were also trade partners with Japan. However, China's closest neighboring states affected its domestic and foreign policy the most. From its inception under Taizu, the Song dynasty alternated between warfare and diplomacy with the ethnic Khitans of the Liao dynasty in the northeast and with the Tanguts of the Western Xia in the northwest. The Song dynasty used military force in an attempt to quell the Liao dynasty and recapture the Sixteen Prefectures, a territory under Khitan control that was traditionally considered part of China proper. Song forces were repulsed by the Liao forces, who engaged in aggressive yearly campaigns into Northern Song territory until 1005, when the signing of the Shanyuan Treaty ended these northern border clashes. The Song were forced to provide tribute to the Khitans, although this did little damage to the Song economy since the Khitans were economically dependent upon importing massive amounts of goods from the Song. More significantly, the Song state recognized the Liao state as its diplomatic equal.

The Song dynasty managed to win several military victories over the Tanguts in the early 11th century, culminating in a campaign led by the polymath scientist, general, and statesman Shen Kuo (1031–1095). However, this campaign was ultimately a failure due to a rival military officer of Shen disobeying direct orders, and the territory gained from the Western Xia was eventually lost. There was also a significant war fought against the Lý dynasty of Vietnam from 1075 to 1077 over a border dispute and the Song's severing of commercial relations with the Đại Việt kingdom. After Lý forces inflicted heavy damages in a raid on Guangxi, the Song commander Guo Kui (1022–1088) penetrated as far as Thăng Long (modern Hanoi). Heavy losses on both sides prompted the Lý commander Thường Kiệt (1019–1105) to make peace overtures, allowing both sides to withdraw from the war effort; captured territories held by both Song and Lý were mutually exchanged in 1082, along with prisoners of war.

Northern Song dynasty. The extent of the land holdings of the Northern Song dynasty in 1111.

Political Rivalries

During the 11th century, political rivalries divided members of the court due to the ministers' differing approaches, opinions, and policies regarding the handling of the Song's complex society and thriving economy. The idealist Chancellor Fan Zhongyan (989–1052) was the first to experience a heated political backlash when he attempted to institute the Qingli Reforms, which included measures such as improving the recruitment system of officials, increasing the salaries for minor officials, and establishing sponsorship programs to allow a wider range of people to be well educated and eligible for state service.

After Fan was forced to step down from his office, Wang Anshi (1021–1086) became chancellor of the imperial court. With the backing of Emperor Shenzong (1067–1085), Wang Anshi severely criticized the educational system and state bureaucracy. Seeking to resolve what he saw as state corruption and negligence, Wang implemented a series of reforms called the New Policies. These involved land value tax reform, the establishment of several government monopolies, the support of local militias, and the creation of higher standards for the Imperial examination to make it more practical for men skilled in statecraft to pass.

The reforms created political factions in the court. Wang Anshi's "New Policies Group" (Xin Fa), also known as the "Reformers," were opposed by the ministers in the "Conservative" faction led by the historian and chancellor Sima Guang (1019–1086). As one faction supplanted another in the majority position of the court ministers, it would demote rival officials and exile them to govern remote frontier regions of the empire. One of the prominent victims of the political rivalry, the famous poet and statesman Su Shi (1037–1101), was jailed and eventually exiled for criticizing Wang's reforms.

Decline and Transition to Southern Song

While the central Song court remained politically divided and focused upon its internal affairs, alarming new events to the north in the Liao state finally came to its attention. The Jurchen, a subject tribe of the Liao, rebelled against them and formed their own state, the Jin dynasty (1115–1234). The Song official Tong Guan (1054–1126) advised Emperor Huizong (1100–1125) to form an

alliance with the Jurchens (the Alliance Conducted at Sea), and the joint military campaign under this alliance toppled and completely conquered the Liao dynasty by 1125.

However, the poor performance and military weakness of the Song army was observed by the Jurchens, who immediately broke the alliance, beginning the Jin–Song Wars of 1125 and 1127; during the latter invasion, the Jurchens captured not only the capital, but also the retired Emperor Huizong, his successor Emperor Qinzong, and most of the imperial court. This took place in the year of Jingkang and it is known as the Jingkang Incident.

The remaining Song forces regrouped under the self-proclaimed Emperor Gaozong of Song (1127–1162) and withdrew south of the Yangtze to establish a new capital at Lin'an (modern Hangzhou). The Jurchen conquest of northern China and the shift of capitals from Kaifeng to Lin'an was the dividing line between the Northern and Southern Song dynasties.

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10.17: The Southern Song Era

Learning Objectives

- Compare and contrast the Southern Song era with the Northern Song era

Key Points

- After the Jins captured the Northern Song capital of Kaifeng, they went on to conquer the rest of northern China, while the Song Chinese court fled south and founded the Southern Song dynasty.
- Although weakened and pushed south beyond the Huai River, the Southern Song found new ways to bolster its strong economy and defend itself against the Jin dynasty, especially through the creation of the first standing navy of China.
- The Jin-Song Wars engendered an era of technological, cultural, and demographic changes in China, including the introduction of gunpowder into weaponry.
- Though the Song dynasty was able to hold back the Jin from their southern territory, a new foe came to power over the steppe, deserts, and plains north of the Jin dynasty—the Mongols led by Genghis Khan.
- The Mongols were at one time allied with the Song, but this alliance was broken when the Song recaptured the former imperial capitals of Kaifeng, Luoyang, and Chang'an at the collapse of the Jin dynasty.
- The Mongols continued to war with the Song, eventually founding the Yuan dynasty under Kublai Khan, thus ending the Song dynasty.

Terms

Kublai Khan

The fifth Great Khan of the Mongol Empire and founder of the Yuan dynasty in China as a conquest dynasty in 1271; he ruled as the first Yuan emperor until his death in 1294.

Mongols

An East-Central Asian ethnic group native to Mongolia.

Genghis Khan

The founder and Great Khan (emperor) of the Mongol Empire, which became the largest contiguous empire in history after his death.

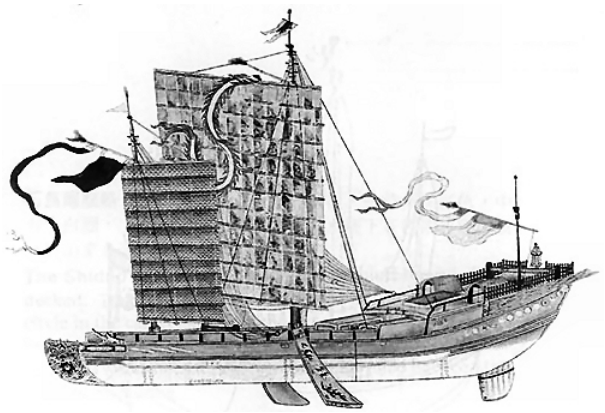
Founding of the Southern Song

After capturing Kaifeng, the Jurchens went on to conquer the rest of northern China, while the Song Chinese court fled south. They took up temporary residence at Nanjing, where a surviving prince was named Emperor Gaozong of Song in 1127. Jin forces halted at the Yangtze River, but staged continual raids south of the river until a later boundary was fixed at the Huai River further north. With the border fixed at the Huai, the Song government promoted an immigration policy of repopulating and resettling territories north of the Yangtze River, since vast tracts of vacant land between the Yangtze and the Huai were open for landless peasants found in the Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and Fujian provinces of the south.

Continued War with the Jin

Though weakened and pushed south beyond the Huai River, the Southern Song found new ways to bolster its strong economy and defend itself against the Jin dynasty. It had able military officers such as Yue Fei and Han Shizhong. The government sponsored massive shipbuilding, harbor-improvement projects, and the construction of beacons and seaport warehouses to support maritime trade abroad, including at the major international seaports, such as Quanzhou, Guangzhou, and Xiamen, that were sustaining China's commerce. To protect and support the multitude of ships sailing for maritime interests into the waters of the East China Sea and Yellow Sea (to Korea and Japan), Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the Red Sea, it was necessary to establish an official standing navy. The Song dynasty therefore established China's first permanent navy in 1132, with a headquarters at Dinghai.

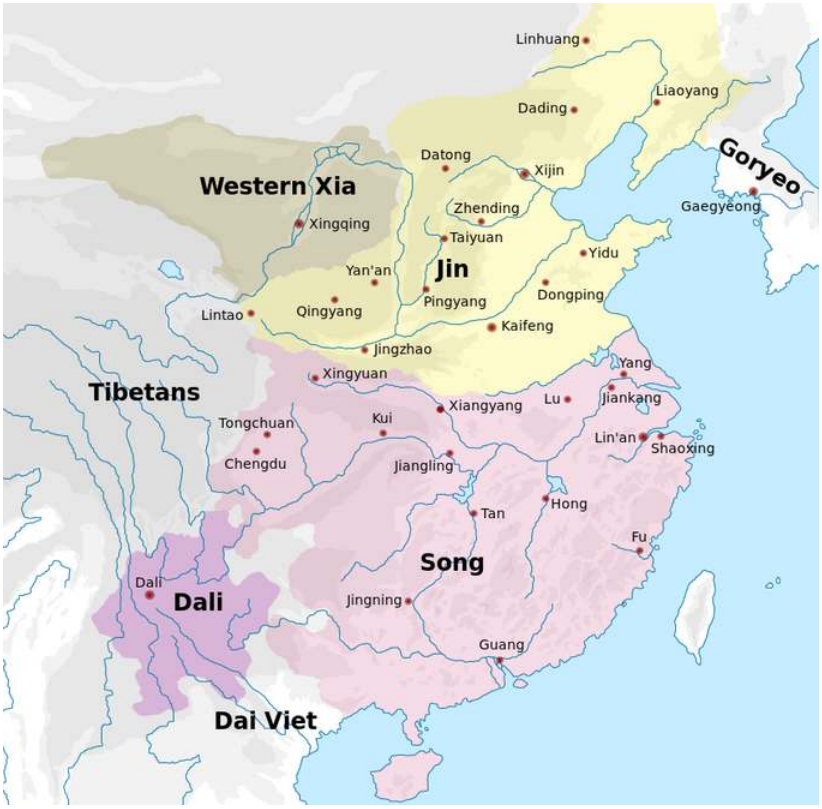
With a permanent navy, the Song were prepared to face the naval forces of the Jin on the Yangtze River in 1161, in the Battle of Tangdao and the Battle of Caishi. During these battles the Song navy employed swift paddle-wheel driven naval vessels armed with trebuchet catapults aboard the decks that launched gunpowder bombs. Although the Jin forces commanded by Wanyan Liang (the Prince of Hailing) boasted 70,000 men on 600 warships, and the Song forces only 3,000 men on 120 warships, the Song forces were victorious in both battles due to the destructive power of the bombs and the rapid assaults by paddle-wheel ships. The strength of the navy was heavily emphasized after that. A century after the navy was founded it had grown in size to 52,000 fighting marines.



Southern Song era ship. A Song era junk ship, 13th century; Chinese ships of the Song period featured hulls with watertight compartments.

The Jin-Song Wars engendered an era of technological, cultural, and demographic changes in China. Battles between the Song and Jin brought about the introduction of various gunpowder weapons. The siege of De'an in 1132 was the first recorded appearance of the fire lance, an early ancestor of firearms. There were also reports of battles fought with primitive gunpowder bombs like the incendiary *huopao* or the exploding *tiehuopao*, flammable arrows, and other related weapons.

The Song government confiscated portions of land owned by the gentry in order to raise revenue for military and naval projects, an act which caused dissension and loss of loyalty amongst leading members of Song society, but did not stop the Song's defensive preparations. Financial matters were made worse by the fact that many wealthy, land-owning families—some of which had members working as officials for the government—used their social connections with those in office to obtain tax-exempt status.



Southern Song in 1142. The extent of the land holdings of the Southern Song dynasty, significantly reduced from Northern Song's holdings by the Jin dynasty.

The Mongols

Although the Song dynasty was able to hold back the Jin, a new foe came to power over the steppe, deserts, and plains north of the Jin dynasty. The Mongols, led by Genghis Khan (r. 1206–1227), initially invaded the Jin dynasty in 1205 and 1209, engaging in large raids across its borders, and in 1211 an enormous Mongol army was assembled to invade the Jin. The Jin dynasty was forced to submit and pay tribute to the Mongols as vassals; when the Jin suddenly moved their capital city from Beijing to Kaifeng, the Mongols saw this as a revolt. Under the leadership of Ögedei Khan (r.1229–1241), Mongol forces conquered both the Jin dynasty and Western Xia dynasty. The Mongols also invaded Korea, the Abbasid Caliphate of the Middle East, and Kievan Rus'.

The Mongols were at one time allied with the Song, but this alliance was broken when the Song recaptured the former imperial capitals of Kaifeng, Luoyang, and Chang'an at the collapse of the Jin dynasty. The Mongol leader Möngke Khan led a campaign against the Song in 1259, but died on August 11 during the Battle of Diaoyu Fortress in Chongqing. Möngke's death and the ensuing succession crisis prompted Hulagu Khan to pull the bulk of the Mongol forces out of the Middle East, where they were poised to fight the Egyptian Mamluks (who defeated the remaining Mongols at Ain Jalut). Although Hulagu was allied with Kublai Khan, his forces were unable to help in the assault against the Song due to Hulagu's war with the Golden Horde.

Kublai continued the assault against the Song, gaining a temporary foothold on the southern banks of the Yangtze. Kublai made preparations to take Ezhou, but a pending civil war with his brother Ariq Böke—a rival claimant to the Mongol Khaganate—forced Kublai to move back north with the bulk of his forces. In Kublai's absence, the Song forces were ordered by Chancellor Jia Sidao to make an opportune assault, and succeeded in pushing the Mongol forces back to the northern banks of the Yangtze. There were minor border skirmishes until 1265, when Kublai won a significant battle in Sichuan. From 1268 to 1273, Kublai blockaded the Yangtze River with his navy and besieged Xiangyang, the last obstacle in his way to invading the rich Yangtze River basin.

The End of the Southern Song

Kublai Khan officially declared the creation of the Yuan dynasty in 1271. In 1275, a Song force of 130,000 troops under Chancellor Jia Sidao was defeated by Kublai's newly appointed commander-in-chief, General Bayan. By 1276, most of the Song territory had

been captured by Yuan forces. In the Battle of Yamen on the Pearl River Delta in 1279, the Yuan army, led by General Zhang Hongfan, finally crushed the Song resistance. The last remaining ruler, the 8-year-old emperor Emperor Huaizong of Song, committed suicide, as did Prime Minister Lu Xiufu and 800 members of the royal clan. On Kublai's orders carried out by his commander Bayan, the rest of the former imperial family of Song were unharmed; the deposed Emperor Gong was demoted, given the title "Duke of Ying," but was eventually exiled to Tibet, where he took up a monastic life. The former emperor would eventually be forced to commit suicide under the orders of Kublai's great-great grandson Gegeen Khan, who feared that Emperor Gong would stage a coup to restore his reign. Other members of the Song imperial family continued to live in the Yuan dynasty, including Zhao Mengfu and Zhao Yong.

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10.18: Culture Under the Song Dynasty

Learning Objectives

- Explain cultural aspects of the Song dynasty

Key Points

- The Song dynasty was an era of administrative sophistication and complex social organization that brought rise to a rich and diverse social life and culture.
- Citizens gathered to view and trade precious artworks, the populace intermingled at public festivals and private clubs, and cities had lively entertainment quarters.
- Although women were on a lower social tier than men, they enjoyed many social and legal privileges and wielded considerable power at home and in their own small businesses, and some women became famous artists and writers.
- Ancient Chinese Taoism, ancestor worship, and foreign-originated Buddhism were the most prominent religious practices in the Song period.
- Chinese literature during the Song period contained a range of different genres and was enriched by the social complexity of the period.
- The visual arts during the Song dynasty were heightened by new developments in areas such as landscape and portrait painting.

Terms

antiquarian

An aficionado or student of antiquities or things of the past; or relating to such interests.

Manichaean

Of or relating to a major religion founded in Iran that taught an elaborate dualistic cosmology describing the struggle between a good, spiritual world of light, and an evil, material world of darkness.

Pear Garden

The first known royal acting and musical academy in China, founded during the Tang dynasty by Emperor Xuanzong.

Society during the Song Dynasty

The Song dynasty was an era of administrative sophistication and complex social organization. Some of the largest cities in the world were found in China during this period (Kaifeng and Hangzhou had populations of over a million). People enjoyed various social clubs and entertainment in the cities, and there were many schools and temples to provide the people with education and religious services. The Song government supported social welfare programs, including the establishment of retirement homes, public clinics, and paupers' graveyards. The Song dynasty supported a widespread postal service, modeled on the earlier Han dynasty (202 BCE–CE 220) postal system, to provide swift communication throughout the empire. The central government employed thousands of postal workers of various ranks to provide service for post offices and larger postal stations. In rural areas, farming peasants either owned their own plots of land, paid rents as tenant farmers, or were serfs on large estates.

Women in the Song Dynasty

Although women were on a lower social tier than men (according to Confucian ethics), they enjoyed many social and legal privileges and wielded considerable power at home and in their own small businesses. As Song society became more and more prosperous and parents on the bride's side of the family provided larger dowries for her marriage, women naturally gained many new legal rights in the ownership of property. Under certain circumstances, an unmarried daughter without brothers, or a surviving mother without sons, could inherit one-half of her father's share of undivided family property. There were many notable and well-educated women, and it was a common practice for women to educate their sons during their earliest youth. The mother of the

scientist, general, diplomat, and statesman Shen Kuo taught him essentials of military strategy. There were also exceptional women writers and poets such as Li Qingzhao (1084–1151), who became famous even in her lifetime.

Men dominated the public sphere, while affluent wives spent most of their time indoors enjoying leisure activities and managing the household. However, women of the lower and middle classes were not solely bound to the domestic sphere. It was common for women to manage town inns and restaurants, farmers' daughters to weave mats and sell them on their own behalf, midwives to deliver babies, Buddhist nuns to study religious texts and sutras, and female nurses to assist physicians. Many women kept a close eye on their own financial matters; there are legal case documents that describe childless widows who accused their nephews of stealing their property.

Empress of Zhenzong of Song. Official court portrait painting of the empress and wife of Zhenzong. Notice the heavy ceremonial facial painting and elaborate clothing, typical of royal women.

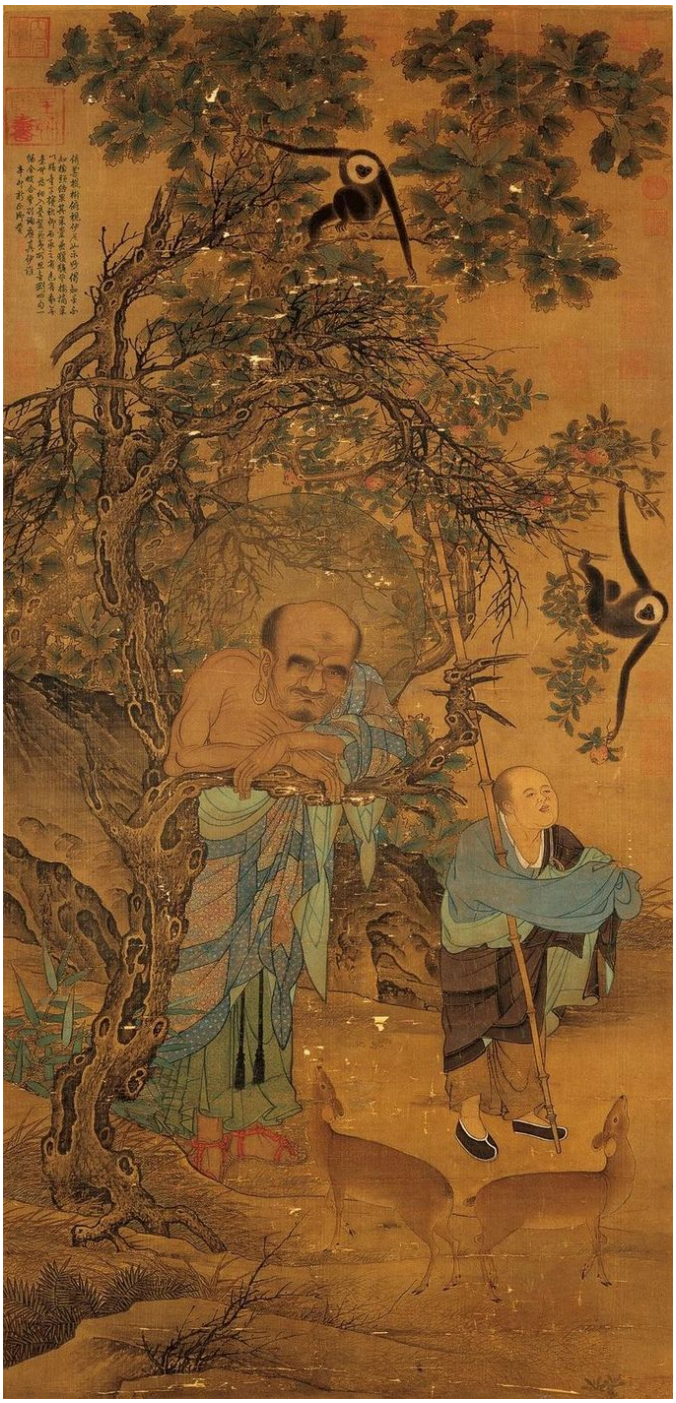
Social Life in the Song

The populace engaged in a vibrant social and domestic life, enjoying such public festivals as the Lantern Festival and the Qingming Festival. There were entertainment quarters in the cities providing a constant array of amusements. There were puppeteers, acrobats, theatre actors, sword swallowers, snake charmers, storytellers, singers and musicians, and prostitutes, and places to relax, including tea houses, restaurants, and organized banquets. People attended social clubs in large numbers; there were tea clubs, exotic food clubs, antiquarian and art collectors' clubs, horse-loving clubs, poetry clubs, and music clubs. There were regional styles of cooking and cuisine, as well as of performing arts. Theatrical drama was very popular amongst the elite and general populace, although Classical Chinese—not the vernacular language—was spoken by actors on stage. The four largest drama theaters in Kaifeng could hold audiences of several thousand each. There were also notable domestic pastimes, as people at home enjoyed activities such as the go and xiangqi board games.

Religion and Philosophy

Religion in China during this period had a great effect on people's lives, beliefs, and daily activities, and Chinese literature on spirituality was popular. The major deities of Taoism and Buddhism, ancestral spirits, and the many deities of Chinese folk religion were worshipped with sacrificial offerings. Tansen Sen asserts that more Buddhist monks from India travelled to China during the Song than in the previous Tang dynasty (618–907). With many ethnic foreigners traveling to China to conduct trade or live permanently, there came many foreign religions; religious minorities in China included Middle Eastern Muslims, Kaifeng Jews, and Persian Manichaeans.

Song intellectuals sought answers to all philosophical and political questions in the Confucian Classics. This renewed interest in the Confucian ideals and society of ancient times coincided with the decline of Buddhism, which was then largely regarded as foreign and as offering few solutions for practical problems. However, Buddhism in this period continued as a cultural underlay to the more-accepted Confucianism and even Taoism, both seen as native and pure by conservative Neo-Confucians. The continuing popularity of Buddhism is evidenced by achievements in the arts, such as the one-hundred painting set of the Five Hundred Luohan, completed by Lin Tinggui and Zhou Jichang in 1178.

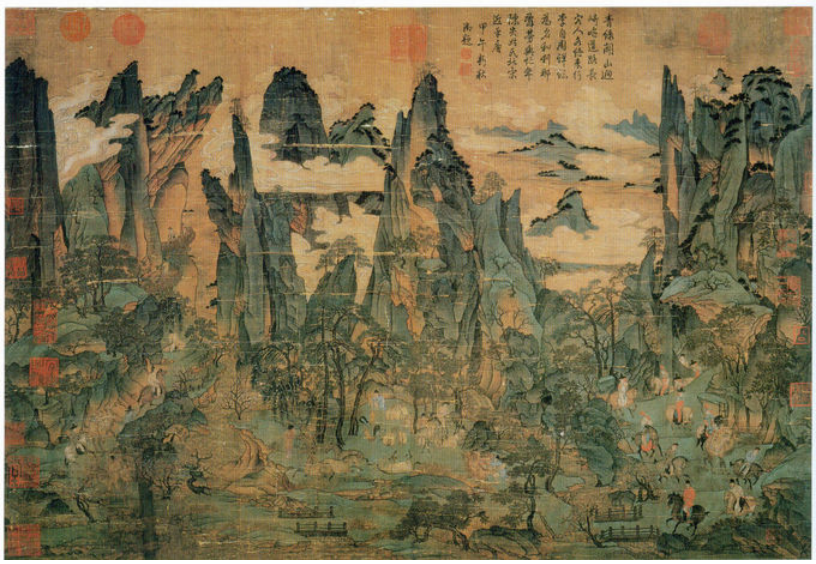


A Luohan painting. One of the Five Hundred Luohan, painted in 1207 by Liu Songnian, Southern Song period.

Chinese folk religion continued as a tradition in China, drawing upon aspects of both ancient Chinese mythology and ancestor worship. Many people believed that spirits and deities of the spirit realm regularly interacted with the realm of the living. This subject was popular in Song literature. People in Song China believed that many of their daily misfortunes and blessings were caused by an array of different deities and spirits who interfered with their daily lives. These deities included the nationally accepted deities of Buddhism and Taoism, as well as the local deities and demons from specific geographic locations. If one displeased a long-dead relative, the dissatisfied ancestor would allegedly inflict natural ailments and illnesses. People also believed in mischievous demons and malevolent spirits who had the capability to extort sacrificial offerings meant for ancestors—in essence these were bullies of the spiritual realm.

Arts and Literature

Chinese painting during the Song dynasty reached a new level of sophistication with further development of landscape painting. The shan shui style painting—"shan" meaning mountain, and "shui" meaning river—became prominent features in Chinese landscape art. The emphasis laid upon landscape painting in the Song period was grounded in Chinese philosophy; Taoism stressed that humans were but tiny specks among vast and greater cosmos, while Neo-Confucianist writers often pursued the discovery of patterns and principles that they believed caused all social and natural phenomena. The making of glazed and translucent porcelain and celadon wares with complex use of enamels was also developed further during the Song period. Longquan celadon wares were particularly popular in the Song period. Black and red lacquerwares of the Song period featured beautifully carved artwork of miniature nature scenes, landscapes, or simple decorative motifs.



Song-era painting. A Song-era painting that exemplifies new styles of landscape paintings, depicting humans as small aspects of grand landscapes.

The gentry elite engaged in the arts as accepted pastimes of the cultured scholar-official; these pastimes included painting, composing poetry, and writing calligraphy. Poetry and literature profited from the rising popularity and development of the ci poetry form. Enormous encyclopedic volumes were compiled, such as works of historiography and dozens of treatises on technical subjects. This included the universal history text of the Zizhi Tongjian, compiled into 1000 volumes of 9.4-million written Chinese characters. The genre of Chinese travel literature also became popular with the writings of the geographers Fan Chengda (1126–1193) and Su Shi, the latter of whom wrote the "daytrip essay" known as Record of Stone Bell Mountain, which used persuasive writing to argue for a philosophical point. Although an early form of the local geographic gazetteer had existed in China since the 1st century, the matured form known as "treatise on a place," or fangzhi, replaced the old "map guide," or tujing, during the Song dynasty.

Theater and drama in China trace their roots back to the academy of music known as the Pear Garden, founded in the early 8th century during the Tang dynasty. However, historian Stephen H. West asserts that the Northern Song era capital Kaifeng was the first real center where the performing arts became "an industry, a conglomerate involving theatre, gambling, prostitution, and food." The rise in consumption by merchants and scholar-officials, he states, "accelerated the growth of both the performance and the food industries," asserting a direct link between the two due to their close proximity within the cities. Of the fifty-some theaters located in the "pleasure districts" of Kaifeng, four were large enough to entertain audiences of several thousand each, drawing huge crowds that nearby businesses thrived upon. The chief crowd that gathered was composed of those from the merchant class, while government officials only went to restaurants and attended theater performances during holidays.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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11.1: Kingdom of Aksum

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the characteristics of the Kingdom of Aksum

Key Points

- The Kingdom of Aksum (or Axum; also known as the Aksumite Empire) was a trading nation in the area of northern Ethiopia and Eritrea that existed from approximately 100 to 940 CE.
- The Aksumite Empire at its height extended across most of present-day Eritrea, northern Ethiopia, western Yemen, southern Saudi Arabia, and Sudan. The capital city of the empire was Aksum, now in northern Ethiopia.
- By 350, Aksum conquered the Kingdom of Kush. Around 520, King Kaleb sent an expedition to Yemen against the Jewish Himyarite King Dhu Nuwas, who was persecuting the Christian/Aksumite community in his kingdom. These wars may have been Aksum's swan-song as a great power, but it is also possible that Ethiopia was affected by the Plague of Justinian.
- Covering parts of what is now northern Ethiopia and Eritrea, Aksum was deeply involved in the trade network between India and the Mediterranean (Rome, later Byzantium). Aksum's access to both the Red Sea and the Upper Nile enabled its strong navy to profit in trade between various African (Nubia), Arabian (Yemen), and Indian states.
- The Kingdom of Aksum is notable for a number of achievements, such as its own alphabet, the Ge'ez alphabet. Under Emperor Ezana, Aksum adopted Christianity, which gave rise to the present-day Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church.
- There exist different hypotheses as to why the empire collapsed, but historians agree that climate changes must have greatly contributed to the end of Aksum.

Terms

Sabaeans

An ancient people speaking an Old South Arabian language who lived in what is today Yemen, in the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula. For some time, they were believed to have established the Kingdom of Aksum, but historians today reject this claim.

Agaw

An ethnic group inhabiting Ethiopia and neighboring Eritrea. They speak Agaw languages, which belong to the Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic family. They are credited with establishing first settlements in the territory that later became the Kingdom of Aksum.

Ge'ez

A script used as an abugida (syllable alphabet) for several languages of Ethiopia and Eritrea. It originated as anabjad (consonant-only alphabet) and was first used to write the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

Miaphysitism

A Christological formula of the Oriental Orthodox churches. It holds that in the one person of Jesus Christ, Divinity and Humanity are united in one nature, without separation, without confusion, and without alteration.

Plague of Justinian

A pandemic that afflicted the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire, especially its capital, Constantinople, the Sassanid Empire, and port cities around the entire Mediterranean Sea (541–542). One of the greatest plagues in history, this devastating pandemic resulted in the deaths of an estimated 25 to 50 million people. It is generally regarded as the first recorded instance of bubonic plague.

> Aksum
>
> The capital of the Kingdom of Aksum.

Introduction

The Kingdom of Aksum (or Axum; also known as the Aksumite Empire) was a trading nation in the area of northern Ethiopia and Eritrea that existed from approximately 100 to 940 CE.

It grew from the proto-Aksumite Iron Age period around the 4th century BCE to achieve prominence by the 1st century CE, and was a major agent in the commercial route between the Roman Empire and Ancient India. The Aksumite rulers facilitated trade by minting their own Aksumite currency. The state established its hegemony over the declining Kingdom of Kush and regularly entered the politics of the kingdoms on the Arabian Peninsula, eventually extending its rule over the region with the conquest of the Himyarite Kingdom. The Persian Prophet Mani regarded Axum as the third of the four greatest powers of his time after Rome and Persia, with China being the fourth.

Origins

Aksum was previously thought to have been founded by Sabaeans, an ancient people speaking an Old South Arabian language who lived in what is today Yemen, in the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula. However, most scholars now agree that prior to the arrival of Sabaeans, an African settlement by the Agaw people and other Ethiopian groups had already existed in the territory. Sabaean influence is now thought to have been minor, limited to a few localities, and disappearing after a few decades or a century, perhaps representing a trading or military colony.

Empire

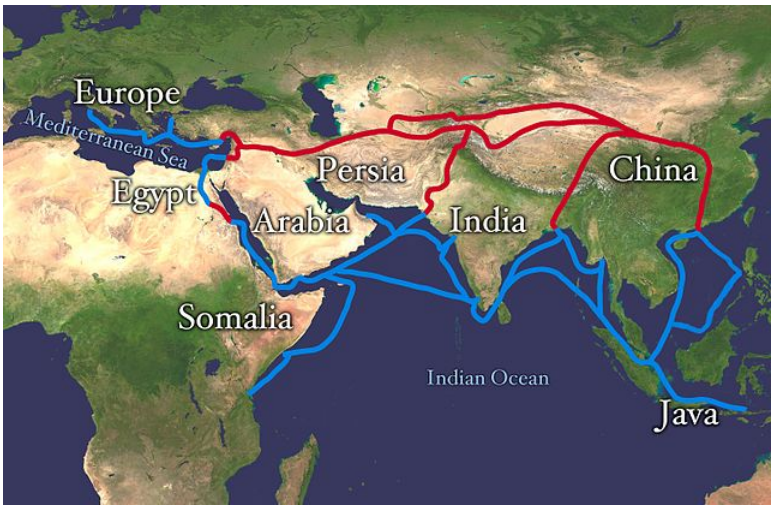
The Aksumite Empire at its height extended across most of present-day Eritrea, northern Ethiopia, western Yemen, southern Saudi Arabia, and Sudan. The capital city of the empire was Aksum, now in northern Ethiopia. Today a smaller community, the city of Aksum was once a bustling metropolis and cultural and economic center. By the reign of Endubis in the late 3rd century, the empire had begun minting its own currency. It converted to Christianity in 325 or 328 under King Ezana, and was the first state ever to use the image of the cross on its coins. The kingdom used the name “Ethiopia” as early as the 4th century.

By 350, Aksum conquered the Kingdom of Kush. Around 520, King Kaleb sent an expedition to Yemen against the Jewish Himyarite King Dhu Nuwas, who was persecuting the Christian/Aksumite community in his kingdom. After several years of military and political struggles, Yemen fell under the rule of Aksumite general Abreha, who continued to promote the Christian faith until his death, not long after which Yemen was conquered by the Persians. According to Munro-Hay these wars may have been Aksum’s swan-song as a great power, with an overall weakening of Aksumite authority and over-expenditure in money and manpower. It is also possible that Ethiopia was affected by the Plague of Justinian around this time, a disease thought to be the first recorded instance of bubonic plague.

Trading and Culture

Covering parts of what is now northern Ethiopia and Eritrea, Aksum was deeply involved in the trade network between India and the Mediterranean (Rome, later Byzantium), exporting ivory, tortoise shell, gold, and emeralds, and importing silk and spices. Aksum’s access to both the Red Sea and the Upper Nile enabled its strong navy to profit in trade between various African (Nubia), Arabian (Yemen), and Indian states.

The empire traded with Roman traders as well as with Egyptian and Persian merchants.



Extent of Silk Route/Silk Road. The economically important northern Silk Road and southern Spice (Eastern) trade routes. The sea routes around the horn of Arabia and the Indian sub-continent were Aksum's specialty for nearly a millennium.

The main exports of Aksum were agricultural products. The land was fertile during the time of the Aksumites, and the principal crops were grains such as wheat and barley. The people of Aksum also raised cattle, sheep, and camels. Wild animals were hunted for ivory and rhinoceros horns.
The empire was rich with gold and iron deposits, and salt was an abundant and widely traded mineral.

Aksum benefited from a major transformation of the maritime trading system that linked the Roman Empire and India. Starting around 100 BCE, a route from Egypt to India was established, making use of the Red Sea and using monsoon winds to cross the Arabian Sea directly to southern India. Aksum was ideally located to take advantage of the new trading situation. Adulis soon became the main port for the export of African goods, such as ivory, incense, gold, and exotic animals. Slaves were also traded along the same routes. During the 2nd and 3rd centuries, the Kingdom of Aksum continued to expand their control of the southern Red Sea basin. A caravan route to Egypt, which bypassed the Nile corridor entirely, was established. Aksum succeeded in becoming the principal supplier of African goods to the Roman Empire.

A gold coin of the Aksumite king Ousas, specifically a one third solidus, diameter 17 mm, weight 1.50 gm. The Aksumite Empire was one of the first African polities economically and politically ambitious enough to issue its own coins, which bore legends in Ge'ez and Greek.

The Aksumite Empire is notable for a number of achievements, such as its own alphabet, the Ge'ez alphabet, which was eventually modified to include vowels. Furthermore, in the early times of the empire, giant obelisks to mark emperors' (and nobles') tombs (underground grave chambers) were constructed, the most famous of which is the Obelisk of Aksum.

Under Emperor Ezana, Aksum adopted Christianity in place of its former polytheistic and Judaic religions. This gave rise to the present day Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (only granted autonomy from the Coptic Church in 1953), and Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church (granted autonomy from the Ethiopian Orthodox church in 1993). Since the schism with orthodoxy following the Council of Chalcedon (451), it has been an important Miaphysite church, and its scriptures and liturgy continue to be in Ge'ez.

The Rome Stele (known also as the Aksum Obelisk) in Aksum (Tigray Region, Ethiopia). The Stelae (hawilt/hawilti in local languages) are perhaps the most identifiable part of the Aksumite legacy. These stone towers served to mark graves and represent a magnificent multi-storied palace. They are decorated with false doors and windows in typical Aksumite design. The Stelae have most of their mass out of the ground, but are stabilized by massive underground counter-weights. The stone was often engraved with a pattern or emblem denoting the king's or the noble's rank.

Decline

Eventually, the Islamic Empire took control of the Red Sea and most of the Nile, forcing Aksum into economic isolation. Northwest of Aksum, in modern-day Sudan, the Christian states of Makuria and Alodia lasted until the 13th century before becoming Islamic. Aksum, isolated, nonetheless still remained Christian.

After a second golden age in the early 6th century, the empire began to decline, eventually ceasing its production of coins in the early 7th century. Around the same time, the Aksumite population was forced to go farther inland to the highlands for protection, abandoning Aksum as the capital. Arab writers of the time continued to describe Ethiopia (no longer referred to as Aksum) as an extensive and powerful state, although it had lost control of most of the coast and its tributaries. While land was lost in the north, it was gained in the south, and Ethiopia still attracted Arab merchants. The capital was moved to a new location, currently unknown, though it may have been called Ku'bar or Jarmi.

There exist different hypotheses as to why the empire collapsed, but historians agree that climate changes must have greatly contributed to the end of Aksum. As international profits from the exchange network declined, Aksum lost its ability to control its own raw material sources, and that network collapsed. The already persistent environmental pressure of a large population to maintain a high level of regional food production had to be intensified. The result was a wave of soil erosion that began on a local scale circa 650 and attained catastrophic proportions after 700. Presumably, complex socio-economic inputs compounded the problem. These are traditionally reflected in declining maintenance, deterioration and partial abandonment of marginal crop land, shifts to destructive pastoral exploitation, and eventual wholesale and irreversible land degradation. This syndrome was possibly accelerated by an apparent decline in rainfall reliability beginning in 730–760, with the presumed result that an abbreviated modern growing season was reestablished during the 9th century.

Sources

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11.2: The Sultanates of Somalia

Learning Objectives

- Explain the impact the arrival of Islam had on Somalia

Key Points

- During the Middle Ages, Somalia's territory witnessed the emergence and decline of several powerful sultanates that dominated the regional trade. At no point was the region centralized as one state, and the development of all the sultanates was linked to the central role that Islam played in the area since the 7th century.
- The Sultanate of Mogadishu was an important trading empire that lasted from the 10th century to the 16th century. It maintained a vast trading network, dominated the regional gold trade, minted its own Mogadishu currency, and left an extensive architectural legacy in present-day southern Somalia.
- The Ajuran Sultanate ruled over large parts of the Horn of Africa between the 13th and late 17th centuries. Through a strong centralized administration and an aggressive military stance towards invaders, it successfully resisted an Oromo invasion from the west and a Portuguese incursion from the east. It left an extensive architectural and engineering legacy.
- The Warsangali Sultanate was a kingdom centered in northeastern and in some parts of southeastern Somalia. It was one of the largest sultanates ever established in the territory.
- The Sultanate of Ifat was a medieval Muslim Sultanate in the Horn of Africa. Led by the Walashma dynasty, it was centered in the ancient cities of Zeila and Shewa. The Kingdom ruled over parts of what are now eastern Ethiopia, Djibouti, and northern Somalia. Ifat first emerged in the 13th century, when Sultan Umar Walashma conquered the Sultanate of Showa in 1285. The Adal Sultanate or Kingdom of Adal was founded after the fall of the Sultanate of Ifat. It flourished from around 1415 to 1577.
- Following the Middle Ages and Early Modern period, Arab sultanates continued to dominate the region until it fell under the colonial control of Europeans in the 19th century.

Terms

Berbers

An ethnic group indigenous to North Africa. They are distributed in an area stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Siwa Oasis in Egypt, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Niger River. Since the Muslim conquest of North Africa in the 7th century, a large number inhabiting the Maghreb have acquired different degrees of knowledge of the various languages of North Africa.

Zeila

A port city in northwestern Somali. It evolved into an early Islamic center with the arrival of Muslims shortly after the hijra. By the 9th century it was the capital of the Ifat Sultanate and a major port for its successor state the Adal Sultanate. It would attain its height of prosperity a few centuries later, in the 16th century. The city subsequently came under Ottoman and British protection in the 18th century.

hijra

The migration or journey of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Yathrib, later renamed Medina, in 622 CE. In May 622 CE, after being warned of a plot to assassinate him, Muhammad secretly left his home in Mecca to emigrate to Yathrib, 320 kilometers (200 miles) north of Mecca, along with his companion, Abu Bakr.

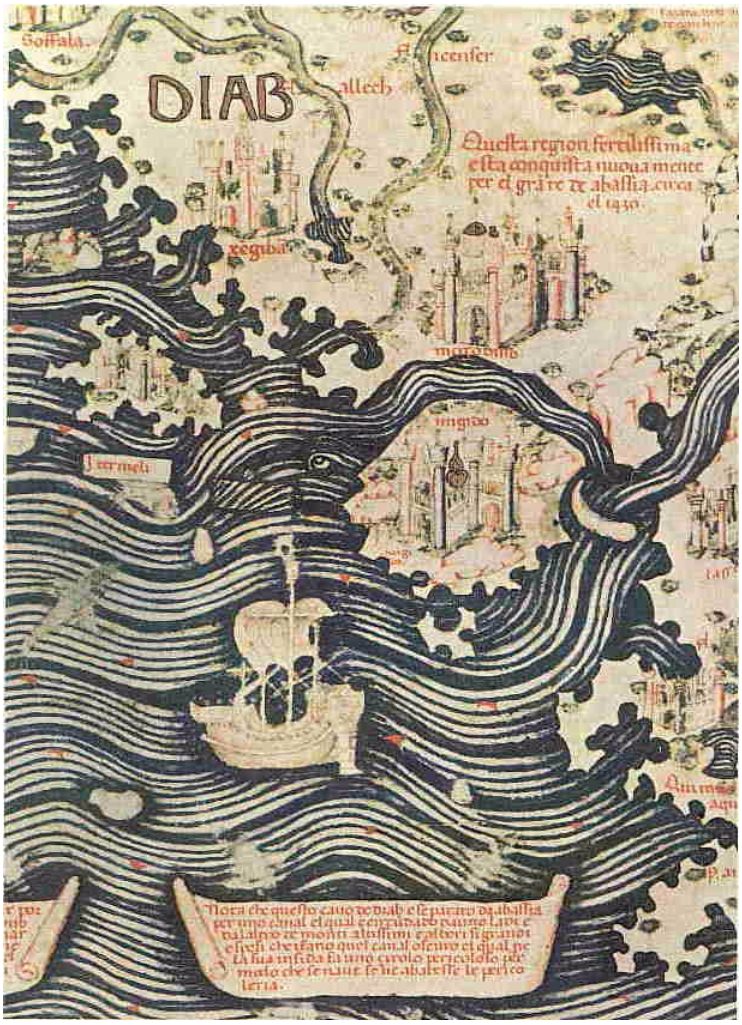
Somali Sultanates and Islam

During the Middle Ages, Somalia's territory witnessed the emergence and decline of several powerful sultanates that dominated the regional trade. At no point was the region centralized as one state, and the development of all the sultanates was linked to the central role that Islam played in the area since the 7th century. Islam was introduced to the northern Somali coast from the Arabian Peninsula early on, shortly after the hijra (also hegira), or the journey of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Yathrib, later renamed Medina, in 622 CE.

The oldest mosque in the city of Zeila, a major port/trading center, dates to the 7th century. In the late 9th century, Muslims were living along the northern Somali seaboard, and evidence suggests that Zeila was already the headquarters of a Muslim sultanate in the 9th or 10th century. According to I.M. Lewis, the polity was governed by local dynasties consisting of Somalized Arabs or Arabized Somalis, who also ruled over the Sultanate of Mogadishu in the Benadir region to the south.

Mogadishu

The Sultanate of Mogadishu was an important trading empire that lasted from the 10th century to the 16th century. It rose as one of the pre-eminent powers in the Horn of Africa over the course of the 12th to 14th centuries, before becoming part of the expanding Ajuran Empire. The Mogadishu Sultanate maintained a vast trading network, dominated the regional gold trade, minted its own Mogadishu currency, and left an extensive architectural legacy in present-day southern Somalia. Its first dynasty was established by Sultan Fakr ad-Din. This ruling house was succeeded by the Muzaffar dynasty, and the kingdom subsequently became closely linked with the Ajuran Sultanate. For many years, Mogadishu stood as the pre-eminent city in what is known as the Land of the Berbers, which was the medieval Arab term for the Somali coast. Contemporary historians suggest that the Berbers were ancestors of the modern Somalis.



Location of Mogadishu Sultanate according to 15th-century Italian cartographer Fra Mauro. During his travels, Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi (1213–1286) noted that the city had already become the leading Islamic center in the region. By the time of the Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta's appearance on the Somali coast in 1331, the city was at the zenith of its prosperity. He described Mogadishu as "an exceedingly large city" with many rich merchants that was famous for its high quality fabric that it exported to Egypt, among other places.

Ajuran

The Ajuran Sultanate ruled over large parts of the Horn of Africa between the 13th and late 17th centuries. Through a strong centralized administration and an aggressive military stance toward invaders, it successfully resisted an Oromo invasion (a series of expansions in the 16th and 17th centuries by the Oromo people from parts of Kenya and Somalia to Ethiopia)from the west and a Portuguese incursion from the east during the Gaal Madow and the Ajuran-Portuguese wars. Trading routes dating from the ancient and early medieval periods of Somali maritime enterprise were strengthened or re-established, and foreign trade and commerce in the coastal provinces flourished, with ships sailing to and coming from many kingdoms and empires in East Asia, South Asia, Europe, the Near East, North Africa, and East Africa.

The Ajuran Sultanate left an extensive architectural legacy, being one of the major medieval Somali powers engaged in castle and fortress building. Many of the ruined fortifications dotting the landscapes of southern Somalia today are attributed to the Ajuran Sultanate's engineers. During the Ajuran period, many regions and people in the southern part of the Horn of Africa converted to Islam because of the theocratic nature of the government. The royal family, the House of Garen, expanded its territories and established its hegemonic rule through a skillful combination of warfare, trade linkages, and alliances.

As a hydraulic empire, the Ajuran monopolized the water resources of the Shebelle and Jubba rivers. It also constructed many of the limestone wells and cisterns of the state that are still in use today. The rulers developed new systems for agriculture and taxation, which continued to be used in parts of the Horn of Africa as late as the 19th century. The tyrannical rule of the later Ajuran rulers caused multiple rebellions to break out in the sultanate, and at the end of the 17th century the Ajuran state disintegrated into several successor kingdoms and states, the most prominent being the Geledi Sultanate.

Warsangali

The Warsangali Sultanate was a kingdom centered in northeastern and in some parts of southeastern Somalia. It was one of the largest sultanates ever established in the territory, and, at the height of its power, included the Sanaag region and parts of the northeastern Bari region of the country, an area historically known as Maakhir or the Maakhir Coast. The Sultanate was founded in the late 13th century in northern Somalia by a group of Somalis from the Warsangali branch of the Darod clan. It survived until the British colonization of the region in the 19th century.

The Ajuuraan, Adal, and Warsangali Sultanates in the 15th century. Already in the classical (ancient) period, the Somali city-states of Mosylon, Opone, Malao, Sarapion, Mundus, Essina, and Tabae developed a lucrative trade network connecting with

merchants from Phoenicia, Ptolemic Egypt, Greece, Parthian Persia, Sheba, Nabataea, and the Roman Empire. They used the ancient Somali maritime vessel known as the beden to transport their cargo.

Ifat

The Sultanate of Ifat was a medieval Muslim Sultanate in the Horn of Africa. Led by the Walashma dynasty, it was centered in the ancient cities of Zeila and Shewa. The sultanate ruled over parts of what are now eastern Ethiopia, Djibouti, and northern Somalia.
Ifat first emerged in the 13th century, when Sultan Umar Walashma (or his son Ali, according to another source) is recorded as having conquered the Sultanate of Showa in 1285. Historian Taddesse Tamrat explains Sultan Umar's military acts as an effort to consolidate the Muslim territories in the Horn of Africa in much the same way as Emperor Yekuno Amlak was attempting to consolidate the Christian territories in the highlands during the same period. These two states inevitably came into conflict over Shewa and territories further south. A lengthy war ensued, but the Muslim sultanates of the time were not strongly unified. Ifat was finally defeated by Emperor Amda Seyon I of Ethiopia in 1332.

Despite this setback, the Muslim rulers of Ifat continued their campaign. The Ethiopian emperor branded the Muslims of the surrounding area "enemies of the Lord" and invaded Ifat in the early 15th century. After much struggle, Ifat's troops were defeated. Ifat eventually disappeared as a distinct polity following the Conquest of Abyssinia led by Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi and the subsequent Oromo migrations into the area. Its name is preserved in the modern-day Ethiopian district of Yifat, situated in Shewa.

Adal

The Adal Sultanate or Kingdom of Adal was founded after the fall of the Sultanate of Ifat. It flourished from around 1415 to 1577. The sultanate was established predominately by local Somali tribes, as well as Afars, Arabs, and Hararis. At its height, the polity controlled large parts of Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Eritrea.
During its existence, Adal had relations and engaged in trade with other polities in northeast Africa, the Near East, Europe, and South Asia. Many of the historic cities in the Horn of Africa, such as Abasa and Berbera, flourished under its reign, with courtyard houses, mosques, shrines, walled enclosures, and cisterns. Adal attained its peak in the 14th century, trading in slaves, ivory, and other commodities with Abyssinia and kingdoms in Arabia through its chief port of Zeila.

Modern Sultanates

Following the Middle Ages and Early Modern period, Arab sultanates continued to dominate the region, until it fell under the colonial control of Europeans in the 19th century. The Sultanate of the Geledi ruled parts of the Horn of Africa during the late 17th century and 19th century. The Sultanate was governed by the Gobroon Dynasty. It was eventually incorporated into Italian Somaliland in 1908, and ended with the death of Osman Ahmed in 1910.

The Majeerteen Sultanate was a Somali Sultanate centered in the Horn of Africa. Ruled by Boqor Osman Mahamuud during its golden age, it controlled much of northern and central Somalia in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The polity had all of the organs of an integrated modern state and maintained a robust trading network. It also entered into treaties with foreign powers and exerted strong centralized authority on the domestic front. In late 1889, Boqor Osman entered into a treaty with Italy, making his kingdom a protectorate known as Italian Somaliland.

Finally, the Sultanate of Hobyo, in present-day northeastern and central Somalia and eastern Ethiopia, was established in the 1870s by Yusuf Ali Kenadid, cousin of Boqor Osman Mahamuud. As with the Majeerteen Sultanate, the Sultanate of Hobyo exerted a strong centralized authority during its existence, and possessed all of the organs and trappings of an integrated modern state: a functioning bureaucracy, a hereditary nobility, titled aristocrats, a state flag, and a professional army. In late 1888, Sultan Kenadid entered into a treaty with the Italians, making his realm an Italian protectorate, but the sultanate eventually dissolved in 1926.

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11.3: Ethiopia and Eritrea

Learning Objectives

- Compare and contrast Ethiopia with other East African empires

Key Points

- The first kingdom thought to have existed in today's Ethiopia was the kingdom of D'mt, with its capital at Yeha, where a Sabaean-style temple was built around 700 BCE. It rose to power around the 10th century BCE, but little is certain about its development and decline. Aksum is the first verifiable kingdom of great power to rise in the region. It was a trading empire in the area of northern Ethiopia and Eritrea, and existed approximately from 100 to 940 CE.
- An Agaw lord named Mara Takla Haymanot founded the Zagwe dynasty in 1137. The new dynasty established its capital at Roha and controlled a smaller area than the Aksumites, with its core in the Lasta region. The Zagwe seem to have ruled over a mostly peaceful state with a flourishing urban culture.
- Around 1270, a new dynasty was established in the Abyssinian highlands under Yekuno Amlak. A 14th century legend was created to legitimize the Solomonic dynasty, under which the chief provinces became Tigray (northern), what is now Amhara (central), and Shewa (southern).
- Towards the close of the 15th century, the Portuguese missions into Ethiopia began, and Pêro da Covilhã arrived in Ethiopia in 1490. In 1507, an Armenian named Matthew was sent by the emperor to the king of Portugal to request his aid against the Muslims. In 1520, a Portuguese fleet, with Matthew on board, entered the Red Sea in compliance with this request.
- Between 1528 and 1543, wars with Somali sultanates dominated the Ethiopian Empire. With the support of the Portuguese, Ethiopia emerged victorious from the conflict.
- In the 18th century, the so-called Zemene Mesafint (Era of the Princes) began. It was a period in Ethiopian history when the country was divided into several regions with no effective central authority. It ended in the mid-19th century, and Ethiopia was one of few territories not colonized by Europeans.

Terms

Hatata

A 1667 ethical philosophical treatise by Ethiopian philosopher Zera Yacob. The philosophy is theistic in nature and came during a period when African philosophical literature was significantly oral in character. It has often been compared by scholars to Descartes' Discours de la methode (1637). Yacob wrote his treatise as an investigation of the light of reason. Yacob is most noted for this philosophy surrounding the principle of harmony.

Aksum

A trading nation in Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia Tigray that existed approximately from 100 to 940 CE. It grew from the proto-Aksumite Iron Age period c. the 4th century BCE to achieve prominence by the 1st century CE, and was a major agent in the commercial route between the Roman Empire and Ancient India.

the Zagwe dynasty

A historical kingdom in present-day northern Ethiopia. Centered at Lalibela, it ruled large parts of the territory from approximately 900 to 1270, when the last Zagwe King Za-Ilmaknun was killed in battle by the forces of Yekuno Amlak.

the Solomonic dynasty

The former ruling imperial house of the Ethiopian Empire. Its members claim patrilineal descent from King Solomon of Israel and the Queen of Sheba. Yekuno Amlak claimed direct male-line descent from the old Aksumite royal house that the Zagwes had replaced on the throne. It continued to rule Ethiopia with few interruptions until 1974, when the last emperor, Haile Selassie I, was deposed.

Fasil Ghebbi

A fortress-city within Gondar, Ethiopia. It was founded in the 17th and 18th centuries by Emperor Fasilides (Fasil) and was the home of Ethiopia's emperors. Its unique architecture shows diverse influences, including Nubian styles.

Zemene Mesafint

Known also as Era of the Princes, was a period (18th century to mid-19th century) in Ethiopian history when the country was divided into several regions with no effective central authority. It was a period in which the emperors were reduced to figureheads confined to the capital city of Gondar.

Ancient and Medieval Ethiopia

The first kingdom thought to have existed in today's Ethiopia was the kingdom of D'mt, with its capital at Yeha, where a Sabaean-style temple was built around 700 BCE. It rose to power around the 10th century BCE, but little is certain about its development and decline. It is not known
whether D'mt ended as a civilization before Aksum's (its one possible successor) early stages, evolved into the Aksumite state, or was one of the smaller states united in the Aksumite kingdom possibly around the beginning of the 1st century. Aksum is the first verifiable kingdom of great power to rise in the region. It was a trading empire in the area of northern Ethiopia and Eritrea that existed approximately from 100 to 940 CE, and was a major agent in the commercial route between the Roman Empire and Ancient India. About 1000 (presumably c. 960, though the date is uncertain), a non-Christian female ruler conquered the area. Little is known about this episode, but the later Solomonic Dynasty used the legend of a princess named Yodit to legitimize its rule.

At one point during the next century, the last of Yodit's successors were overthrown by an Agaw lord named Mara Takla Haymanot, who founded the Zagwe dynasty in 1137—the year that marks the beginning of the Ethiopian Empire, known also as Abyssinia. The new Zagwe dynasty established its capital at Roha (also called Lalibela), where they built a series of monolithic churches. The architecture of the Zagwe shows a continuation of earlier Aksumite traditions. The Zagwe dynasty controlled a smaller area than the Aksumites, with its core in the Lasta region. The Zagwe seem to have ruled over a mostly peaceful state with a flourishing urban culture. Unlike the Aksumites, they were very isolated from the other Christian nations, although they did maintain a degree of contact through Jerusalem and Cairo. Later, as the Crusades were dying out in the early 14th century, the Ethiopian King Wedem Ar'ad dispatched a thirty-man mission to Europe, where they traveled to Rome to meet the Pope and then, since the Medieval Papacy was in schism, they traveled to Avignon to meet the Antipope. During this trip, the Ethiopian mission also traveled to France, Spain, and Portugal in the hopes of building an alliance against the Muslim states that threatened Ethiopia's existence.

The Solomonic Dynasty

Around 1270, a new dynasty was established in the Abyssinian highlands under Yekuno Amlak, who deposed the last of the Zagwe kings and married one of his daughters. According to legends, the new dynasty were male-line descendants of Aksumite monarchs. The 14th century legend was created to legitimize the Solomonic dynasty, under which the chief provinces became Tigray (northern), what is now Amhara (central), and Shewa (southern). The seat of government, or rather of overlordship, was usually in Amhara or Shewa, and the ruler exacted tribute, when he could, from the other provinces. At the time, Ethiopia engaged in military reforms and imperial expansion that left it dominating the Horn of Africa, especially under the rule of Amda Seyon I (1314–44). Artistic and literary advancement of the period came together with a decline in urbanization, as the Solomonic emperors did not have a fixed capital but rather moved around the empire in mobile camps.

Towards the close of the 15th century, the Portuguese missions into Ethiopia began. A belief had long prevailed in Europe of the existence of a Christian kingdom in the far east whose monarch was known as Prester John, and various expeditions had been sent to find it. Among others engaged in this search was Pêro da Covilhã, who arrived in Ethiopia in 1490. Da Covilhã remained in the country, but in 1507 an Armenian named Matthew was sent by the emperor to the king of Portugal to request his aid against the Muslims. In 1520, a Portuguese fleet, with Matthew on board, entered the Red Sea in compliance with this request, and an embassy from the fleet visited the emperor, Lebna Dengel, and remained in Ethiopia for about six years. One of this embassy was Father Francisco Álvares, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the country.

Lebna Dengel, nəgusä nägäst (emperor) of Ethiopia and a member of the Solomonic dynasty. Portrait by Cristofano dell'Altissimo, c. 1552-1568, Uffizi, Florence. The Solomonic dynasty was a bastion of Judaism and later of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. It is considered to have ruled Ethiopia in the 10th century BCE. Records of the dynasty's history were reported to have been maintained by the Ethiopian Orthodox monasteries to near antiquity. However, if such records existed, most were lost as a result of the destruction of Orthodox monasteries. The Dynasty re-established itself in 1270 CE, when when Yekuno Amlak overthrew the last ruler of the Zagwe dynasty.

Wars with Somali Sultanates

Between 1528 and 1540, armies of Muslims, under the Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrihim al-Ghazi, entered Ethiopia from the low country to the southeast and overran the Abyssinian Kingdom, obliging the Emperor to take refuge in the mountains. The ruler turned to the Portuguese again. João Bermudes, a subordinate member of the mission of 1520, was sent to Lisbon, although it is not know what his specific role was. In response to Bermudes's message, a Portuguese fleet under the command of Estêvão da Gama was sent from India and arrived at Massawa in 1541. Under the command of Cristóvão da Gama, younger brother of the admiral, the Portuguese and local troops were initially successful against the enemy. However, they were subsequently defeated at the Battle of Wofla (1542), and their commander was captured and executed. Nonetheless, in 1543, Al-Ghazi was shot and killed in the Battle of Wayna Daga, and his forces were totally routed. Following the victory, quarrels arose between the emperor and Bermudes, who now urged the emperor to publicly profess his obedience to Rome. The emperor refused, and Bermudes was obliged to leave.

Gondar and Zemene Mesafint

Upon the death of Emperor Susenyos and the accession of his son Fasilides in 1633, the Jesuits,
who had accompanied or followed the Gama expedition, were expelled and the native religion restored to official status. Fasilides made Gondar his capital in 1636 and built a castle there, which would grow into the castle complex known as the Fasil Ghebbi, or Royal Enclosure. During this time, Ethiopian philosophy flourished, with philosophers Zera Yacob and Walda Heywat leading the way. Yaqob is known for his treatise on religion, morality, and reason, known as Hatata.

The Royal Enclosure (Fasil Ghebbi) and Gondar. Emperor Fasilides made Gondar his capital and built a castle there, which would grow into the castle complex known as the Fasil Ghebbi, or Royal Enclosure. Fasilides also constructed several churches in Gondar, many bridges across the country, and expanded the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion in Aksum.

In the 18th century, the so-called Zemene Mesafint (Era of the Princes) began. It was a period in Ethiopian history when the country was divided into several regions with no effective central authority. The emperors were reduced to little more than figureheads confined to the capital city of Gondar. Historians debate what triggered Zemene Mesafint, pointing to various events ranging from 1706 to 1769 as the beginning of the era. A religious conflict between settling Muslims and traditional Christians, between nationalities they represented, and between feudal lords dominated the region at the time. The power lay ever more openly in the hands of the great nobles and military commanders.

Bitter religious conflicts contributed to hostility toward foreign Christians and Europeans; they persisted into the 20th century and were a factor in Ethiopia's isolation until the mid-19th century, when the first British mission was sent in 1805 to conclude an alliance with Ethiopia and obtain a port on the Red Sea in case France conquered Egypt. This isolation was pierced by very few European travelers.

The first years of the 19th century were disturbed by fierce campaigns between Ras Gugsa of Begemder and Ras Wolde Selassie of Tigray, who fought over control of the figurehead emperor Egwale Seyon. Wolde Selassie was eventually the victor and practically ruled the whole country until his death in 1816 at the age of eighty. Dejazmach Sabagadis of Agame succeeded Wolde Selassie in 1817, through force of arms, to become warlord of Tigre.
Under the emperors Tewodros II (1855–1868), Yohannes IV (1872–1889), and Menelek II (1889–1913), the empire began to emerge from its isolation. Under Emperor Tewodros II, Zemene Mesafint was brought to an end.

Ethiopia was never colonized by a European power, but was occupied by Italians in 1936. However, several colonial powers had interests in and designs on Ethiopia in the context of the 19th century colonization of Africa.

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11.4: Namibia

Learning Objectives

- Describe the tribal makeup of Namibia

Key Points

- Not much is known about pre-colonial Namibia, but evidence suggests that a number of diverse peoples settled there as a result of ancient, medieval, and modern migrations.
- The San (also called Bushmen) are generally assumed to have been the earliest inhabitants of the region comprising today's Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa. Until about 2,000 years ago, they were the only inhabitants in Namibia, but around that time the Nama (also known as Namaqua), the Khoikhoi, and the Hottentots settled around the Orange River in the south, on the border between Namibia and South Africa, where they kept herds of sheep and goats.
- In the 9th century, the Damara entered Namibia. The Damara do not relate to the other Khoisan peoples, although they share a similar language. It is believed that they separated themselves early on from their Bantu brothers of Southern and Central Africa and moved to Southwest Africa.
- The Ovambo, and the smaller and closely related group Kavango, lived in northern Namibia and southern Angola. The Kavango also lived in western Zambia. They migrated south from the upper regions of Zambezi around the 14th century. Their economy was based on farming, cattle, and fishing, but they also produced metal goods.
- During the 17th century, the Herero, a pastoral, nomadic people keeping cattle, moved into Namibia. They came from the east African lakes and entered Namibia from the northwest.
- In the 19th century white farmers, mostly Boers, moved farther north, pushing the indigenous Khoisan peoples, who put up a fierce resistance, across the Orange River. Known as Oorlams, these Khoisan adopted Boer customs and spoke a language similar to Afrikaans.
- Europeans first arrived in Namibia in the 15th century, and the territory became one of the first European (German) colonies on the continent.

Terms

the Herero and Namaqua genocide

A campaign of racial extermination and collective punishment that the German Empire undertook in German South-West Africa (modern-day Namibia) against the Herero and Nama people. It is considered one of the first genocides of the 20th century. It took place between 1904 and 1907 during the Herero Wars.

Herero Wars

A series of colonial wars between the German Empire and the Herero people of German South-West Africa (present-day Namibia, c. 1903–1908).

Khoisan peoples

A unifying name for two groups of peoples of Southern Africa who share physical and putative linguistic characteristics distinct from the Bantu majority of the region. Culturally, they are divided into the foraging San, or Bushmen, and the pastoral Khoi, or more specifically Khoikhoi, previously known as Hottentots.

Zambezi

The fourth-longest river in Africa, the longest east flowing river in Africa, and the largest river flowing into the Indian Ocean from Africa. The 2,574-kilometer-long river (1,599 miles) rises in Zambia and flows through eastern Angola, along the eastern border of Namibia and the northern border of Botswana, then along the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe to Mozambique, where it crosses the country to empty into the Indian Ocean.

The Peoples Of Pre-Colonial Namibia

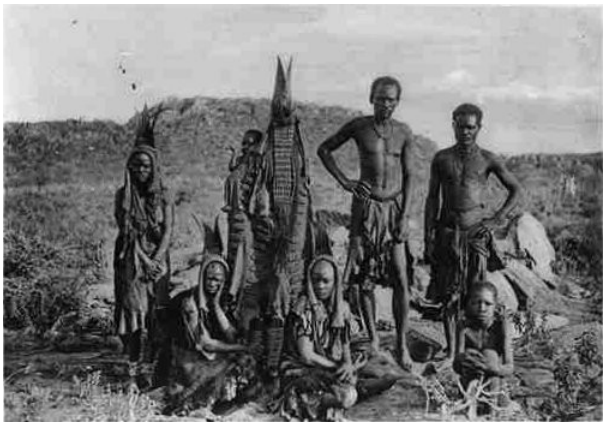
Unlike in other territories in Africa, no powerful ancient or medieval kingdoms and empires served as predecessors of the Namibian state today. Not much is known about pre-colonial Namibia, but evidence suggests that a number of diverse peoples settled there as a result of ancient, medieval, and modern migrations. The San (also called Bushmen) are generally assumed to have been the earliest inhabitants of the region comprising today's Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa. The San were hunters and gatherers with a nomadic lifestyle. The most important part of their diet consisted of fruits, nuts, and roots, but they also hunted different kinds of antelopes.

Until about 2,000 years ago, the original hunters and gatherers of the San people were the only inhabitants in Namibia, but around that time, the Nama (also known as Namaqua), the Khoikhoi, and the Hottentots settled around the Orange River in the south, on the border between Namibia and South Africa, where they kept herds of sheep and goats. Both the San and the Nama were Khoisan peoples, and spoke languages from the Khoisan language group.

In the 9th century, the Damara entered Namibia. The Damara do not relate to the other Khoisan peoples, although they share a similar language. It is believed that they separated themselves early on from their Bantu brothers of Southern and Central Africa and moved to Southwest Africa. It is unclear where they came from, but they settled in the grasslands in central Namibia, known as Damaraland.

The Ovambo, and the smaller and closely related group Kavango, lived in northern Namibia and southern Angola. The Kavango also lived in western Zambia. They migrated south from the upper regions of Zambezi around the 14th century. Their economy was based on farming, cattle, and fishing, but they also produced metal goods. Both groups belonged to the Bantu nation. They rarely ventured south to the central parts of the country, where the conditions did not suit their farming way of life. However, they extensively traded their knives and agricultural implements. The Ovambo constitute the largest ethnic group and a majority of the population in today's Namibia.

During the 17th century, the Herero, a pastoral, nomadic people keeping cattle, moved into Namibia. They came from the east African lakes and entered Namibia from the northwest. First they resided in Kaokoland, but in the middle of the 19th century some tribes moved farther south and into Damaraland. A number of tribes remained in Kaokoland. During German occupation of this region, about one third of the population was wiped out in a genocide that continues to provoke historical and political debates. Known as the Herero and Namaqua genocide, it was a campaign of racial extermination and collective punishment. It is considered one of the first genocides of the 20th century, taking place between 1904 and 1907 during the Herero Wars.



Herero, c. 1910. During the 17th century the Herero, a pastoral, nomadic people keeping cattle, moved into Namibia. They came from the east African lakes and entered Namibia from the northwest.

In the 19th century white farmers, mostly Boers, moved farther north, pushing the indigenous Khoisan peoples, who put up a fierce resistance, across the Orange River. Known as Oorlams, these Khoisans adopted Boer customs and spoke a language similar to Afrikaans. Armed with guns, the Oorlams caused instability as more and more came to settle in Namaqualand, and eventually conflict arose between them and the Nama. Under the leadership of Jonker Afrikaner, the Oorlams used their superior weapons to take control of the best grazing land. In the 1830s, Jonker Afrikaner concluded an agreement with the Nama chief Oaseb whereby the Oorlams would protect the central grasslands of Namibia from the Herero who were then pushing south. Eventually, warfare

over land control between the Herero and the Oorlams, as well as between the two of them and the Damara, who were the original inhabitants of the area, broke out. The Damara were displaced by the fighting and many were killed.

Europeans in Namibia

The first European to set foot on Namibian soil was the Portuguese Diogo Cão, in 1485 during an exploratory mission along the west coast of Africa. The next European to visit Namibia was also a Portuguese, Bartholomeu Dias, who stopped there on his way to round the Cape of Good Hope. However, as the inhospitable Namib Desert constituted a formidable barrier, neither of the Portuguese explorers went far inland.

In 1793, the Dutch authority in the Cape decided to take control of Walvis Bay, since it was the only good deep-water harbor along the Skeleton Coast. When the United Kingdom took control of the Cape Colony in 1797, they also took over Walvis Bay. But white settlement in the area was limited, and neither the Dutch nor the British penetrated far into the country. One of the first European groups to show interest in Namibia were the missionaries. In 1805 the London Missionary Society began working in Namibia, moving north from the Cape Colony. In 1811 they founded the town Bethanie in southern Namibia, where they built a church, which today is Namibia's oldest building.

In the 1840s the German Rhenish Mission Society started working in Namibia and cooperating with the London Missionary Society. It was not until the 19th century, when European powers sought to carve up the African continent between them in the so-called Scramble for Africa, that Europeans—predominately Germany and Great Britain— became interested in Namibia. The first territorial claim on a part of Namibia came when Britain occupied Walvis Bay, confirming the settlement of 1797, and permitted the Cape Colony to annex it in 1878. The annexation was an attempt to forestall German ambitions in the area, and it also guaranteed control of the good deep water harbor on the way to the Cape Colony and other British colonies on Africa's east coast. Believing that Britain was soon about to declare the whole area a protectorate, the German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck claimed it in 1884, thereby establishing German South-West Africa as a colony.

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11.5: Great Zimbabwe

Learning Objectives

- Explain the social structure, unique aspects, and decline of Great Zimbabwe

Key Points

- Great Zimbabwe is a ruined city in the southeastern hills of today's Zimbabwe. It was the capital of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe during the country's Late Iron Age. Construction on the monument began in the 11th century and continued until the 15th century.
- David Beach believes that the city and its state, the Kingdom of Zimbabwe, flourished from 1200 to 1500, although a somewhat earlier date for its demise is implied by a description transmitted in the early 1500s to João de Barros. Its growth has been linked to the decline of Mapungubwe from around 1300, due to climatic change or the greater availability of gold in the hinterland of Great Zimbabwe.
- Archaeological evidence suggests that Great Zimbabwe became a center for trading, with a trade network linked to Kilwa Kisiwani and extending as far as China. This international trade was mainly in gold and ivory. The rulers of Zimbabwe brought artistic and stone masonry traditions from Mapungubwe. The construction of elaborate stone buildings and walls reached its apex in the kingdom.
- Causes suggested for the decline and ultimate abandonment of the city of Great Zimbabwe have included a decline in trade compared to sites further north, the exhaustion of the gold mines, political instability, and famine and water shortages induced by climatic change.
- In the early 11th century, people from the Kingdom of Mapungubwe in Southern Africa are believed to have settled on the Zimbabwe plateau. There, they would establish the Kingdom of Zimbabwe around 1220.
- Nyatsimba Mutota from Great Zimbabwe established his dynasty at Chitakochangonya Hill, and the land he conquered would become the Kingdom of Mutapa. Within a generation, Mutapa eclipsed Great Zimbabwe. By 1450, the capital and most of the kingdom had been abandoned.

Terms

Kingdom of Zimbabwe

A medieval (c. 1220–1450) kingdom located in modern-day Zimbabwe. Its capital, Great Zimbabwe, is the largest stone structure in precolonial Southern Africa.

Great Zimbabwe

A ruined city in the southeastern hills of Zimbabwe near Lake Mutirikwe and the town of Masvingo. It was the capital of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe during the country's Late Iron Age. Construction on the monument began in the 11th century and continued until the 15th century. It is believed to have served as a royal palace for the local monarch. As such, it would have been used as the seat of political power.

Shona

A group of Bantu people in Zimbabwe and some neighboring countries. The main part of them is divided into five major clans and adjacent to some people of very similar culture and languages. They
created empires and states on the Zimbabwe plateau. These states include the Kingdom of Zimbabwe (12th–16th century), the Torwa State, and the Munhumutapa states.

Mapungubwe

A pre-colonial state in Southern Africa located at the confluence of the Shashe and Limpopo rivers, south of Great Zimbabwe. It was the first stage in a development that would culminate in the creation of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe in the 13th century and with gold trading links to Rhapta and Kilwa Kisiwani on the African east coast. It lasted about 80 years, and at its height its population was about 5,000 people.

Introduction

Great Zimbabwe is a ruined city in the southeastern hills of today's Zimbabwe. It was the capital of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe during the country's Late Iron Age. Construction on the monument began in the 11th century and continued until the 15th century. The exact identity of the Great Zimbabwe builders is at present unknown. Local traditions recorded in the 18th and 19th centuries assert that the stoneworks were constructed by the early Lemba. However, the most popular modern archaeological theory is that the edifices were erected by the ancestral Shona.

Origins and Growth

Construction of the stone buildings started in the 11th century and continued for over 300 years. The ruins at Great Zimbabwe are some of the oldest and largest structures in Southern Africa; they are the second oldest after nearby Mapungubwe in South Africa. The most formidable edifice, commonly referred to as the Great Enclosure, makes it the largest ancient structure south of the Sahara Desert. David Beach believes that the city and its state, the Kingdom of Zimbabwe, flourished from 1200 to 1500, although a somewhat earlier date for its demise is implied by a description transmitted in the early 1500s to João de Barros. Its growth has been linked to the decline of Mapungubwe from around 1300, due to climatic change or the greater availability of gold in the hinterland of Great Zimbabwe. At its peak, estimates are that Great Zimbabwe had as many as 18,000 inhabitants. The ruins that survive are built entirely of stone, and they span 730 ha (1,800 acres).

Economy

Archaeological evidence suggests that Great Zimbabwe became a center for trading, with a trade network linked to Kilwa Kisiwani (the historic center of the Kilwa Sultanate; off the southern coast of present-day Tanzania in eastern Africa)and extending as far as China. This international trade was mainly in gold and ivory. Some estimates indicate that more than 20 million ounces of gold were extracted from the ground. That international commerce was in addition to the local agricultural trade, in which cattle were especially important. The large cattle herd that supplied the city moved seasonally and was managed by the court. Archaeological evidence also suggests a high degree of social stratification, with poorer residents living outside of the city. Chinese pottery shards, coins from Arabia, glass beads, and other non-local items have been excavated. Despite these strong international trade links, there is no evidence to suggest exchange of architectural concepts between Great Zimbabwe and other centers such as Kilwa Kisiwani.

A tower of Great Zimbabwe Great Zimbabwe is notable for its advanced masonry techniques. The ruins form three distinct architectural groups. They are known as the Hill Complex, the Valley Complex and the Great Enclosure. The Hill Complex is the oldest, and was occupied from the 9th to 13th centuries. The Great Enclosure was occupied from the 13th to 15th centuries, and the Valley Complex from the 14th to 16th centuries.

Kingdom of Zimbabwe

The Kingdom of Zimbabwe, of which Great Zimbabwe was the capital, existed between circa 1220 and 1450 in modern-day Zimbabwe. Although it was formally established during the medieval period, archaeological excavations suggest that state formation here was considerably more ancient. In the early 11th century, people from the Kingdom of Mapungubwe in Southern Africa are believed to have settled on the Zimbabwe plateau. There, they would establish the Kingdom of Zimbabwe around 1220. Sixteenth-century records left by the explorer João de Barros indicate that Great Zimbabwe appears to have still been inhabited as recently as the early 1500s.

The rulers of Zimbabwe brought artistic and stone masonry traditions from Mapungubwe. The construction of elaborate stone buildings and walls reached its apex in the kingdom. The kingdom taxed other rulers throughout the region. It was composed of over 150 tributaries headquartered in their own minor zimbabwes (stone structures). The Kingdom controlled the ivory and gold trade from the interior to the southeastern coast of Africa. Asian and Arabic goods could be found in abundance. The Great Zimbabwe people mined minerals like gold, copper, and iron. They also kept livestock.

Decline of the State and the City

Causes suggested for the decline and ultimate abandonment of the city of Great Zimbabwe have included a decline in trade compared to sites further north, the exhaustion of the gold mines, political instability, and famine and water shortages induced by climatic change.Around 1430, prince Nyatsimba Mutota from Great Zimbabwe traveled north in search of salt among the Shona-Tavara. He defeated the Tonga and Tavara with his army and established his dynasty at Chitakochangonya Hill. The land he conquered would become the Kingdom of Mutapa. Within a generation, Mutapa eclipsed Great Zimbabwe as the economic and political power in Zimbabwe. By 1450, the capital and most of the kingdom had been abandoned.

The end of the kingdom resulted in a fragmentation of proto-Shona power. Two bases emerged along a north-south axis. In the north, the Kingdom of Mutapa carried on and even improved upon Zimbabwe's administrative structure. It did not carry on the stone masonry tradition to the extent of its predecessor. In the south, the Kingdom of Butua was established as a smaller but nearly identical version of Zimbabwe. Both states were eventually absorbed into the largest and most powerful of the Kalanga states, the Rozwi Empire.

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11.6: The Swahili Culture

Learning Objectives

- Explain how the Bantu migration impacted the Swahili culture

Key Points

- Swahili culture is the culture of the Swahili people inhabiting the Swahili Coast. They speak Swahili as their native language, which belongs to the Niger-Congo family. Swahili culture is the product of the history of the coastal part of the African Great Lakes region.
- As with the Swahili language, Swahili culture has a Bantu core and has also borrowed from foreign influences. Around 3,000 years ago, speakers of the proto-Bantu language group began a millennia-long series of migrations; the Swahili people originate from Bantu inhabitants of the coast of Southeast Africa, in Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique. They are mainly united under the mother tongue of Kiswahili, a Bantu language.
- Around the 8th century, the Swahili people engaged in the Indian Ocean trade. As a consequence, they were influenced by Arabic, Persian, Indian, and Chinese cultures. During the 10th century, several city-states flourished along the Swahili Coast and adjacent island. They were Muslim, cosmopolitan, and politically independent of one another.
- The Kilwa Sultanate was a medieval sultanate, centered at Kilwa, whose authority, at its height, stretched over the entire length of the Swahili Coast. It was founded in the 10th century, and the last native dynasty was overthrown by a Portuguese invasion in 1505. By 1513, the sultanate was already fragmented into smaller states.
- Despite its origin as a Persian colony, extensive inter-marriage and conversion of local Bantu inhabitants and later Arab immigration turned the Kilwa Sultanate into a very diverse state. It is the mixture of Perso-Arab and Bantu cultures in Kilwa that is credited for creating Swahili as a distinctive East African culture and language.
- The diverse history of the Swahili Coast has also resulted in multicultural influences on Swahili arts, including furniture and architecture.

Terms

Bantu expansion

A postulated millennia-long series of migrations of speakers of the original proto-Bantu language group. Attempts to trace the exact route of the migrations, to correlate it with archaeological evidence and genetic evidence, have not been conclusive. The Bantu traveled in two waves, and it is likely that the migration of the Bantu-speaking people from their core region in West Africa began around 1000 BCE.

Kilwa Sultanate

A Medieval sultanate, centered at Kilwa (an island off modern-day Tanzania), whose authority, at its height, stretched over the entire length of the Swahili Coast. It was founded in the 10th century by Ali ibn al-Hassan Shirazi, a Persian prince of Shiraz. His family ruled the Sultanate until 1277, when it was replaced by the Arab family of Abu Moaheb. The latter was overthrown by a Portuguese invasion in 1505.

Bantu and Swahili Culture

Swahili culture is the culture of the Swahili people inhabiting the Swahili Coast, encompassing today's Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Mozambique, as well as the adjacent islands of Zanzibar and Comoros and some parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Malawi. They speak Swahili as their native language, which belongs to the Niger-Congo family. Swahili culture is the product of the history of the coastal part of the African Great Lakes region.

As with the Swahili language, Swahili culture has a Bantu core and has also borrowed from foreign influences. Around 3,000 years ago, speakers of the proto-Bantu language group began a millennia-long series of migrations eastward from their homeland between West Africa and Central Africa, at the border of eastern Nigeria and Cameroon. This Bantu expansion first introduced Bantu peoples to central, southern, and southeastern Africa, regions they had previously been absent from. The Swahili people are

mainly united under the mother tongue of Kiswahili, a Bantu language. This also extends to Arab, Persian, and other migrants who reached the coast around the 7th and 8th centuries, providing considerable cultural infusion and numerous loan words from Arabic and Persian. However, archaeologist Felix Chami notes the presence of Bantu settlements straddling the Southeast African coast as early as the beginning of the 1st millennium. They evolved gradually from the 6th century onward to accommodate for an increase in trade (mainly with Arab merchants), population growth, and further centralized urbanization, developing into what would later become known as the Swahili city-states.

Swahili Arabic script on a carved wooden door (open) at Lamu in Kenya. British archaeologists assumed during the colonial period that Arab or Persian colonizers brought stone architecture and urban civilization to the Swahili Coast. Today we know that it was local populations that developed the Swahili coast. Swahili architecture exhibits a range of influences and innovations, and diverse forms and histories interlock and overlap to create densely layered structures that cannot be broken down into distinct stylistic parts.

Swahili City-States

Around the 8th century, the Swahili people began trading with the Arab, Persian, Indian, Chinese, and Southeast Asian peoples—a process known as the Indian Ocean trade.

As a consequence of long-distance trading routes crossing the Indian Ocean, the Swahili were influenced by Arabic, Persian, Indian, and Chinese cultures. During the 10th century, several city-states flourished along the Swahili Coast and adjacent islands, including Kilwa, Malindi, Gedi, Pate, Comoros, and Zanzibar. These early Swahili city-states were Muslim, cosmopolitan, and

politically independent of one another.
They grew in wealth as the Bantu Swahili people served as intermediaries and facilitators to local, Arab, Persian, Indonesian, Malaysian, Indian, and Chinese merchants. They all competed against one another for the best of the Great Lakes region's trade business, and their chief exports were salt, ebony, gold, ivory, and sandalwood. They were also involved in the slave trade. These city-states began to decline towards the 16th century, mainly as a consequence of the Portuguese advent. Eventually, Swahili trading centers went out of business, and commerce between Africa and Asia on the Indian Ocean collapsed.

Kilwa Sultanate

The Kilwa Sultanate was a medieval sultanate, centered at Kilwa (an island off modern-day Tanzania), whose authority, at its height, stretched over the entire length of the Swahili Coast. It was founded in the 10th century by Ali ibn al-Hassan Shirazi, a Persian prince of Shiraz. His family ruled the Sultanate until 1277, when it was replaced by the Arab family of Abu Moaheb. The latter was overthrown by a Portuguese invasion in 1505. By 1513, the sultanate was already fragmented into smaller states, many of which became protectorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

Despite its origin as a Persian colony, extensive inter-marriage and conversion of local Bantu inhabitants and later Arab immigration turned the Kilwa Sultanate into a diverse state not ethnically differentiable from the mainland. It is the mixture of Perso-Arab and Bantu cultures in Kilwa that is credited for creating Swahili as a distinctive East African culture and language. Nonetheless, the Muslims of Kilwa (whatever their ethnicity) would often refer to themselves generally as *Shirazi* or *Arabs*, and to the unconverted Bantu peoples of the mainland as *Zanj* or *Khaffirs* (infidels).

The Kilwa Sultanate was almost wholly dependent on external commerce. Effectively, it was a confederation of urban settlements, and there was little or no agriculture carried on in within the boundaries of the sultanate. Grains (principally millet and rice), meats (cattle and poultry), and other supplies necessary to feed the large city populations had to be purchased from the Bantu peoples of the interior. Kilwan traders from the coast encouraged the development of market towns in the Bantu-dominated highlands of what are now Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. The Kilwan mode of living was as middlemen traders, importing manufactured goods (cloth, etc.) from Arabia and India, which were then swapped in the highland market towns for Bantu-produced agricultural commodities (grain, meats, etc.) for their own subsistence, and precious raw materials (gold, ivory, etc.) that they would export back to Asia. The exception was the coconut palm tree.

Arts

The diverse history of the Swahili Coast has also resulted in multicultural influences on Swahili arts, including furniture and architecture. The Swahili do not often use designs with images of living beings due to their Muslim heritage. Instead, Swahili designs are primarily geometric. The most typical musical genre of Swahili culture is taarab (or tarabu), sung in the Swahili language. Its melodies and orchestration have Arab and Indian influences, although Western instruments, such as guitars, are sometimes used.
Swahili architecture, a term used to designate a whole range of diverse building traditions practiced or once practiced along the eastern and southeastern coasts of Africa, is in many ways an extension of mainland African traditions, although structural elements, such as domes and barrel vaulting, clearly connect to Persian Gulf area and South Asian building traditions as well. Exotic ornament and design elements also connected the architecture of the Swahili coast to other Islamic port cities. In fact, many of the classic mansions and palaces of the Swahili Coast belonged to wealthy merchants and landowners, who played a key role in the mercantile economy of the region.

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11.7: The Kingdoms of Madagascar

Learning Objectives

- Identify some of the kingdoms that ruled on Madagascar before the arrival of Europeans

Key Points

- Over the past 2,000 years, Madagascar has received waves of settlers of diverse origins, including Austronesian, Bantu, Arab, South Asian, Chinese, and European populations. Centuries of intermarriages created the Malagasy people that form nearly the entire population of Madagascar today.
- By the European Middle Ages, over a dozen predominant ethnic identities had emerged on the island, typified by rule under a local chieftain. Leaders of some communities, such as the Sakalava, Merina, and Betsimisaraka, seized the opportunity to unite these disparate groups and establish powerful kingdoms under their rule.
- According to local tradition, the founders of the Sakalava kingdom quickly subdued the neighboring princes, starting with the southern ones, in the Mahafaly area. The true founder of Sakalava dominance was Andriamisara. In the 17th century, the empire started to split, resulting in a southern kingdom (Menabe) and a northern kingdom (Boina). Further splits followed.
- A northern Betsimisaraka zana-malata named Ratsimilaho successfully united his compatriots, and around 1712 was elected king of all the Betsimisaraka. He established alliances with the southern Betsimisaraka and the neighboring Bezanozano, extending his authority over these areas by allowing local chiefs to maintain their power while offering tributes of rice, cattle, and slaves. By 1730, he was one of the most powerful kings of Madagascar. Around a century later, the fractured Betsimisaraka kingdom was easily colonized by Radama I, king of Merina.
- The Merina emerged as the politically dominant group in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, and the Merina kingdom reached the peak of its power in the early 19th century. Its economy was heavily based on slave labor. The absolute dominance of the Merina kingdom over all of Madagascar came to an end with the first Franco-Hova War of 1883 to 1885.
- In 1896, the French Parliament voted to annex Madagascar, forming the colony of French Madagascar in 1897.

Terms

Sakalava

An ethnic group of Madagascar that occupies the western edge of the island from Toliara in the south to Sambirano in the north. The term denominates a number of smaller ethnic groups that once comprised an empire, rather than an ethnic group in its own right. During the Middle Ages, their influence extended across the area that is now the provinces of Antsiranana, Mahajanga, and Toliara. However, with the domination of the Indian Ocean by the British fleet and the end of the Arab slave trade, they lost their power to the emerging Merina threat.

Merina

The dominant “highlander” Malagasy ethnic group in Madagascar, and one of the country’s eighteen official ethnic groups. Their core territory corresponds to the former Antananarivo Province in the center of the island. Beginning in the late 18th century, their sovereigns extended political domination over the rest of the island, ultimately uniting it under their rule.

Betsimisaraka

A group that makes up approximately 15% of the Malagasy people and is the second largest ethnic group in Madagascar after the Merina. They occupy a large stretch of the eastern seaboard of Madagascar, from Mananjary in the south to Antalaha in the north. They have a long history of extensive interaction with European seafarers and traders that produced a significant subset with mixed European-Malagasy origins, termed the *zana-malata*.

Malagasy people

The ethnic group that forms nearly the entire population of Madagascar. They are divided into two subgroups: the “Highlander” Merina, Sihanaka, and Betsileo of the central plateau around Antananarivo, Alaotra, and Fianarantsoa, and the “coastal dwellers” elsewhere in the country. This division has its roots in historical patterns of settlement.

Diverse Populations and the Rise of Great Kingdoms

Over the past 2,000 years, Madagascar has received waves of settlers of diverse origins, including Austronesian, Bantu, Arab, South Asian, Chinese, and European populations. Centuries of intermarriages created the Malagasy people, who primarily speak Malagasy, an Austronesian language with Bantu, Malay, Arabic, French, and English influences. Most of the genetic makeup of the average Malagasy, however, reflects an almost equal blend of Austronesian and Bantu influences, especially in coastal regions. Other populations often intermixed with the existent population to a more limited degree or have sought to preserve a separate community from the majority Malagasy.

By the European Middle Ages, over a dozen predominant ethnic identities had emerged on the island, typified by rule under a local chieftain. Leaders of some communities, such as the Sakalava, Merina, and Betsimisaraka, seized the opportunity to unite these disparate groups and establish powerful kingdoms under their rule. The kingdoms increased their wealth and power through exchanges with European, Arab, and other seafaring traders, whether they were legitimate vessels or pirates.

Sakalava

The island's west clan chiefs began to extend their power through trade with their Indian Ocean neighbors, first with Arab, Persian, and Somali traders who connected Madagascar with East Africa, the Middle East, and India, and later with European slave traders. The wealth created in Madagascar through trade produced a state system ruled by powerful regional monarchs known as the Maroserana. These monarchs adopted the cultural traditions of subjects in their territories and expanded their kingdoms. They took on divine status, and new nobility and artisan classes were created. Madagascar functioned as a contact port for the other Swahili seaport city-states, such as Sofala, Kilwa, Mombasa, and Zanzibar. By the Middle Ages, large chiefdoms began to dominate considerable areas of the island. Among these were the Betsimisaraka alliance of the eastern coast and the Sakalava chiefdoms of the Menabe (centered in what is now the town of Morondava) and of Boina (centered in what is now the provincial capital of Mahajanga). The influence of the Sakalava extended across the area that is now the provinces of Antsiranana, Mahajanga, and Toliara.

According to local tradition, the founders of the Sakalava kingdom were Maroseraña (or Maroseranana, "those who owned many ports") princes from the Fiherenana (now Toliara). They quickly subdued the neighboring princes, starting with the southern ones, in the Mahafaly area. The true founder of Sakalava dominance was Andriamisara. His son Andriandahifotsy (c. 1610–1658) extended his authority northwards, past the Mangoky River. His two sons, Andriamanetiarivo and Andriamandisoarivo, extended gains further up to the Tsongay region (now Mahajanga). At about that time, the empire started to split, resulting in a southern kingdom (Menabe) and a northern kingdom (Boina). Further splits followed, despite continued extension of the Boina princes' reach into the extreme north, in Antankarana country.

Betsmiraka

Like the Sakalava to the west, today's Betsimisaraka are composed of numerous ethnic sub-groups that formed a confederation in the early 18th century. Through the late 17th century, the various clans of the eastern seaboard were governed by chieftains who typically ruled over one or two villages. Around 1700, the Tsikoa clans began uniting around a series of powerful leaders. Ramanano, the chief of Vatomandry, was elected in 1710 as the leader of the Tsikoa ("those who are steadfast") and initiated invasions of the northern ports. A northern Betsimisaraka *zana-malata* (a person of mixed native and European origin) named Ratsimilaho led a resistance to these invasions and successfully united his compatriots around this cause. In 1712, he forced the Tsikoa to flee, and was elected king of all the Betsimisaraka and given a new name, Ramaromanompo ("Lord Served by Many") at his capital at Foulpointe. He established alliances with the southern Betsimisaraka and the neighboring Bezanozano, extending his authority over these areas by allowing local chiefs to maintain their power while offering tributes of rice, cattle, and slaves. By 1730, he was one of the most powerful kings of Madagascar. By the time of his death in 1754, his moderate and stabilizing rule had provided nearly forty years of unity among the diverse clans within the Betsimisaraka political union. He also allied the Betsimisaraka with the other most powerful kingdom of the time, the Sakalava of the west coast, through marriage with Matave, the only daughter of Iboina king Andrianbaba.

Ratsimilaho's successors gradually weakened the union, leaving it vulnerable to the growing influence and presence of European and particularly French settlers, slave traders, missionaries, and merchants. The fractured Betsimisaraka kingdom was easily colonized in 1817 by Radama I, king of Merina. The subjugation of the Betsimisaraka in the 19th century left the population

relatively impoverished. Under colonization by the French (1896–1960), a focused effort was made to increase access to education and paid employment on French plantations.

Map of Madagascar and surrounding areas, c. 1702–1707. Over the 19th century, a series of Merina monarchs engaged in the process of modernization through close diplomatic ties to Britain that led to the establishment of European-style schools, government institutions, and infrastructure. Christianity, introduced by members of the London Missionary Society, was made the state religion under Queen Ranavalona II and her prime minister, highly influential statesman Rainilaiarivony.

Merina

The Merina emerged as the politically dominant group in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries. Oral history traces the emergence of a united kingdom in the central highlands of Madagascar—a region called Imerina—back to early 16th century king Andriamanelo. By 1824, sovereigns in his line had conquered nearly all of Madagascar, particularly through the military strategy and ambitious political policies of Andrianampoinimerina (c. 1785–1810) and his son Radama I (1792–1828). The kingdom's contact with British and later French powers led local leaders to build schools and a modern army based on European models.

The Merina oral histories mention several attacks by Sakalava raiders against their villages as early as the 17th century and during the entire 18th century. However, it seems that the term was used generically to design all the nomadic peoples in the sparsely settled territories between the Merina country and the western coast of the island. The Merina king Radama I's wars with the western coast of the island ended in a fragile peace sealed through his marriage with the daughter of a king of Menabe. Though the Merina were never to annex the two last Sakalava strongholds of Menabe and Boina (Mahajanga), the Sakalava never again posed a threat to the central plateau, which remained under Merina control until the French colonization of the island in 1896.

The Merina kingdom reached the peak of its power in the early 19th century. In a number of military expeditions, large numbers of non-Merina were captured and used for slave labor. By the 1850s, these slaves were replaced by imported slaves from East Africa, mostly of Makoa ethnicity. Until the 1820s, the imported slave labor benefited all classes of Merina society, but in the period of 1825 to 1861, a general impoverishment of small farmers led to the concentration of slave ownership in the hands of the ruling elite. The slave-based economy led to a constant danger of a slave revolt, and for a period in the 1820s all non-Merina males captured in military expeditions were killed rather than enslaved for fear of an armed uprising. There was a brief period of increased prosperity in the late 1870s, as slave import began to pick up again, but it was cut short with the abolishment of slavery under French administration in 1896.
Due to the influence of British missionaries, the Merina upper classes converted entirely to Protestantism in the mid-19th century, following the example of their queen, Ranavalona II.

The absolute dominance of the Merina kingdom over all of Madagascar came to an end with the first Franco-Hova War of 1883 to 1885, when a French flying column marched to the capital, Antananarivo, taking the city's defenders by surprise. In 1896, the

French Parliament voted to annex Madagascar, forming the colony of French Madagascar in 1897.

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11.8: The Bantu Migration

Learning Objectives

- Explain how the Bantu Migration impacted the Swahili cultures

Key Points

- The Bantu expansion is the name for a postulated millennia-long series of migrations of speakers of the original proto-Bantu language group. The primary evidence for this expansion has been linguistic, namely that the languages spoken in sub-Equatorial Africa are remarkably similar to each other.
- It seems likely that the expansion of the Bantu-speaking people from their core region in West Africa began around 1000 BCE. The western branch possibly followed the coast and the major rivers of the Congo system southward, reaching central Angola by around 500 BCE.
- Further east, Bantu-speaking communities had reached the great Central African rainforest, and by 500 BCE pioneering groups had emerged into the savannas to the south, in what are now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, and Zambia.
- Another stream of migration, moving east by 1000 BCE, was creating a major new population center near the Great Lakes of East Africa. Pioneering groups had reached modern KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa by CE 300 along the coast, and the modern Limpopo Province (formerly Northern Transvaal) by 500 CE.
- Before the expansion of farming and pastoralist African peoples, Southern Africa was populated by hunter-gatherers and earlier pastoralists. The Bantu expansion first introduced Bantu peoples to Central, Southern, and Southeast Africa, regions they had previously been absent from. The proto-Bantu migrants in the process assimilated and/or displaced a number of earlier inhabitants.
- The relatively powerful Bantu-speaking states on a scale larger than local chiefdoms began to emerge in the regions when the Bantu peoples settled from the 13th century onward. By the 19th century, groups with no previous distinction gained political and economic prominence.

Terms

Bantu languages

A traditional branch of the Niger-Congo languages. It is not known how many of them exist today, but Ethnologue counts 535 languages. They are spoken mostly east and south of present-day Cameroon, that is, in the regions commonly known as Central Africa, Southeast Africa, and Southern Africa.

The Bantu expansion

A postulated millennia-long series of migrations of speakers of the original proto-Bantu language group. The primary evidence for this expansion has been linguistic, namely that the languages spoken in sub-Equatorial Africa are remarkably similar to each other.

Monomatapa

A Portuguese name for the Kingdom of Mutapa, a Shona kingdom, which stretched from the Zambezi through the Limpopo rivers to the Indian Ocean in Southern Africa, in what are the modern states of Zimbabwe, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, and parts of Namibia and Botswana, stretching well into modern Zambia. Its founders are descendants of the builders who constructed Great Zimbabwe.

KwaZulu-Natal

A province of South Africa that was created in 1994 when the Zulu bantustan of KwaZulu (“Place of the Zulu” in Zulu) and Natal Province were merged. It is located in the southeast of the country, enjoying a long shoreline beside the Indian Ocean and sharing borders with three other provinces and the countries of Mozambique, Swaziland, and Lesotho.

> **Trekboers**
>
> Nomadic pastoralists descended from mostly Dutch colonists, French Huguenots, and German Protestants in the Cape Colony (founded in 1652). They began migrating into the interior from the areas surrounding what is now Cape Town during the late 17th century and throughout the 18th century.

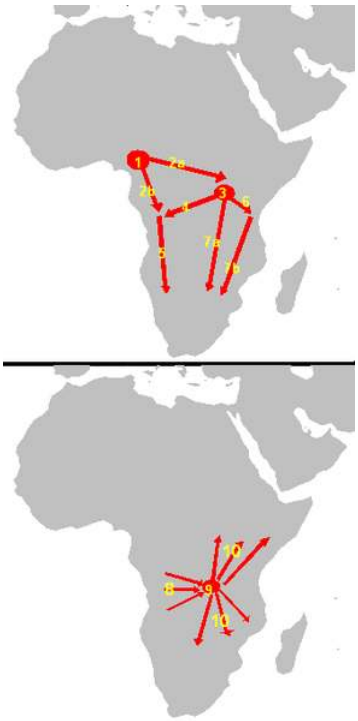
Bantu Migration: Background

The Bantu expansion is the name for a postulated millennia-long series of migrations of speakers of the original proto-Bantu language group. The primary evidence for this expansion has been linguistic, namely that the languages spoken in sub-Equatorial Africa are remarkably similar to each other. Attempts to trace the exact route of the expansion, to correlate it with archaeological evidence and genetic evidence, have not been conclusive. Many aspects of the expansion remain in doubt or are highly contested. The linguistic core of the Bantu family of languages, a branch of the Niger-Congo language family, was located in the adjoining region of Cameroon and Nigeria. From this core, expansion began about 3,000 years ago, with one stream going into East Africa, and other streams going south along the African coast of Gabon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Angola, or inland along the many south-to-north flowing rivers of the Congo River system. The expansion eventually reached South Africa as early as 300 CE.

The Expansion

It seems likely that the expansion of the Bantu-speaking people from their core region in West Africa began around 1000 BCE. Although early models posited that the early speakers were both iron-using and agricultural, archaeology has shown that they did not use iron until as late as 400 BCE, though they were agricultural. The western branch, not necessarily linguistically distinct, according to Christopher Ehret, followed the coast and the major rivers of the Congo system southward, reaching central Angola by around 500 BCE. Further east, Bantu-speaking communities had reached the great Central African rainforest, and by 500 BCE, pioneering groups had emerged into the savannas to the south, in what are now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, and Zambia.

Another stream of migration, moving east by 1000 BCE, was creating a major new population center near the Great Lakes of East Africa, where a rich environment supported a dense population. Movements by small groups to the southeast from the Great Lakes region were more rapid, with initial settlements widely dispersed near the coast and near rivers due to comparatively harsh farming conditions in areas further from water. Pioneering groups had reached modern KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa by 300 CE along the coast, and the modern Limpopo Province (formerly Northern Transvaal) by 500 CE.



The Bantu expansion. Map legend: 1 = 2000–1500 BC origin; 2 = ca.1500 BCE first migrations; 2.a = Eastern African, 2.b = Western African; 3 = 1000–500 BCE Urewe nucleus of Eastern African; 4–7 = southward advance; 9= 500 BCE–0 Congo nucleus; 10 = CE 0–1000 last phase.

Effects of the Bantu Migration

Archaeological, linguistic, genetic, and environmental evidence all support the conclusion that the Bantu expansion was a long process of multiple human migrations. Before the expansion of farming and pastoralist African peoples, Southern Africa was populated by hunter-gatherers and earlier pastoralists. The Bantu expansion first introduced Bantu peoples to Central, Southern, and Southeast Africa, regions they had previously been absent from. The proto-Bantu migrants in the process assimilated and/or displaced a number of earlier inhabitants that they came across, including Pygmy and Khoisan populations in the center and south, respectively. They also encountered some Afro-Asiatic outlier groups in the southeast, who had migrated down from Northeast Africa.

In Eastern and Southern Africa, Bantu speakers may have adopted livestock husbandry from other unrelated Cushitic- and Nilotic-speaking peoples they encountered. Herding practices reached the far south several centuries before Bantu-speaking migrants did.

Between the 13th and 15th centuries, the relatively powerful Bantu-speaking states on a scale larger than local chiefdoms began to emerge in the Great Lakes region, in the savanna south of the Central African rainforest, and on the Zambezi river where the Monomatapa kings built the famous Great Zimbabwe complex. Such processes of state-formation occurred with increasing frequency from the 16th century onward. This was probably due to denser populations, which led to more specialized divisions of labor, including military power, while making outmigration more difficult. Other factors included increased trade among African communities and with European and Arab traders on the coasts, technological developments in economic activity, and new techniques in the political-spiritual ritualization of royalty as the source of national strength and health.

By the time Great Zimbabwe had ceased being the capital of a large trading empire, speakers of Bantu languages were present throughout much of Southern Africa. Two main groups developed—the Nguni (Xhosa, Zulu, Swazi), who occupied the eastern coastal plains, and the Sotho-Tswana, who lived on the interior plateau.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, two major events occurred. The Trekboers were colonizing new areas of Southern Africa, moving northeast from the Cape Colony, and they came into contact with the Xhosa, the Southern Nguni. At the same time the area in modern-day KwaZulu-Natal was populated by dozens of small clans, one of which was the Zulu, then a particularly small clan of no local distinction whatsoever. In 1816, Shaka,

one of the most influential monarchs of the Zulu Kingdom, acceded to the Zulu throne. Within a year he had conquered the neighboring clans and had made the Zulu into the most important ally of the large Mtetwa clan, which was in competition with the Ndwandwe clan for domination of the northern part of modern-day KwaZulu-Natal.

Currently, 300-600 ethnic groups in Africa speak Bantu languages and are categorized as Bantu peoples. It is not known how many Bantu language exist today, but *Ethnologue* counts 535. They are spoken mostly east and south of present-day Cameroon, that is, in the regions commonly known as Central Africa, Southeast Africa, and Southern Africa. Parts of the Bantu area include languages from other language families.

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11.9: Post-Byzantine Egypt

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the effects of the Islamic conquest on Egypt

Key Points

- At the onset of the Muslim conquest of North Africa, Egypt was part of the Byzantine/Eastern Roman Empire, with the capital in Constantinople. The province held strategic importance for its grain production and naval yards, and as a base for further conquests in Africa.
- In 639, Rashidun troops led by Amr ibn al-As were sent to conquer Egypt. The Rashidun army crossed into Egypt from Palestine and advanced rapidly into the Nile Delta. The Muslim forces eventually defeated a Byzantine army at the 640 Battle of Heliopolis. Alexandria and the Thebaid surrendered shortly after that.
- Following the first surrender of Alexandria, Amr chose a new site to settle his men, near the location of the Byzantine fortress of Babylon. The new settlement was called Fustat, and quickly became the focal point of Islamic Egypt.
- The main pillar of the early Muslim rule and control in the country was the military force, or *jund*, provided by the Arab settlers. These were initially the men who had followed Amr and participated in the conquest.
- The Fatimid Caliphate conquered Egypt in 969, founding a new capital in Cairo, which was intended as a royal enclosure for the Fatimid caliph and his army. Under Fatimid rule, Egypt became the center of the caliphate.
- Under Fatimid rule, Egypt flourished economically and and culturally, attracting scholars and thinkers from across the world and becoming the center of intellectual debates and freedom of expression.

Terms

The Fatimid Caliphate

An Ismaili Shia Islamic caliphate that spanned a large area of North Africa, from the Red Sea in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west. The dynasty ruled across the Mediterranean coast of Africa, and it was under its rule that Egypt became the center of the caliphate. At its height the caliphate included, in addition to Egypt, varying areas of the Maghreb, Sudan, Sicily, the Levant, and Hijaz.

Byzantine/Eastern Roman Empire

The continuation of the Roman Empire in the East during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, when its capital city was Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul, originally founded as Byzantium). It survived the fragmentation and fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century CE and continued to exist for an additional thousand years until it fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453.

mamluk

An Arabic designation for slaves. While they were purchased, their status was above ordinary slaves, who were not allowed to carry weapons or perform certain tasks. They eventually formed a powerful military caste.

Copts

An ethno-religious group situated in North Africa and the Middle East, mainly in the area of modern Egypt, where they are the largest Christian denomination. They are also the largest Christian denomination in Sudan and Libya. Historically they spoke the Coptic language, a direct descendant of the Demotic Egyptian spoken in the Roman era, but it has been near-extinct and mostly limited to liturgical use since the 18th century. They now speak Arabic.

The Rashidun Caliphat

The Islamic caliphate in the earliest period of Islam, comprising the first four caliphs—the “Rightly Guided” caliphs. It was founded after Muhammad’s death in 632 (year 11 AH in the Islamic calendar). At its height, the caliphate controlled an empire from the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant to the Caucasus in the north, North Africa from Egypt to present-day Tunisia in the west, and the Iranian plateau to Central Asia in the east.

caliphate

An area containing an Islamic steward known as a caliph—a person considered a religious successor to the Islamic prophet Muhammad and a leader of the entire Muslim community. During the history of Islam after the Rashidun period, many Muslim states, almost all of them hereditary monarchies, have claimed the right to be defined as such.

Egypt in the Byzantine Empire

At the onset of the Muslim conquest of North Africa, Egypt was part of the Byzantine/Eastern Roman Empire, with the capital in Constantinople.

The province held strategic importance for its grain production and naval yards, and as a base for further conquests in Africa. Shortly before the Muslim conquest, Egypt had been conquered by the Persian Empire (619–629). However, Emperor Heraclius re-captured it after a series of campaigns against the Sassanid Persians, only to lose it to the Muslim Rashidun army ten years later. Before the Muslim conquest of Egypt began, the Byzantines had already lost the Levant and their Arab ally, the Ghassanid Kingdom, to the Muslims. All of this left the Byzantine Empire dangerously exposed and vulnerable.

Rashidun Conquest

The Rashidun Caliphate was the Islamic caliphate in the earliest period of Islam, comprising the first four caliphs. It was founded after Muhammad's death in 632 (year 11 AH in the Islamic calendar). At its height, the caliphate controlled an empire from the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant to the Caucasus in the north, North Africa from Egypt to present-day Tunisia in the west, and the Iranian plateau to Central Asia in the east. Caliph Umar conquered more than 2,200,000 km² area in less than ten years and is known as the most powerful caliph in the history of Islam.

In 639, some 4,000 Rashidun troops led by Amr ibn al-As were sent by Umar to conquer the land of the ancient pharaohs. The Rashidun army crossed into Egypt from Palestine and advanced rapidly into the Nile Delta. The imperial garrisons retreated into the walled towns, where they successfully held out for a year or more. But the Muslims sent for reinforcements and the invading army, joined by another 12,000 men in 640, defeated a Byzantine army at the Battle of Heliopolis. Amr next proceeded in the direction of Alexandria, which was surrendered to him by a treaty signed in November 641. The Thebaid seems to have surrendered with scarcely any opposition.

Empire of the Rashidun Caliphate at its peak. The Rashidun Caliphate expanded gradually. Within the span of twenty-four years of conquest, a vast territory was conquered comprising Mesopotamia, the Levant, parts of Anatolia, and most of the Sasanian Empire. Unlike the Sasanian Persians, the Byzantines, after losing Syria, retreated back to Anatolia. As a result, they also lost Egypt to the invading Rashidun army.

Early Islamic Egypt

Following the first surrender of Alexandria, Amr chose a new site to settle his men, near the location of the Byzantine fortress of Babylon. The new settlement was called Fustat. Fustat quickly became the focal point of Islamic Egypt and—with the exception of the brief relocation to Hulwan during a plague in 689, and the period of 750–763, when the seat of the governor moved to Askar—the capital and residence of the administration. After the conquest, the country was initially divided in two provinces, Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt with the Nile Delta. In 643/4, however, Caliph Uthman appointed a single governor, resident at Fustat, with

jurisdiction over all of Egypt. The governor would in turn nominate deputies for Upper and Lower Egypt. Alexandria remained a distinct district, reflecting both its role as the country's shield against Byzantine attacks and as the major naval base.

The main pillar of the early Muslim rule and control in the country was the military force, or *jund*, provided by the Arab settlers. These were initially the men who had followed Amr and participated in the conquest. The followers of Amr were mostly drawn from the Yamani. Although limited in number, they held many privileges and a protected status of prestige.

In return for a tribute of money and food for the occupying troops, the Christian inhabitants of Egypt were excused from military service and left free in the observance of their religion and the administration of their affairs. Conversions of Copts to Islam were at first rare, and the old system of taxation was maintained for the greater part of the first Islamic century.

Egypt under the Fatimid Caliphate

The Fatimid Caliphate was an Ismaili Shia Islamic caliphate that spanned a large area of North Africa, from the Red Sea in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west. The dynasty ruled across the Mediterranean coast of Africa and it was under its rule that Egypt became the center of the caliphate. At its height the caliphate included, in addition to Egypt, varying areas of the Maghreb, Sudan, Sicily, the Levant, and Hijaz.

The Fatimid general Jawhar conquered Egypt in 969 and built a new palace city there, near Fusṭat, founding a new capital in Cairo in 969. Cairo was intended as a royal enclosure for the Fatimid caliph and his army, though the actual administrative and economic capital of Egypt was in Fustat until 1169. Egypt flourished and the Fatimids developed an extensive trade network in both the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. Their trade and diplomatic ties extended all the way to China and its Song dynasty, which eventually determined the economic course of Egypt during the High Middle Ages. The Fatimid focus on long-distance trade was accompanied by a lack of interest in agriculture and a neglect of the Nile irrigation system.

Unlike western European governments in the era, advancement in Fatimid state offices was based more on merit than on heredity. Members of other branches of Islam, like the Sunnis, were just as likely to be appointed to government posts as Shiites. Tolerance was extended to non-Muslims such as Christians and Jews, who occupied high levels in government based on ability. Religious tolerance was set into place also to ensure the flow of money from all those who were non-Muslims in order to finance the caliphs' large army of mamluks (an Arabic designation for slaves)brought in from Circassia by Genoese merchants.
Over time, mamluks became a powerful military knightly caste, not only in Egypt. In some cases, they attained the rank of sultan, while in others they held regional power.

An Egyptian Mamluk warrior in full armor and armed with lance, shield, sabre, and pistols; Georg Moritz Ebers (1837-1898), Picturesque Egypt, Vol. II (1878). In the Middle Ages, soon after the mamluks took up the practice of chivalry, or furusiyya in Arabic, they came to be known as knights (or faris in Arabic), though un-free until after their service. The faris were trained in the use of various weapons and in wrestling. Their martial art skills were to be honed first on foot and then perfected when mounted. They were popularly used as heavy knightly cavalry by a number of different Islamic kingdoms and empires.

Intellectual life in Egypt during the Fatimid period advanced greatly, with many scholars living in or visiting Egypt and having easy access to sophisticated libraries. Fatimid caliphs gave prominent positions to scholars in their courts, encouraged scholarship, and established libraries in their palaces. Perhaps the most significant feature of Fatimid rule was the freedom of thought, provided that no one infringed on the rights of others. The Fatimids reserved separate pulpits for different Islamic sects, where the scholars expressed their various ideas. They offered patronage to scholars and invited them from all over the world, even when their beliefs conflicted with their own. From the perspective of these developments, the history of the Fatimids is the history of knowledge, literature, and philosophy.
The period is also known for producing exquisite art and architecture.

During the late 11th century and the twelfth century, the Fatimid Caliphate declined rapidly, and in 1171 Saladin invaded their territory. He founded the Ayyubid dynasty and incorporated the Fatimid state into the Abbasid Caliphate.

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11.10: Islamic Conquest of the Maghreb

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the effects the Islamic conquest of the Maghreb had on the area

Key Points

- The Muslim conquest of North Africa continued the century of rapid Arab Muslim military expansion following the death of Muhammad in 632. The conquest of the Maghreb region (more or less west of Egypt) took place largely under the Umayyad Caliphate (661–750).
- The Umayyad regime was founded by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan in 661. Syria was the Umayyads' main power base, and Damascus was their capital. The Umayyads continued the Muslim conquests, creating one of the vastest empires in human history.
- The Arabs reached the Maghreb in early Umayyad times. Departing from Damascus, Arab forces marched into North Africa, and in 670 the city of Kairouan (south of modern Tunis) was established as a refuge and base for further operations.
- By 698, the Arabs had taken most of North Africa from the Byzantines. The area was divided into three provinces: Egypt with its governor at al-Fustat, Ifriqiya with its governor at Kairouan, and the Maghreb (modern Morocco) with its governor at Tangiers. Arab forces were able to capture Carthage in 698 and Tangiers by 708.
- Arab expansion and the spread of Islam into the Maghreb pushed the development of trans-Saharan trade. Though restricted due to the cost and dangers, the trade was highly profitable.
- The conventional historical view that the conquest of North Africa by the Umayyad Caliphate effectively ended Christianity in Africa for several centuries has been recently questioned by historians who found evidence that Christianity persisted in the region for centuries after the completion of the Arab conquest.

Terms

Berbers

An ethnic group indigenous to North Africa. They are distributed in an area stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Siwa Oasis in Egypt, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Niger River. Historically, they spoke Berber languages, which together form the Berber branch of the Afro-Asiatic family. Since the Muslim conquest of North Africa in the 7th century, a large number of them inhabiting the Maghreb have acquired different degrees of knowledge of varieties of the languages of North Africa.

caliphate

An area containing an Islamic steward known as a caliph—a person considered a religious successor to the Islamic prophet Muhammad and a leader of the entire Muslim community. During the history of Islam after the Rashidun period, many Muslim states, almost all of them hereditary monarchies, have claimed the right to be defined as such.

The Maghreb

Much or most of the region of western North Africa or Northwest Africa, west of Egypt. The traditional definition as the region including the Atlas Mountains and the coastal plains of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya was later superseded by the inclusion of Mauritania and the disputed territory of Western Sahara (mostly controlled by Morocco).

the Umayyad Caliphate

The second of the four major Arab caliphates established after the death of Muhammad. This caliphate was centered on the Umayyad dynasty, hailing from Mecca. The Umayyad family had first come to power under the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan (r. 644–656), but the Umayyad regime was founded by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, long-time governor of Syria, after the end of the First Muslim Civil War in 661 CE/41 AH. Syria remained the Umayyads' main power base thereafter, and Damascus was their capital.

The Maghreb and Islam

The Maghreb is usually defined as much or most of the region of western North Africa or Northwest Africa, west of today's Egypt. It is important to keep in mind, however, that because of the constantly changing borders of the first caliphates in the region, the history of the Muslim conquest of the Maghreb is intertwined with the history of the territories east of the border of the region that is today defined as the Maghreb. Consequently, the history of the Muslim conquest of the Maghreb and the history of the Muslim conquest of a greater North African region (reaching far into the Middle East) cannot be sharply distinguished.

The Muslim conquest of North Africa continued the century of rapid Arab Muslim military expansion following the death of Muhammad in 632 CE. By 642, the Arabs controlled Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Syria, had invaded Armenia, and were concluding their conquest of the Persian Empire. It was at this point that Arab military expeditions into North African regions west of Egypt were first launched, continuing for years and furthering the spread of Islam. The conquest of the Maghreb region (more or less west of Egypt) took place largely under
the Umayyad Caliphate (661–750), which was the second of the four major Arab caliphates established after the death of Muhammad.

The Umayyad Caliphate

The Umayyad family had first come to power under the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan (644–656), but the Umayyad regime was founded by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, long-time governor of Syria, after the end of the First Muslim Civil War in 661 CE/41 AH. Syria remained the Umayyads' main power base thereafter, and Damascus was their capital. The Umayyads continued the Muslim conquests, incorporating the Caucasus, Transoxiana, Sindh, the Maghreb, and the Iberian Peninsula (Al-Andalus) into the Muslim world. At its greatest extent, the Umayyad Caliphate covered 15 million square kilometers (5.79 million square miles) and 62 million people (29% of the world's population), making it the fifth largest empire in history in both area and proportion of the world's population.

The Conquest

The Arabs reached the Maghreb in early Umayyad times.
The years 665–689 saw another Arab invasion of North Africa. It began with an army of more than 40,000 Muslims advancing through the desert to Barca and marching to the neighborhood of Carthage (today's Tunisia). Next came a force of 10,000 led by the Arab general Uqba ibn Nafi and enlarged by thousands of others. Departing from Damascus, the army marched into North Africa and in 670 the city of Kairouan (south of modern Tunis) was established as a refuge and base for further operations. This would become the capital of the Islamic province of Ifriqiya, which would cover the coastal regions of today's western Libya, Tunisia, and eastern Algeria. After this, Uqba ibn Nafi moved forward until reaching the Atlantic coast. In his conquest of the Maghreb, he besieged the coastal city of Bugia as well as Tingi or Tangier, overwhelming what had once been the traditional Roman province of Mauretania Tingitana. However, he was stopped and partially repulsed here. Unable to occupy Tangier, he was recalled from the coast. On his return, a Berber-Byzantine coalition ambushed and crushed his forces near Biskra, killing Uqba and wiping out his troops.

Meanwhile, a new civil war among rivals for the monarchy raged in Arabia and Syria. It resulted in a series of four caliphs between the death of Muawiya in 680 and the accession of Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (Abdalmalek) in 685. Strife ended only in 692, which brought about a return of domestic order that allowed the caliph to resume the Islamic conquest of North Africa. It began with the renewed invasion of Ifriqiya, but the Byzantine Empire responded with troops from Constantinople, joined by soldiers and ships from Sicily and a powerful contingent of Visigoths from Hispania. This forced the invading Arab army to run back to Kairouan (today's Tunisia). The following spring, however, the Arabs launched a new assault by sea and land, forcing the Byzantines and their allies to evacuate Carthage. The Arabs slaughtered the civilians, totally destroyed the city, and burned it to the ground, leaving the area desolate for the next two centuries. After the departure of the main force of the Byzantines and their allies, another battle was fought near Utica and the Arabs were again victorious, forcing the Byzantines to leave that part of North Africa for good.

By 698, the Arabs had taken most of North Africa from the Byzantines. The area was divided into three provinces: Egypt with its governor at al-Fustat, Ifriqiya with its governor at Kairouan, and the Maghreb (modern Morocco) with its governor at Tangiers.
Arab forces were able to capture Carthage in 698 and Tangiers by 708. After the fall of Tangiers, many Berbers joined the Muslim

army. In 740, Umayyad rule in the region was shaken by a major Berber revolt. After a series of defeats, the caliphate was finally able to crush the rebellion in 742, although local Berber dynasties continued to drift away from imperial control from that time on.

Age of the Caliphs: [dark purple] Expansion under the Prophet Mohammad, 622-632; [dark pink] Expansion during the Patriarchal Caliphate, 632-661; [dark orange] Expansion during the Umayyad Caliphate, 661-750.

Effects of the Arab Conquest on the Maghreb

Arab expansion and the spread of Islam into the Maghreb pushed the development of trans-Saharan trade. Though restricted due to the cost and dangers, the trade was highly profitable. Commodities traded included such goods as salt, gold, and ivory. Slaves were also transferred. Arab control over the Maghreb was quite weak. Various Islamic variations, such as the Ibadis and the Shia, were adopted by some Berbers, often leading to scorning of caliph control in favor of other interpretations of Islam. The Arabic language became widespread only later.

The conventional historical view is that the conquest of North Africa by the Umayyad Caliphate effectively ended Christianity in Africa for several centuries. The prevailing view is that the church at that time lacked the backbone of a monastic tradition and was still suffering from the aftermath of heresies, and that this contributed to the early obliteration of the church in the present day Maghreb. However, new scholarship has appeared that disputes these claims. There are reports that Christianity persisted in the region from Tripolitania (present-day western Libya) to present-day Morocco for several centuries after the completion of the Arab conquest by 700.

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11.11: Nubia

Learning Objectives

- Explain some of the sources of wealth that the Kingdom of Kush had access to

Key Points

- Nubia is a region along the Nile river located in what is today northern Sudan and southern Egypt. It was one of the earliest civilizations of ancient Northeastern Africa, with a history that can be traced from at least 2000 BCE, and was home to one of the African empires.
- Before the 4th century, and throughout classical antiquity, Nubia was known as Kush, or, in Classical Greek usage, included under the name Ethiopia (Aithiopia). With the disintegration of the New Kingdom around 1070 BCE, Kush became an independent kingdom centered at Napata in modern central Sudan.
- Alara, a King of Kush who is the first recorded prince of Nubia, founded the Napatan, or Twenty-fifth, Kushite dynasty at Napata in Nubia, now the Sudan. Alara's successor, Kashta, extended Kushite control north to Elephantine and Thebesin Upper Egypt. Kashta's successor, Piye, seized control of Lower Egypt around 727 BCE, creating the Twenty-fifth dynasty of Egypt.
- The power of the Twenty-fifth dynasty reached a climax under Taharqa. The Nile valley empire was as large as it had been since the New Kingdom. New prosperity revived Egyptian culture. Religion, the arts, and architecture were restored to their glorious Old, Middle, and New Kingdom forms. It was during the Twenty-fifth dynasty that the Nile valley saw the first widespread construction of pyramids (many in modern Sudan) since the Middle Kingdom.
- After brief military successes, Taharqa's successor, Tantamani, was chased back to Nubia, and never threatened the Assyrian Empire again. A native Egyptian ruler, Psammetichus I, was placed on the throne as a vassal of Ashurbanipal.
- Aspelta moved the capital to Meroë, considerably farther south than Napata, possibly in 591 BCE. In about 300 BCE the move to Meroë was made more complete when the monarchs began to be buried there, instead of at Napata. Kush began to fade as a power by the 1st or 2nd century CE.

Terms

Nubia

A region along the Nile river located in what is today northern Sudan and southern Egypt. It was one of the earliest civilizations of ancient Northeastern Africa, with a history that can be traced from at least 2000 BCE, and was home to one of the African empires. Before the 4th century, and throughout classical antiquity, it was known as Kush, or, in Classical Greek usage, included under the name Ethiopia (Aithiopia).

the Middle Kingdom

The period in the history of ancient Egypt between about 2000 BCE and 1700 BCE, stretching from the establishment of the Eleventh dynasty to the end of the Twelfth dynasty, although some writers include the Thirteenth and Fourteenth dynasties in the Second Intermediate Period.

the Twenty-fifth dynasty

The last dynasty of the Third Intermediate Period of Ancient Egypt. It was a line of rulers originating in the Nubian Kingdom of Kush—in present-day northern Sudan and southern Egypt—and most saw Napata as their spiritual homeland. They reigned in part or all of Ancient Egypt from 760 BCE to 656 BCE. Their reunification of Lower Egypt, Upper Egypt, and Kush (Nubia) created the largest Egyptian empire since the New Kingdom. They assimilated into society by reaffirming Ancient Egyptian religious traditions, temples, and artistic forms, while introducing some unique aspects of Kushite culture.

the Old Kingdom

The name given to the period in the 3rd millennium BCE when Egypt attained its first continuous peak of civilization—the first of three so-called "Kingdom" periods that mark the high points of civilization in the lower Nile Valley (the others being the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom).

Kush

An ancient Nubian kingdom situated on the confluences of the Blue Nile, White Nile, and River Atbara in what is now the Republic of Sudan. It was centered at Napata in its early phase. After its King Kashta invaded Egypt in the 8th century BCE, its emperors ruled as pharaohs of the Twenty-fifth dynasty of Egypt for a century, until they were expelled by the Assyrians under the rule of Esarhaddon.

the New Kingdom

The period in ancient Egyptian history between the 16th century BCE and the 11th century BCE, covering the Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth dynasties of Egypt. It followed the Second Intermediate Period and was succeeded by the Third Intermediate Period. It was Egypt's most prosperous time and marked the peak of its power.

Nubia: Introduction

Nubia is a region along the Nile river located in what is today northern Sudan and southern Egypt. It was one of the earliest civilizations of ancient Northeastern Africa, with a history that can be traced from at least 2000 BCE, and home to one of the African empires. There were a number of large Nubian kingdoms throughout the Postclassical Era, the last of which collapsed in 1504 CE, when Nubia became divided between Egypt and the Sennar sultanate, resulting in the Arabization of much of the Nubian population. Nubia was again united within Ottoman Egypt in the 19th century, and within the Kingdom of Egypt from 1899 to 1956.

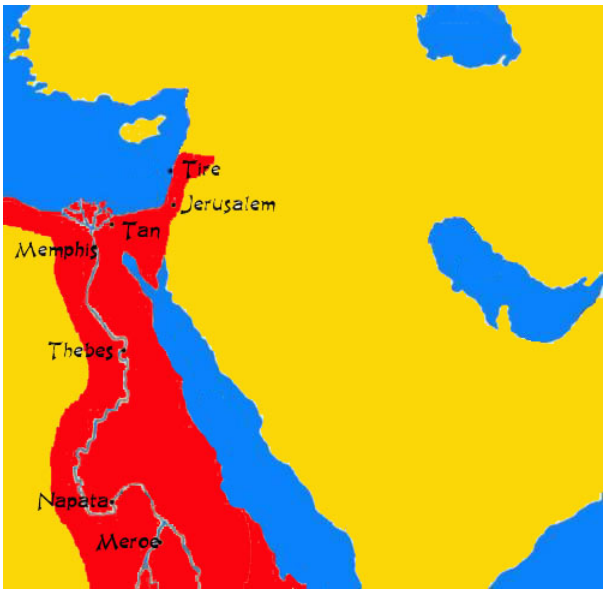
Kush

Before the 4th century, and throughout classical antiquity, Nubia was known as Kush, or, in Classical Greek usage, included under the name Ethiopia (*Aithiopia*). Mentuhotep II (21st century BCE founder of the Middle Kingdom) is recorded to have undertaken campaigns against Kush in the 29th and 31st years of his reign. This is the earliest Egyptian reference to Kush. The Nubian region had gone by other names in the Old Kingdom. During the New Kingdom of Egypt, Nubia (Kush) was an Egyptian colony, from the 16th century BCE. With the disintegration of the New Kingdom around 1070 BCE, Kush became an independent kingdom centered at Napata in modern central Sudan.

Control of Egypt

Alara, a King of Kush who is the first recorded prince of Nubia, founded the Napatan, or Twenty-fifth, Kushite dynasty at Napata in Nubia, now the Sudan. Alara's successor Kashta extended Kushite control north to Elephantine and Thebesin Upper Egypt. Kashta's successor, Piye, seized control of Lower Egypt around 727 BCE, creating the Twenty-fifth dynasty of Egypt.

Piye was defeated by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser V and then his successor Sargon II in the 720s BCE.
The power of the Twenty-fifth dynasty reached a climax underPiye's son, Taharqa. The Nile valley empire was as large as it had been since the New Kingdom. New prosperity revived Egyptian culture. Religion, the arts, and architecture were restored to their glorious Old, Middle, and New Kingdom forms. The Nubian pharaohs built or restored temples and monuments throughout the Nile valley, including Memphis, Karnak, Kawa, and Jebel Barkal. It was during the 25th dynasty that the Nile valley saw the first widespread construction of pyramids (many in modern Sudan) since the Middle Kingdom. Writing was introduced to Kush in the form of the Egyptian-influenced Meroitic script circa 700–600 BCE, although it appears to have been wholly confined to the royal court and major temples.



A map showing the full extent of the Kushite Empire in 700 BCE.

Between 674 and 671 BCE the Assyrians began their invasion of Egypt under King Esarhaddon. Assyrian armies had been the best in the world since the 14th century BCE, and they conquered this vast territory with surprising speed. Taharqa was driven from power by Esarhaddon and fled to his Nubian homeland. However, the native Egyptian vassal rulers installed by Esarhaddon as puppets were unable to effectively retain full control for long without Assyrian aid. Two years later, Taharqa returned from Nubia and seized control of a section of southern Egypt as far north as Memphis from Esarhaddon's local vassals. Esarhaddon's successor, Ashurbanipal, sent a *Turtanu* (general) with a small but well-trained army that once more defeated Taharqa and ejected him from Egypt, and he was forced to flee back to his homeland in Nubia, where he died two years later.

Taharqa's successor, Tanutamun, attempted to regain Egypt. He successfully defeated Necho, the subject ruler installed by Ashurbanipal, taking Thebes in the process. The Assyrians, who had a military presence in the north, then sent a large army southwards. Tantamani was routed, and the Assyrian army sacked Thebes to such an extent that it never truly recovered. Tantamani was chased back to Nubia, and never threatened the Assyrian Empire again. A native Egyptian ruler, Psammetichus I, was placed on the throne as a vassal of Ashurbanipal.

Move to Meroë

Aspelta, a ruler of the kingdom of Kush from c. 600 to c. 580 BCE, moved the capital to Meroë, considerably farther south than Napata, possibly in 591 BCE. It is also possible that Meroë had always been the Kushite capital. Historians believe that the Kushite rulers may have chosen Meroë as their home because, unlike Napata, the region around Meroë had enough woodlands to provide fuel for iron working. In addition, Kush was no longer dependent on the Nile to trade with the outside world. They could instead transport goods from Meroë to the Red Sea coast, where Greek merchants were now traveling extensively.

In about 300 BCE the move to Meroë was made more complete when the monarchs began to be buried there, instead of at Napata. One theory is that this represents the monarchs breaking away from the power of the priests at Napata. Kushite civilization continued for several centuries. In the Napatan period, Egyptian hieroglyphs were used; at this time writing seems to have been restricted to the court and temples. From the 2nd century BCE there was a separate Meroitic writing system. This was an alphabetic script with twenty-three signs used in a hieroglyphic form (mainly on monumental art) and in a cursive form. The latter was widely used. So far, some 1278 texts using this version are known. The script was deciphered, but the language behind it is still a problem, with only a few words understood by modern scholars.

Kush began to fade as a power by the 1st or 2nd century CE, sapped by the war with the Roman province of Egypt and the decline of its traditional industries. Christianity began to gain over the old pharaonic religion, and by the mid-6th century CE the Kingdom of Kush was dissolved.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: http://pb.libretexts.org/ewc/?p=296

Nubia: The Forgotten Kingdom, Julie Anderson and Salah Ahmed (2003), Dicovery Channel

Various pharaohs of Nubian origin are held by some Egyptologists to have played an important part towards the area in different eras of Egyptian history, particularly the Twelfth dynasty. These rulers handled matters in typical Egyptian fashion, reflecting the close cultural influences between the two regions.

The eventual influx of Arabs and Nubians to Egypt and Sudan had contributed to the suppression of the Nubian identity following the collapse of the last Nubian kingdom around 1504. A major part of the modern Nubian population became totally Arabized, and some claimed to be Arabs. A vast majority of the Nubian population is currently Muslim, and the Arabic language is their main medium of communication in addition to their indigenous old Nubian language.

On account of the Kingdom of Kush's proximity to Ancient Egypt—the first cataract at Elephantine usually being considered the traditional border between the two polities—and because the Twenty-fifth dynasty ruled over both states in the 8th century BCE, from the Rift Valley to the Taurus mountains, historians have closely associated the study of Kush with Egyptology. This is in keeping with the general assumption that the complex sociopolitical development of Egypt's neighbors can be understood in terms of Egyptian models. As a result, the political structure and organization of Kush as an independent ancient state has not received as thorough attention from scholars, and there remains much ambiguity, especially surrounding the earliest periods of the state.

The Nubian region today. With the end of colonialism and the establishment of the Republic of Egypt (1953) and the secession of the Republic of Sudan from unity with Egypt (1956), Nubia was divided between Egypt and Sudan. During the early-1970s, many Egyptian Nubians were forcibly resettled to make room for Lake Nasser after the construction of the dams at Aswan. Nubian villages can now be found north of Aswan on the west bank of the Nile and on Elephantine Island, and many Nubians now live in large cities, such as Cairo.

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11.12: Bornu Empire

Learning Objectives

- Locate the Bornu Empire

Key Points

- The Kanem Empire (c. 700–1376) at its height encompassed an area covering much of Chad, parts of southern Libya (Fezzan) and eastern Niger, northeastern Nigeria, and northern Cameroon.
- The empire of Kanem formed under the nomadic Tebu-speaking Kanembu, who eventually abandoned their nomadic lifestyle and founded a capital around 700 CE under the first documented Kanembu king (mai), known as Sef of Saif. The capital of Njimi grew in power and influence under the Duguwa dynaty.
- The major factor that later influenced the history of the state of Kanem was the early penetration of Islam that came with North African traders, Berbers, and Arabs.
- By the end of the 14th century, internal struggles and external attacks had torn Kanem apart. Around 1380, the Bulala forced Mai Umar Idrismi to abandon Njimi and move the Kanembu people to Bornu on the western edge of Lake Chad. Around 1460, a fortified capital at Ngazargamu, to the west of Lake Chad (in present-day Niger), was built, but in the early 16th century Mai Idris Katakarmabe retook Njimi, the former capital.
- With control over both capitals, the Sayfawa dynasty became more powerful than ever. The two states were merged, but political authority still rested in Bornu. Kanem-Bornu peaked during the reign of the statesman Mai Idris Alwma.
- During the 17th century, the empire began to decline, and finally dissolved at the end of the 19th century.

Terms

jihad

An Islamic term referring to the religious duty of Muslims to maintain and spread the religion. Muslims and scholars do not all agree on its definition. Many observers—both Muslim and non-Muslim—as well as the Dictionary of Islam, talk of the term as having two meanings: an inner spiritual struggle and an outer physical struggle against the enemies of Islam, which may take a violent or non-violent form.

Duguwa dynasty

The line of kings (mai) of the Kanem Empire prior to the rise of the Islamic Seyfawa dynasty in 1068. According to the Girgam, they were the kings of Kanem; their dynastic name is derived from Duku, the third king of the Duguwa.

The Kanem Empire

An empire (c. 700–1376) that at its height encompassed an area covering much of Chad, parts of southern Libya (Fezzan) and eastern Niger, northeastern Nigeria, and northern Cameroon. Its history is mainly known from the Royal Chronicle, or Girgam, discovered in 1851 by the German traveler Heinrich Barth.

the Sefuwa dynasty

The name of the kings (or mai, as they called themselves) of the Kanem-Bornu Empire, centered first in Kanem in western Chad, and then, after 1380, in Borno (today's northeastern Nigeria).

mai

A term that in the history of the Kanem-Bornu Empire was used to roughly refer to a king.

The Kanem Empire

The Kanem Empire (c. 700–1376) at its height encompassed an area covering Chad, parts of southern Libya (Fezzan) and eastern Niger, northeastern Nigeria, and northern Cameroon. The history of the empire is mainly known from the Royal Chronicle, or *Girgam*, discovered in 1851 by the German traveller Heinrich Barth.

The empire of Kanem began forming around CE 300 under the nomadic Tebu-speaking Kanembu. The Kanembu eventually abandoned their nomadic lifestyle and founded a capital around 700 CE under the first documented Kanembu king (mai), known as Sef of Saif. The capital of Njimi grew in power and influence under Sef's son, Dugu. This transition marked the beginning of the Duguwa dynasty. The mais of the Duguwa were regarded as divine kings and belonged to the ruling establishment known as the magumi. Despite changes in dynastic power, the magumi and the title of mai would persevere for over a thousand years.

The major factor that later influenced the history of the state of Kanem was the early penetration of Islam that came with North African traders, Berbers, and Arabs. In 1085, a Muslim noble by the name of Hummay removed the last Duguwa king, Selma, from power and thus established the new dynasty of the Sefuwa. The introduction of the Sefuwa dynasty meant radical changes for the Kanem Empire. First, it meant the Islamization of the court and state policies. Second, the identification of founders had to be revised. Islam offered the Sayfawa rulers the advantage of new ideas from Arabia and the Mediterranean world, as well as literacy in administration. But many people resisted the new religion, favoring traditional beliefs and practices.

Kanem's expansion peaked during the long and energetic reign of Mai Dunama Dabbalemi (ca. 1221–1259), also of the Sayfawa dynasty. Dabbalemi initiated diplomatic exchanges with sultans in North Africa and apparently arranged for the establishment of a special hostel in Cairo to facilitate pilgrimages to Mecca. During his reign, he declared *jihad* against the surrounding tribes and initiated an extended period of conquest. However, he also destroyed the national Mune cult and thus precipitated widespread revolt culminating in the uprise of the Tubu and the Bulala. The former was quenched, but the latter continued to linger on, leading finally to the retreat of the Sayfuwa from Kanem to Bornu c. 1380.

The Bornu Empire

By the end of the 14th century, internal struggles and external attacks had torn Kanem apart. Between 1359 and 1383, seven mais reigned, but Bulala invaders (from the area around Lake Fitri to the east) killed five of them. This proliferation of mais resulted in numerous claimants to the throne and a series of destructive wars. Finally, around 1380, the Bulala forced Mai Umar Idrismi to abandon Njimi and move the Kanembu people to Bornu on the western edge of Lake Chad. Over time, the intermarriage of the Kanembu and Bornu peoples created a new people and language, the Kanuri.

But even in Bornu, the Sayfawa dynasty's troubles persisted. During the first three-quarters of the 15th century, for example, fifteen mais occupied the throne. Around 1460, Mai Ali Dunamami defeated his rivals and began the consolidation of Bornu. He built a fortified capital at Ngazargamu, to the west of Lake Chad (in present-day Niger), the first permanent home a Sayfawa mai had enjoyed in a century. The Sayfawa rejuvenation was so successful that by the early 16th century, Mai Idris Katakarmabe (1487–1509) was able to defeat the Bulala and retake Njimi, the former capital. The empire's leaders, however, remained at Ngazargamu because its lands were more agriculturally productive and better suited to the raising of cattle.

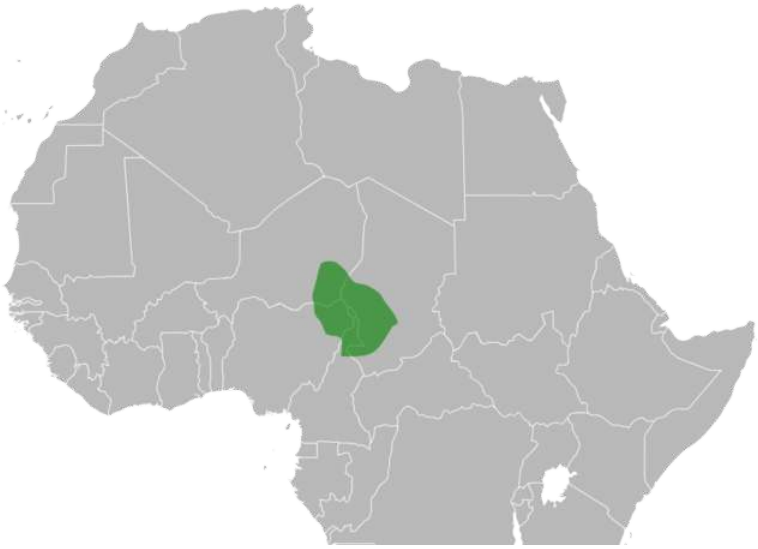
The Kanem-Bornu Period

With control over both capitals, the Sayfawa dynasty became more powerful than ever. The two states were merged, but political authority still rested in Bornu. Kanem-Bornu peaked during the reign of the statesman Mai Idris Alwma (also spelled Alooma or Alawma; the last decades of the 16th/the beginning of the 17th century). Alwma introduced a number of legal and administrative reforms based on his religious beliefs and Islamic law (*sharia*). He sponsored the construction of numerous mosques and made a pilgrimage to Mecca, where he arranged for the establishment of a hostel to be used by pilgrims from his empire. Alwma's reformist goals led him to seek loyal and competent advisers and allies, and he frequently relied on slaves who had been educated in noble homes. He required major political figures to live at the court, and he reinforced political alliances through appropriate marriages.

Kanem-Bornu under Alwma was strong and wealthy. Government revenue came from tribute (or booty, if the recalcitrant people had to be conquered), sales of slaves, and duties on and participation in trans-Saharan trade. Unlike West Africa, the Chadian region did not have gold. Still, it was central to one of the most convenient trans-Saharan routes. Between Lake Chad and Fezzan lay a sequence of well-spaced wells and oases, and from Fezzan there were easy connections to North Africa and the Mediterranean Sea. Many products were sent north, including natron (sodium carbonate), cotton, kola nuts, ivory, ostrich feathers, perfume, wax, and hides. However, the most significant export of all were slaves. Imports included salt, horses, silks, glass, muskets, and copper.

Decline

The administrative reforms and military brilliance of Alwma sustained the empire until the mid-17th century, when its power began to fade. By the late 18th century, Bornu rule extended only westward, into the land of the Hausa. Around that time, Fulani people, invading from the west, were able to make major inroads into Bornu. By the early 19th century, Kanem-Bornu was clearly an empire in decline, and in 1808 Fulani warriors conquered Ngazargamu. Usman dan Fodio led the Fulani thrust and proclaimed a *jihad* (holy war) on the irreligious Muslims of the area. His campaign eventually affected Kanem-Bornu and inspired a trend toward Islamic orthodoxy. But Muhammad al-Kanem contested the Fulani advance. Kanem was a Muslim scholar and non-Sayfawa warlord who had put together an alliance of Shuwa Arabs, Kanembu, and other semi-nomadic peoples. He eventually built a capital at Kukawa (in present-day Nigeria) in 1814. Sayfawa mais remained titular monarchs until 1846. In that year, the last mai, in league with Ouaddai tribesmen, precipitated a civil war. It was at that point that Kanem's son, Umar, became king, thus ending one of the longest dynastic reigns in regional history.



Bornu in the 18th century. The extent of the Bornu Empire in 1750.

Although the dynasty ended, the kingdom of Kanem-Bornu survived. Umar could not match his father's vitality ,and gradually allowed the kingdom to be ruled by advisers. Bornu began a further decline as a result of administrative disorganization, regional particularism, and attacks by the militant Ouaddai Empire to the east. The decline continued under Umar's sons. In 1893, Rabih az-Zubayr led an invading army from eastern Sudan and conquered Bornu. Following his expulsion shortly thereafter, the state was absorbed by the British-ruled entity that eventually became known as Nigeria. From that point on, a remnant of the old kingdom was (and still is) allowed to continue to exist in subjection to the various governments of the country as the Borno Emirate.

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11.13: The Ghana Empire

Learning Objectives

- Describe the Ghana Empire and the source of its wealth

Key Points

- The Ghana Empire, called the Wagadou (or Wagadu) Empire by its rulers, was located in what is now southeastern Mauritania, western Mali, and eastern Senegal. There is no consensus on when precisely it originated. Different traditions identify its beginnings between as early as 100 CE and the 9th century, with most scholars accepting the 8th or 9th century.
- Ghana's economic development and eventual wealth was linked to the growth of regular and intensified trans-Saharan trade in gold, salt, and ivory, which allowed for the development of larger urban centers and encouraged territorial expansion to gain control over different trade routes.
- The empire's capital is believed to have been at Koumbi Saleh on the rim of the Sahara desert. According to the description of the town left by Al-Bakri in 1067/1068, the capital was actually two cities, but "between these two towns are continuous habitations," so they might have merged into one.
- The Ghana Empire lay in the Sahel region to the north of the West African gold fields, and was able to profit by controlling the trans-Saharan gold trade, which turned Ghana into an empire of legendary wealth.
- Ghana appears to have had a central core region and was surrounded by vassal states. One of the earliest sources notes that "under the king's authority are a number of kings." These "kings" were presumably the rulers of the territorial units often called *kafu* in Mandinka.
- Although scholars debate how and when Ghana declined and collapsed, it is clear that it was incorporated into the Mali Empire around 1240.

Terms

Koumbi Saleh

The site of a ruined medieval town in southeast Mauritania that may have been the capital of the Ghana Empire.

the Soninke people

A Mandé people who descend from the Bafour and are closely related to the Imraguen of Mauritania. They were the founders of the ancient empire of Ghana c. 750–1240 CE. Subgroups include the Maraka and Wangara.

the Almoravids

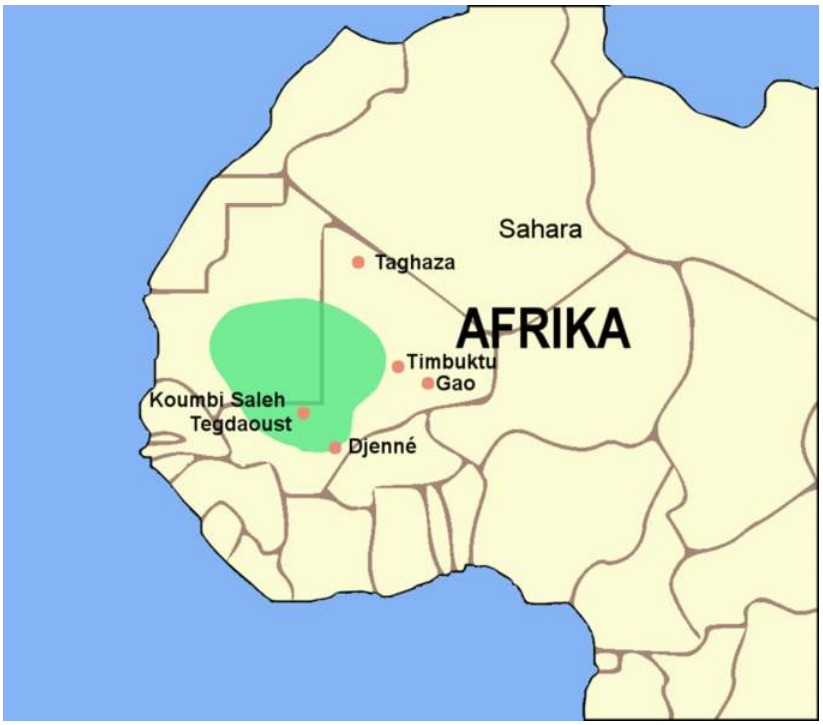
A Berber imperial dynasty of Morocco that formed an empire in the 11th century that stretched over the western Maghreb and Al-Andalus. Founded by Abdallah ibn Yasin, their capital was Marrakesh, a city they founded in 1062. The dynasty originated among the Lamtuna and the Gudala, nomadic Berber tribes of the Sahara, traversing the territory between the Draa, the Niger, and the Senegal rivers.

Disputed Origins of the Ghana Empire

The Ghana Empire, called the Wagadou (or Wagadu) Empire by its rulers, was located in what is now southeastern Mauritania, western Mali, and eastern Senegal. There is no consensus on when precisely it originated, but its development is linked to the changes in trade that emerged throughout the centuries after the introduction of the camel to the western Sahara (3rd century). By the time of the Muslim conquest of North Africa in the 7th century, the camel had changed the earlier, more irregular trade routes into a trade network running from Morocco to the Niger River. This regular and intensified trans-Saharan trade in gold, salt, and ivory allowed for the development of larger urban centers and encouraged territorial expansion to gain control over different trade routes.

The Ghana ruling dynasty was first mentioned in written records in 830, and thus the 9th century is sometimes identified as the empire's beginning. In the medieval Arabic sources the word "Ghana" can refer to a royal title, the name of a capital city, or a

kingdom. The earliest reference to Ghana as a town is by al-Khuwarizmi, who died around 846. Research on the site of Koumbi Saleh (or Kumbi Saleh), a ruined medieval town in southeast Mauritania that may have been the capital of the Ghana Empire, suggests earlier beginnings. The earliest author to mention Ghana is the Persian astronomer Ibrahim al-Fazari, who, writing at the end of the eighth century, refers to “the territory of Ghana, the land of gold.” From the 9th century, Arab authors mention the Ghana Empire in connection with the trans-Saharan gold trade. Al-Bakri, who wrote in the 11th century, described the capital of Ghana as consisting of two towns six miles apart, one inhabited by Muslim merchants and the other by the king of Ghana. According to the tradition of the Soninke people, they migrated to southeastern Mauritania in the 1st century, and as early as around 100 CE created a settlement that would eventually develop into the Ghana Empire. Other sources identify the beginnings of the empire some time between the 4th century and the mid-8th century.



The Ghana Empire at its greatest extent. When the Gold Coast in 1957 became the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to regain its independence from colonial rule, it was renamed in honor of the long-gone empire from which the ancestors to the Akan people of modern-day Ghana are thought to have migrated.

The Capital City: Koumbi Saleh

The empire’s capital is believed to have been at Koumbi Saleh on the rim of the Sahara desert. According to the description of the town left by Al-Bakri in 1067/1068, the capital was actually two cities, but “between these two towns are continuous habitations,” so they might have merged into one. According to al-Bakri, the major part of the city was called El-Ghaba, and was the residence of the king. It was protected by a stone wall and functioned as the royal and spiritual capital of the empire. It contained a sacred grove of trees used for Soninke religious rites in which priests lived. It also contained the king’s palace, the grandest structure in the city. There was also one mosque for visiting Muslim officials. The name of the other section of the city is not recorded. It was surrounded by wells with fresh water, where vegetables were grown. It had twelve mosques, one of which was designated for Friday prayers, and had a full group of scholars, scribes, and Islamic jurists. Because the majority of these Muslims were merchants, this part of the city was probably its primary business district.

Economy and Government

Most of our information about the economy of Ghana comes from al-Bakri. He noted that merchants had to pay a one gold dinar tax on imports of salt and two on exports of salt. Al-Bakri mentioned also copper and “other goods.” Imports probably included products such as textiles and ornaments. Many of the hand-crafted leather goods found in old Morocco also had their origins in the Ghana Empire. Tribute was also received from various tributary states and chiefdoms at the empire’s periphery. The Ghana Empire

lay in the Sahel region to the north of the West African gold fields, and was able to profit from controlling the trans-Saharan gold trade. The early history of Ghana is unknown, but there is evidence that North Africa had begun importing gold from West Africa before the Arab conquest in the middle of the 7th century.

Much testimony on ancient Ghana comes from the recorded visits of foreign travelers, who, by definition, could provide only a fragmentary picture. Islamic writers often commented on the social-political stability of the Empire based on the seemingly just actions and grandeur of the king. Al-Bakri questioned merchants who visited the empire in the 11th century and wrote of the king hearing grievances against officials and being surrounded by great wealth. Ghana appears to have had a central core region and was surrounded by vassal states. One of the earliest sources, al-Ya'qubi, writing in 889/890 (276 AH), noted that "under the king's authority are a number of kings." These "kings" were presumably the rulers of the territorial units often called *kafu* in Mandinka. In al-Bakri's time, the rulers of Ghana had begun to incorporate more Muslims into government, including the treasurer, his interpreter, and "the majority of his officials."

Decline

Given scarce Arabic sources and the ambiguity of the existing archaeological record, it is difficult to determine when and how Ghana declined and fell. According to Arab tradition, Ghana fell when it was sacked by the Almoravid movement in 1076–1077, but this interpretation has been questioned. Conrad and Fisher (1982) argued that the notion of any Almoravid military conquest is merely perpetuated folklore, derived from a misinterpretation of or limited reliance on Arabic sources. Dierke Lange agreed with the original military incursion theory but argued that this does not preclude Almoravid political agitation, claiming that Ghana's demise owed much to the latter. Sheryl L. Burkhalter
argued that while the idea of the conquest was unclear, the influence and success of the Almoravid movement in securing West African gold and circulating it widely necessitated a high degree of political control. Furthermore, the archaeology of ancient Ghana does not show signs of the rapid change and destruction that would be associated with any Almoravid-era military conquests.

It is assumed that the ensuing war pushed Ghana over the edge, ending the kingdom's position as a commercial and military power by 1100. It collapsed into tribal groups and chieftaincies, some of which later assimilated into the Almoravids, while others founded the Mali Empire. Despite ambiguous evidence, it is clear that Ghana was incorporated into the Mali Empire around 1240.

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11.14: Mali

Learning Objectives

- Evaluate each period in the history of the Mali Empire

Key Points

- The Mali Empire, also historically referred to as the Manden Kurufaba, was an empire in West Africa that lasted from c. 1230 to 1600. It was the largest empire in West Africa and profoundly influenced the culture of the region through the spread of its language, laws, and customs along lands adjacent to the Niger River, as well as other areas consisting of numerous vassal kingdoms and provinces.
- Modern oral traditions recorded that the Mandinka kingdoms of Mali or Manden had already existed several centuries before unification. This area was composed of mountains, savanna, and forest providing ideal protection and resources for the population of hunters. Those not living in the mountains formed small city-states.
- The combined forces of northern and southern Manden defeated the Sosso army at the Battle of Kirina in approximately 1235. This victory resulted in the fall of the Kaniaga kingdom and the rise of the Mali Empire.
- The Mali Empire covered a larger area for a longer period of time than any other West African state before or since. What made this possible was the decentralized nature of administration throughout the state. Its power came, above all, from trade.
- The Mali Empire reached its largest size and flourished as a trade and intellectual center under the Laye Keita mansas (1312–1389). The empire's total area included nearly all the land between the Sahara Desert and the coastal forests.
- The 1599 battle of Djenné marked the effective end of the great Mali Empire and set the stage for a plethora of smaller West African states to emerge.

mansa

A Mandinka word meaning "sultan" (king) or "emperor." It is particularly associated with the Keita dynasty of the Mali Empire, which dominated West Africa from the 13th century to the 15th century.

muezzin

The person appointed at a mosque to lead and recite the call to prayer for every event of prayer and worship. The muezzin's post is an important one, and the community depends on him for an accurate prayer schedule.

Introduction

The Mali Empire,
also historically referred to as the Manden Kurufaba, was an empire in West Africa that lasted from c. 1230 to 1600. The empire was founded by Sundiata Keita and became renowned for the wealth of its rulers. It was the largest empire in West Africa and profoundly influenced the culture of the region through the spread of its language, laws, and customs along lands adjacent to the Niger River, as well as other areas consisting of numerous vassal kingdoms and provinces.

Pre-Imperial Mali

Modern oral traditions recorded that the Mandinka kingdoms of Mali or Manden had already existed several centuries before unification by Sundiata, a Malian mansa also known as Mari Djata I, as a small state just to the south of the Soninké empire of Wagadou (the Ghana Empire). This area was composed of mountains, savanna, and forest providing ideal protection and resources for the population of hunters. Those not living in the mountains formed small city-states such as Toron, Ka-Ba, and Niani.

In approximately 1140, the Sosso kingdom of Kaniaga, a former vassal of Wagadou, began conquering the lands of its old masters. By 1180, it had even subjugated Wagadou, forcing the Soninké to pay tribute. In 1203, the Sosso king Soumaoro of the Kanté clan came to power and reportedly terrorized much of Manden, stealing women and goods from both Dodougou and Kri.

After many years in exile, first at the court of Wagadou and then at Mema, Sundiata, a prince who eventually became founder of the Mali Empire, was sought out by a Niani delegation and begged to combat the Sosso and free the kingdoms of Manden. Returning with the combined armies of Mema, Wagadou, and all the rebellious Mandinka city-states, Maghan Sundiata, or Sumanguru, led a revolt against the Kaniaga Kingdom around 1234. The combined forces of northern and southern Manden defeated the Sosso army at the Battle of Kirina (then known as *Krina*) in approximately 1235. This victory resulted in the fall of the Kaniaga kingdom and the rise of the Mali Empire. After the victory, King Soumaoro disappeared and the Mandinka stormed the last of the Sosso cities. Maghan Sundiata was declared "faama of faamas" and received the title "mansa," which translates roughly to emperor. At the age of eighteen, he gained authority over all the twelve kingdoms in an alliance known as the Manden Kurufaba. He was crowned under the throne name Sunidata Keita, becoming the first Mandinka emperor. And so the name Keita became a clan/family and began its reign.

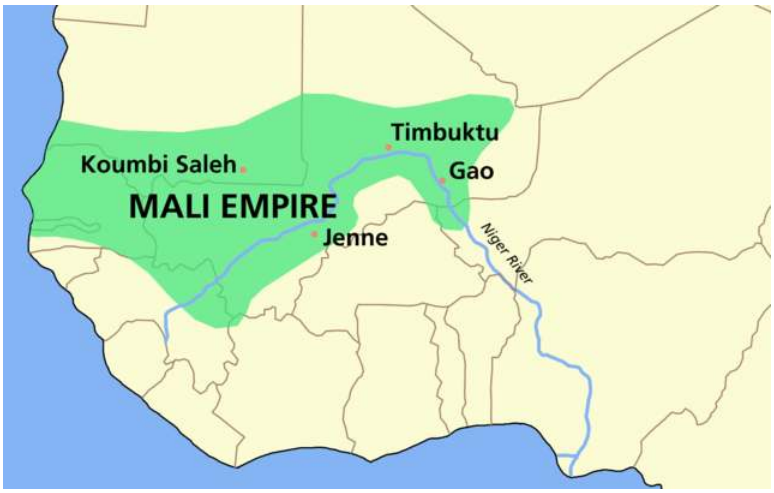
Imperial Mali (1250–1559)

The Mali Empire covered a larger area for a longer period of time than any other West African state before or since. What made this possible was the decentralized nature of administration throughout the state; yet the mansa managed to keep tax money and nominal control over the area without agitating his subjects into revolt. Officials at the village, town, city, and county levels were elected locally, and only at the state or provincial level was there any palpable interference from the central authority in Niani. Provinces picked their own governors via their own custom (election, inheritance, etc.), but governors had to be approved by the mansa and were subject to his oversight.

The Mali Empire flourished because of trade above all else. It contained three immense gold mines within its borders, and the empire taxed every ounce of gold or salt that entered its borders. By the beginning of the 14th century, Mali was the source of almost half the Old World's gold, exported from mines in Bambuk, Boure, and Galam. There was no standard currency throughout the realm, but several forms were prominent by region. The Sahelian and Saharan towns of the Mali Empire were organized as both staging posts in the long-distance caravan trade and trading centers for the various West African products (e.g., salt, copper). Ibn Battuta,
a Medieval Moroccan Muslim traveler and scholar, observed the employment of slave labor. During most of his journey, Ibn Battuta traveled with a retinue that included slaves, most of whom carried goods for trade but would also be traded themselves. On the return from Takedda to Morocco, his caravan transported 600 female slaves, which suggests that slavery was a substantial part of the commercial activity of the empire.

The number and frequency of conquests in the late 13th century and throughout the 14th century indicate that the Kolonkan mansas (who ruled at the time) inherited and/or developed a capable military. However, it went through radical changes before reaching the legendary proportions proclaimed by its subjects. Thanks to steady tax revenue and a stable government beginning in the last quarter of the 13th century, the Mali Empire was able to project its power throughout its own extensive domain and beyond. The empire maintained a semi-professional full-time army in order to defend its borders. The entire nation was mobilized, with each clan obligated to provide a quota of fighting-age men. Historians who lived during the height and decline of the Mali Empire consistently recorded its army at 100,000, with 10,000 of that number being made up of cavalry.

The Mali Empire reached its largest size under the Laye Keita mansas (1312–1389). The empire's total area included nearly all the land between the Sahara Desert and the coastal forests. It spanned modern-day Senegal, southern Mauritania, Mali, northern Burkina Faso, western Niger, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, and northern Ghana. The first ruler from the Laye lineage was Kankan Musa Keita (or Moussa), also known as Mansa Musa. He embarked on a large building program, raising mosques and madrasas in Timbuktu and Gao. He also transformed Sankore from an informal madrasah into an Islamic university. By the end of Mansa Musa's reign, the Sankoré University had been converted into a fully staffed university, with the largest collections of books in Africa since the Library of Alexandria. During this period, there was an advanced level of urban living in the major centers of the Mali. Sergio Domian, an Italian art and architecture scholar, wrote the following about this period: "Thus was laid the foundation of an urban civilization. At the height of its power, Mali had at least 400 cities, and the interior of the Niger Delta was very densely populated."



Extent of the Mali Empire (c. 1350). The Mali Empire was the largest in West Africa, and profoundly influenced the culture of the region through the spread of its language, laws, and customs along lands adjacent to the Niger River, as well as other areas consisting of numerous vassal kingdoms and provinces.

Collapse

Mansa Mahmud Keita IV was the last emperor of Manden, according to the Tarikh al-Sudan. He launched an attack on the city of Djenné in 1599 with Fulani allies, hoping to take advantage of Songhai's defeat. Eventually, the army inside Djenné intervened, forcing Mansa Mahmud Keita IV and his army to retreat to Kangaba. The battle marked the effective end of the great Mali Empire and set the stage for a plethora of smaller West African states to emerge. Around 1610, Mahmud Keita IV died. Oral tradition states that he had three sons who fought over Manden's remains. No single Keita ever ruled Manden after Mahmud Keita IV's death, thus the end of the Mali Empire.

The old core of the empire was divided into three spheres of influence. Kangaba, the de facto capital of Manden since the time of the last emperor, became the capital of the northern sphere. The Joma area, governed from Siguiri, controlled the central region, which encompassed Niani. Hamana (or Amana), southwest of Joma, became the southern sphere, with its capital at Kouroussa in modern Guinea. Each ruler used the title of mansa, but their authority only extended as far as their own sphere of influence. Despite this disunity in the realm, the realm remained under Mandinka control into the mid-17th century. The three states warred on each other as much if not more than they did against outsiders, but rivalries generally stopped when faced with invasion. This trend would continue into colonial times against Tukulor enemies from the west.

Timbuktu manuscripts, c. 14th century. Timbuktu became a permanent settlement early in the 12th century. After a shift in trading routes, Timbuktu flourished from the trade in salt, gold, ivory, and slaves. It became part of the Mali Empire early in the 14th century. In its Golden Age, the town's numerous Islamic scholars and extensive trading network made possible an important book

trade. Together with the campuses of the Sankore Madrasah, an Islamic university, this established Timbuktu as a scholarly center in Africa.

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11.15: Songhai

Learning Objectives

- Explain the importance of Timbuktu after locating the Songhai Empire

Key Points

- The Songhai Empire was a state that dominated the western Sahel in the 15th and 16th centuries. At its peak, it was one of the largest states in African history. Initially, the empire was ruled by the Sonni dynasty (c. 1464–1493), but it was later replaced by the Askiya dynasty (1493–1591).
- In the second half of the 14th century, disputes over succession weakened the Mali Empire and in the 1430s Songhai, previously a Mali dependency, gained independence under the Sonni Dynasty.
- Sonni Ali reigned from 1464 to 1492. In the late 1460s, he conquered many of the Songhai's neighboring states, including what remained of the Mali Empire. He was arguably the empire's most formidable military strategist and conqueror. Under his rule, Songhai reached a size of over 1,400,000 square kilometers.
- The internal political chaos and multiple civil wars within the empire allowed Morocco to invade Songhai. The main reason for the Moroccan invasion was to seize control of and revive the trans-Saharan trade in salt and gold. The empire fell to the Moroccans and their firearms in 1591.
- The empire's power was linked to economic trade; their government system granted authority to local chiefs as long as they did not undermine Songhai policy and tightly controlled labor division system.

Terms

Timbuktu

A historical and still-inhabited city in the West African nation of Mali, situated 20 km (12 mi) north of the River Niger on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. In its Golden Age, the town's numerous Islamic scholars and extensive trading network enabled an important book trade. Together with the campuses of the Sankore Madrasah, an Islamic university, this established the city as a scholarly center in Africa.

Sahel

The ecoclimatic and biogeographic zone of transition in Africa between the Sahara to the north and the Sudanian Savanna to the south. Having a semi-arid climate, it stretches across the south-central latitudes of Northern Africa between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea.

Sonni dynasty

A dynasty of rulers of the Songhai Empire of medieval West Africa. The first ruler of the dynasty, Sunni Ali Kulun, probably reigned at the end of the fourteenth century. The last ruler, Sonni Baru, ruled until 1493 when the throne was usurped by the Askiya Muhammad I (known also as Askia the Great), the founder of the Askiya Dynasty.

Gao

A city in Mali located on the River Niger that for much of its history was an important commercial center involved in the trans-Saharan trade. Towards the end of the 13th century, it became part of the Mali Empire, but in the first half of the 15th century the town regained its independence and with the conquests of Sonni Ali (ruled 1464–1492) it became the capital of the Songhai Empire.

Introduction

The Songhai Empire (also transliterated as Songhay) was a state that dominated the western Sahel in the 15th and 16th centuries. At its peak, it was one of the largest states in African history. The state is known by its historiographical name, derived from its leading ethnic group and ruling elite, the Songhai. Sonni Ali established Gao as the capital of the empire, although a Songhai state had existed in and around Gao since the 11th century. Other important cities in the empire were Timbuktu and Djenné, conquered

in 1468 and 1475 respectively, where urban-centered trade flourished. Initially, the empire was ruled by the Sonni dynasty (c. 1464–1493), but it was later replaced by the Askiya dynasty (1493–1591).

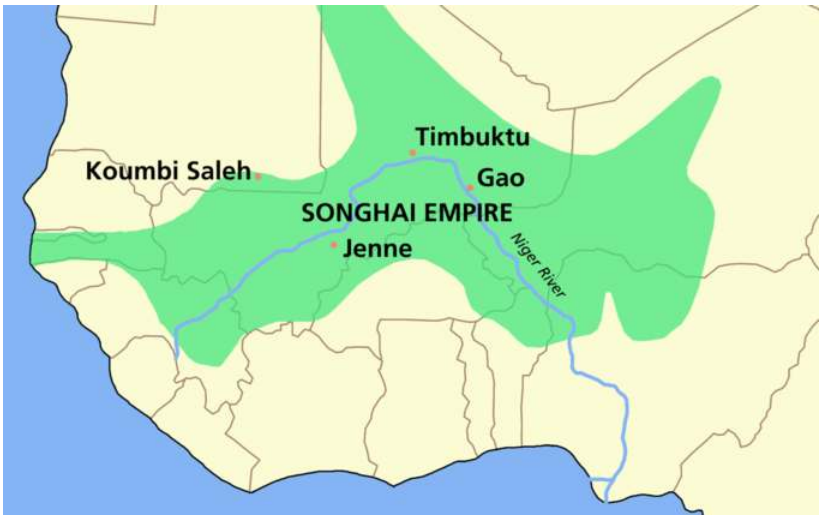
During the second half of the 13th century, Gao and the surrounding region had grown into an important trading center and attracted the interest of the expanding Mali Empire. Mali conquered Gao towards the end of the 13th century and the town would remain under Malian hegemony until the late 14th century. But as the Mali Empire started to disintegrate, the Songhai reasserted control of Gao. Songhai rulers subsequently took advantage of the weakened Mali Empire to expand Songhai rule.

Imperial Songhai

In the second half of the 14th century, disputes over succession weakened the Mali Empire and in the 1430s, Songhai, previously a Mali dependency, gained independence under the Sonni Dynasty. Around thirty years later, Sonni Sulayman Dama attacked Mema, the Mali province west of Timbuktu, paving the way for his successor, Sonni Ali, to turn his country into one of the greatest empires sub-Saharan Africa has ever seen.

Sonni Ali reigned from 1464 to 1492. Like Songhai kings before him, he was a Muslim. In the late 1460s, he conquered many of the Songhai's neighboring states, including what remained of the Mali Empire. He was arguably the empire's most formidable military strategist and conqueror. Under his rule, Songhai reached a size of over 1,400,000 square kilometers. During his campaigns for expansion, Ali conquered many lands, repelling attacks from the Mossi to the south and overcoming the Dogon people to the north. He annexed Timbuktu in 1468, after Islamic leaders of the town requested his assistance in overthrowing marauding Tuaregs (Berber people with a traditionally nomadic pastoralist lifestyle) who had taken the city following the decline of Mali. However, Ali met stark resistance after setting his sights on the wealthy and renowned trading town of Djenné (also known as Jenne). After a persistent seven-year siege, he was able to forcefully incorporate it into his vast empire in 1473, but only after having starved its citizens into surrender

Oral traditions present a conflicted image of Sonni Ali. On the one hand, the invasion of Timbuktu destroyed the city; Ali was described as an intolerant tyrant who conducted a repressive policy against the scholars of Timbuktu, especially those of the Sankore region who were associated with the Tuareg. On the other hand, his control of critical trade routes and cities brought great wealth. He is thus often presented as a powerful politician and great military commander and under his reign, Djenné and Timbuktu became great centers of learning.



Songhai Empire in 1500. Songhai rulers took advantage of the weakened Mali Empire to expanded Songhai rule. Under the rule of Sonni Ali, the Songhai surpassed the Malian Empire in area, wealth, and power, absorbing vast areas of the Mali Empire and reaching its greatest extent.

Following Ali's reign, Askia the Great strengthened the Songhai Empire and made it the largest empire in West Africa's history. At its peak under his reign, the Songhai Empire encompassed the Hausa states as far as Kano (in present-day Nigeria) and much of the territory that had belonged to the Songhai empire in the west. His policies resulted in a rapid expansion of trade with Europe and Asia, the creation of many schools, and the establishment of Islam as an integral part of the empire. Askia opened religious schools, constructed mosques, and opened up his court to scholars and poets from throughout the Muslim world, but he was also tolerant of

other religions and did not force Islam on his people. Among his great accomplishments was an interest in astronomical knowledge, which led to the development of astronomy and observatories in the capital.

Not only was he a patron of Islam but he was also gifted in administration and encouraging trade. He centralized the administration of the empire and established an efficient bureaucracy that was responsible for, among other things, tax collection and the administration of justice. He also demanded that canals be built in order to enhance agriculture, which would eventually increase trade. More importantly than anything he did for trade was the introduction of weights and measures and the appointment of an inspector for each of Songhai's important trading centers. During his reign Islam became more widely entrenched, trans-Saharan trade flourished, and the Saharan salt mines of Taghaza were brought within the boundaries of the empire.

However, as Askia the Great grew older, his power declined. In 1528, his sons revolted against him and declared Musa, one of Askia's many sons, as king. Following Musa's overthrow in 1531, Songhai's empire went into decline. Multiple attempts at governing the empire by Askia's sons and grandsons failed and between the political chaos and multiple civil wars within the empire, Morocco invaded Songhai. The main reason for the Moroccan invasion of Songhai was to seize control and revive the trans-Saharan trade in salt and gold. The Songhai military, during Askia's reign, consisted of full-time soliders, but the king never modernized his army. The Empire fell to the Moroccans and their firearms in 1591.

The Organization of Songhai

At its peak, the Songhai city of Timbuktu became a thriving cultural and commercial center where Arab, Italian, and Jewish merchants all gathered for trade. Economic trade existed throughout the empire due to the standing army stationed in the provinces. Central to the regional economy were independent gold fields. The *Julla* (merchants) would form partnerships, and the state would protect these merchants and the port cities of the Niger.

The Songhai economy was based on a clan system. The clan a person belonged to ultimately decided one's occupation. The most common were metalworkers, fishermen, and carpenters. Lower caste participants consisted of mostly non-farm working immigrants, who at times were provided special privileges and held high positions in society. At the top were noblemen and direct descendants of the original Songhai people, followed by freemen and traders. At the bottom were war captives and European slaves obligated to labor, especially in farming. Historian James Olson describes the labor system as resembling modern day unions, with the empire possessing craft guilds that consisted of various mechanics and artisans

Criminal justice in Songhai was based mainly, if not entirely, on Islamic principles, especially during the rule of Askia the Great. Upper classes in society converted to Islam while lower classes often continued to follow traditional religions. Sermons emphasized obedience to the king. Sonni Ali established a system of government under the royal court, later to be expanded by Askia, which appointed governors and mayors to preside over local tributary states situated around the Niger valley. Local chiefs were still granted authority over their respective domains as long as they did not undermine Songhai policy.

Tax was imposed onto peripheral chiefdoms and provinces to ensure the dominance of Songhai, and in return these provinces were given almost complete autonomy. Songhai rulers only intervened in the affairs of these neighboring states when a situation became volatile, usually an isolated incident. Each town was represented by government officials, holding positions and responsibilities similar to today's central bureaucrats.

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11.16: The Yoruba States

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the Yoruba states and their progression towards centralized government

Key Points

- Yorubaland is the cultural region of the Yoruba people in West Africa. It spans the modern-day countries of Nigeria, Togo, and Benin. Its pre-modern history is based largely on oral traditions and legends. According to Yoruba religion, Oduduwa became the ancestor of the first divine king of the Yoruba.
- By the 8th century, Ile-Ife was already a powerful Yoruba kingdom, one of the earliest in Africa south of the Sahara-Sahel. Almost every Yoruba settlement traces its origin to princes of Ile-Ife. As such, Ife can be regarded as the cultural and spiritual homeland of the Yoruba nation.
- Ile-Ife was a settlement of substantial size between the 12th and 14th centuries, with houses featuring potsherd pavements. It is known worldwide for its ancient and naturalistic bronze as well as stone and terracotta sculptures, which reached their peak of artistic expression between 1200 and 1400.
- The mythical origins of the Oyo Empire lie with Oranyan, who made Oyo his new kingdom and became the first oba with the title of Alaafin of Oyo. The oral tradition holds that he left all his treasures in Ife and allowed another king named Adimu to rule there.
- Oyo had grown into a formidable inland power by the end of the 14th century, but it suffered military defeats at the hands of the Nupe led by Tsoede. During the 17th century, Oyo began a long stretch of growth, becoming a major empire. It never encompassed all Yoruba-speaking people, but it was the most populous kingdom in Yoruba history. The key to Yoruba rebuilding Oyo was a stronger military and a more centralized government.
- In the second half of the 18th century, dynastic intrigues, palace coups, and failed military campaigns began to weaken the Oyo Empire. It became a protectorate of Great Britain in 1888 before further fragmenting into warring factions. The Oyo state ceased to exist as any sort of power in 1896.

Terms

Yorubaland

The cultural region of the Yoruba people in West Africa. It spans the modern-day countries of Nigeria, Togo, and Benin, and covers a total land area of 142,114 square kilometers. The geocultural space contains an estimated 55 million people, the overwhelming majority of whom are ethnic Yorubas.

Oranyan

A Yoruba king from the kingdom of Ile-Ife; although last born, he was heir to Oduduwa. According to Yoruba history, he founded Oyo as its first Alaafin at around the year 1300 and one of his children, Eweka I, went on to become the first Oba of the Benin Empire.

Oduduwa

The King of Ile-Ife, whose name is generally ascribed to the ancestral dynasties of Yorubaland because he is held by the Yoruba to have been the ancestor of their numerous crowned kings. Following his posthumous deification, he was admitted to the Yoruba pantheon as an aspect of a primordial divinity of the same name.

Ile-Ife

An ancient Yoruba city in southwestern Nigeria (located in the present-day Osun State) that turned into the first powerful Yoruba kingdom, one of the earliest in Africa south of the Sahara-Sahel. It is regarded as the cultural and spiritual homeland of the Yoruba nation.

Yorubaland: Introduction

Yorubaland is the cultural region of the Yoruba people in West Africa. It spans the modern-day countries of Nigeria, Togo, and Benin. Its pre-modern history is based largely on oral traditions and legends. According to Yoruba religion, Olodumare, the Supreme God, ordered Obatala to create the earth, but on Obatala's way he found palm wine, which he drank and became intoxicated. Therefore, his younger brother, Oduduwa, took the three items of creation from him, climbed down from the heavens on a chain, and threw a handful of earth on the primordial ocean, then put a cockerel on it so that it would scatter the earth, thus creating the land on which Ile-Ife would be built. On account of his creation of the world, Oduduwa became the ancestor of the first divine king of the Yoruba, while Obatala is believed to have created the first Yoruba people out of clay. The meaning of the word "*ife*" in Yoruba is "expansion." "Ile-Ife" is therefore in reference to the myth of origin, "The Land of Expansion."

Ile-Ife

Evidence suggests that as of the 7th century BCE, the African peoples who lived in Yorubaland were not initially known as the Yoruba, though they shared a common ethnicity and language group. By the 8th century CE, Ile-Ife was already a powerful Yoruba kingdom, one of the earliest in Africa south of the Sahara-Sahel. Almost every Yoruba settlement traces its origin to princes of Ile-Ife. As such, Ife can be regarded as the cultural and spiritual homeland of the Yoruba nation. Archaeologically, the settlement at Ife can be dated to the 4th century BC, with urban structures appearing in the 12th century CE. Until today, the Oòni (or king) of Ife claims direct descent from Oduduwa.

The city was a settlement of substantial size between the 12th and 14th centuries, with houses featuring potsherd pavements. Ile-Ife is known worldwide for its ancient and naturalistic bronze as well as stone and terracotta sculptures, which reached their peak of artistic expression between 1200 and 1400. In the period around 1300 the artists at Ife developed a refined and naturalistic sculptural tradition in terracotta, stone, and copper alloy—copper, brass, and bronze—many of which appear to have been created under the patronage of King Obalufon II, the man who today is identified as the Yoruba patron deity of brass casting, weaving, and regalia. After this period, production declined as political and economic power shifted to the nearby kingdom of Benin, which, like the Yoruba kingdom of Oyo, developed into a major empire.

Bronze head from Ife, probably a king, dated around 1300. Ile-Ife is known worldwide for its ancient and naturalistic bronze, stone, and terracotta sculptures, which reached their peak of artistic expression between 1200 and 1400.

The Rise of the Oyo Empire

The mythical origins of the Oyo Empire lie with Oranyan (also known as Oranmiyan), the second prince of Ile-Ife, who made Oyo his new kingdom and became the first oba with the title of Alaafin of Oyo (Alaafin means “owner of the palace” in Yoruba). The oral tradition holds that he left all his treasures in Ife and allowed another king, named Adimu, to rule there.

Oranyan was succeeded by Oba Ajaka, but he was deposed because he allowed his sub-chiefs too much independence. Leadership was then conferred upon Ajaka’s brother, Shango, who was later deified as the deity of thunder and lightning. Ajaka was restored after Shango’s death. His successor, Kori, managed to conquer the rest of what later historians would refer to as metropolitan Oyo. The heart of metropolitan Oyo was its capital at Oyo-Ile.

Oyo had grown into a formidable inland power by the end of the 14th century, but it suffered military defeats at the hands of the Nupe led by Tsoede. Sometime around 1535, the Nupe occupied Oyo and forced its ruling dynasty to take refuge in the kingdom of Borgu.

The Yoruba of Oyo went through an interregnum of eighty years as an exiled dynasty. However, they re-established Oyo to be more centralized and expansive than ever. During the 17th century, Oyo began a long stretch of growth, becoming a major empire. It never encompassed all Yoruba-speaking people, but it was the most populous kingdom in Yoruba history.

Oyo Empire and surrounding states c. 1700. The Oyo Empire rose through the outstanding organizational skills of the Yoruba, gaining wealth from trade and its powerful cavalry. It was the most politically important state in the region from the mid-17th century to the late 18th century, holding sway not only over most of the other kingdoms in Yorubaland, but also over nearby African states, notably the Fon Kingdom of Dahomey in the modern Republic of Benin to the west.

The Power Of Oyo

The key to Yoruba rebuilding Oyo was a stronger military and a more centralized government. Oba Ofinran succeeded in regaining Oyo's original territory from the Nupe. A new capital, Oyo-Igboho, was constructed, and the original became known as Old Oyo. The next oba, Eguguojo, conquered nearly all of Yorubaland. Despite a failed attempt to conquer the Benin Empire sometime between 1578 and 1608, Oyo continued to expand. The Yoruba allowed autonomy to the southeast of metropolitan Oyo, where the non-Yoruba areas could act as a buffer between Oyo and Imperial Benin. By the end of the 16th century, the Ewe and Aja states of modern Benin were paying tribute to Oyo.

The reinvigorated Oyo Empire began raiding southward as early as 1682. By the end of its military expansion, its borders would reach to the coast some 200 miles southwest of its capital. At the beginning, the people were concentrated in metropolitan Oyo. With imperial expansion, Oyo reorganized to better manage its vast holdings within and outside Yorubaland. It was divided into four layers defined by relation to the core of the empire. These layers were Metropolitan Oyo, southern Yorubaland, the Egbado Corridor, and Ajaland.

The Oyo Empire developed a highly sophisticated political structure to govern its territorial domains. Scholars have not determined how much of this structure existed prior to the Nupe invasion. Some of Oyo's institutions are clearly derivative of early accomplishments in Ife.
The Oyo Empire was not a hereditary monarchy, nor an absolute one.
While the Alaafin of Oyo was supreme overlord of the people, he was not without checks on his power. The Oyo Mesi (seven councilors of the states) and the Yoruba Earth cult known as Ogboni kept the Oba's power in check. The Oyo Mesi spoke for the politicians while the Ogboni spoke for the people, backed by the power of religion. The power of the Alaafin of Oyo in relation to the Oyo Mesi and Ogboni depended on his personal character and political shrewdness.

Oyo became the southern emporium of the trans-Saharan trade. Exchanges were made in salt, leather, horses, kola nuts, ivory, cloth, and slaves. The Yoruba of metropolitan Oyo were also highly skilled in craft making and iron work. Aside from taxes on trade products coming in and out of the empire, Oyo also became wealthy off the taxes imposed on its tributaries. Oyo's imperial success made Yoruba a *lingua franca* almost to the shores of the Volta. Toward the end of the 18th century, the empire acted as a go-between for both the trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic slave trade. By 1680, the Oyo Empire spanned over 150,000 square kilometers.

Decline

In the second half of the 18th century, dynastic intrigues, palace coups, and failed military campaigns began to weaken the Oyo Empire. Recurrent power struggles and resulting periods of interregnum created a vacuum, in which the power of regional commanders rose.
As Oyo tore itself apart via political intrigue, its vassals began taking advantage of the situation to press for independence. Some of

them succeeded, and Oyo never regained its prominence in the region. It became a protectorate of Great Britain in 1888 before further fragmenting into warring factions. The Oyo state ceased to exist as any sort of power in 1896.

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12.1: The Mixtec

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between the Mixtec people and the Mixtec language and identify when they were most prominent

Key Points

- The Mixtec survive today, but reached peak prominence in the 11th century CE.
- The Mixtec language is a set of up to fifty languages, and is not to be confused with the Mixtec people.
- The Mixtec are well known in the anthropological world for their codices, or phonetic pictures in which they wrote their history and genealogies.

Terms

Mixtec

Indigenous Mesoamerican peoples inhabiting the region known as La Mixteca, which covers parts of the Mexican states of Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Puebla.

Codices

Phonetic pictures painted on deerskin and folded into books, which recorded Mixtec history and genealogy.

Tututepec

A prominent city center during the height of the Mixtec state, situated along the coast of modern-day Oaxaca.

The Mixtec are indigenous Mesoamerican peoples inhabiting the region known as La Mixteca, which covers parts of the Mexican states of Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Puebla. Though the Mixtec remain today, they were most prominent in the 11th century and the following years, until they were conquered by the Spanish and their allies in the 16th century.

Before the arrival of Spanish hostility, a number of Mixtecan city-states competed with each other and with the Zapotec kingdoms. The major Mixtec polity was Tututepec, which rose to prominence in the 11th century under the leadership of Eight Deer Jaguar Claw. This prominent leader was the only Mixtec king to ever unite the highland and lowland polities into a single Mixtec state. During this era there were approximately 1.5 million Mixtecs populating this varied region.

Modern Mixtec People

Today there are approximately 800,000 Mixtec people in Mexico, and there are also large populations in the United States. In recent years a large exodus of indigenous peoples from Oaxaca, such as the Zapotec and Triqui, have emerged as one of the most numerous groups of Amerindians in the United States. As of 2011, an estimated 150,000 Mixtec people were living in California, and 25,000 to 30,000 were living in New York City. Large Mixtec communities exist in the border cities of Tijuana; Baja California; San Diego, California; and Tucson, Arizona. Mixtec communities are generally described as trans-national or trans-border because of their ability to maintain and reaffirm social ties between their native homelands and diasporic communities.

Mixtec Language

The word “Mixtec” is often used to refer not to the group of people of Mixtec ancestry, but to the family of languages that have developed alongside the group. There is no longer one single Mixtec language; some estimate that there are fifty distinct languages in the Mixtec family, including Cuicatec and Triqui.

Mixtec's area. The historical geographic area inhabited by the Mixtec, including the important polities, such as Tututepec.

Mixtec History

Important ancient centers of the Mixtec include the ancient capital of Tilantongo, as well as the sites of Achiutla, Cuilapan, and Yucuñudahui. The Mixtec also erected major constructions at the ancient city of Monte Albán, which had originated as a Zapotec city before the Mixtec gained control of it.

The west side platform at Monte Albán. This ancient city remained a religious site for centuries, and was more sparsely populated during the rise of smaller Mixtec polities. However, religious sites were often reused by Mixtec elites.

At the height of the Aztec Empire (between 1428 and 1521 CE) many Mixtec polities were forced to pay tribute. However, many Mixtec polities remained completely independent of the threatening empire, even as it expanded outward. The smaller Mixtec polities also put up resistance to Spanish forces led by Pedro de Alvarado until the invaders gained control of the region and destroyed any attempt at a revolt in 1521. Disease, weaponry, and local political fractures likely aided the Spanish takeover of the area.

Mixtex Art

The work of Mixtec artisans who produced work in stone, wood, and metal were well regarded throughout ancient Mesoamerica. Mixtec artists were known for their exceptional mastery of jewelry, in which gold and turquoise figured prominently. The intricate metalwork of Mixtec goldsmiths formed an important part of the tribute the Mixtecs had to pay to the Aztecs during parts of their history.

Mixtec funerary mask. Mixtec art included the use of turquoise, gold, and carved stones, and exemplified artistry before the arrival of the Spanish.

Codices

The Mixtec are well known in the anthropological world for their codices, or phonetic pictures, in which they wrote their history and genealogies in deerskin in the “fold-book” form. The best-known story of the Mixtec codices is that of Lord Eight Deer, named after the day on which he was born, whose personal name was Jaguar Claw, and whose epic history is related in several codices. He successfully conquered and united most of the Mixteca region.

A page from the Codex Bodley. This codex tells the story of the Tilantongo and Tiaxiaco dynasties.

Codices can be read from right to left and often measure many feet long. The Codex Bodley measures twenty-two feet long and contains complex explanations of important family lineages and creation stories, such as the War of Heaven, that directly refer back to elite dynasties. The preservation of these extremely rare Codices paints a distinct picture of Mesoamerica right before the arrival of Spanish forces.

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12.2: Teotihuacan

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the diversity and notable archeological features of Teotihuacan

Key Points

- Teotihuacan was founded around 100 BCE and reached its peak population around 450 CE.
- Teotihuacan was a multi-ethnic city, with distinct quarters occupied by Otomi, Zapotec, Mixtec, Maya and Nahua peoples.
- The geographical layout of Teotihuacan is a good example of the Mesoamerican tradition of planning cities, settlements, and buildings as a reflections of their view of the Universe.

Terms

Pyramid of the Sun

The largest building in Teotihuacan, which measures 246 feet high and 736 feet wide.

Teotihuacan

A large precolumbian Mesoamerican city known for its archeological significance.

The Great Goddess

This deity was one of the central icons of Teotihuacano religious culture. She appears in painted murals with images associated with the underworld, birth, death, and creation.

Just 30 miles from modern day Mexico City lies the precolumbian Mesoamerican city of Teotihuacan. It is famous for its pyramids and series of accompanying residential compounds, but was once much more than an archaeological and tourist site.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Teotihuacan was a multi-ethnic city, with distinct quarters occupied by Otomi, Totonac, Zapotec, Mixtec, Maya, and Nahua peoples. In 2001, Terrence Kaufman presented linguistic evidence suggesting that an important ethnic group in Teotihuacan was of Totonacan or Mixe–Zoquean linguistic affiliation. Other scholars maintain that the largest population group must have been of Otomi ethnicity, because the Otomi language is known to have been spoken in the area around Teotihuacan both before and after the classic period and not during the middle period.

Although it is a subject of debate whether Teotihuacan was the center of a state empire, its influence throughout Mesoamerica is well documented; evidence of Teotihuacano presence can be seen at numerous sites in Veracruz and the Maya region. Many Maya murals represent Teotihucuan and the leaders of the city during its zenith. The Aztecs were also heavily influenced by the architecture, culture, and lore of this ancient city, claiming common ancestry with the Teotihuacanos and adopting some of their artistic and architectural styles.

Founding of the City

The city and culture, which can be referred to as Teotihuacan or Teotihuacano, is thought to have been established around 100 BCE, with major monuments continuously under construction until about 250 CE. It began as a new religious center in the Mexican Highland and a large population was drawn to the city over a few centuries. It may have lasted until sometime between the 7th and 8th centuries CE, but its major monuments were sacked and systematically burned around 550 CE. At its zenith, around the first half of the first millennium CE, Teotihuacan was the largest city in the pre-Columbian Americas, with a population estimated at 125,000 or more. It's varied population made it, at minimum, the sixth largest city in the world during its epoch. The city eventually included multi-floor apartment compounds built to accommodate this large population.

Mysterious Founders and Religion

The founders of this religious and populous city remain a mystery to scholars of the area. Some have speculated that the Xitle volcano, which is located southwest of modern-day Mexico City, may have prompted a mass emigration out of the central valley

and into the Teotihuacan valley. These displaced settlers may have founded, or at least helped grow, the city.

An alternate explanation is that the Totonac people, who still remain today, founded Teotihuacan. There is also evidence that at least some of the people living in Teotihuacan immigrated from those areas influenced by the Teotihuacano civilization, including the Zapotec, Mixtec, and Maya peoples.

Mural of the Great Goddess of Teotihuacan. This powerful goddess was associated with darkness, mystery, death, and creation. She was often depicted with owls, jaguars, and spiders, all creatures of the earth, darkness and the underworld. This mural is from the Tetitla compound at Teotihuacan.

As a religious center, Teotihuacan displayed its most prominent gods and goddesses in murals and architecture. The Great Goddess of Teotihuacan appears to be the most prominent of these deities, and she likely represented the underworld, war, creation, water, and the earth. Evidence of human sacrifices to honor the completion of buildings or special times of year has also been uncovered by archeologists. Captives from wars were decapitated, had their hearts removed, were bludgeoned, or were buried alive to commemorate these momentous occasions.

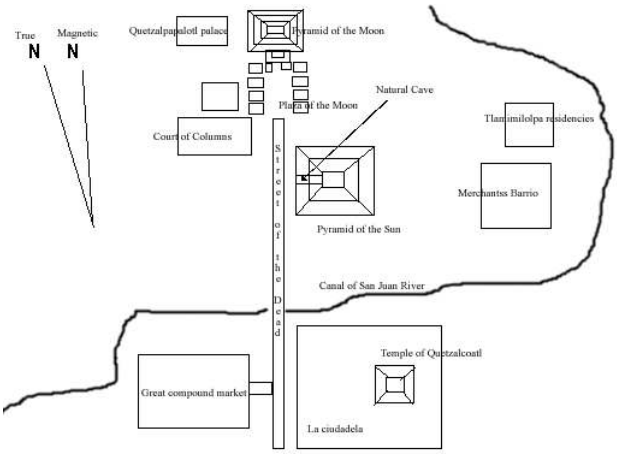
Pyramid of the Sun. This giant pyramid dwarfs the smaller platforms surrounding it and was the largest building at Teotihuacan.

Layout

The city's broad central avenue, called "Avenue of the Dead" (a translation from its Nahuatl name Miccoatli), is flanked by impressive ceremonial architecture, including the immense Pyramid of the Sun (third largest in the World after the Great Pyramid of Cholula and the Great Pyramid of Giza) and the Pyramid of the Moon. Along the Avenue of the Dead are many smaller talud-tablero platforms. The Aztecs believed they were tombs, inspiring the Nahuatl name of the avenue.

Pyramid of the Moon. This pyramid is the second largest in Teotihuacan.

Further down the Avenue of the Dead is the area known as the Citadel, containing the ruined Temple of the Feathered Serpent. This area was a large plaza surrounded by temples that formed the religious and political center of the city. Most of the common people lived in large apartment buildings spread across the city. Many of the buildings contained workshops where artisans produced pottery and other goods.



Teotihuacan City Plan. The layout of Teotihuacan exemplifies Mesoamerican urban planning.

The geographical layout of Teotihuacan is a good example of the Mesoamerican tradition of planning cities, settlements, and buildings as a reflection of the Universe. Its urban grid is aligned to precisely 15.5º east of North. One theory says this is due to the fact that the sun rose at that same angle during the same summer day each year. Settlers used the alignment to calibrate their sense of time or as a marker for planting crops or performing certain rituals. Another theory is that there are numerous ancient sites in Mesoamerica that seem to be oriented with the tallest mountain in their given area. This appears to be the case at Teotihuacan, although the mountain to which it is oriented is not visible from within the Teotihuacan complex due to a closer mountain ridge. Pecked-cross circles throughout the city and in the surrounding regions indicate how the people managed to maintain the urban grid over long distances. It also enabled them to orient the Pyramids to the distant mountain that was out of sight.

Fall of Teotihuacan

There is an ongoing debate about why Teotihuacan collapsed and the population abandoned this city center. Evidence of climate changes, which caused severe droughts around 535 CE, suggest there was a general population decline in the region. In fact, archeological digs have revealed juvenile skeletons with signs of malnutrition, which probably forced populations to move and caused internal social strife. Further archeological evidence reveals that only the buildings associated with the elites along the Avenue of the Dead were sacked and burned. This type of activity suggests there might have been internal unrest and possibly a revolt against the elite power structure, which caused the collapse of the city.

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12.3: The Zapotec

Learning Objectives

- Explain the culture, religion, expansion, and demise of the Zapotec civilization

Key Points

- The Zapotec civilization originated in the three Central Valleys of Oaxaca in the late 6th Century BCE.
- There are five distinct Zapotec periods, denoted Monte Albán 1–5 (after the place of origin).
- The Zapotec were polytheists who developed a calendar and logosyllabic writing system.

Terms

Monte Alban

The place of origin for the Zapotec civilization.

Cocijo

The lightning and rain god of the Zapotec civilization. He was the most important of the religious figures and was believed to have created the universe with his breath.

Mitla

The main religious city of the Zapotec culture. Elaborate buildings and artwork display the richness of religious life for the Zapotec elite.

The Zapotec civilization originated in the three Central Valleys of Oaxaca in the late 6th Century BCE. The valleys were divided between three different-sized societies, separated by no-man's-land in the middle, today occupied by the city of Oaxaca. Archaeological evidence from the period, such as burned temples and sacrificed captives, suggests that although the three societies shared linguistic, cultural, and religious traditions, they also competed against one another.

Panorama from Monte Albán. The view from the site of origin of the Zapotec rulers that expanded power beyond the Central Valleys of Oaxaca.

Five Phases

The Zapotec state formed at Monte Albán. This consolidation of power began outward political expansion during the late Monte Albán 1 phase (400–100 BCE) and throughout the Monte Albán 2 phase (100 BCE–200 CE). Zapotec rulers from Monte Albán seized control of provinces outside the valley of Oaxaca with their superior military and political clout, which quickly overtook less-developed local entities. By 200 CE, the end of the Monte Albán 2 phase, the Zapotecs had extended their influence, from Quiotepec in the North to Ocelotepec and Chiltepec in the South. The religious and cultural city of Monte Albán had become the largest city in what are today the southern Mexican highlands. This powerful city retained this status until approximately 700 CE.

Phase	Period
Monte Alban 1	ca 400–100 BC
Monte Alban 2	ca 100 BC – AD 100
Monte Alban 3	ca AD 200-900
Monte Alban 4	ca 900–1350
Monte Alban 5	ca 1350–1521

Monte Albán phases. Historical Monte Albán phases and the duration of each phase.

Expansion and Decline

Between Monte Albán phases 1 and 2 there was a considerable expansion of the population of the Valley of Oaxaca. As the population grew, so did the degree of social differentiation, the centralization of political power, and ceremonial activity. Another effect of this population boom and the political expansion of the military during Monte Albán 1–2 was the development of fragmented, independent states. These areas developed regional centers of power with distinct leaders and linguistic dialects. However, the Zapotec rulers retained control over vast swaths of the region. Some archeologists argue that the building centered on the main plaza of Monte Albán contains depictions of elaborate heads, which represent the rulers of conquered provinces.

Jade warrior mask from Monte Albán. This jade replica illustrates the fierce military presence that initially expanded the Zapotec holdings during Monte Albán phase 2.

The Zapotecs were ultimately destroyed by Spanish invaders. Having lost militarily to the Aztecs in battles from 1497–1502, the Zapotecs tried to avoid confrontation with the Spaniards, and hopefully the tragic fate of the Aztecs. The Spaniards took advantage of this pacifist stance and ultimately defeated the Zapotecs after five years of campaigns ending in 1527. The arrival of new diseases and steel weapons also weakened any attempts at a revolt from the Zapotec population. There were some subsequent uprisings against the new rulers, but for all intents and purposes, the Zapotecs were conquered. However, the seven Zapotec languages, and hundreds of Zapotec dialects, still survive with populations that have spread throughout Mexico and also Los Angeles, California.

Zapotec Writing and Religion

The Zapotecs developed a calendar and a logosyllabic system of writing that used a separate glyph to represent each of the syllables of the language. This writing system is thought to be one of the first writing systems of Mesoamerica and a predecessor of those developed by the Maya, Mixtec, and Aztec civilizations.

Like most Mesoamerican religious systems, the Zapotec religion was polytheistic. Two principal deities included Cocijo, the rain god (similar to the Aztec god Tlaloc), and Coquihani, the god of light. These deities, along with many others, centered around concepts of fertility and agriculture. It is likely that the Zapotec practiced human sacrifices to these gods of fertility, and also played elaborate and ritualistic ball games in the court at Monte Albán. They also practiced dedication rituals, which cleansed a new space. Fine pieces of rare jade, pearl, and obsidian were found in a cache in Oaxaca, and were probably used to cleanse religious sites or temples upon the completion of construction.

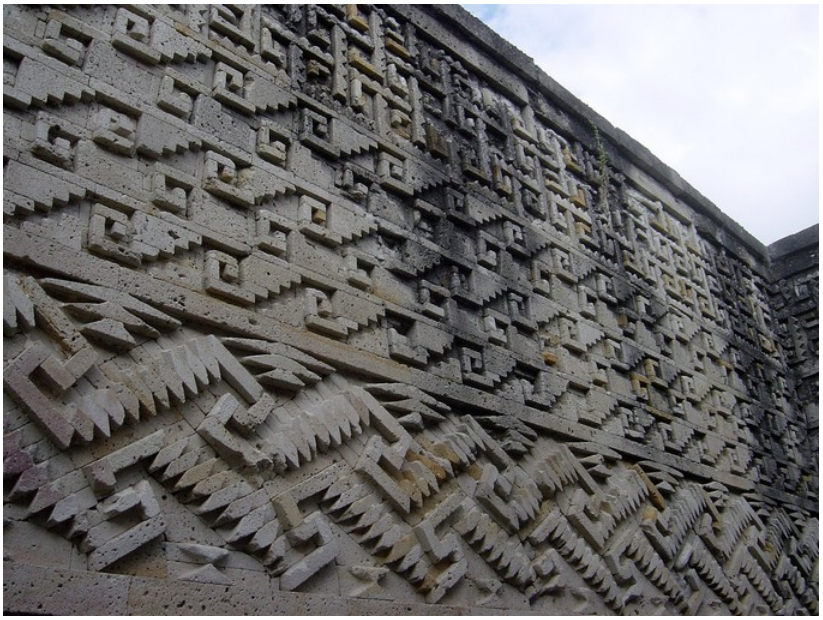
The ball court at Monte Albán. A religious ball game utilizing a rubber ball was practiced throughout Mesoamerica by young men playing for sacred, and often sacrificial, purposes.

According to historic, as well as contemporary, Zapotec legends, their ancestors emerged from the earth or from caves, or turned into people from trees or jaguars. Their governing elite apparently believed that they descended from supernatural beings that lived among the clouds, and that upon death they would return to the same status. In fact, the name by which Zapotecs are known today results from this belief. The Zapotecs of the Central Valleys call themselves “Be’ena’ Za’a”—the Cloud People.

A funerary urn in the shape of a “bat god” or a jaguarc. 300–650 CE. Height: 9.5 in (23 cm).

Mitla

Evidence of the central role of religion in the Zapotec cultural hierarchy is pronounced at the religious city of Mitla. It is the second most important archeological site in the state of Oaxaca, and the most important of the Zapotec culture. The site is located 44 kilometers from the city of Oaxaca. While Monte Albán was most important as the political center, Mitla was the main religious center, as evidenced by the elaborate buildings and artwork throughout the city. The name “Mitla” is derived from the Nahuatl name “Mictlán,” which was the place of the dead or underworld. Its Zapotec name is Lyobaa, which means “place of rest.” The name “Mictlán” was Hispanicized to “Mitla” by the Spanish.



Fretwork on a building in the religious capital of Mitla. This complex fretwork illustrates the religious importance of this ancient city in the Zapotec culture.

What makes Mitla unique among Mesoamerican sites is the elaborate and intricate mosaic fretwork and geometric designs that cover tombs, panels, friezes, and even entire walls. These mosaics are made with small, finely cut and polished stone pieces, which have been fitted together without the use of mortar. No other site in Mexico has this.

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12.4: The Preclassic Period of the Maya

Learning Objectives

- Describe life in the Preclassic period

Key Points

- The Preclassic period itself is further divided into four periods: Early Preclassic, Middle Preclassic, Late Preclassic, and Terminal Preclassic.
- The Early Preclassic period (2000–1000 BCE) was when the Maya transitioned into an agrarian society.
- In the Middle Preclassic period (1000–400 BCE), the Mayans built more established cities and expanded through war.
- Two powerful states emerged in the Late Preclassic period (400 BCE–100 CE).
- The Mayan civilization collapsed and left the major Preclassic capitals behind at the end of the Terminal Preclassic period (100–250 CE) for unknown reasons.

Terms

kakaw

An Olmec word for the cacao plant. This word was borrowed and incorporated into the Mayan language, illustrating the relationship between these two cultures.

Southern Maya Area

The geographic region in which Mayan civilization first emerged.

Kaminaljuyu

The ruling city-state of the Middle Preclassic era. Evidence of stone monuments and complex canals illustrate the power this early capital retained for centuries.

The Preclassic period is the first of three periods in Mayan history, coming before the Classic and Postclassic periods. It extended from the emergence of the first settlements sometime between 2000 and 1500 BCE until 250 CE. The Preclassic period saw the rise of large-scale ceremonial architecture, writing, cities, and states. Many of the distinctive elements of Mesoamerican civilization can be traced back to this period, including the dominance of corn, the building of pyramids, human sacrifice, jaguar worship, the complex calendar, and many of the gods.

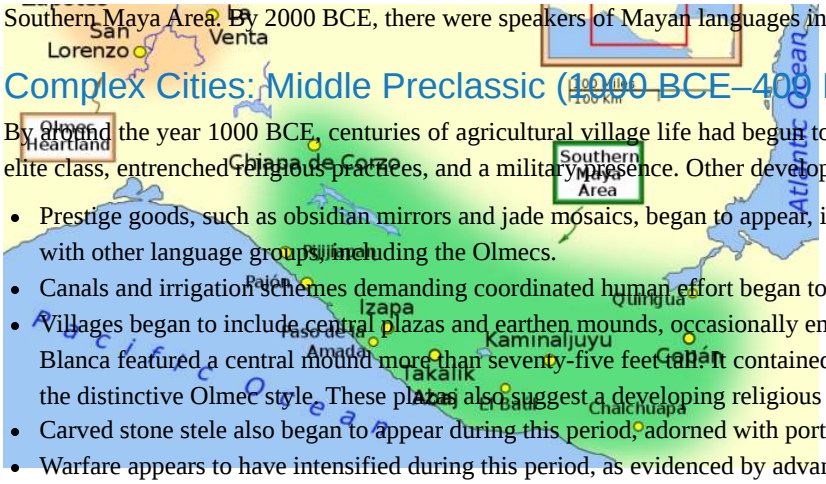
Mayan language speakers most likely originated in the Chiapas-Guatamalan Highlands and dispersed from there. By around 2500–2000 BCE researchers can begin to trace the arc of Mayan-language settlements and culture in what is now southeastern Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize. The Preclassic period itself is divided into four periods: Early Preclassic, Middle Preclassic, Late Preclassic, and Terminal Preclassic

Agricultural Shift: Early Preclassic (2000 BCE–1000 BCE)

Though the exact starting date of Mayan civilization is unclear, there were Mayan language speakers in the Southern Maya Area by 2000 BCE. It appears that around this time the Maya people began to transition from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle to a culture based around agricultural villages. The process appears to have been a gradual one. Analysis of bones from early Maya grave sites indicates that, although maize had already become a major component of the diet by this time, fish, meat from game animals, and other hunted or gathered foods still made up a major component of the diet. Along with the gradual development of agriculture, basic forms of pottery began to appear, with simple designs and some slipped vessels.

Around this time, the Olmec culture began to emerge in nearby Tabasco, granting the early Maya an important trading partner and beginning a period of prolonged contact that would have profound effects on Maya society and artistic production.

Southern Maya Area. By 2000 BCE, there were speakers of Mayan languages in the Southern Maya Area.



Complex Cities: Middle Preclassic (1000 BCE–400 BCE)

By around the year 1000 BCE, centuries of agricultural village life had begun to form the beginnings of a complex society, with an elite class, entrenched religious practices, and a military presence. Other developments of this era include the following:

- Prestige goods, such as obsidian mirrors and jade mosaics, began to appear, increasing the demand for more extensive trade with other language groups, including the Olmecs.
- Canals and irrigation schemes demanding coordinated human effort began to appear with increasing complexity and scale.
- Villages began to include central plazas and earthen mounds, occasionally enhanced by masonry. For instance, the site of La Blanca featured a central mound more than seventy-five feet tall. It contained a masonry fragment strongly resembling a head in the distinctive Olmec style. These plazas also suggest a developing religious and hierarchical social structure.
- Carved stone stele also began to appear during this period, adorned with portraits of rulers but still devoid of writing.
- Warfare appears to have intensified during this period, as evidenced by advanced weaponry, rulers beginning to be portrayed as warriors, and the appearance of mass graves and decapitated skeletons.

Beginning around 900 BCE, the Pacific coastal region fell under the dominance of the La Blanca statelet, which collapsed around 600 BCE, to be replaced by a polity centered around the El Ujuxte site. Another early statelet was probably based at the site of Chalchuapa, a town with extensive earthen mounds arranged around several plazas. However, it was likely ruled by the first true Mayan city-state, Kaminaljuyu.

Excavation site at Kaminaljuyu. Complex temples, stairways, and friezes illustrate the acme of this Preclassic city's power and influence.

Lying within modern-day Guatemala City on the shores of Lake Miraflores, Kaminaljuyu developed a powerful government structure that organized massive irrigation campaigns and built numerous intricately carved stone monuments to its rulers. These monuments clearly depict war captives and often show the rulers holding weapons. These images indicate the Kaminaljuyu polity engaged in active warfare and dominated the Guatemalan highlands for centuries.

Nakbe Palace. The ruins of a Middle Preclassic palace at Nakbe.

During this period, the Olmec culture reached its zenith, centered around the capital of La Venta in modern-day Tabasco near the early Maya centers. Speakers of a Mixe–Zoquean language, the Olmec are generally recognized as the first true civilization in the Americas. Their capital city of La Venta contains extensive earthworks and stone monuments, including several of the distinctive Olmec stone heads. The Olmec share several features with later Maya culture, including extensive jaguar worship, a diet dominated by maize, and the use of the cacao plant. Several words entered Mayan from a Mixe–Zoquean language, presumably due to Olmec influence. These words include the words “ajaw,” meaning “lord,” and “kakaw,” which has become the English words “cacao” and “chocolate. ” Most of these borrowings relate to prestige concepts and high culture, indicating that the Middle Preclassic Maya were deeply impressed and influenced by their northwestern neighbors.

Art and Language: Late Preclassic (400 BCE–100 CE)

Some of the earliest remaining examples of the complex writing system of the Maya appear from the 3rd century BCE. The glyph-based system represents complex concepts and often reflects the religious beliefs of the Maya, including jaguar worship, elites practicing blood letting rituals, and offerings to deities. The Maya also developed the concept of the number zero during this era. The appearance of an explicit number zero in their written records might be the first example of it worldwide. The appearance of this number also helped Mayan architects and priests make exact calculations of the stars and buildings for religious and social purposes.

The Late Preclassic also saw the rise of two powerful states that rival later Classic Mayan city-states for scale and monumental architecture—Kaminaljuyu in the highlands and El Mirador in the lowlands. Both cities display the continued refinement in stonework, artistic friezes, and architecture during this era.

City Collapse: Terminal Preclassic (100 CE–250 CE)

The Late or Terminal Preclassic murals found in San Bartolo reflect the profound relationship between the Olmec and Maya civilizations over hundreds of years, due to the striking artistic similarities. These murals also provide a window into the Terminal Preclassic sacrificial and inauguration rituals, such as bloodletting, that were practiced around 100 BCE. Elites were expected to perform these painful rituals in reverence to powerful deities.

Painted mural at San Bartolo from around 100 BCE. This colorful mural depicts a king practicing bloodletting, probably for an inauguration or other sacrificial purpose.

The collapse of the Preclassic Maya civilization remains a mystery, and little is known as to why the major cities were abandoned around 250 CE. However, there were actually two collapses, one at the end of the Preclassic and a more famous one at the end of the Classic. The Preclassic collapse refers to the systematic decline and abandoning of the major Preclassic cities, such as Kaminaljuyu and El Mirador around 100 CE. In fact, the Maya remained an essential part of the region. A number of theories have been proposed, but there is as little consensus as there is for the causes of the more famous collapse between the Classic and Postclassic periods.

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12.5: The Classic Period of the Maya

Learning Objectives

- Describe life, religion, and architecture in the Classic period

Key Points

- The Maya developed an agriculturally intensive, city-centered civilization consisting of numerous independent city-states of varying power and influence.
- The Maya civilization participated in long-distance trade with many other Mesoamerican cultures and established trade routes between city-states.
- The Maya used complex calendars to calculate religious, solar, and lunar cycles.
- The cause of the collapse of the Maya civilization is unknown.

Terms

Copán

An important city that boasted some of the most complex architecture from the Classic period of Maya history.

Tzolkin

This 365-day solar calendar utilized the movement of Earth around the Sun to calculate the year.

stelae

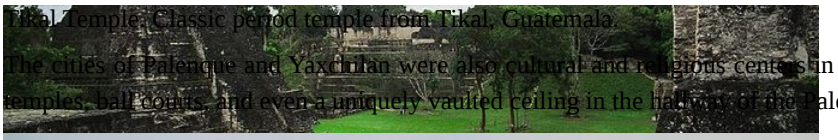
Carved stones depicting rulers with hieroglyphic texts describing their accomplishments.

The Classic period lasted from 250 to 900 CE. It saw a peak in large-scale construction and urbanism, the recording of monumental inscriptions, and significant intellectual and artistic development, particularly in the southern lowland regions. During this period the Maya population numbered in the millions, with many cities containing 50,000 to 120,00o people. The Maya developed an agriculturally intensive, city-centered civilization consisting of numerous independent city-states of varying power and influence. They created a multitude of kingdoms and small empires, built monumental palaces and temples, engaged in highly developed ceremonies, and developed an elaborate hieroglyphic writing system.

The political, economic, and culturally dominant “core” Maya units of the Classic Maya world system were located in the central lowlands, while the corresponding peripheral Maya units were found along the margins of the southern highland and northern lowland areas. The semi-peripheral (mediational) units generally took the form of trade and commercial centers. But as in all world systems, the Maya core centers shifted through time, starting out during Preclassic times in the southern highlands, moving to the central lowlands during the Classic period, and finally shifting to the northern peninsula during the Postclassic period.

Monuments

The most notable monuments are the stepped pyramids the Maya built in their religious centers and the accompanying palaces of their rulers. The palace at Cancuén is the largest in the Maya area, but the site has no pyramids. On the other hand, cities like Tikal and Copán illustrate the wealth of architectural accomplishments during these prolific centuries. Copán came to its full power between the 6th and 8th centuries, and included massive temples and carvings that illustrate the full power of its ruling, and often merciless, emperors.



Tikal Temple. Classic period temple from Tikal, Guatemala.

The cities of Palenque and Yaxchilan were also cultural and religious centers in the southeastern Maya region, and included large temples, ball courts, and even a uniquely vaulted ceiling in the hallway of the Palenque Palace.

The Palenque Palace and aqueduct. Cities like Palenque boasted some of the most refined architectural works in the Classic period of Maya culture.

Other important archaeological remains include the carved stone slabs usually called stelae (the Maya called them tetun, or “tree-stones”), which depict rulers along with hieroglyphic texts describing their genealogy, military victories, and other accomplishments.

Maya mask. Stucco frieze from Placeres, Campeche. Early Classic period (c. 250–600 CE).

Trade

The political relationship between Classic Maya city-states has been likened to the relationships between city-states in Classical Greece and Renaissance Italy. Some cities were linked to each other by straight limestone causeways, known as sacbeob. Whether the exact function of these roads was commercial, political, or religious has not been determined.

The Maya civilization participated in long distance trade with many other Mesoamerican cultures, including Teotihuacan, the Zapotec, and other groups in central and gulf-coast Mexico. In addition, they traded with more distant, non-Mesoamerican groups,

such as the Taínos of the Caribbean islands. Archeologists have also found gold from Panama in the Sacred Cenote of Chichen Itza. Important trade goods included:

- Cacao
- Salt
- Seashells
- Jade
- Obsidian

Calendars and Religion

The Maya utilized complex mathematical and astronomical calculations to build their monuments and conceptualize the cosmography of their religion. Each of the four directions represented specific deities, colors, and elements. The underworld, the cosmos, and the great tree of life at the center of the world all played their part in how buildings were built and when feasts or sacrifices were practiced. Ancestors and deities helped weave the various levels of existence together through ritual, sacrifice, and measured solar years.

The Maya developed a mathematical system that is strikingly similar to the Olmec traditions. The Maya also linked this complex system to the deity Itzamna. This deity was believed to have brought much of Maya culture to Earth. A 260-day calendar (Tzolkin) was combined with the 365-day solar calendar (Haab') to create a calendar round. This calendar round would take fifty-two solar years to return to the original first date. The Tzolkin calendar was used to calculate exact religious festival days. It utilized twenty named days that repeated thirteen times in that calendar year. The solar calendar (Haab') is very similar to the modern solar calendar year that uses Earth's orbit around the Sun to measure time. The Maya believed there were five chaotic days at the end of the solar year that allowed the portals between worlds to open up, known as Wayeb'.

A Classic period Maya calendar. Each symbol represents a specific day within the calendar. When the Tzolkin and Haab' calendar's are combined they create a fifty-two-year solar calendar.

These calendars were recorded utilizing specific symbols for each day in the two central cycles. Calendrical stones were employed to carefully follow the movement of the solar and religious years. Although less commonly used, the Maya also employed a long count calendar that calculated dates hundreds of years in the future. They also inscribed a lengthier 819-day calendar on many religious temples throughout the region that most likely coincided with important religious days.

Decline

The Classic Maya Collapse refers to the decline of the Maya Classic Period and abandonment of the Classic Period Maya cities of the southern Maya lowlands of Mesoamerica between the 8th and 9th centuries. This should not be confused with the collapse of

the Preclassic Maya in the 2nd century CE. The Classic Period of Mesoamerican chronology is generally defined as the period from 300 to 900 CE, the last 100 years of which, from 800 to 900 CE, are frequently referred to as the Terminal Classic.

It has been hypothesized that the decline of the Maya is related to the collapse of their intricate trade systems, especially those connected to the central Mexican city of Teotihuacán. Before there was a greater knowledge of the chronology of Mesoamerica, Teotihuacan was believed to have fallen during 700–750 CE, forcing the "restructuring of economic relations throughout highland Mesoamerica and the Gulf Coast." This remaking of relationships between civilizations would have then given the collapse of the Classic Maya a slightly later date. However, it is now believed that the strongest Teotihuacan influence was during the 4th and 5th centuries. In addition, the civilization of Teotihuacan started to lose its power, and maybe even abandoned the city, during 600–650 CE. The Maya civilizations are now thought to have lived on, and also prospered, perhaps for another century after the fall of Teotihuacano influence.

The Classic Maya Collapse is one of the biggest mysteries in archaeology. The classic Maya urban centers of the southern lowlands, among them Palenque, Copán, Tikal, Calakmul, and many others, went into decline during the 8th and 9th centuries and were abandoned shortly thereafter. Some 88 different theories, or variations of theories, attempting to explain the Classic Maya Collapse have been identified. From climate change, to deforestation, to lack of action by Maya kings, there is no universally accepted collapse theory, although drought is gaining momentum as the leading explanation.

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12.6: The Decline of the Maya

Learning Objectives

- Explain what happened to the structure of the Maya Empire in the Postclassic period

Key Points

- The Maya cities of the northern lowlands in Yucatán continued to flourish.
- The center of power shifted to the northern peninsula.
- The Postclassic period was a time of technological advancement in areas of architecture, engineering, and weaponry.
- The Spanish conquest of the Maya began in the 16th century, but lasted close to 150 years.
- Mayan languages, agricultural practices, and familial cultures still exist in parts of Chiapas and Guatemala.

Terms

Yucatán

A geographic area in the south of modern day Mexico near Belize.

Codex

A book containing religious and cultural information written in the Mayan script. Only three of these books remain in the world.

Mayapan

The cultural capital of the Maya culture during the Postclassic period. It was at its height between 1220 and 1440 CE.

The period after the second collapse of the Maya Empire (900 CE–1600 CE) is called the Postclassic period. The center of power shifted from the central lowlands to the northern peninsula as populations most likely searched for reliable water resources, along with greater social stability.

The Maya cities of the northern lowlands in Yucatán continued to flourish; some of the important sites in this era were Chichén Itzá, Uxmal, Edzná, and Coba. A typical Classic Maya polity was a small hierarchical state (called an *ajawil*, *ajawlel*, or *ajawlil*) headed by a hereditary ruler known as an *ajaw* (later *k'uhul ajaw*). However, the Postclassic period generally saw the widespread abandonment of once-thriving sites as populations gathered closer to water sources. Warfare most likely caused populations in long-inhabited religious cities, like Kuminaljuyu, to be abandoned in favor of smaller, hilltop settlements that had a better advantage against warring factions.

El Castillo (pyramid of Kukulcán) in Chichén Itzá. Built by the pre-Columbian Maya civilization sometime between the 9th and 12th centuries CE, El Castillo served as a temple to the god Kukulkan, the Yucatec Maya Feathered Serpent deity closely related to the god Quetzalcoatl known to the Aztecs and other central Mexican cultures of the Postclassic period.

Postclassic Cities

Maya cities during this era were dispersed settlements, often centered around the temples or palaces of a ruling dynasty or elite in that particular area. Cities remained the locales of administrative duties and royal religious practices, and the sites where luxury items were created and consumed. City centers also provided the sacred space for privileged nobles to approach the holy ruler and the places where aesthetic values of the high culture were formulated and disseminated and where aesthetic items were consumed. These more established cities were the self-proclaimed centers of social, moral, and cosmic order.

If a royal court fell out of favor with the people, as in the well-documented cases of Piedras Negras or Copan, this fall from power would cause the inevitable "death" and abandonment of the associated settlement. After the decline of the ruling dynasties of Chichén Itzá and Uxmal, Mayapan became the most important cultural site until about 1450 CE. This city's name may be the source of the word "Maya," which had a more geographically restricted meaning in Yucatec and colonial Spanish. The name only grew to its current meaning in the 19th and 20th centuries. The area degenerated into competing city-states until the Spanish arrived in the Yucatán and shifted the power dynamics.

Certain smaller Maya groups, such as the Itza Maya, Ko'woj, and Yalain of Central Peten, survived the collapse in the Postclassic period in small numbers. By around 1250 CE these groups had reconstituted themselves to form competing city-states. The Itza maintained their capital at Tayasal (also known as Noh Petén), an archaeological site thought to underlay the modern city of Flores, Guatemala, on Lake Petén Itzá. The Ko'woj had their capital at Zacpeten. Though less visible during this era, Postclassic Maya states also continued to survive in the southern highlands.

Artistry, Architecture, and Religion

The Postclassic period is often viewed as a period of cultural decline. However, it was a time of technological advancement in areas of architecture, engineering, and weaponry. Metallurgy came into use for jewelry and the development of some tools utilizing new metal alloys and metalworking techniques that developed within a few centuries. And although some of the classic cities had been abandoned after 900 CE, architecture continued to develop and thrive in newly flourishing city-states, such as Mayapan. Religious and royal architecture retained themes of death, rebirth, natural resources, and the afterlife in their motifs and designs. Ballcourts, walkways, waterways, pyramids, and temples from the Classic period continued to play essential roles in the hierarchical world of Maya city-states.

A religious building at Mayapan along the northern Yucatán Peninsula. Curved walls, complex carvings, and layered platforms illustrate the continued prevalence of architecture in Maya culture and religion during the Postclassic period.

Maya religion continued to be centered around the worship of male ancestors. These patrilineal intermediaries could vouch for mortals in the physical world from their position in the afterlife. Archeological evidence shows that deceased relatives were buried

under the floor of family homes. Royal dynasties built pyramids in order to bury their ancestors. This patrilineal form of worship was used by some royal dynasties in order to justify their right to rule. The afterlife was complex, and included thirteen levels in heaven and nine levels in the underworld, which had to be navigated by an initiated priesthood, ancestors, and powerful deities.

Precise food preparation, offerings, and astronomical predictions were all required for religious practices. Powerful deities that often represented natural elements, such as jaguars, rain, and hummingbirds, needed to be placated with offerings and prayers regularly. Many of the motifs on large pyramids and temples of the royal dynasties reflect the worship of both deities and patrilineal ancestors and provide a window into the daily practices of this culture before the arrival of Spanish forces.

The Colonial Period

Shortly after their first expeditions to the region in the 16th century, the Spanish attempted to subjugate the Maya polities several times. The Maya leaders and people were understandably hostile towards the Spanish crown, and utilized bows and arrows, spears, and padded armor in defense of their city-states. The Spanish campaign, sometimes termed “The Spanish Conquest of Yucatán,” would prove to be a lengthy and dangerous exercise for the invaders from the outset, and it would take some 170 years and tens of thousands of Indian auxiliaries before the Spanish established substantive control over all Maya lands.

Pages from the Paris Codex. One of three surviving examples of Mayan writing, the Paris Codex offers keen insights into religious and patrilineal traditions before the Spanish invasion.

Unlike the Aztec and Inca Empires, there was no single Maya political center during the Postclassic period that, once overthrown, would hasten the end of collective resistance from the indigenous peoples. Instead, Spanish forces needed to subdue the numerous independent Maya polities almost one by one, many of which kept up a fierce resistance. Myths of gold and precious metals motivated many Spanish forces to capture and dominate the Maya lands. However, the Yucatán does not offer rich mining opportunities, and some areas were difficult to navigate because of the dense jungle environment.

As the battle over control of the region waged on, the Spanish church and government officials destroyed the vast majority of Maya texts and, with them, a large swath of knowledge about Maya writing and language. Fortunately, three of the pre-Columbian books dated to the Postclassic period survived the Spanish invasion and destruction of Maya culture. These are known as the Madrid Codex, the Dresden Codex, and the Paris Codex. The last Maya states (and the last indigenous holdouts from Spanish control in the

Americas)—the Itza polity of Tayasal and the Ko'woj city of Zacpeten—remained independent of the Spanish until late in the 17th century. They were finally subdued by the Spanish in 1697 after many casualties.

Maya Today

Although Spanish weaponry, administration, and practices became much more dominant throughout Mesoamerica by the 17th century and onward, the Maya people persisted, along with many of their essential traditions. Today, in remote parts of Guatemala and Chiapas, similar familial configurations, uses of the 260-day Maya calendar, and agricultural practices continue to shape families of descendants. Millions of Mayan-language speakers inhabit their ancestral lands and keep these languages and traditions alive.

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12.7: The Toltecs

Learning Objectives

- Identify the Toltecs

Key Points

- Much of what is known about the Toltecs is based on what has been learned about the Aztecs.
- Historicists believe that Aztec accounts of the Toltecs can be trusted as historical sources.
- Others believe that Aztec accounts are too shrouded in myth to be trusted as sources of truth.
- Certain Mayan sites, such as Chichén Itzá, share distinctive archeological traits with religious monuments and buildings in Tula.

Terms

Quetzalcoatl

The feathered serpent deity that appears in carvings at Tula and also in much later buildings and mythology in the Aztec Empire.

Historicist

A scholar that utilizes Aztec accounts of Toltec culture to piece together the history of the Toltec people.

Atlantean figures

Gigantic stone statues of Toltec warriors that only appear at the sites of Tula, Chichén Itzá, and Potrero Nuevo.

The Toltec culture is an archaeological Mesoamerican culture that dominated a state centered in Tula in the early Postclassic period of Mesoamerican chronology (c. 800–1000 CE). Much of what is known about the Toltecs is based on what has been learned about the Aztecs, another Mesoamerican culture that postdated the Toltecs and admired the Toltecs as predecessors. Since so much of what remains on record about the Toltecs may have been tainted by Aztec glorification and mythology in the 14th through 16th centuries, it is difficult to parse out the true history.

The later Aztec culture saw the Toltecs as their intellectual and cultural predecessors, and described Toltec culture emanating from Tōllān [ˈtoːlːaːn] (Nahuatl for Tula) as the epitome of civilization. Indeed, in the Nahuatl language the word “Tōltēcatl” [toːl ˈteːka͡t] (singular) or “Tōltēcah” [toːlˈteːkaʔ] (plural) came to take on the meaning “artisan.” The Aztec oral and pictographic tradition also described the history of the Toltec Empire, giving lists of rulers and their exploits.

Among modern scholars it is a matter of debate whether the Aztec narratives of Toltec history should be given credence as descriptions of actual historical events. While all scholars acknowledge that there is a large mythological part of the narrative, some maintain that by using a critical comparative method some level of historicity can be salvaged from the sources. Others maintain that continued analysis of the narratives as sources of actual history is futile and hinders access to actual knowledge of the culture.

Another controversy relating to the Toltecs remains how best to understand the reasons behind the perceived similarities in architecture and iconography between the archaeological site of Tula and the Mayan site of Chichén Itzá. No consensus has yet emerged about the degree or direction of influence between these two sites.

Toltec pyramid at Tula, Hidalgo. Similarities to the pyramid at Chichén Itzá can be seen, including the sloped shape and external steps.

Historicists

The historicists believe that there is truth within the stories told by the Aztecs. Theories abound about the role the Toltecs actually played in Mesoamerica, from the central Mexican valleys all the way down to certain Maya city-states.

- Désiré Charnay, the first archaeologist to work at Tula, Hidalgo, defended the historicist views based on his impression of the Toltec capital. He was the first to note similarities in architectural styles between Tula and Chichén Itzá, a famous Maya archeological site. This led him to posit the theory that Chichén Itzá had been violently taken over by a Toltec military force under the leadership of Kukulcan.
- Following Charnay, the term “Toltec” has since been associated with the influx of certain Central Mexican cultural traits into the Maya sphere of dominance during the late Classic and early Postclassic periods. The Postclassic Maya civilizations of Chichén Itzá, Mayapán, and the Guatemalan highlands have been referred to as “Toltecized” or “Mexicanized” Mayas.
- Some 20th-century historicist scholars, such as David Carrasco, Miguel León Portilla, Nigel Davies and H. B. Nicholson, argued that the Toltecs were a distinct ethnic group. This school of thought connected the “Toltecs” to the archaeological site of Tula, which was taken to be the Tollan of Aztec myth.
- Historicists supportive of the ethnic group theory also argue that much of central Mexico was possibly dominated by a “Toltec empire” between the 10th and 12th centuries CE. One possible clue they point to is that the Aztecs referred to several Mexican city-states as Tollan, “Place of Reeds,” such as “Tollan Chololllan.”
- Archaeologist Laurette Sejourné, followed by the historian Enrique Florescano, argued that the “original” Tollan was probably Teotihuacán.

Anti-Historicist

On the other side of the argument lie those who believe that the Aztec stories are clouded by myth and cannot be taken as accurate accounts of the Toltec civilization. Multiple theories place the Toltec and the site of Tula within a more general framework:

- Some scholars argue that the Toltec era is best considered the fourth of the five Aztec mythical “suns” or ages. This fourth sun immediately precedes the fifth sun of the Aztec people, which was prophesied to be presided over by Quetzalcoatl.
- Some researchers argue that the only historically reliable data in the Aztec chronicles are the names of some rulers and possibly some of the conquests ascribed to them.
- Skeptics argue that the ancient city of Teotihuacán and the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan were much more influential sites for Mesoamerican culture than Tula. However, this skeptical school of thought acknowledges that Tula still contributed to central Mexican cultural heritage in unique ways.
- Recent scholarship does not frame Tula, Hidalgo, as the capital of the Toltecs as described in the Aztec accounts. Rather, it takes “Toltec” to mean simply an inhabitant of Tula during its apogee. Separating the term “Toltec” from those of the Aztec accounts,

it attempts to find archaeological clues to the ethnicity, history, and social organization of the inhabitants of the site of Tula.

Archeology and Clues

While the residents of the site of Tula, Hidalgo, remain a mysterious group, and their ethnic and social dynamics are obscure, they left behind substantial archeological records that modern scholars have attempted to parse through.

Stone carving of Quetzalcoatl. This powerful feathered serpent deity has deep mythological roots in Aztec stories. He also appears regularly in carvings at Tula.

The city of Tula boasts 15-foot-tall warrior statues carved from stone. These same Atlantean figures, as they are called, also appear at the Mayan sites of Chichén Itzá and Potrero Nuevo.

Toltec warrior statues at Tula. These stone statues highlight the artistic style of the city of Tula. They also connect this city with other cultural sites in Mesoamerica.

Tula also boasts intricate carvings of eagles, jaguars, hummingbirds, and butterflies, all of which the Aztec Empire used prolifically. Furthermore, the site of Tula includes two ball courts for the religious rubber ball game that appears in many Mesoamerican civilizations. Along with these distinct relics, the Toltecs also built distinctive pyramids that mirror other sites, such as Chichén Itzá.

Many questions still remain about the inhabitants of this site, including questions about their origin and their demise. This site also raises questions about the flow of influence between multiple Mesoamerican cultures before the rise of the Aztec Empire.

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12.8: The Aztec People

Learning Objectives

- Describe distinguishing factors of Aztec life

Key Points

- The Aztec “empire” was more of a collection of city-states than an empire.
- Mexico City today is built on the ruins of Tenochtitlan, which was the capital of the Aztec empire.
- Agriculture played a key role in the Aztec civilization. Irrigation and floating garden beds allowed people to grow several crops a year.

Terms

altepetl

Small, mostly independent city-states that often paid tribute to the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan.

Nahuatl

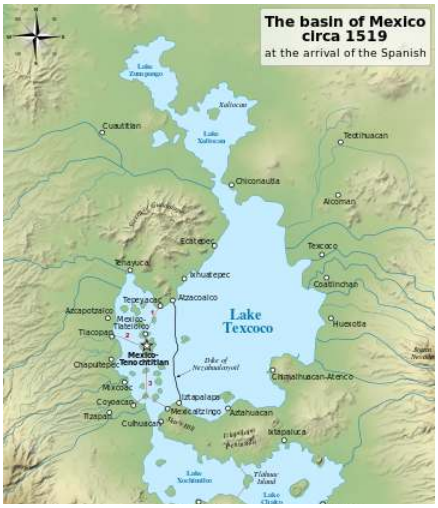
The language spoken by the Mexica people who made up the Aztec Triple Alliance, as well as many city-states throughout the region.

flower wars

The form of ritual war where warriors from the Triple Alliance fought with enemy Nahua city-states.

The Aztecs were a pre-Columbian Mesoamerican people of Central Mexico in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. They called themselves Mexica. The Republic of Mexico and its capital, Mexico City, derive their names from the word “Mexica.” The capital of the Aztec empire was Tenochtitlan, built on a raised island in Lake Texcoco. Modern Mexico City is built on the ruins of Tenochtitlan.

From the 13th century, the Valley of Mexico was the heart of Aztec civilization; here the capital of the Aztec Triple Alliance, the city of Tenochtitlan, was built upon raised islets in Lake Texcoco. The Triple Alliance was comprised of Tenochtitlan along with their main allies of Acolhuas of Texcoco and Tepanecs of Tlacopan. They formed a tributary empire expanding its political hegemony far beyond the Valley of Mexico, conquering other city-states throughout Mesoamerica. At its pinnacle, Aztec culture had rich and complex mythological and religious traditions, and reached remarkable architectural and artistic accomplishments. In 1521 Hernán Cortés, along with a large number of Nahuatl-speaking indigenous allies, conquered Tenochtitlan and defeated the Aztec Triple Alliance under the leadership of Hueyi Tlatoani Moctezuma II. Subsequently the Spanish founded the new settlement of Mexico City on the site of the ruined Aztec capital, from where they proceeded to colonize Central America.



Basin in the Valley of Mexico. Circa 1519, at the time of the arrival of the Spanish.

Politics

The Aztec empire was an example of an empire that ruled by indirect means. Like most European empires, it was ethnically very diverse, but unlike most European empires, it was more of a system of tribute than a single system of government. Although the form of government is often referred to as an empire, in fact most areas within the empire were organized as city-states, known as “altepetl” in Nahuatl. These were small polities ruled by a king (tlatoani) from a legitimate dynasty.

Two of the primary architects of the Aztec empire were the half-brothers Tlacaelel and Montezuma I, nephews of Itzcoatl. Moctezuma I succeeded Itzcoatl as Hueyi Tlatoani (or king) in 1440. Although he was also offered the opportunity to be tlatoani, Tlacaelel preferred to operate as the power behind the throne. Tlacaelel focused on reforming the Aztec state and religious practices. According to some sources, he ordered the burning of most of the extant Aztec books, claiming that they contained lies. He thereupon rewrote the history of the Aztec people, thus creating a common awareness of history for the Aztecs. This rewriting led directly to the curriculum taught to scholars, and promoted the belief that the Aztecs were always a powerful and mythic nation —forgetting forever a possible true history of modest origins. One component of this reform was the institution of ritual war (the flower wars) as a way to have trained warriors, and the necessity of constant sacrifices to keep the Sun moving.

Economics

The Aztec economy can be divided into a political sector, under the control of nobles and kings, and a commercial sector that operated independently of the political sector. The political sector of the economy centered on the control of land and labor by kings and nobles. Nobles owned all land, and commoners got access to farmland and other fields through a variety of arrangements, from rental through sharecropping to serf-like labor and slavery. These payments from commoners to nobles supported both the lavish lifestyles of the high nobility and the finances of city-states. Many luxury goods were produced for consumption by nobles. The producers of featherwork, sculptures, jewelry, and other luxury items were full-time commoner specialists who worked for noble patrons.

Several forms of money were in circulation, most notably the cacao bean. These beans could be used to buy food, staples, and cloth. Around thirty beans would purchase a rabbit, while one father was recorded as selling his daughter for around 200 cacao beans. The Aztec rulers also maintained complex road systems with regular stops to rest and eat every ten miles or so. Couriers walked these roads regularly to ensure they were in good working order and to bring news back to Tenochtitlan.

Aztec headdress. The feathers most likely came from a tropical rainforest far away, and the headdress was probably owned by an elite or noble.

Trade also formed a central part of Aztec life. While local commoners regularly paid tribute to the nobles a few times a year, there was also extensive trade with other regions in Mesoamerica. Archeological evidence shows that jade, obsidian, feathers, and shells

reached the capital through established trade routes. Rulers and nobles enjoyed wearing these more exotic goods and having them fashioned into expressive headdresses and jewelry.

Architecture and Agriculture

The capital of Tenochtitlan was divided into four even sections called *campans*. All of these sections were interlaced together with a series of canals that allowed for easy transportation throughout the islets of Lake Texcoco. Commoner housing was usually built of reeds or wood, while noble houses and religious sites were constructed from stone.

Agriculture played a large part in the economy and society of the Aztecs. They used dams to implement irrigation techniques in the valleys. They also implemented a raised bed gardening technique by layering mud and plant vegetation in the lake in order to create moist gardens. These raised beds were called *chinampas*. These extremely fertile beds could harvest seven different crops each year. Some of the most essential crops in Aztec agriculture included:

- Avocados
- Beans
- Squash
- Sweet Potatoes
- Maize
- Tomatoes
- Amarinth
- Chilies
- Cotton
- Cacao beans

Most farming occurred outside of the busy heart of Tenochtitlan. However, each family generally had a garden where they could grow maize, fruits, herbs, and medicinal plants on a smaller scale.

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12.9: Aztec Religion

Learning Objectives

- Outline the key points of Aztec religious practices and beliefs

Key Points

- The Aztec religion incorporated deities from multiple cultures into its pantheon.
- Ritual sacrifice played an essential role in the religious practice of the Aztecs, and they believed it ensured the sun would rise again and crops would grow.
- The Aztecs utilized a 365-day calendar split into eighteen months based on agricultural traditions and different deities.

Terms

Huitzilopochtli

The left-handed hummingbird god that mythically founded Tenochtitlan and represented war and the sun.

Toxcatl

A month in the Aztec sun calendar that represented drought and ritual renewal.

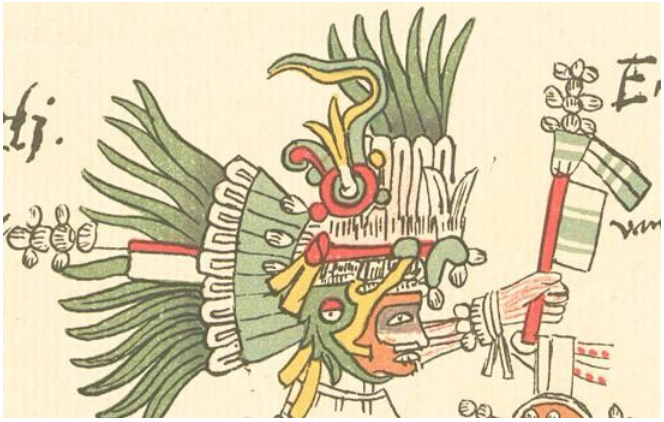
Mesoamerican ballgame

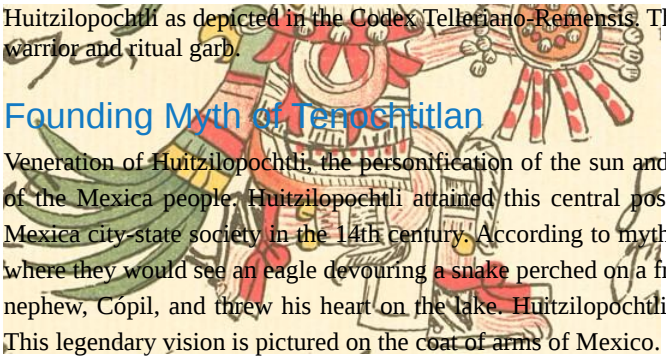
This ritual practice involved a rubber ball that the players hit with their elbows, knees, and hips, and tried to get through a small hoop in a special court.

The Aztecs had at least two manifestations of the supernatural: tētl and tēixiptla. Tētl, which the Spaniards and European scholars routinely mistranslated as “god” or “demon,” referred rather to an impersonal, mysterious force that permeated the world. Tēixiptla, by contrast, denoted the physical representations (“idols,” statues, and figurines) of the tētl as well as the human cultic activity surrounding this physical representation.

The Aztec religious cosmology included the physical earth plane, where humans lived, the underworld (or land of the dead), and the realm of the sky. Due to the flexible imperial political structure, a large pantheon of gods was incorporated into the larger cultural religious traditions. The Aztecs also worshipped deities that were central to older Mesoamerican cultures, such as the Olmecs. Some of the most central deities that the Aztecs paid homage to included:

- Huitzilopochtli – The “left-handed hummingbird” god was the god of war and the sun and also the founder of Tenochtitlan.
- Quetzalcoatl – The feathered serpent god that represented the morning star, wind, and life.
- Tlaloc – The rain and storm god.
- Mixcoatl – The “cloud serpent” god that was incorporated into Aztec belief and represented war.
- Xipe Totec – The flayed god that was associated with fertility. This deity was also incorporated from cultures under the Aztec Triple Alliance umbrella.





Huitzilopochtli as depicted in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis. This depiction of the war and sun god shows him in all of his warrior and ritual garb.

Founding Myth of Tenochtitlan

Veneration of Huitzilopochtli, the personification of the sun and of war, was central to the religious, social, and political practices of the Mexica people. Huitzilopochtli attained this central position after the founding of Tenochtitlan and the formation of the Mexica city-state society in the 14th century. According to myth, Huitzilopochtli directed the wanderers to found a city on the site where they would see an eagle devouring a snake perched on a fruit-bearing nopal cactus. (It was said that Huitzilopochtli killed his nephew, Cópil, and threw his heart on the lake. Huitzilopochtli honoured Cópil by causing a cactus to grow over Cópil's heart.) This legendary vision is pictured on the coat of arms of Mexico.

Ritual and Sacrifice

Like all other Mesoamerican cultures, the Aztecs played a variant of the Mesoamerican ballgame, named "tlachtli" or "ollamaliztli" in Nahuatl. The game was played with a ball of solid rubber, called an olli. The players hit the ball with their hips, knees, and elbows, and had to pass the ball through a stone ring to automatically win. The practice of the ballgame carried religious and mythological meanings and also served as sport. Many times players of the game were captured during the famous Aztec flower wars with neighboring rivals. Losers of the game were often ritually sacrificed as an homage to the gods.

A depiction of human sacrifice in the Codex Magliabechiano. This Spanish rendering of human sacrifices reflects the outsider's view of these ritual traditions.

While human sacrifice was practiced throughout Mesoamerica, the Aztecs, if their own accounts are to be believed, brought this practice to an unprecedented level. For example, for the reconsecration of the Great Pyramid of Tenochtitlan in 1487, the Aztecs reported that they sacrificed 80,400 prisoners over the course of four days, reportedly by Ahuitzotl, the Great Speaker himself. This number, however, is not universally accepted. Accounts by the Tlaxcaltecas, the primary enemy of the Aztecs at the time of the Spanish Conquest, show that at least some of them considered it an honor to be sacrificed. In one legend, the warrior Tlahuicole

was freed by the Aztecs but eventually returned of his own volition to die in ritual sacrifice. Tlaxcala also practiced the human sacrifice of captured Aztec citizens.

Everyone was affected by human sacrifice, and it should be considered in the context of the religious cosmology of the Aztec people. It was considered necessary in order for the world to continue and be reborn each new day. Death and ritual blood sacrifice ensured the sun would rise again and crops would continue to grow. Not only were captives and warriors sacrificed, but nobles would often practice ritual bloodletting during certain sacred days of the year. Every level of Aztec society was affected by the belief in the human responsibility to pay homage to the gods, and anyone could serve as a sacrificial offering.

Priests and Religious Architecture

A noble priest class played an integral role in the religious worship and sacrifices of Aztec society. They were responsible for collecting tributes and ensuring there were enough goods for sacrificial ceremonies. They also trained young men to impersonate various deities for an entire year before being sacrificed on a specific day. These priests were respected by all of society and were also responsible for practicing ritual bloodletting on themselves at regular intervals. Priests could come from the noble or common classes, but they would receive their training at different schools and perform different functions.

Aztec pyramid of St. Cecilia Acatitlan. This pyramid is typical of Aztec religious architecture. Priests would have stood on the platform at the top to perform religious duties and sacrifices.

Priests performed rituals from special temples and religious houses. The temples were generally huge pyramidal structures that were covered over with a new surface every fifty-two years, meaning some pyramids were gigantic in scale. These feats of architectural display were the sites of large sacrificial offerings and festivals, where Spanish reports said blood would run down the steps of the pyramids. The priests often performed smaller daily rituals in small, dark temple houses where incense and images of important gods were displayed.

Aztec Calendar

Aztec sun calendar. This calendar shows the eighteen months circling around a representation of the sun.

The Aztecs based their calendar on the sun and utilized a 365-day religious calendar. It was split into eighteen twenty-day months, and each month had its own religious, and often agricultural, theme. For example, the late winter month Altcahualo fell between February 14 and March 5 and represented a time of sowing crops and fertility. The month Toxcatl occurred in May and was a time of drought in the central valley. The Aztecs saw this month as a time of renewal, and it involved a large festival where a young man that had been impersonating the god Tezcatlipoca for a full year would be sacrificed.

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12.10: The Aztec in the Colonial Period

Learning Objectives

- Describe the role of the Confederacy of Tlaxcala in the fall of the Aztec empire

Key Points

- The arrival of Hernándo Cortés in 1519 marked the beginning of the end for the Aztec empire.
- Cortés and the Confederacy of Tlaxcala allied to militarily defeat the Aztecs, who were further weakened by a smallpox epidemic in 1520–1521 and subsequent outbreaks.
- Aztec hegemonic structure was re-appropriated to serve the Spanish colonialists.
- Some aspects of Aztec culture, such as the language, survive.

Terms

Tlaxcalan

The people of a pre-Columbian city and state in Central Mexico, who helped Cortés conquer the Aztec empire.

Bartolomé de las Casas

(Seville, c. 1484– Madrid, July 18, 1566) Sixteenth-century Spanish historian, social reformer, and Dominican friar. Arriving as one of the first European settlers in the Americas, he participated in the atrocities committed against the Native Americans by the Spanish colonists. In 1515, he reformed his views and advocated before King Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, on behalf of rights for the natives.

Overview

The Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire was one of the most significant events in the Spanish colonization of the Americas. The Spanish campaign began in February 1519, and was declared victorious on August 13, 1521, when a coalition army of Spanish forces and native Tlaxcalan warriors led by Hernándo Cortés and Xicotencatl the Younger captured the emperor Cuauhtemoc and Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec empire. The fall of the Aztec empire was the key event in the formation of the Spanish overseas empire, with New Spain, which later became Mexico, a major component.

Hernándo Cortés

Conquest of the Aztecs

During the campaign, Cortés was given support from a number of tributaries and rivals of the Aztecs, including the Totonacs and the Tlaxcaltecas, Texcocans, and other city-states particularly bordering Lake Texcoco. In their advance, the allies were tricked and ambushed several times by the people they encountered. After eight months of battles and negotiations, which overcame the diplomatic resistance of the Aztec emperor Moctezuma II to his visit, Cortés arrived in Tenochtitlan on November 8, 1519, where he was welcomed by Moctezuma and took up residence. When news reached Cortés of the death of several of his men during the

Aztec attack on the Totonacs in Veracruz, he took the opportunity to take Moctezuma captive; Moctezuma allowed himself to be captured as a diplomatic gesture. Capturing the indigenous ruler was standard operating procedure for Spaniards in their expansion in the Caribbean, so capturing Moctezuma had considerable precedent.

When Cortés left Tenochtitlan to return to the coast and deal with the expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez, Pedro de Alvarado was left in charge. Alvarado allowed a significant Aztec feast to be celebrated in Tenochtitlan, and in the pattern of the earlier massacre in Cholula closed off the square and massacred the celebrating Aztec noblemen. The biography of Cortés by Francisco López de Gómara contains a description of the massacre. The Alvarado massacre at the Main Temple of Tenochtitlan precipitated rebellion by the population of the city. When the captured emperor Moctezuma II, now seen as a mere puppet of the invading Spaniards, attempted to calm the outraged populace, he was killed by a projectile. Cortés, who by then had returned to Tenochtitlan, and his men fled the capital city during the Noche Triste in June 1520. The Spanish, Tlaxcalans, and reinforcements returned a year later, on August 13, 1521, to a civilization that had been wiped out by famine and smallpox. This made it easier to conquer the remaining Aztecs.

Aftermath

To reward Spaniards who participated in the conquest of what is now contemporary Mexico, the Spanish crown authorized grants of native labor in particular indigenous communities via the encomienda. The indigenous were not slaves, chattel bought and sold or removed from their home community, but the system was one of forced labor. The indigenous of Central Mexico had practices rendering labor and tribute products to their polity's elites, and those elites to the Mexica overlords in Tenochtitlan, so the Spanish system of encomienda was built on pre-existing patterns. The Spanish conquerors in Mexico during the early colonial era lived off the labor of the indigenous. Due to some horrifying instances of abuse against the indigenous peoples, Bishop Bartolomé de las Casas suggested importing black slaves to replace them (he later repented when he saw the even worse treatment given to the black slaves).

Nevertheless, Aztec culture survives today. Modern-day Mexico City is built on the site of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan. There are still 1.5 million people who speak the Aztec language of Nahuatl, and part of the Mexica migration story appears on the Mexican flag.

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12.11: The Moche

Learning Objectives

- Identify key aspects of Moche life

Key Points

- The Moche were less of a state or empire and more of a society—they lived in a general geographic area and shared cultural values, but were not governed under a uniform political system.
- The Moche practiced a number of religious rituals, some of which involved human sacrifice.
- Moche art appears in a variety of mediums, such as ceramics, architecture, and textiles, and lends insight into their beliefs and culture.

Terms

Decapitator

A Moche icon, usually depicted as a spider, and associated with ritual sacrifices and the elements of land, air, and water.

Moche

A city in modern-day Peru, which is also where the Moche culture was centered.

vicuña

A wild South American camelid that lives in the high alpine areas of the Andes. It is a relative of the llama, and is now believed to be the wild ancestor of domesticated alpacas, which are raised for their coats.

Huaca

A large, pyramid-like structure made of adobe bricks and used as a palace, ritual site, temple, and administrative center.

The Moche (also known as the Early Chimú or Mochica) lived in what is modern-day Peru, near Moche and Trujillo. Their civilization lasted from approximately 100 to 800 CE. The Moche shared cultural values and social structures within a distinct geographical region. However, scholars suggest this civilization functioned as individual city-states, sharing similar cultural elite classes, rather than as an empire or a single political system.

The Moche cultural sphere centered around several valleys along the north coast of Peru, and occupied 250 miles of desert coastline that extended up to 50 miles inland. Moche society was agriculturally based, but because of the arid climate, they invested heavily in the construction of a network of irrigation canals. These ornate canals diverted river water to crops across the region. The Moche are also noted for their expansive ceremonial architecture (*huacas*), elaborately painted ceramics, and woven textiles.

Religion

Both iconography and the discovery of human skeletons in ritual contexts seem to indicate that human sacrifice played a significant part in Moche religious practices. These rites appear to have involved the elite, both ruling men and women, as key actors in an elaborate spectacle. These rituals included:

- Costumed participants, including elite priests and priestesses, many of which also ruled the city-states;
- Monumental settings, including the pyramid-like structures called *huacas*; and
- Likely the consumption of human blood and possibly flesh as a part of a renewal ritual.

The Moche may have also held and tortured the victims for several weeks before sacrificing them, with the intent of deliberately drawing blood. The sacrifices may have been associated with rites of ancestral renewal and agricultural fertility.

Moche iconography features a figure, which scholars have nicknamed the “Decapitator” or Ai Apaec. It is frequently depicted as a spider, but sometimes as a winged creature or a sea monster. Together, all three features symbolize land, water, and air. When the

body is included, the figure is usually shown with one arm holding a knife and another holding a severed head by the hair. It has also been depicted as “a human figure with a tiger’s mouth and snarling fangs.”

Moche Decapitator. A mural depicting the Decapitator, a central Moche icon of the land, water, and air as well as a figure of death and renewal.

Architecture

The Huaca del Sol, a pyramidal adobe structure on the Rio Moche, was the largest pre-Columbian structure in Peru. Huacas were the centerpieces for ritual sites and used as administrative centers and palaces for Moche culture. However, the Huaca del Sol was partly destroyed when Spanish Conquistadores mined its graves for gold in the 16th century. During the Spanish occupation of Peru in the early 17th century, colonists redirected the waters of the Moche River to run past the base of the Huaca del Sol in order to facilitate the looting of gold artifacts from the temple, which caused massive erosion. In total, approximately two-thirds of the structure has been lost to erosion and such looting. The remaining structure stands at a height of 41 meters (135 feet). Looting and erosion due to El Niño continue to be major concerns to this day

Huaca del Sol. Originally the largest pre-Columbian adobe structure in the Americas, this pyramid was constructed using around 130 million bricks.

The nearby Huaca de la Luna is better preserved. Its interior walls contain many colorful murals with complex iconography. The site has been under professional archaeological excavation since the early 1990s.

A view of the Huaca de la Luna, with Cerro Blanco in the background. When this structure was originally completed it would have been covered in brightly painted murals in yellows, blues, reds, and black.

Art

The Moche are well known for their art, especially their naturalistic and articulate ceramics, particularly in the form of stirrup-spout vessels. The ceramics incorporate a wide-ranging subject matter, both in shape and painted decorations, including representations of people, animals, and ritual scenes. They also feature gods hunting, scenes of war, music making, visiting rulers, burying the dead, curing the sick, and anthropomorphic iconography. Moche ceramics illustrate these recurring narrative themes, which help illuminate and define their ideologies in the present day.

Some of the ceramics have become known as “sex-pots”: vessels depicting sexual acts. It is thought that these vessels were used for didactic purposes, and also as articulations of Moche culture. Because irrigation was the source of wealth and foundation of the empire, the Moche culture emphasized the importance of circulation and flow. Sexual themes in the pottery are posited to reflect Moche views of bodily fluids as an essential life force.

The Moche also wove textiles, mostly using wool from vicuñas and alpacas. Although there are few surviving examples of this, descendants of the Moche people have strong weaving traditions.

Collapse

There are several theories as to what caused the demise of the Moche political structure. Some scholars have emphasized the role of environmental change. Studies of ice cores drilled from glaciers in the Andes reveal climatic events between 536 and 594 CE, possibly a super El Niño, that resulted in thirty years of intense rain and flooding followed by thirty years of drought, part of the aftermath of the climate changes of 535–536. These weather events could have disrupted the Moche way of life and shattered their faith in their religion, which had promised stable weather through sacrifices.

Other evidence demonstrates that these events did not cause the final Moche demise. Moche polities survived beyond 650 in the Jequetepeque Valley and the Moche Valleys. For instance, in the Jequetepeque Valley, later settlements are characterized by fortifications and defensive works. While there is no evidence of a foreign invasion, as many scholars have suggested in the past, the defensive works suggest social unrest, possibly the result of climate change, as factions fought for control over increasingly scarce resources.

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12.12: Great Basin Culture

Learning Objectives

- Describe the culture of the Great Basin civilizations

Key Points

- Between 10,500 BCE and 9,500 BCE (11,500 – 12,500 years ago), the broad-spectrum, big game hunters of the Great Plains began to focus on a single animal species: the bison.
- Paleo-Indians were not numerous, and population densities were quite low during this time.
- These bison-oriented indigenous peoples inhabited a portion of the North American continent known as the Great Basin.
- The climate in the Great Basin was very arid, which affected the lifestyles and cultures of its inhabitants.

Terms

cultural region

A cultural region is inhabited by a culture that does not limit their geographic coverage to the borders of a nation state, or to smaller subdivisions of a state.

metates

A morter and grind stone tool used for processing grain and seeds.

Numic languages

A branch of the Uto-Aztecan language family. Includes seven languages spoken by American Indian peoples traditionally living in the Great Basin, Colorado River Basin, and southern Great Plains.

Between 10,500 BCE and 9,500 BCE (11,500 – 12,500 years ago), the broad-spectrum, big game hunters of the Great Plains began to focus on a single animal species: the bison, an early cousin of the American Bison. The earliest of these bison-oriented hunting traditions is known as the Folsom tradition. Folsom peoples traveled in small family groups for most of the year, returning yearly to the same springs while others favored locations on higher grounds. There they would camp for a few days, moving on after erecting a temporary shelter, making and/or repairing stone tools, or processing meat. Paleo-Indians were not numerous, and population densities were quite low during this time.

These bison-oriented indigenous peoples mostly inhabited a portion of the North American continent known as the “cultural region” of the Great Basin. The Great Basin is the region between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada, in what is now modern-day Nevada, Utah, California, Idaho, Wyoming, and parts of Oregon. The original inhabitants of the region are believed to have arrived as early as 10,000 BCE. The climate in the Great Basin was and is very arid; this affected the lifestyles and cultures of its inhabitants.

Map showing the Great Basin. The Great Basin is a multi-state endorheic area surrounded by the Pacific Watershed of North America, home to the pre-Columbian indigenous peoples of the Great Basin.

Language

While anthropologists can point to many distinct peoples throughout the region, most peoples of the Great Basin shared certain common cultural elements that distinguished them from other surrounding cultures. Except for the Washoe, most of the groups spoke Numic languages. Some groups may have not have spoken Numic languages, but no relics of their linguistic patterns remain today. There was considerable intermingling among the groups, who lived peacefully and often shared common territories. These groups were all predominantly hunters and gatherers. As a result of these similarities, anthropologists use the terms “Desert Archaic” or more simply “The Desert Culture” to refer collectively to the Great Basin tribes.

Lifeways

Desert Archaic peoples required great mobility to follow seasonally available food supplies. The use of pottery was rare because of its weight, but intricate baskets were woven that could be used to hold water, cook food, and winnow grass seeds. Baskets were also used for storage, including the storage of pine nuts. Heavy items such as metates were cached rather than carried between foraging areas. Agriculture was not practiced within the Great Basin itself, although it was practiced in adjacent areas. The area was too dry, and even modern agriculture in the Great Basin requires either large mountain reservoirs or deep artesian wells. Likewise, the Great Basin tribes had no permanent settlements, although winter villages might be revisited winter after winter by the same groups of families. In the summer groups would split; the largest social grouping was usually the nuclear family, an efficient response to the low density of food supplies.

Religion

Because Great Basin peoples did not come into contact with European-Americans or African Americans until comparatively later in North American history, many groups were able to maintain their traditional tribal religions. These peoples were leading proponents of cultural and religious renewals during the 19th century. Two Paiute prophets, Wodziwob and Wovoka, introduced the Ghost Dance as a means to commune with departed loved ones and bring renewals of buffalo herds and precontact lifeways. The Ute Bear Dance also emerged in the Great Basin, as did the Sun Dance.

Peyote religion flourished in the Great Basin as well, particularly among the Ute who used peyote obtained through trade and other potent ceremonial plants. Ute religious beliefs borrowed heavily from Plains Indians after the arrival of the horse. Northern and Uncompahgre Ute were among the only group of indigenous peoples known to create ceremonial pipes out of salmon alabaster and rare black pipestone found in creeks that border the southeastern slops of the Uinta Mountains in Utah and Colorado. The Uncompahgre Ute are also among the first documented peoples to utilize the effect of mechanoluminescene with quartz crystals to generate light in ceremonies used to call spirits. Special ceremonial rattles were made from buffalo rawhide and filled with clear quartz crystals collected from the mountains of Colorado and Utah. These ceremonial rattles were considered extremely powerful religious objects.

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12.13: Pacific Coast Culture

Learning Objectives

- Examine how natural resources shaped the cultures of the Pacific Coast

Key Points

- Due to the prosperity made possible by the abundant natural resources in this region, the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest developed complex religious and social ceremonies as well as many fine arts and crafts.
- Music was created to honor the Earth, the creator, ancestors, and all other aspects of the supernatural world.
- Many works of art served practical purposes, such as clothing, tools, weapons of war and hunting, transportation, and shelter; but others were purely aesthetic.
- The Pacific Coast was at one time the most densely populated area of North America in terms of indigenous peoples.

Terms

animism

The worldview that non-human entities—such as animals, plants, and inanimate objects—possess a spiritual essence.

potlatch

A ceremony amongst certain American Indian peoples of the Pacific Coast in which gifts are bestowed upon guests and personal property is destroyed in a show of wealth and generosity.

permaculture

Any system of sustainable agriculture that renews natural resources and enriches local ecosystems.

The indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast were composed of many nations and tribal affiliations, each with distinctive cultural and political identities; but they shared certain beliefs, traditions, and practices, such as the centrality of salmon as a resource and spiritual symbol. These nations had time and energy to devote to the establishment of fine arts and crafts and to religious and social ceremonies. The term “Northwest Coast”, or “North West Coast”, is used to refer to the groups of indigenous people residing along the coasts of British Columbia, Washington State, parts of Alaska, Oregon, and northern California.

The Pacific Northwest Coast at one time had the most densely populated areas of indigenous people. The mild climate and abundant natural resources, such as cedar and salmon, made possible the rise of a complex aboriginal culture. The indigenous people in this region practiced various forms of forest gardening and fire-stick farming in the forests, grasslands, mixed woodlands, and wetlands, ensuring that desired food and medicine plats continued to be available through the use of advanced farming techniques. Those involved in agricultural development would create low-intensity fires in order to prevent larger, catastrophic fires and sustain low-density agriculture in a loose rotation. This is what is known as permaculture, or any system of sustainable agriculture that renews natural resources and enriches local ecosystems.

Arts and Crafts

One of the major cultural elements that began to flourish on the Pacific Northwest Coast was the use of music and other forms of arts and crafts. Although music varied in function and expression among indigenous tribes, there were cultural similarities. For example, some tribes used hand drums made of animal hides as their instrument of choice, while others used plank or log drums, along with whistlers, wood clappers, and rattles. However, regardless of the type of instrument used, music and song were created to accompany ceremonies, dancing, and festivities.

The principal function of music in this region was to invoke spirituality. Music was created to honor the Earth, the creator, ancestors, and all other aspects of the supernatural world. Songs were also used to convey stories and sometimes were owned by families like property that could be inherited, sold, or given as a gift to a prestigious guest at a feast. Professional musicians existed

in some communities, and in some nations, those who made musical errors were punished, usually through shaming. Vocal rhythmic patterns were often complex and ran counter to rigid percussion beats.

As with music, the creation of art also served as a means of transmitting stories, history, wisdom, and property from generation to generation. Due to the abundance of natural resources and the affluence of most Northwest tribes, there was plenty of leisure time to create art. Many works of art served practical purposes, such as clothing, tools, weapons of war and hunting, transportation, cooking, and shelter. Others were purely aesthetic. Art provided indigenous people with a tie to the land and was a constant reminder of their birth places, lineages, and nations. One example of this is the use of symbols on totem poles and plank houses of the Pacific Northwest coast.

Pacific Coast Art. Tribal art included plank houses and totem poles that served as constant reminders of indigenous peoples' birth places, lineages, and nations.

Religious and Social Ceremonies

Other cultural elements that became established were the religious and social ceremonies of the Pacific Northwest nations. Although various tribes might have had their own different mythologies and rituals, "animism" is said to describe the most common, foundational thread of indigenous peoples' spiritual or supernatural perspectives in this region. Spiritualism, the supernatural, and the importance of the environment played such integral roles in day-to-day life. Therefore, it was not unusual for worldly goods to be adorned with symbols, crests, and totems that represented some important figure(s) from both the seen and unseen worlds.

Many of these religious or spiritual symbols would be present during social ceremonies as well. The potlatch, a gift-giving feast, was perhaps one of the most significant social experiences that occurred within Pacific Northwest groups. It was a highly complex event where people gathered in order to commemorate a specific event such as the raising of a totem pole or the appointment/election of a new chief. In the potlatch ceremony, the chief would give highly elaborate gifts to visiting peoples in order to establish his power and prestige, and by accepting these gifts, the visitors conveyed their approval of the chief. There were also great feasts and displays of conspicuous consumption. Groups of dancers put on elaborate dances and ceremonies. Watching these performances was considered an honor. Potlatches were held for several reasons: the confirmation of a new chief, coming of age, tattooing or piercing ceremonies, initiation into a secret society, marriages, the funeral of a chief, or a battle victory.

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12.14: Eastern Woodland Culture

Learning Objectives

- Analyze how agricultural practices shaped the Eastern Woodland Culture

Key Points

- This time period is widely regarded as a developmental period for the people of this region as they steadily advanced in their means of cultivation, tools and textile manufacture, and use of pottery.
- While the increasing use of agriculture meant the nomadic nature of many groups was supplanted by permanent villages, intensive agriculture did not become the norm for most cultures until the succeeding Mississippian period.
- The Early Woodland period differed from the Archaic period in the following ways: the appearance of permanent settlements, elaborate burial practices, intensive collection and horticulture of starchy seed plants, differentiation in social organization, and specialized activities.
- Due to the similarity of earthworks and burial goods, researchers assume a common body of religious practice and cultural interaction existed throughout the entire region, referred to as the "Hopewellian Interaction Sphere."

Terms

maize

A grain, domesticated by indigenous peoples in Mesoamerica in prehistoric times, known in many English-speaking countries as corn.

atlatl

A wooden stick with a thong or perpendicularly protruding hook on the rear end that grips a grove or socket on the butt of its accompanying spear.

The Eastern Woodland cultural region extended from what is now southeastern Canada, through the eastern United States, down to the Gulf of Mexico. The time in which the peoples of this region flourished is referred to as the Woodland Period. This period is known for its continuous development in stone and bone tools, leather crafting, textile manufacture, cultivation, and shelter construction. Many Woodland hunters used spears and atlatls until the end of the period when those were replaced by bows and arrows. The Southeastern Woodland hunters however, also used blowguns. The major technological and cultural advancements during this period included the widespread use of pottery and the increasing sophistication of its forms and decoration. The growing use of agriculture and the development of the Eastern Agricultural Complex also meant that the nomadic nature of many of the groups was supplanted by permanently occupied villages.

Early Woodland Period (1000–1 BCE)

The archaeological record suggests that humans in the Eastern Woodlands of North America were collecting plants from the wild by 6,000 BCE and gradually modifying them by selective collection and cultivation. In fact, the eastern United States is one of 10 regions in the world to become an "independent center of agricultural origin." Research also indicates that the first appearance of ceramics occurred around 2,500 BCE in parts of Florida and Georgia. What differentiates the Early Woodland period from the Archaic period is the appearance of permanent settlements, elaborate burial practices, intensive collection and horticulture of starchy seed plants, and differentiation in social organization. Most of these were evident in the southeastern United States by 1,000 BCE with the Adena culture, which is the best-known example of an early Woodland culture.

The Adena culture was centered around what is present-day Ohio and surrounding states and was most likely a number of related American Indian societies that shared burial complexes and ceremonial systems. Adena mounds generally ranged in size from 2o to 300 feet in diameter and served as burial structures, ceremonial sites, historical markers, and possibly even gathering places. The mounds provided a fixed geographical reference point for the scattered populations of people dispersed in small settlements of one to two structures. A typical Adena house was built in a circular form, 15 to 45 feet in diameter. Walls were made of paired posts

tilted outward that were then joined to other pieces of wood to form a cone-shaped roof. The roof was covered with bark, and the walls were bark and/or wickerwork.

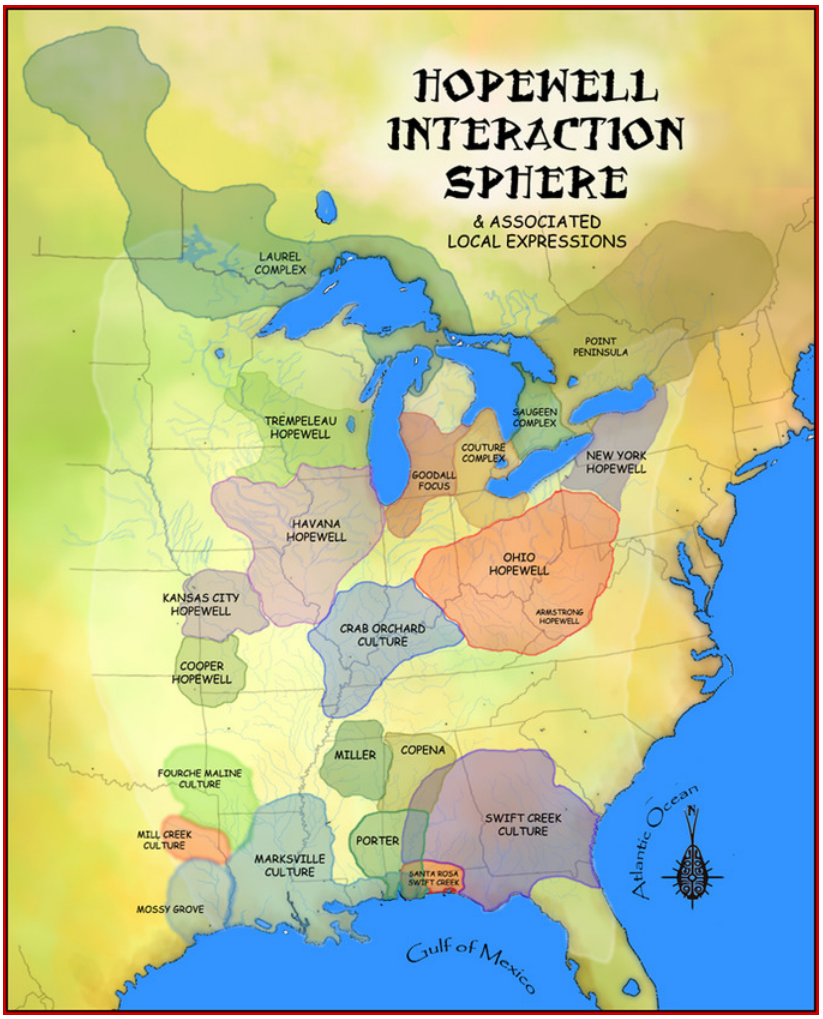
While the burial mounds created by Woodland culture peoples were beautiful artistic achievements, Adena artists were also prolific in creating smaller, more personal pieces of art using copper and shells. Art motifs that became important to many later American Indians began with the Adena. Examples of these motifs include the weeping eye and the cross and circle design. Many works of art revolved around shamanic practices and the transformation of humans into animals, especially birds, wolves, bears, and deer, indicating a belief that objects depicting certain animals could impart those animals' qualities to the wearer or holder.

Middle Woodland Period (1–500 CE)

The beginning of this period saw a shift of settlement to the interior. As the Woodland period progressed, local and inter-regional trade of exotic materials greatly increased to the point where a trade network covered most of the eastern United States. Throughout the Southeast and north of the Ohio River, burial mounds of important people were very elaborate and contained a variety of mortuary gifts, many of which were not local. The most archaeologically certifiable sites of burial during this time were in Illinois and Ohio. These have come to be known as the Hopewell tradition.

Hopewell mounds. The Eastern Woodland cultures built burial mounds for important people such as these of the Hopewell tradition in Ohio.

The Hopewellian peoples had leaders, but they were not powerful rulers who could command armies of soldiers or slaves. It has been posited that these cultures accorded certain families with special privileges and that these societies were marked by the emergence of "big-men," or leaders who were able to acquire positions of power through their ability to persuade others to agree with them on matters of trade and religion. It is also likely these rulers gained influence through the creation of reciprocal obligations with other important community members. Regardless of their path to power, the emergence of big-men marked another step toward the development of the highly structured and stratified sociopolitical organization called the chiefdom, which would characterize later American Indian tribes. Due to the similarity of earthworks and burial goods, researchers assume a common body of religious practice and cultural interaction existed throughout the entire region (referred to as the "Hopewellian Interaction Sphere"). Such similarities could also be the result of reciprocal trade, obligations, or both between local clans that controlled specific territories. Clan heads were buried along with goods received from their trading partners to symbolize the relationships they had established. Although many of the Middle Woodland cultures are called Hopewellian, and groups shared ceremonial practices, archaeologists have identified the development of distinctly separate cultures during the Middle Woodland period. Examples include the Armstrong culture, Copena culture, Crab Orchard culture, Fourche Maline culture, the Goodall Focus, the Havana Hopewell culture, the Kansas City Hopewell, the Marksville culture, and the Swift Creek culture.



Hopewell Interaction Area and local expressions of the Hopewell tradition. Throughout the Southeast and north of the Ohio River, burial mounds of important people were very elaborate and contained a variety of mortuary gifts, many of which were not local. The most archaeologically certifiable sites of burial during this time were in Illinois and Ohio. These sites were constructed within the Hopewell tradition of Eastern Woodland cultures.

Ceramics during this time were thinner, of better quality, and more decorated than in earlier times. This ceramic phase saw a trend towards round-bodied pottery and lines of decoration with cross-etching on the rims.

Late Woodland Period (500–1000 CE)

The late Woodland period was a time of apparent population dispersal. In most areas, construction of burial mounds decreased drastically, as did long distance trade in exotic materials. Bow and arrow technology gradually overtook the use of the spear and atlatl, and agricultural production of the “three sisters” (maize, beans, and squash) was introduced. While full scale intensive agriculture did not begin until the following Mississippian period, the beginning of serious cultivation greatly supplemented the gathering of plants.

Late Woodland settlements became more numerous, but the size of each one was generally smaller than their Middle Woodland counterparts. It has been theorized that populations increased so much that trade alone could no longer support the communities and some clans resorted to raiding others for resources. Alternatively, the efficiency of bows and arrows in hunting may have decimated the large game animals, forcing tribes to break apart into smaller clans to better use local resources, thus limiting the trade potential of each group. A third possibility is that a colder climate may have affected food yields, also limiting trade possibilities. Lastly, it may be that agricultural technology became sophisticated enough that crop variation between clans lessened, thereby decreasing the need for trade.

In practice, many regions of the Eastern Woodlands adopted the full Mississippian culture much later than 1,000 CE. Some groups in the North and Northeast of the United States, such as the Iroquois, retained a way of life that was technologically identical to the Late Woodland until the arrival of the Europeans. Furthermore, despite the widespread adoption of the bow and arrow, indigenous peoples in areas near the mouth of the Mississippi River, for example, appear never to have made the change.

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12.15: Southwestern Culture

Learning Objectives

- Describe the cultural traditions of the Southwest

Key Points

- Three of the major cultural traditions that impacted the region include the Paleo-Indian tradition, the Southwestern Archaic tradition, and the Post-Archaic cultures tradition.
- As Southwestern cultural traditions evolved, tribes transitioned from a hunting-gathering, nomadic experience to more permanent agricultural settlements.
- As various cultures developed over time, many shared similarities in family structure and religious beliefs.
- Extensive irrigation systems were developed and were among the largest of the ancient world.
- Elaborate adobe and sandstone buildings were constructed, and highly ornamental and artistic pottery was created.

Terms

irrigation

The act or process of irrigating, or the state of being irrigated; especially, the operation of causing water to flow over lands for the purpose of nourishing plants.

shamanism

A practice that involves a practitioner reaching altered states of consciousness in order to perceive and interact with a spirit world and channel transcendental energies into this world.

animism

The worldview that non-human entities—such as animals, plants, and inanimate objects—possess a spiritual essence.

sandstone

A sedimentary rock produced by the consolidation and compaction of sand, cemented with clay.

Overview

The greater Southwest has long been occupied by hunter-gatherers and agricultural settlements. This area, comprised of modern-day Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Nevada, and the states of Sonora and Chihuahua in northern Mexico, has seen successive prehistoric cultural traditions since approximately 12,000 years ago. Three of the major cultural traditions that impacted the region include the Paleo-Indian tradition, the Southwestern Archaic tradition, and the Post-Archaic cultures tradition. As various cultures developed over time, many of them shared similarities in family structure and religious beliefs.

Southwestern Agriculture

Southwestern farmers probably began experimenting with agriculture by facilitating the growth of wild grains such as amaranth and chenopods as well as gourds for their edible seeds and shells. The earliest maize known to have been grown in the Southwest was a popcorn varietal measuring one to two inches long. It was not a very productive crop. More productive varieties were developed later by Southwestern farmers or introduced via Mesoamerica, though the drought-resistant tepary bean was native to the region. Cotton has been found at archaeological sites dating to about 1,200 BCE in the Tucson basin and was most likely cultivated by indigenous peoples in the region. Evidence of tobacco use and possibly the cultivation of tobacco, dates back to approximately the same time period.

Agave, especially agave murpheyi, was a major food source of the Hohokam and grown on dry hillsides where other crops would not grow. Early farmers also possibly cultivated cactus fruit, mesquite bean, and species of wild grasses for their edible seeds.

Paleolithic peoples utilized habitats near water sources like rivers, swamps, and marshes, which had an abundance of fish and attracted birds and game animals. They hunted big game—bison, mammoths, and ground sloths—who were also attracted to these water sources. A period of relatively wet conditions saw many cultures in the American Southwest flourish. Extensive irrigation systems were developed and were among the largest of the ancient world. Elaborate adobe and sandstone buildings were constructed, and highly ornamental and artistic pottery was created. The unusual weather conditions could not continue forever, however, and gave way in time, to the more common arid conditions of the area. These dry conditions necessitated a more minimal way of life and, eventually, the elaborate accomplishments of these cultures were abandoned.

During this time, the people of the Southwest developed a variety of subsistence strategies, all using their own specific techniques. The nutritive value of weed and grass seeds was discovered and flat rocks were used to grind flour to produce gruels and breads. The use of grinding slabs originated around 7,500 BCE and marks the beginning of the Archaic tradition. Small bands of people traveled throughout the area gathering plants such as cactus fruits, mesquite beans, acorns, and pine nuts. Archaic people established camps at collection points, and returned to these places year after year.

The American Indian Archaic culture eventually evolved into two major prehistoric archaeological culture areas in the American Southwest and northern Mexico. These cultures, sometimes referred to as Oasisamerica, are characterized by dependence on agriculture, formal social stratification, population clusters, and major architecture. One of the major cultures that developed during this time was the Pueblo peoples, formerly referred to as the Anasazi. Their distinctive pottery and dwelling construction styles emerged in the area around 750 CE. Ancestral Pueblo peoples are renowned for the construction of and cultural achievement present at Pueblo Bonito and other sites in Chaco Canyon, as well as Mesa Verde, Aztec Ruins, and Salmon Ruins. Other cultural traditions that developed during this time include the Hohokam and Mogollon traditions.

Hohokam House. Photo of the Great House at the Casa Grande Ruins National Monument.

Family and Religion

Paleolithic peoples in the Southwest initially structured their families and communities into highly mobile traveling groups of approximately 20 to 50 members, moving place to place as resources were depleted and additional supplies were needed. As cultural traditions began to evolve throughout the Southwest between 7,500 BCE to 1,550 CE, many cultures developed similar social and religious traditions. For the Pueblos and other Southwest American Indian communities, the transition from a hunting-gathering, nomadic experience to more permanent agricultural settlements meant more firmly established families and communities. Climate change that occurred about 3,500 years ago during the Archaic period, however, changed patterns in water sources, dramatically decreasing the population of indigenous peoples. Many family-based groups took shelter in caves and rock overhangs within canyon walls, many of which faced south to capitalize on warmth from the sun during the winter. Occasionally, these peoples lived in small, semi-sedentary hamlets in open areas.

Many Southwest tribes during the Post-Archaic period lived in a range of structures that included small family pit houses, larger structures to house clans, grand pueblos, and cliff-sited dwellings for defense. These communities developed complex networks that stretched across the Colorado Plateau, linking hundreds of neighborhoods and population centers.

While southwestern tribes developed more permanent family structures and established complex communities, they also developed and shared a similar understanding of the spiritual and natural world. Many of the tribes that made up the Southwest Culture practiced animism and shamanism. Shamanism encompasses the premise that shamans are intermediaries or messengers between the human world and the spirit worlds. At the same time, animism encompasses the beliefs that there is no separation between the spiritual and physical (or material) world, and that souls or spirits exist not only in humans, but also in some other animals, plants, rocks, and geographic features such as mountains or rivers, or other entities of the natural environment, including thunder, wind, and shadows.

Conclusion

Although at present there are a variety of contemporary cultural traditions that exist in the greater Southwest, many of these traditions still incorporate similar religious aspects that are found in animism and shamanism. Some of these cultural traditions include the Yuman-speaking peoples inhabiting the Colorado River valley, the uplands, and Baja California; O'odham peoples of southern Arizona and northern Sonora; and the Pueblo peoples of Arizona and New Mexico.

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12.16: Mississippian Culture

Learning Objectives

- Describe the economies of Mississippian cultures

Key Points

- Mississippian cultures lived in the Mississippi valley, Ohio, Oklahoma, and surrounding areas.
- The “three sisters”—corn, squash, and beans—were the three most important crops.
- Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto brought diseases and cultural changes that eventually contributed to the decline of many Mississippian cultures.

Terms

three sisters

Corn, squash, and beans. The three most important crops for Mississippian cultures.

mounds

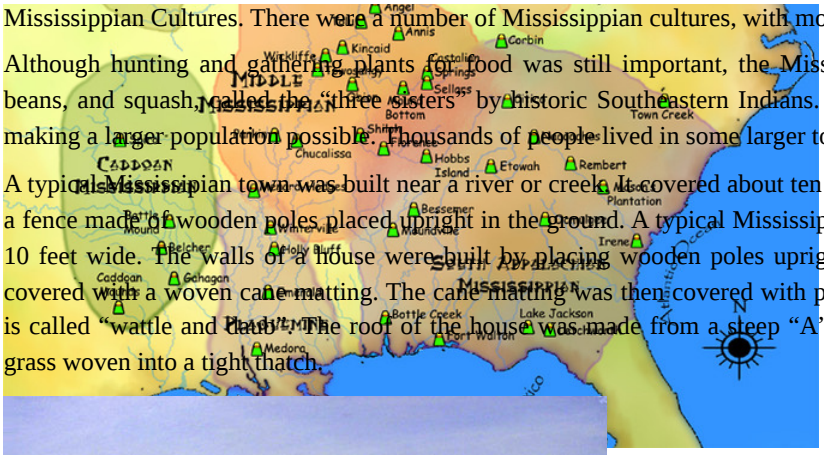
Formations made of earth that were used as foundations for Mississippian culture structures.

The Mississippian Period lasted from approximately 800 to 1540 CE. It’s called “Mississippian” because it began in the middle Mississippi River valley, between St. Louis and Vicksburg. However, there were other Mississippians as the culture spread across modern-day US. There were large Mississippian centers in Missouri, Ohio, and Oklahoma.

A number of cultural traits are recognized as being characteristic of the Mississippians. Although not all Mississippian peoples practiced all of the following activities, they were distinct from their ancestors in adoption of some or all of the following traits:

- The construction of large, truncated earthwork pyramid mounds, or platform mounds. Such mounds were usually square, rectangular, or occasionally circular. Structures (domestic houses, temples, burial buildings, or other) were usually constructed atop such mounds.
- Maize-based agriculture. In most places, the development of Mississippian culture coincided with adoption of comparatively large-scale, intensive maize agriculture, which supported larger populations and craft specialization.
- The adoption and use of riverine (or more rarely marine) shells as tempering agents in their shell tempered pottery.
- Widespread trade networks extending as far west as the Rockies, north to the Great Lakes, south to the Gulf of Mexico, and east to the Atlantic Ocean.
- The development of the chiefdom or complex chiefdom level of social complexity.
- A centralization of control of combined political and religious power in the hands of few or one.
- The beginnings of a settlement hierarchy, in which one major center (with mounds) has clear influence or control over a number of lesser communities, which may or may not possess a smaller number of mounds.
- The adoption of the paraphernalia of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC), also called the Southern Cult. This is the belief system of the Mississippians as we know it. SECC items are found in Mississippian-culture sites from Wisconsin to the Gulf Coast, and from Florida to Arkansas and Oklahoma. The SECC was frequently tied in to ritual game-playing.

Mississippian Cultures. There were a number of Mississippian cultures, with most spreading from the Middle Mississippian area.



Although hunting and gathering plants for food was still important, the Mississippians were mainly farmers. They grew corn, beans, and squash, called the "three sisters" by historic Southeastern Indians. The "sisters" provided a stable and balanced diet, making a larger population possible. Thousands of people lived in some larger towns and cities.

A typical Mississippian town was built near a river or creek. It covered about ten acres of ground, and was surrounded by a palisade, a fence made of wooden poles placed upright in the ground. A typical Mississippian house was rectangular, about 12 feet long and 10 feet wide. The walls of a house were built by placing wooden poles upright in a trench in the ground. The poles were then covered with a woven cane matting. The cane matting was then covered with plaster made from mud. This plastered cane matting is called "wattle and daub". The roof of the house was made from a steep "A" shaped framework of wooden poles covered with grass woven into a tight thatch.

Platform Mounds. Mississippian cultures often built structures on top of their mounds such as homes and burial buildings.

Mississippian cultures, like many before them, built mounds. Though other cultures may have used mounds for different purposes, Mississippian cultures typically built structures on top of them. The type of structures constructed ran the gamut: temples, houses, and burial buildings.

Mississippian artists produced unique art works. They engraved shell pendants with animal and human figures, and carved ceremonial objects out of flint. They sculpted human figures and other objects in stone. Potters molded their clay into many shapes, sometimes decorating them with painted designs.

Mississippian Underwater Panther.

The Nashville area was a major population center during this period. Thousands of Mississippian-era graves have been found in the city, and thousands more may exist in the surrounding area. There were once many temple and burial mounds in Nashville, especially along the Cumberland River.

Decline of the Mississippians

Hernando de Soto was a Spanish explorer who, from 1539-43, lived with and spoke to many Mississippian cultures. After his contact, their cultures were relatively unaffected directly by Europeans, though they were indirectly. Since the natives lacked immunity to new infectious diseases, such as measles and smallpox, epidemics caused so many fatalities that they undermined the social order of many chiefdoms. Some groups adopted European horses and changed to nomadism. Political structures collapsed in many places.By the time more documentary accounts were being written, the Mississippian way of life had changed irrevocably. Some groups maintained an oral tradition link to their mound-building past, such as the late 19th-century Cherokee. Other Native American groups, having migrated many hundreds of miles and lost their elders to diseases, did not know their ancestors had built the mounds dotting the landscape. This contributed to the myth of the Mound Builders as a people distinct from Native Americans.

Hernando de Soto. Engraving by Lambert A. Wilmer (1858).

Mississippian peoples were almost certainly ancestral to the majority of the American Indian nations living in this region in the historic era. The historic and modern day American Indian nations believed to have descended from the overarching Mississippian Culture include: the Alabama, Apalachee, Caddo, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee Creek, Guale, Hitchiti, Houma, Kansa, Missouria, Mobilian, Natchez, Osage, Quapaw, Seminole, Tunica-Biloxi, Yamasee, and Yuchi.

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12.17: The Nazca

Learning Objectives

- Explain the culture, religion, agriculture, and decline of the Nazca civilization

Key Points

- Early Nazca society was made up of local chiefdoms and regional centers of power centered around the ritual site of Cahuachi.
- The Nazca are known for their Nazca Lines—geometric shapes, lines, and animal figures carved into the desert floor.
- Like the Moche, the Nazca decline was likely due to environmental changes.

Terms

Nazca Lines

A series of geometric shapes, miles of lines, and large drawings of animal figures created by the Nazca culture.

shamans

Spiritual practitioners that reach altered states of consciousness in order to encounter and interact with the spirit world and channel these transcendental energies into this world for healing and divination purposes.

Trephination

This primitive surgery removed a piece of bone from the skull, while the person was still alive, to allow drainage after a head injury.

The Nazca (or Nasca) lived near the arid southern coast of Peru from 100 BCE to 800 CE. Early Nazca society was made up of local chiefdoms and regional centers of power centered around Cahuachi, a non-urban ceremonial site of earthwork mounds and plazas. These pyramid-like structures and plazas, situated in the lower part of the Nazca Valley, served as important spaces for fertility and agricultural rituals. People from across the Nazca region most likely gathered in Cahuachi during specific times of the year to feast and make offerings.

The Nazca developed underground aqueducts, named *puquios*, to sustain cities and agriculture in this arid climate. Many of them still function today. They also created complex textiles and ceramics reflecting their agricultural and sacrificial traditions.

Society and Religion

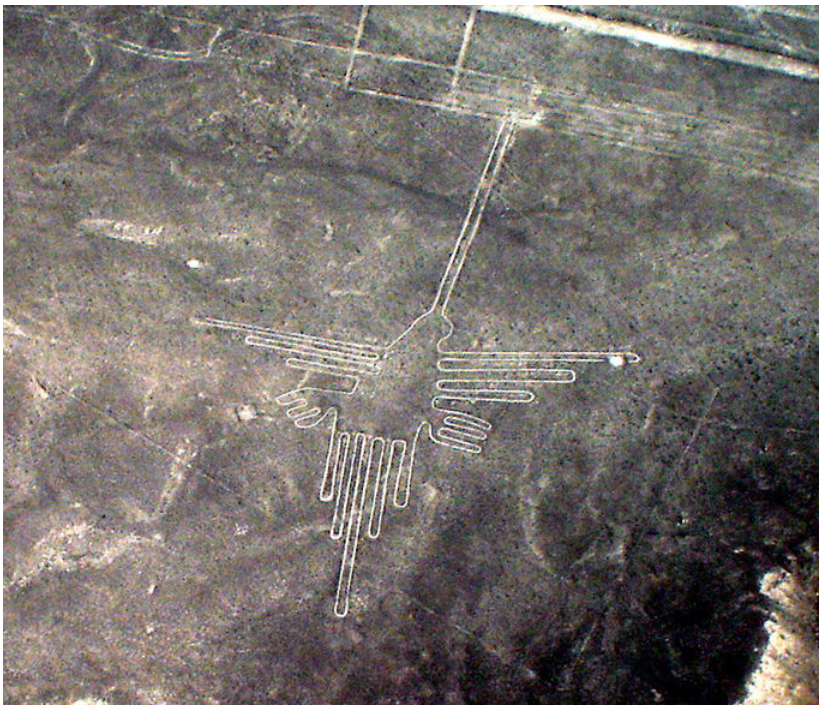
Likely related to the arid and extreme nature of the environment, Nazca religious beliefs were based upon agriculture and fertility. Much of Nazca art depicts powerful nature gods, such as the mythical killer whale, the harvesters, the mythical spotted cat, the hummingbird, and the serpentine entity. As in the contemporary Moche culture based in northwest Peru, shamans apparently used hallucinogenic drugs, such as extractions from the San Pedro cactus, to induce visions during ceremonies.

Killer whale (Orca). Powerful nature gods were an essential element of the Nazca religious culture, which centered around agriculture.

Nazca Lines

The geoglyphs of Nazca, or "Nazca Lines," are a series of geometric shapes, extended lines that run for miles, and large drawings of animal figures (some as large as a football field) constructed on the desert floor in the Nazca region. A large number of people over an extended period of time could have constructed the lines.

Researchers have demonstrated techniques to explore how this was done. By extending a rope between two posts and removing the red pebbles on the desert surface along the rope, the lines could have been constructed. The contrast of the red desert pebbles and the lighter earth beneath would make the lines visible from a high altitude. Due to the simplistic construction of the geoglyphs, regular amounts of rainfall would have easily eroded the drawings, but the dry desert environment has preserved the lines for hundreds of years. Several theories have been posited as to why the Nazca Lines exist, but the true meaning of the geoglyphs remains a mystery.



Nazca Lines. These Nazca lines, called The Hummingbird, are representative of the type of structures that remain.

Agriculture and Diet

Nazca subsistence was based largely on agriculture. Iconography on ceramics and excavated remains indicate that the Nazca people had a varied diet, including:

- Maize
- Squash
- Sweet potatoes
- Beans
- Manioc (also known as Yuca)
- Achira
- Small amounts of fish
- Peanuts

They also grew several non-food crops, such as cotton for textiles, coca, San Pedro cactus, and gourds. The latter were decorated to illustrate activities in daily life. The presence of coca is evident in pottery and artwork. The leaves of this plant were chewed and

worked as a stimulant that suppressed hunger, pain, thirst, and fatigue. The hallucinogenic San Pedro cactus also appears on several polychrome pots and bowls showcasing its ceremonial significance.

In terms of animal resources, the Nazca made sacrifices of llamas and guinea pigs at Cahuachi. Llamas were also commonly exploited as pack animals, for their wool, and as a source of meat.

San Pedro cactus. This plant, Echinopsis pachanoi, has hallucinogenic properties, which shamans of the Nazca culture utilized in ceremonies.

Trephination and Cranial Manipulation

Trephination was a primitive skull surgery used by the Nazca that relieved pressure on the brain from battle wounds or for ritual purposes. It entails the removal of one or more sections of bone from the skull, while the person is still alive. Evidence of trephination has been seen through the analysis of excavated skulls. Some of the skulls show signs of healing, evidence that some individuals who underwent the procedure survived.

Elongated skulls, as a result of skull manipulation, were also seen in the excavations from Cahuachi. This effect was achieved by binding a cushion to an infant's forehead and a board to the back of the head. Archaeologists can only speculate as to why this was done to some of the skulls. Several theories suggest skull manipulation created an ethnic identity, formed the individual into a social being, or may have illustrated social status.

Decline of the Nazca

Like the Moche, who lived along the arid northern coast of Peru during the same time period, it is thought that the Nazca may have been forced into decline by environmental changes. This is thought to have occurred when an El Niño triggered widespread and destructive flooding, leaving the civilization unstable by 750 CE. Evidence also suggests that the Nazca people may have exacerbated the effects of these floods by gradually cutting down Prosopis pallida trees to make room for maize and cotton agriculture. These trees play an extremely important role as an ecological keystone of this landscape, in particular preventing river and wind erosion. Gradual removal of trees would have exposed the landscape to the effects of climate perturbations such as El Niño, leading to erosion and leaving irrigation systems high and dry.

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12.18: The Sicán

Learning Objectives

- Explain the unique aspects of the Sicán and what led to their downfall

Key Points

- In the Early Sicán period (750–900 CE) the Sicán began to establish trade and commerce.
- The Middle Sicán period (900–1100 CE) saw an explosion of culture and art, along with the development of extensive trading routes.
- Environmental changes caused unrest in the Late Sicán period (1100–1375), but the ultimate end to the Sicán came when they were conquered by the Chimú.

Terms

tumbaga

A thin sheet of low-karat gold alloy, which was used to decorate symbolic metal vessels for lower elites.

Sicán Precinct

The religious and cultural center of the Sicán culture.

Sicán Deity

The central religious figure of the Middle Sicán period. This entity represented water, the ocean, and natural resources. It was also the social underpinning of the theocratic state.

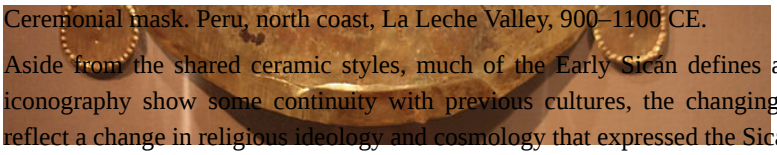
The Sicán culture inhabited what is now the north coast of Peru between about 750 CE and 1375 CE. They succeeded the Moche culture, but there is still controversy among archeologists and anthropologists over whether the two are separate cultures.

Early Sicán Period

The Early Sicán period began around 750 CE and lasted until 900 CE. The lack of artifacts has limited the development of knowledge about this early period. Based on common themes, the Sicán were probably direct descendants of the Moche and developed their new culture during an unstable time in the region.

From remains found in archaeological locations, researchers have determined that this culture maintained commercial exchange with people from present-day Ecuador, Colombia, and Chile, and the eastern basin of the Marañón River.

The Early Sicán culture is known for the highly polished, black-finish ceramics found in the La Leche Valley. This black-finish ceramic style began in the Moche culture prior to the Early Sicán, and demonstrates the sharing of cultures in the region. Many of the ceramics were examples of a single spout, loop-handle bottle, featuring an anthropomorphic-avian (bird) face at the spout base. The face consisted of bulging eyes, a hooked beak or triangular projection instead of a nose, stylized ears, and no mouth. It appeared to be a predecessor to the related faces of the Sicán Deity and the Sicán Lord of the Middle Sicán culture.



Ceremonial mask. Peru, north coast, La Leche Valley, 900–1100 CE.

Aside from the shared ceramic styles, much of the Early Sicán defines a distinguishable culture. While the ceramic styles and iconography show some continuity with previous cultures, the changing iconography, ceramic themes, and funerary practices reflect a change in religious ideology and cosmology that expressed the Sicán culture.

Most importantly, the late Early Sicán period saw a major organizational and religious shift, by which the Sicán constructed monumental adobe structures, developed large-scale copper alloy smelting and metalworking, and developed the elaborate funerary tradition that would come to characterize the Middle Sicán. Such changes have been noted by researchers at sites in Batan Grande, including the Huaca del Pueblo site, dated to around 850–900 CE.

Middle Sicán Period

The Middle Sicán period lasted from 900 to 1100 CE. This is the period of the Sicán's "cultural florescence," and was marked by the emergence of various cultural innovations, some of which were unprecedented in the local area. The Sicán culture had a highly productive economy, clear social differentiation, and an influential religious ideology. This religious ideology served as the underpinning of the social hierarchy of the theocratic state.

The precious metal objects found in Middle Sicán sites reveal the unprecedented scale of their production and use, as well as the class hierarchy inherent in Sicán culture. Metal objects permeated all levels of society. Tumbaga, a thin sheet of low-karat gold alloy, was used to wrap ceramic vessels for the lower elites, while the upper elites had high-karat gold alloys. Common laborers had only arsenical copper objects.

Gold beaker. A 9th–11th century gold beaker exemplary of Middle Sicán art and craftsmanship.

Funerary Practices of the Middle Sicán

Funerary practices at Huaca Loro reflected the social differentiation and hierarchy present in Sicán society. This social stratification is revealed in varying burial types and practices, along with accompanying grave goods. The most obvious difference in burial type based on social hierarchy was that commoners were buried in simple, shallow graves on the peripheries of the monumental mounds while the elite were buried in deep shaft tombs beneath monumental mounds. It was found that one's social status was also a determinant of the burial position of the body—whether it was seated, extended, or flexed. Bodies of the high elite were always buried in the seated position, while commoners could be buried in a seated, extended, or flexed position.

Social stratification and hierarchy is also evidenced through the variation in quantity and quality of grave goods for different social classes. The elite East Tomb at Huaca Loro contained over a ton of diverse grave goods, over two-thirds of which were objects of arsenical bronze, tumbaga, silver and copper alloys, and high-karat gold alloys. Other grave goods of the elite included:

- Semi-precious stone objects
- Amber
- Feathers
- Textiles
- Imported shells (such as conus and spondylus)
- Shell beads
- Double spout bottles

All of these items required hours of labor and precious supplies, highlighting the power of the elite. On the other hand, commoners had significantly fewer grave goods of different types, made of less valuable materials. For example, commoner grave goods at Huaca Loro were usually restricted to single-spout bottles, utilitarian plain and/or paddle decorated pottery, and copper-arsenic objects, instead of the precious metal objects of the elite tombs.

Religious Cities and Elite Culture

The Sicán culture was characterized by the establishment of religious cities with monumental temples. The religious capital city and cultural center of the Middle Sicán is referenced as the Sicán Precinct, which is defined by a number of monumental rounds. The pyramidal monumental mounds were used as both burials sites for the elite and places of worship and ritual. The construction of these mounds required considerable material, manpower, and time, indicating the Sicán elite's control and monopoly over the society's resources.

None of the metalworking sites showed evidence of on-site mining of any materials. In addition, the spondylus shell, emeralds, feathers, and other minerals were imported to the area. Their materials came from mainly the Northern Andes, but could have also come from as far south as the Tiwanaku lands in the South Central Andes and as far east as the Marañón River, a major Amazon River tributary. The Sicán also could have controlled the transport methods in addition to the goods being traded. The breeding and herding of llamas on the north coast since the time of the Moche could have been utilized by the Sicán to provide caravans of llamas to transport the goods considerable distances.

Late Sicán Period

The Late Sicán period began around 1100 CE and ended with the Chimú conquest of the Lambayeque region around 1375 CE.

Around 1020 CE, a major drought lasting thirty years occurred at Sicán. At the time of the drought, the Sicán Deity, so closely tied to the ocean and water in general, was at the center of Sicán religion, and appeared in most major artistic motifs. The catastrophic changes in weather were thus linked to the Sicán Deity, mainly to the failure of the deity to mediate nature for the Sicán people. The Sicán ceremonies (and mounds on which they were performed) were supposed to ensure that there was an abundance of resources for the people. After thirty years of uncertainty in respect to nature, the temples that were the center of Middle Sicán religion and elite power were burned and abandoned, between 1050 and 1100 CE.

Perhaps the ancestor cult and aggrandizing of the elites caused too much resentment. Coupled with the drought that surely weakened agriculture in the area, the tolerance of the common population plummeted, forcing the removal of the political and religious leadership at Sicán.

Religious mounds at Túcume. The last capital of the Sicán culture was located just south of the La Leche River, where they built twenty-six new religious mounds.

The Sicán then built a new capital at Túcume, also known as Purgatorio by local people today, where they thrived for another 250 years. The Sicán were able to build twenty-six ceremonial mounds in this new capital in that time period. However, in 1375, the Chimú conquered the area, marking the end of the Sicán era.

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12.19: Chimú

Learning Objectives

- Discuss distinguishing aspects of Chimú religion, craftsmanship, and agriculture

Key Points

- The Chimú expanded to cover a vast area and include many different ethnic groups along the northern coast of modern-day Peru.
- Chimú artisans made notable multi-colored textiles and monochromatic pottery and metalwork.
- In 1470, the Chimú were conquered by the Inca.
- The Chimú worshipped the Moon as the essential deity of fertility, good weather, and bountiful crops.

Terms

Chan Chan

The capital of the Chimú culture. It is in modern-day Peru.

Chimor

The long swath of land along the northern coast of Peru that was ruled by the Chimú elite.

ciudadela

Any one of a number of walled cities in the Chimú capital of Chan Chan where elites consolidated power and artisans lived in organized groups to make prestige goods.

The Chimú were a culture that lasted from approximately 900 CE until 1470 CE along the northern coast of modern-day Peru, centered in the city of Chan Chan. This is not to be confused with the Early Chimú, a related group also known as the Moche that lived in the region until about 800 CE.

The Inca ruler Tupac Inca Yupanqui led a campaign that conquered the Chimú around 1470 CE. This was just fifty years before the arrival of the Spanish in the region. Consequently, Spanish chroniclers were able to record accounts of Chimú culture from individuals who had lived before the Inca conquest. Similarly, archaeological evidence suggests Chimor, the large coastal swath of land inhabited by Chimú culture, grew out of the remnants of Moche culture. Early Chimú ceramics in a high-sheen black, along with detailed and intricate precious metalworking, shared many of the same aspects as Moche craftsmanship.

The mature Chimú culture developed in roughly the same territory where the Moche had existed centuries before, which made the Chimú another coastal culture. It was developed in the Moche Valley south of present-day Lima, northeast of Huarmey, and grew to include central present-day Trujillo, where the bureaucratic and artisanal capital of Chan Chan developed.

The Chimú expansion also incorporated many different ethnic groups, including the Sicán culture, which lasted independently until 1375. At its peak, the Chimú advanced to the limits of the desert coast, to the Jequetepeque Valley in the north, and Carabayallo in the south. Their expansion southward was stopped by the military power of the great valley of Lima.

Agriculture and Bureaucracy

The Chimú expanded and gained power over their 500-year growth through intensive farming techniques and hydraulic works, which joined valleys to form complexes. A few of these landmark agricultural techniques included the following:

- *Huachaques*: These sunken farms included the removal of the top layer of earth and allowed farmers to work the moist, sandy soil underneath.
- Walk-in wells, similar to those of the Nazca, were developed to draw water.
- Large reservoirs were developed to retain water from river systems in this arid climate where water was an essential resource.

These systematic changes increased the productivity of the land, which multiplied Chimú wealth and likely contributed to the formation of a bureaucratic, hierarchical system.

The Chimú cultivated beans, sweet potatoes, papayas, and cotton with their reservoir and irrigation systems. This focus on large-scale irrigation persisted until the Late Intermediate period. At this point, there was a shift to a more specialized system that focused on importing and redistributing resources from satellite communities. There appears to have been a complex network of sites that provided goods and services for Chimú subsistence.

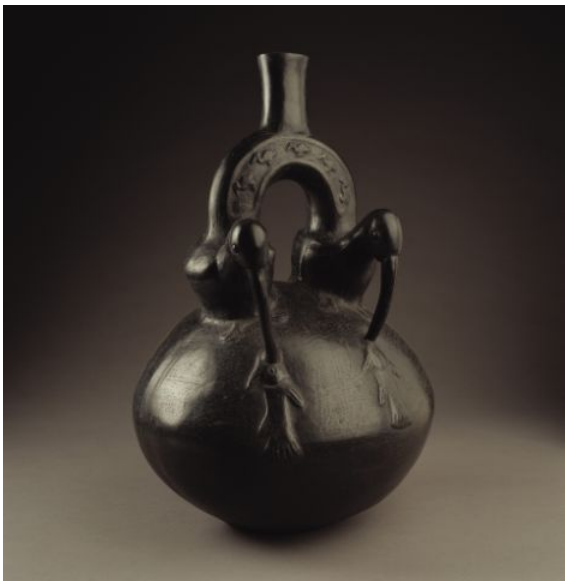
Many of these satellite areas produced commodities that the Chimú population based in the capital of Chan Chan could not. Some sites relied on marine resources, such as fish and precious shells. However, after the advent of agriculture, more sites developed further inland, where marine resources were harder to attain. These inland communities began raising llamas as a supplemental source of meat, but by the Late Intermediate period and Late Horizon, inland sites started to rely on llamas as an essential transportation and food resource.

Chimú mantle. The Chimú are known for their artisanal works, such as this mantle spun of multiple colored fibers sometime from 1000 to 1476 CE.

Artisans

The capital of Chan Chan likely developed a complex bureaucracy due to the elite's controlled access to information. This bureaucratic center imported raw materials from across Chimor, which were then processed into prestige goods by highly skilled artisans. The majority of the citizens in each *ciudadela* (walled cities in the capital of Chan Chan) were artisans. In the late Chimú, about 12,000 artisans lived and worked in Chan Chan alone. Artisans played an essential role in Chimú culture:

- They engaged in fishing, agriculture, craft work, and trade.
- Artisans were forbidden to change their profession, and were grouped in the *ciudadela* according to their area of specialization.
- Archeologists have noted a dramatic increase in Chimú craft production over time, and they believe that artisans may have been brought to Chan Chan from other areas taken as a result of Chimú conquest.



Chimú pottery is distinctly monochromatic and bears a striking resemblance to Moche pottery.

Pottery and Textiles

Though their textiles were multicolored, their pottery and metalwork are known for being monochromatic. The pottery is often in the shape of a creature, or has a human figure sitting or standing on a cuboid bottle. The shiny black finish of most Chimú pottery was achieved by firing the pottery at high temperatures in a closed kiln, which prevented oxygen from reacting with the clay.

Deities

The Chimú worshipped the Moon (*Si*) and considered it the greatest and most powerful of the deities. It was believed to be more powerful than the Sun, as it appeared by night and day, and was deeply linked with patterns in weather, fertility, and the growth of crops. Sacrifices of spondylus shells and other precious items were made to the Moon. Devotees sacrificed their own children on piles of colored cotton with offerings of fruit and chicha. They believed the sacrificed children, normally around the age of five, would become deified.

Spondylus shells were used as a currency and as offerings to the deities.

Animals and birds were also sacrificed to the Moon in order to appease this powerful entity. Two of the stars of Orion's Belt were considered to be the emissaries of the Moon. The constellation Fur (the Pleiades) was also used to calculate the year and was

believed to watch over the crops.

The Sun was associated with stones called *alaec-pong* (cacique stone). These stones were believed to be ancestors of the people in the areas they were found. They were also considered to be sons of the Sun deity. Along with the Sun, the Sea (*Ni*) was also a very important deity, and sacrifices of white maize flour, red ochre, and other precious items were made to it. Prayers for fish and protection against drowning were also offered. Shrines (called *huacas*) developed in each district across Chimor, dedicated to an associated legend, deity, or cult of belief, depending on the region.

The Fall of the Chimú

The end of the Chimú was brought about in the 1470s. They were conquered by the Inca ruler Tupac Inca Yupanqui, who led a fierce and well organized army northward. The Chimú were considered the last substantial rival culture standing in the way of the Inca conquest of the region.

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12.20: The Inca People

Learning Objectives

- Explain Inca agriculture, clothing, commodities, and architecture, and how these elements shaped their complex society.

Key Points

- Centered in Cusco, the Inca Empire extended from modern-day Chile to modern-day Colombia.
- Inca society was sophisticated, and boasted around seventy different crops across the empire's various climates.
- The Inca considered finely woven textiles to be an essential commodity, and spun various grades of cloth from llama and vicuña wool.

Terms

quinoa

This grain crop produces edible seeds that are high in protein and played an essential role in the Inca diet.

Machu Picchu

This Inca citadel was probably built for the emperor Pachacutec around 1450 CE in the Andes at a height of around 8,000 feet above sea level using dry stone masonry.

awaska

A lower-grade textile woven from llama wool and used for everyday household chores and cleaning.

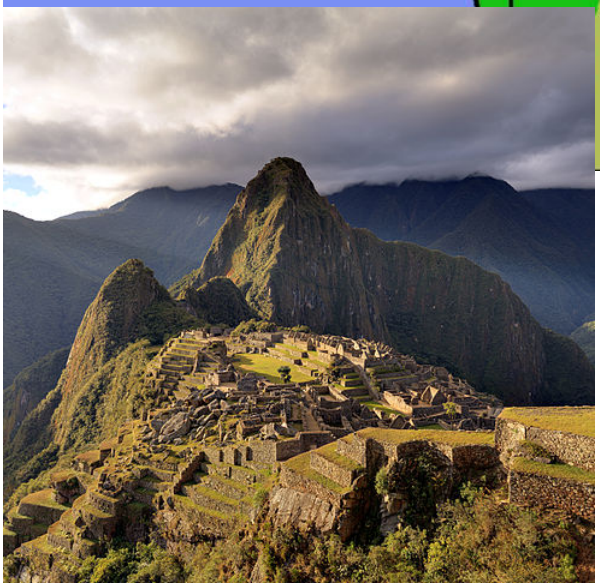
The Inca Empire, or Inka Empire, was the largest empire in pre-Columbian America. The civilization emerged in the 13th century and lasted until it was conquered by the Spanish in 1572. The administrative, political, and military center of the empire was located in Cusco (also spelled Cuzco) in modern-day Peru. From 1438 to 1533, the Incas used a variety of methods, from conquest to peaceful assimilation, to incorporate a large portion of western South America. Beginning with the rule of Pachacuti-Cusi Yupanqui, the Inca expanded their borders to include large parts of modern Ecuador, Peru, western and south-central Bolivia, northwest Argentina, north and north-central Chile, and southern Colombia. This vast territory was known in Quechua (the language of the Inca Empire) as Tawantin Suyu, or the Four Regions, which met in the capital of Cusco.

Inca Empire. From 1438 to 1533, the Inca Empire expanded significantly.

Architecture and Masonry

Architecture illustrates the sophistication and technical skill typical of the Inca Empire. The main example of this resilient art form was the capital city of Cusco, which drew together the Four Regions. The Inca used a mortarless construction technique, called dry stone wall, that fit stones together so well that a knife could not be fitted through the stonework. This was a process first used on a large scale by the Pucara (c. 300 BCE–300 CE) peoples to the south in Lake Titicaca, and later in the great city of Tiwanaku (c. 400–1100 CE) in present-day Bolivia. The rocks used in construction were sculpted to fit together exactly by repeatedly lowering one rock onto another and carving away any sections on the lower rock where there was compression or the pieces did not fit exactly. The tight fit and the concavity on the lower rocks made them extraordinarily stable.

Machu Picchu was built around 1450, at the height of the Inca Empire. It is a rare example of this architectural building technique and remains in remarkable condition after many centuries. The construction of Machu Picchu appears to date from the period of the two great Inca emperors, Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui (1438–1471) and Tupac Inca Yupanqui (1472–1493), and was probably built as a temple for the emperor Pachacutec. Machu Picchu was abandoned just over 100 years later, in 1572, as a belated result of the Spanish Conquest, possibly related to smallpox.



Machu Picchu. This impressive mountain-top temple was built around 1450 CE using dry stone wall.

Textiles, Ceramics, and Metalwork

Textiles were one of the most precious commodities of the Inca culture and denoted a person's social status, and often their profession. The brightly colored patterns on a wool tunic represented various positions and achievements. For example, a black-and-white checkerboard pattern topped with a pink triangle denoted a soldier. Because textiles were so specific to a person's class and employment, citizens could not change their wardrobe without the express permission of the government. Textiles were also manufactured that could only be used for certain tasks or social arenas. A rougher textile, spun from llama wool and called *awaska*, was used for everyday household chores. On the other hand, a fine-spun, very soft cloth made from vicuña wool could only be used in religious ceremonies.

Inca tunic. The complex patterns woven into most Inca textiles and made into tunics, like this one, denoted a person's position in society.

Although textiles were considered the most precious commodity in Inca culture, Incas also considered ceramics and metalwork essential commodities of the economy and class system. Incan pottery was distinctive and normally had a spherical body with a cone-shaped base. The pottery would also include curved handles and often featured animal heads, such as jaguars or birds. These ceramics were painted in bright colors, such as orange, red, black, and yellow.

The Inca also required every province to mine for precious metals like tin, silver, gold, and copper. The intricate metalwork of the Inca was heavily influenced by the Chimú culture, which was conquered and absorbed into the Inca culture around 1470. This metalwork included detailed friezes and patterns inlaid into the metal. Fine silver and gold were made into intricate decorative pieces for the emperors and elites based on these Chimú metallurgy traditions, and often included animal motifs with butterflies, jaguars, and llamas etched into the metal. Skilled metallurgists also transformed bronze and copper into farming implements, blades, axes, and pins for everyday activities.

Agriculture and Diet

The Inca culture boasted a wide variety of crops, numbering around seventy different strains in total, making it one of the most diverse crop cultures in the world. Some of these flavorful vegetables and grains included:

- Potatoes
- Sweet potatoes
- Maize
- Chili peppers
- Cotton

- Tomatoes
- Peanuts
- Oca
- Quinoa
- Amaranth

Terraced farmland in Peru. Terraces allowed Inca farmers to utilize the mountainous terrain and grow around seventy different crops.

These crops were grown in the high-altitude Andes by building terraced farms that allowed farmers to utilize the mineral-rich mountain soil. The quick change in altitude on these mountain farms also utilized the micro-climates of each terrace to grow a wider range of crops. The Inca also produced bounties in the Amazon rainforest and along the more arid coastline of modern-day Peru.

Alongside vegetables, the Inca supplemented their diet with fish, guinea pigs, camelid meat, and wild fowl. They also fermented maize, or corn, to create the alcoholic beverage *chicha*.

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12.21: Administration of the Inca Empire

Learning Objectives

- Understand the importance of the governing bodies, road system, recording tools, and social hierarchy of the Inca Empire

Key Points

- The Inca Empire utilized a complex road system with about 25,000 miles of roads that relayed messages and goods throughout the society.
- Inca administrators used brightly colored knotted strings called quipus to keep precise records of labor, taxes, and goods.
- The Inca had no written legal code, but relied on magistrates and inspectors to keep people in line with established social customs.

Terms

quipus

Brightly colored knotted strings that recorded numerical information, such as taxes, goods, and labor, using the base number of 10 to record data in knots.

suyus

Distinct districts of the Inca Empire that all reported back to the capital of Cusco. There were four major districts during the height of the empire.

ayllu

A clan-like family unit based upon a common ancestor.

Hierarchy

The Inca Empire was a hierarchical system with the emperor, or Inca Sapa, ruling over the rest of society. A number of religious officials and magistrates oversaw the administration of the empire directly below the emperor. Kurakas were magistrates that served as the head of an ayllu, or clan-like family unit based on a common ancestor. These leaders mitigated between the spiritual and physical worlds. They also collected taxes, oversaw the day-to-day administration of the empire in their regions, and even chose brides for men in their communities. Some of the privileges kurakas enjoyed included exemption from taxation, the right to ride in a litter, and the freedom to practice polygamy.

Society was broken into two distinct parts. One segment was comprised of the common people, including those cultures that had been subsumed by the Inca Empire. The second group was made up of the elite of the empire, including the emperor and the kurakas, along with various other dignitaries and blood relations. Education was vocationally based for commoners, while the elite received a formal spiritual education.

There was no codified legal system for people that broke with the cultural and social norms. Local inspectors called *okoyrikoq*, or "he who sees all," reported back to the capital and the emperor and made immediate decisions regarding punishment in cases where customs were not honored. Many times these local inspectors were blood relatives of the emperor.

Road System

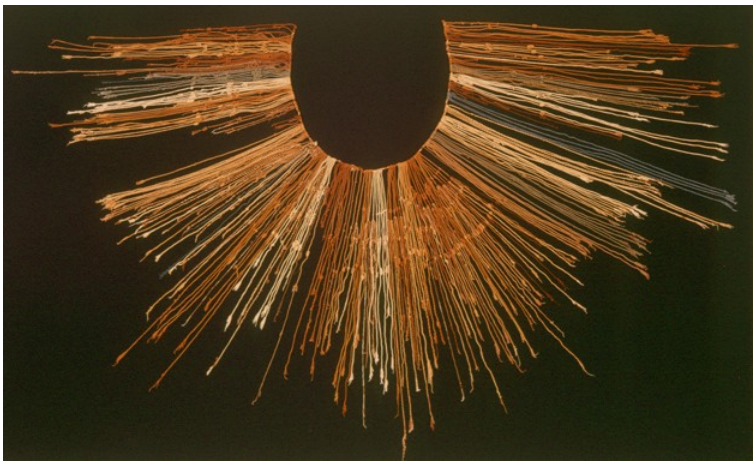
The Inca civilization was able to keep populations in line, collect taxes efficiently, and move goods, messages, and military resources across such a varied landscape because of the complex road system. Measuring about 24,800 miles long, this road system connected the the regions of the empire and was the most complex and lengthy road system in South America at the time. Two main routes connected the north and the south of the empire, with many smaller branches extending to outposts to the east and west. The roads varied in width and style because often the Inca leaders utilized roads that already existed to create this powerful network. Common people could not use these official roads unless they were given permission by the government.

These roads were used for relaying messages by way of *chasqui*, or human runners, who could run up to 150 miles a day with messages for officials. Llamas and alpacas were also used to distribute goods throughout the empire and ease trade relations. The roads also had a ritual purpose because they allowed the highest leaders of the Inca Empire to ascend into the Andes to perform religious rituals in sacred spaces, such as Machu Picchu.

Chasqui carrying a quipu on official state business. Chasquis were highly agile long-distance runners who used the complex road systems to relay messages and goods between cities.

Record Keeping

The Inca utilized a complex recording system to keep track of the administration of the empire. Quipus (also spelled khipus) were colorful bunches of knotted strings that recorded census data, taxes, calendrical information, military organization, and accounting information. These “talking knots” could contain anything from a few threads to around 2,000, and used the base number of 10 to record information in complex variations of knots and spaces.



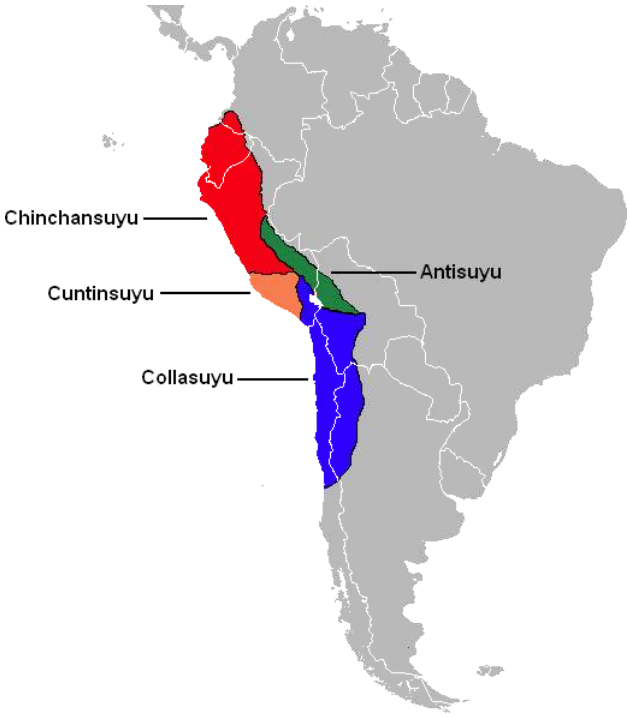
Inca quipu. These complex recording devices allowed officials to keep track of taxes, labor, and goods in a precise fashion.

The Spanish burned the vast majority of existing quipus when they arrived in South America. However, there is some evidence to suggest that these tools were also used to record stories and language for posterity, and were not only numerical recording devices.

Trade and Economics

Trade and the movement of goods fed into what is called the vertical archipelago. This system meant that all goods produced within the empire were immediately property of the ruling elites. These elites, such as the emperor and governors, then redistributed resources across the empire as they saw fit.

Taxes and goods were collected from four distinct *suyus*, or districts, and sent directly to the ruling emperor in Cusco. This highly organized system was most likely perfected under the emperor Pachacuti around 1460.



The Four suyus of the Inca Empire. The economic system linked together four large suyus, or districts, that all reported back to the capital of Cusco.

This system also required a minimum quota of manual labor from the general population. This form of labor taxation was called *mita*. The populations of each district were expected to contribute to the wealth of the empire by mining, farming, or doing other

manual labor that would benefit the entire empire. Precious metals, textiles, and crops were collected and redistributed using the the road system that snaked across the land, from the ocean to the Andes.

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12.22: Religion in the Inca Empire

Learning Objectives

- Learn about the forms of worship of the Sun god Inti, the religious hierarchy, and the cultural assimilation of outlying clans in the Inca Empire

Key Points

- The Inca rulers worshipped the Sun god Inti and built the central temple, Qurikancha, in Cusco.
- The Inca elite incorporated the varied populations into the empire by allowing the worship of other deities.
- Various festivals celebrated the different aspects of the Sun. The most important of these festivals was Inti Raymi, which focused on abundance.

Terms

Pachamama

The Earth goddess worshipped by many clans in outlying areas of the Inca Empire. Inca rulers enforced a religious system that favored Inti, but they incorporated the Earth goddess as a lesser deity.

Inti

The central Sun god the Inca worshipped. He represented abundance, harvests, and fertility, and was considered more important than any other deity worshipped in the region.

Inti Raymi

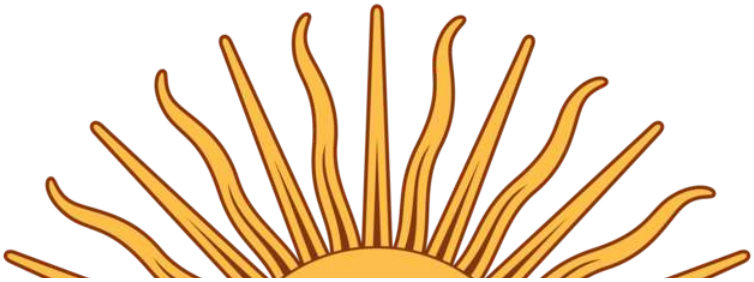
The most important religious festival of the Inca year. It means “Sun Festival” and occurred close to the winter solstice, which happens in June in South America.

The Inca religious system utilized oral traditions to pass down the mythology of their Sun god, Inti. This benevolent male deity was often represented as a gold disk with large rays and a human face. Golden disks were commonly displayed at temples across the Inca Empire and were also associated with the ruling emperor, who was supposed to be a direct descendent of Inti, and divinely powerful. Inti was also associated with the growth of crops and material abundance, especially in the high Andes, where the Inca centered their power.

Some myths state that this benevolent entity, along with Mama Killa, the Moon goddess, had children. Inti ordered these children, named Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo, to descend from the sky and onto Earth with a divine golden wedge. This wedge penetrated the earth, and they built the capital of Cusco and civilization on that very spot.

Inti Worship

Royalty were considered to be direct descendants of Inti and, therefore, able to act as intermediaries between the physical and spiritual realms. The high priest of Inti was called the *Willaq Umu*. He was often the brother or a direct blood relation of the Sapa Inca, or emperor, and was the second most powerful person in the empire. The royal family oversaw the collection of goods, spiritual festivals, and the worship of Inti. Power consolidated around the cult of the Sun, and scholars suggest that the emperor Pachacuti expanded this Sun cult to garner greater power in the 15th century.



An illustrated representation of the Sun god Inti. This image of Inti appears at the center of Argentina's modern-day flag.

Conquered provinces were expected to dedicate a third of their resources, such as herds and crops, directly to the worship of Inti. Each province also had a temple with male and female priests worshipping the Inti cult. Becoming a priest was considered one of the most honorable positions in society. Female priests were called *mamakuna*, or "the chosen women," and they wove special cloth and brewed chicha for religious festivals.

The main temple in the Inca Empire, called Qurikancha, was built in Cusco. The temple housed the bodies of deceased emperors and also contained a vast array of physical representations of Inti, many of which were removed or destroyed when the Spanish arrived. Qurikancha was also the main site of the religious festival Inti Raymi, which means "Sun Festival." It was considered the most important festival of the year, and is still celebrated on the winter solstice in Cusco. It represents the mythical origin of the Inca and the hope for good crops in the coming year as the winter sun returns from darkness.

The festival of Inti Raymi. This festival is celebrated in late June in the capital of Cusco every year. Thousands of visitors arrive to see the procession and rituals.

Religious Expansion

Religious life was centered in the Andes near Cusco, but as the Inca Empire expanded its sphere of influence, they had to incorporate a wide array of religious customs and traditions to avoid outright revolt. Ayllus, or family clans, often worshipped very localized entities and gods. The ruling Inca often incorporated these deities into the Inti cosmos. For example, Pachamama, the Earth goddess, was a long-worshipped deity before the Inca Empire. She was incorporated into Inca culture as a lower divine entity. Similarly, the Chimú along the northern coast of Peru worshipped the Moon, rather than the Sun, probably due to the hot, arid climate and their proximity to the ocean. The Inca also incorporated the Moon into their religious myths and practices in the form of Mama Killa.

Sacrifice and the Afterlife

The Inca believed in reincarnation. Death was a passage to the next world that was full of difficulties. The spirit of the dead, camaquen, would need to follow a long dark road. The trip required the assistance of a black dog that was able to see in the dark. Most Incas imagined the after world to be very similar to the Euro-American notion of heaven, with flower-covered fields and snow-capped mountains. It was important for the Inca to ensure they did not die as a result of burning or that the body of the deceased did not become incinerated. This is because of the underlying belief that a vital force would disappear and this would threaten their passage to the after world. Those who obeyed the Inca moral code (do not steal, do not lie, do not be lazy) went to live in the "Sun's warmth" while others spent their eternal days "in the cold earth."

Skull showing signs of artificial cranial deformation. Although this skull predates the Inca Empire, and is from the Nazca culture, Inca elites would reshape infants' skulls in a similar manner to illustrate a higher class status.

Human sacrifice has been exaggerated by myth, but it did play a role in Inca religious practices. As many as 4,000 servants, court officials, favorites, and concubines were killed upon the death of the Inca Huayna Capac in 1527, for example. The Incas also performed child sacrifices during or after important events, such as the death of the Sapa Inca or during a famine. These sacrifices were known as *capacocha*.

The Inca also practiced cranial deformation. They achieved this by wrapping tight cloth straps around the heads of newborns in order to alter the shape of their soft skulls into a more conical form; this cranial deformation distinguished social classes of the communities, with only the nobility having it.

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12.23: The Spanish Conquest

Learning Objectives

- Learn about the contributing factors that allowed the Spanish explorers to overpower the Inca Empire and establish control of the region

Key Points

- The Inca War of Succession began after the emperor Huayna Capac died around 1528 and his two sons both wanted to seize power.
- Internal instability allowed Francisco Pizarro and his men to find allies within the Inca Empire.
- Spanish forces ousted the last Inca holdout of Vilcabamba in 1572 and enforced a harsh rule of law on the local population.

Terms

mita

A form of labor tax that required one person from each family to work in the mines. The Spanish enforced this heavy labor tax once they gained control of the region.

Viceroyalty of Peru

The Spanish forces gave the newly seized Inca region this title and started to collect taxes and labor from the local people.

Inca Civil War

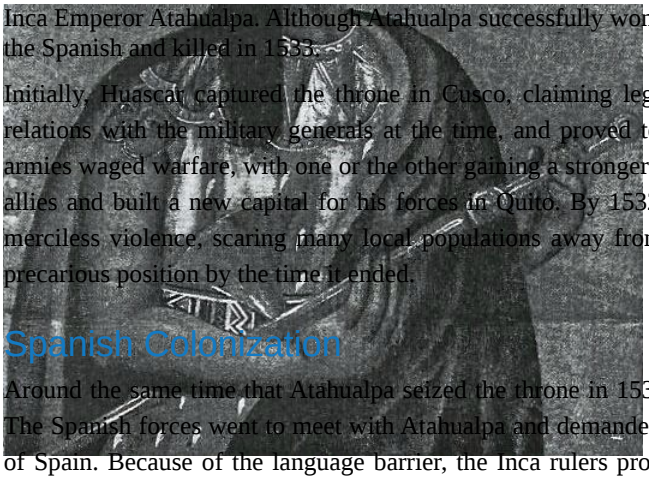
This internal dispute started around 1528 between two sons of the deceased emperor who both wanted control, causing instability in the Inca Empire.

Spanish Arrival

The Spanish explorer Francisco Pizarro, along with a small military retinue, landed on South American soil around 1526. The Spanish recognized the wealth and abundance that could be had in this territory; at this point the Inca Empire was at its largest, measuring around 690,000 square miles. In 1528 Pizarro went back to Spain to ask for the official blessing of the Spanish crown to the conquer the area and become governor. He returned with his blessings around 1529 and began the official takeover of the region.

Inca Civil War

Although Pizarro had a small force behind him, many problems within the Inca Empire worked to his advantage between 1528 and 1533. Foremost among these was the Inca Civil War, which is also known as the War of Succession or the War of Two Brothers. It began to brew just one year after Pizarro first landed in the region. Around 1528, the ruling Inca emperor, Huayna Capac, and his designated heir, Ninan Cuyochic, died of disease. It was most likely smallpox, which had quickly traveled down to South America after the arrival of Spanish explorers in Central America. Brothers Huascar and Atahualpa, two sons of the emperor Huayna Capac, both wanted to rule after their father's death.


Inca Emperor Atahualpa. Although Atahualpa successfully won the Inca Civil War and ruled as emperor, he was soon captured by the Spanish and killed in 1533.

Initially, Huascar captured the throne in Cusco, claiming legitimacy. However, Atahualpa had a keen military mind and close relations with the military generals at the time, and proved to be the deadlier force. Between 1529 and 1532 the two brothers' armies waged warfare, with one or the other gaining a stronger foothold for a time. Atahualpa initially garnered favor with northern allies and built a new capital for his forces in Quito. By 1532, Atahualpa had overpowered his brother's forces via intrigue and merciless violence, scaring many local populations away from standing up to his power. This civil war left the population in a precarious position by the time it ended.

Spanish Colonization

Around the same time that Atahualpa seized the throne in 1532, Pizarro returned to Peru with blessings from the Spanish crown. The Spanish forces went to meet with Atahualpa and demanded he take up the "true faith" (Catholicism) and the yoke of Charles I of Spain. Because of the language barrier, the Inca rulers probably did not understand much of these demands, and the meeting quickly escalated to the Battle of Cajamarca. This clash left thousands of native people dead. The Spanish also captured Atahualpa and kept him hostage, demanding ransoms of silver and gold. They also insisted that Atahualpa agree to be baptized. Although the Inca ruler was mostly cooperative in captivity, and was finally baptized, the Spanish killed him on August 29, 1533, essentially ending the potential for larger Inca attacks on Spanish forces.

An engraved representation of the Battle of Cajamarca. This battle began in 1532, leaving thousands of native people dead and ending with the capture of Atahualpa.

Even though the Inca Civil War made it easier for the Spanish armies to gain control initially, many other contributing factors brought about the demise of Inca rule and the crumbling of local populations. As scholar Jared Diamond points out, the Inca Empire was already facing threats:

- Local unrest in the provinces after years of paying tribute to the Inca elite created immediate allies for the Spanish against the Inca rulers.
- Demanding terrain throughout the empire made it even more difficult to keep a handle on populations and goods as the empire expanded.
- Diseases that the population had never been exposed to, such as smallpox, diphtheria, typhus, measles, and influenza, devastated large swaths of the population within fifty years.
- Superior Spanish military gear, including armor, horses, and weapons, overpowered the siege warfare more common in the Inca Empire.

The Last Incas

After Atahualpa died and the Spanish seized control, they placed Atahualpa's brother Manco Inca Yupanqui in charge of Cusco as a puppet ruler while they tried to reign in the north. After a failed attempt to recapture the city from greater Spanish rule during this time, Manco retreated to Vilcabamba and built the last stronghold of the Inca. The Inca continued to revolt against totalitarian Spanish rule until the year 1572. In that year the Spanish conquered Vilcabamba and killed the last Inca emperor, Tupac Amaru, after a summary trial.

An image of the Spanish executing Tupac Amaru. The last Inca ruler, Tupac Amaru, was killed by Spanish forces in 1572, effectively ending any potential for an Inca uprising.

Spanish Rule

The Spanish named this vast region the Viceroyalty of Peru and set up a Spanish system of rule, which effectively suppressed any type of uprising from local communities.

The Spanish system destroyed many of the Inca traditions and ways of life in a matter of years. Their finely honed agricultural system, which utilized tiered fields in the mountains, was completely disbanded. The Spanish also enforced heavy manual labor taxes, called mita, on the local populations. In general, this meant that every family had to offer up one person to work in the highly dangerous gold and silver mines. If that family member died, which was common, the family had to replace the fallen laborer. The Spanish also enforced heavy taxes on agriculture, metals, and other fine goods. The population continued to suffer heavy losses due to disease as Spanish rule settled into place.

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12.24: The Olmec

Learning Objectives

- Give an account of the society, trade, art, and religion of the Olmec

Key Points

- The Olmec lived in south-central Mexico, with their center in La Venta in Tabasco.
- Little is known about Olmec religion, though scholars believe there were eight main deities.
- People lived in small agricultural villages outside of urban centers, which were mainly for ceremonial use.
- The decline of the Olmec population from 400—350 BCE may have been due to environmental changes.

Terms

La Venta

The main city of the Olmec civilization.

Mesoamerican ballgame

An ancient ritual sport that involved keeping a rubber ball in play in designated courts. It most likely originated in the Olmec culture.

Olmec colossal heads

Basalt sculptures of human faces wearing large helmeted headdresses that stand up to 3.4 meters high. These sculptures most likely represent important rulers.

The Olmec were the first major civilization in Mexico. They lived in the tropical lowlands of south-central Mexico, in the present-day states of Veracruz and Tabasco, and had their center in the city of La Venta.

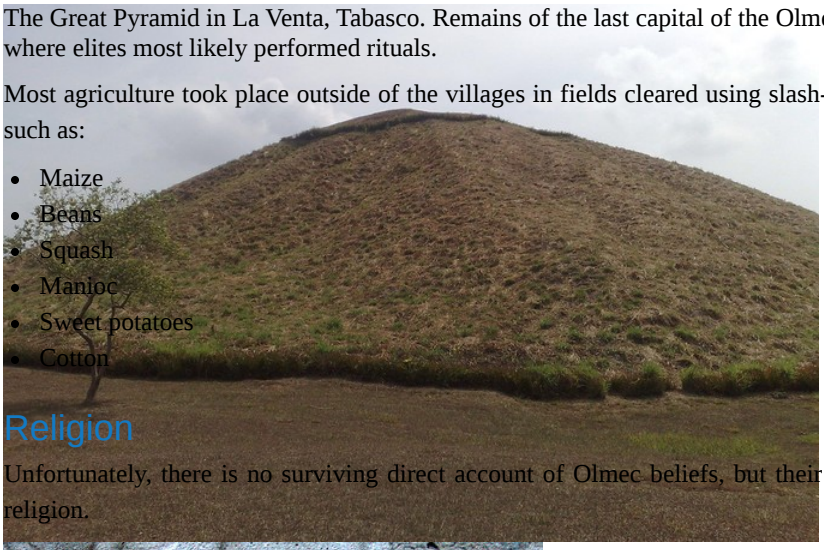
The Olmec flourished during Mesoamerica's formative period, dating roughly from as early as 1500 BCE to about 400 BCE. Pre-Olmec cultures had flourished in the area since about 2500 BCE, but by 1600–1500 BCE, Early Olmec culture had emerged. They were the first Mesoamerican civilization and laid many of the foundations for the civilizations that followed, such as the Maya. Judging from the available archeological evidence it is likely that they originated the Mesoamerican ballgame and possible that they practiced ritual bloodletting.

The Gulf of Mexico's lowlands are generally considered the birthplace of the Olmec culture, and remained the heartland of this civilization during its existence. This area is characterized by swampy lowlands punctuated by low hills, ridges, and volcanoes. The Tuxtlas Mountains rise sharply in the north, along the Gulf of Mexico's Bay of Campeche. Here the Olmec constructed permanent city-temple complexes at San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán, La Venta, Tres Zapotes, and Laguna de los Cerros. San Lorenzo remained the Olmec capital up until about 900 BCE, when the central city became La Venta, which remained functional until the demise of the Olmec around 400 BCE. Possible river or weather changes caused this movement to occur.

Trade and Village Life

There are no written records of Olmec commerce, beliefs, or customs, but from the archeological evidence it appears they were not economically confined. In fact, Olmec artifacts have been found across Mesoamerica, indicating that there were extensive interregional trade routes. The Olmec period saw a significant increase in the length of trade routes, the variety of goods, and the sources of traded items.

Trading helped the Olmec build their urban centers of San Lorenzo and La Venta. However, these cities were used predominantly for ceremonial purposes and elite activity; most people lived in small villages. Individual homes had a lean-to and a storage pit nearby. They also likely had gardens, in which the Olmec would grow medicinal herbs and small crops, like sunflowers.



The Great Pyramid in La Venta, Tabasco. Remains of the last capital of the Olmec society, La Venta, include this religious site where elites most likely performed rituals.

Most agriculture took place outside of the villages in fields cleared using slash-and-burn techniques. The Olmec likely grew crops such as:

- Maize
- Beans
- Squash
- Manioc
- Sweet potatoes
- Cotton

Religion

Unfortunately, there is no surviving direct account of Olmec beliefs, but their notable artwork provide clues about their life and religion.

Olmec king. Surviving art, like this relief of a king or chief found in La Venta, help provide clues about how Olmec society functioned.

There were eight different androgynous Olmec deities, each with its own distinct characteristics. For example, the Bird Monster was depicted as a harpy eagle associated with rulership. The Olmec Dragon was shown with flame eyebrows, a bulbous nose, and bifurcated tongue. These gods were believed to provide the rulers a mandate to lead. Deities often represented a natural element and included:

- The Maize deity
- The Rain Spirit or Were-Jaguar
- The Fish or Shark Monster

Religious activities regarding these deities probably included the elite rulers, shamans, and possibly a priest class making offerings at religious sites in La Venta and San Lorenzo.

Art

The Olmec culture was defined and unified by a specific art style, and this continues to be the hallmark of the culture. Wrought in a large number of media—jade, clay, basalt, and greenstone, among others—much Olmec art, such as The Wrestler, is surprisingly naturalistic. Other art expresses fantastic anthropomorphic creatures, often highly stylized, using an iconography reflective of a religious meaning. Common motifs include downturned mouths and a cleft head, both of which are seen in representations of were-jaguars and the rain deity.

Olmec hollow baby figurine. Realistic ceramic objects, such as this portrayal of an infant, illustrate the highly skilled artistic style of the Olmec culture.

Olmec Colossal Heads

The most striking art left behind by this culture are the Olmec colossal heads. Seventeen monumental stone representations of human heads sculpted from large basalt boulders have been unearthed in the region to date. The heads date from at least before 900 BCE and are a distinctive feature of the Olmec civilization. All portray mature men with fleshy cheeks, flat noses, and slightly crossed eyes. However, none of the heads are alike, and each boasts a unique headdress, which suggests they represent specific individuals.

The boulders were brought from the Sierra de los Tuxtlas mountains of Veracruz. Given that the extremely large slabs of stone used in their production were transported over large distances, requiring a great deal of human effort and resources, it is thought that the monuments represent portraits of powerful individual Olmec rulers. The heads were variously arranged in lines or groups at major Olmec centers, but the method and logistics used to transport the stone to these sites remain uncertain.

The discovery of a colossal head at Tres Zapotes in the 19th century spurred the first archaeological investigations of Olmec culture by Matthew Stirling in 1938. Most colossal heads were sculpted from spherical boulders, but two from San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán were re-carved from massive stone thrones. An additional monument, at Takalik Abaj in Guatemala, is a throne that may have been carved from a colossal head. This is the only known example from outside the Olmec heartland.

Olmec head. This sculpture is typical of the colossal heads of the Olmec.

The End of the Olmecs

The Olmec population declined sharply between 400 and 350 BCE, though it is unclear why. Archaeologists speculate that the depopulation was caused by environmental changes, specifically riverine environment changes. These changes may have been triggered by the silting up of rivers due to agricultural practices.

Another theory for the considerable population drop relates to tectonic upheavals or subsidence, as suggested by Santley and colleagues who propose relocation of settlements due to volcanism, instead of extinction. Volcanic eruptions during the Early, Late, and Terminal Formative periods would have blanketed the lands and forced the Olmec to move their settlements.

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